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OUR HERITAGE OF UNITY AND FELLOWSHIP

The title of this issue is also the title of a collection of writings of Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett that I purposely selected from their abundant material. I think you would be blessed by this book. Let me introduce it by use of two letters from appreciative readers.

“My dear brother Cecil:

“This is to thank you with all I can muster for publishing the above-referenced book. This morning, I reached the midpoint in reading chapter 10, "What Is the Gospel?" by brother Garrett and I suddenly realized that it is the book I had been looking for for a good many years.

“I've always felt queasy about our interpretations of a large portion of the Bible. I've always asked questions that few would attempt to answer for me. Chapter 10 answered some of them; a look ahead at upcoming chapter titles convinced me I have found the book about The Book that makes sense to me, that I have sought for such a long, long time.

“I just wanted to say thank you for publishing this book. Long may it be read and re-read.” --Steve Collins, North Little Rock, AR 72116 <STEVEC365@aol.com>

The following letter is from a newer foreign convert, Carlos Prazeres, <cprazer@hotmail.com>, a citizen of Brazil who is to be transferred to California.

“Hello, Mr. Cecil, I'm really excited to start reading the other books you sent me. I finished reading ‘Our Heritage of Unity and Fellowship.’ It was amazing for me to discover the reality of my ‘fathers.’ It was really wonderful to understand the principles and the reasons of our Movement. It gave me a new direction, new insights about the Bible, the church, and everything else.

“I'm telling you this because I received other information about the Restoration Movement. I really did not know the things I read. I did not know about the real history, the controversies, the ‘Sand Creek Declaration’ etc., and now I believe we have several brothers--preachers--that don't know about those things.

“I thank you very much! I don't have words to express my gratitude. And I know I'll grow up more in Christ after reading and meditating on the other books.”

I thank Steve and Carlos for these unsolicited testimonies about this book. It is not necessary to know your historical background in order to understand the Bible, but it certainly helps in understanding your self. There is much ignorance among us as to our

roots. Many try to detach themselves from any historical heritage, denying that they practice anything because of tradition. They just sprang from Bible teaching inheriting nothing from others! That is about as sensible as saying you inherited no trait or likeness from your parents.

This book of 350 pages is made up of 51 articles written by men in love with their heritage, Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett. They were first published in Carl's "Mission Messenger," and Leroy's "Restoration Review" over a period of many years. Examining their rich storehouses of information, I worked a year selecting these particular lessons at the invitation of Leroy Garrett. I owe those two great writers much. Even if you have not heard their names, your life has probably been influenced by their devoted efforts if you are in a "Restoration" church. Their writings are included in pure form here with no editing or comment of my own.

Although it is not primarily a book of history, early chapters tell of the beginning of our Movement, the principles of unity and fellowship which motivated it, and its progress in the Nineteenth Century. Then we are informed of the misdirection from the original principles so that the noble unity movement lost its thrust by becoming divided and splintering into numerous exclusive factions. The latter portion offers positive and Scriptural direction for us to observe in order to restore that heritage of unity and fellowship. I can promise you that there not a dull chapter in the book.

Let me point to some of the chapter headings:

"Thomas Campbell Writes His Declaration of Independence."

"Let Christian Unity Be Our Polar Star."

"Christians In Babylon." Our pioneers had no exclusive sectarian attitude!

"What Is the Gospel?" Are all of the NT writings gospel?

"The Essence of the Campbell Plea."

"The Sand Creek Declaration." Worth the price of the book!

"The Authority Totem." A widely distributed tract. Candid. Sobering.

"Restoration or Reformation." Defining our Movement.

"Analysis of Legalism." Our besetting sin identified.

Several chapters on fellowship and withdrawing.

"Unity and Identity"

"Unity in Diversity." Especially great.

"Is Doctrine Important?"

"Must We Give Up Our Opinions?"

"The 'One Baptism' and Fellowship."

"Are We to Fellowship the Unimmersed?"

"Our Fathers on 'Who Is A Christian?'"

"What Is 'Our Fellowship'?"

"Separated but Not Divided."

"The Unifying Power of the Cross."

That is not even half of the titles!

Barton W. Stone and the Campbell father and son, Thomas and Alexander, were the gifted leaders of what we call "The Stone-Campbell Movement." They had no aim of starting another church, nor of restoration of the original church, as though it had vanished from existence. Their aim was to unite the Christians among the sects. They claimed to be "Christians only, but not the only Christians." It is saddening to contemplate how that claim was reversed by others to mean, "We are Christians only -- and the only Christians."

Do you not have an interest in re-claiming our heritage of unity and fellowship? This book can give you marvelous insights. It is interesting, challenging, and instructive. Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett, as masterful writers and lovers of the Word, have made their material easy to read, and we have put it into font easy for the eyes in an attractive paper-back cover. It makes a good gift or a valuable donation to the church library.

You may order the book from me for \$12.00. For orders less than \$30.00 please add \$1.50 to your total order to help with mailing. You may order by e-mail <hookc@teleport.com>, phone: 503-690-0826; or mail: 17196 NW Woodmere Ct, Beaverton OR 97006-4820. Also you may access it at my web site <www.freedomring.org>. Through links from my site, you also may access all of Carl Ketcherside's MISSION MESSENGER and some of Leroy Garrett's RESTORATION REVIEW. Thank you. (Cecil Hook, May 2001) []