

Publisher's Note

This edition of *In The Beginning* was created from an optical scan of the original publication. In the process of correcting errors generated by the scanning process, errors in the original text were also discovered and corrections were made where the intended text was apparent (a list of those errors is available from the publisher upon request).

It is our hope that by making this work available on the Internet free of charge it may enjoy wide distribution. It is our belief that its message reflects what is likely the most vital need of the Christian community today--for all believers to embrace each other in love as brothers, accepted in the Lord whose Spirit we share, in spite of the fact that we *cannot* share a complete understanding of everything God has said in scripture.

Although his message was directed primarily to the heirs of the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement in America, Carl Ketcherside has rendered a service to the entire Christian community by pointing out the fundamental cause of religious division and by enabling us to recognize the *only* basis upon which Christian unity will ever be found.

--Bob D. Lewis, Managing Editor

In the Beginning

W. Carl Ketcherside

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Chapter 1

In the Beginning

In the Beginning is not just another book about creation. It does not deal with the primal order of things. Rather, it is about the beginning of a new approach to the vexing problem of sectarianism in our day. It was an approach made by one who had long been steeped in the sectarian spirit without realizing it. It represents some of the things said and done in order to discover freedom in Christ and to stand clear of all that opposed such freedom. It is not by any means the last word in such a struggle. It is possible there will be no last word on earth.

The articles appearing herein were all written about 1957. Some of them were sent forth in fear and trembling. "I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling" (1 Cor. 2:3). Some were delivered orally. There has been no intent to be slavishly wedded to them as they originally appeared. Changes have been made in their construction. They have been altered and amended to better convey the idea originally hoped to achieve. The only thing that can be said about them is that they represent an honest attempt to find and recommend a better way than the one previously known.

There is probably nothing more traumatic than for one who has been shut up as a sectarian to be delivered by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. It is as if an earthquake had occurred which leveled the prison and left one standing in the midst of the wreckage unharmed and unhurt. All that had ever furnished security and protection is now gone, swept aside by the elements. There is no retreat to be found no shadow in which to hide. All of the subtle little hypocrisies of the past, the cavilling and the accommodations are gone. There is no place to flee except to Christ.

It is very difficult to confess that one has been in error much of his life. All past training is opposed to such a confession. It stifles pride. It runs counter to the ego. There is the question of those one has taught. His fellow-prisoners resent his admission. There is the problem of the congregations he has planted. Many of them would rather continue where they are than to acknowledge they have been mistaken. They prefer to embrace the errors with which they are familiar than the truth that is new.

There is the tendency to dart furtive glances in this direction or that, seeking some solution which will allow one to hold on to his own prestige. There is the frantic search for an escape. But none of these can avail. It is only when one admits that he is wrong, and has been wrong all of his life, that he can shed the past as a snake divests himself of his old skin, and be ready to move on to new heights. In the final analysis it is the best thing to do. One does not want to be forever trapped by his own past.

I began in the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. It was a venerable institution with a stately ritual. Gathered about it were all of the grand teachings of the Monk of Erfurt. Not the least of its history was the tacking of the Ninety-Five Theses on the church door at Wittenberg. I entered it by inheritance. My grandparents were from Denmark and Schlesweig-Holstein. Like

thousands of others they brought their religion with them. It was one of form and not of substance. They knew but little about it and nothing of its origin.

But they bitterly resented any attempt to merge with the social order around them. They kept their manners, customs, and language. They expected all to conform to them. My grandmother even kept her old-world form of dress as far as possible. They resented all change with a deep hostility. They were old-order. When I was sprinkled by the Rev. Mr. Peterson I was really inducted into a way of life, more than into a church.

I left the Lutheran Church shortly before I was twelve. In spite of the tenderness of my years the plea that one could be a Christian and Christian only, without being some special kind of a Christian, gripped my heart and provided a certain kind of exultation. It was genuine and now almost sixty years afterwards, I remember how the Spirit strove with me. I recall the deep inward sense of gloom which was mine and the ineffable joy which came when I surrendered to His claim upon my life. I was immersed in a clear creek which wound its way through the pasture, and knew that I was forgiven for the childish sins I had committed.

It was only after I had been preaching the good news for a number of years that I awakened to the fact that I had not been a Christian only, but a partisan. I was actually a Church of Christ Christian. Although it came as quite a shock to find it out, I did not feel betrayed or frustrated. I realized it was a natural development. But I began from that moment on to recognize that the body of Christ was greater than any movement within it. The community of the reconciled was not limited to a movement which began arrogating to itself the name "Church of Christ" but embraced every saved person on the face of the earth. I was helped by a crisis experience in North Ireland in which I was brought face to face with Jesus. If I had never left the United States, or if it had never happened. I would no doubt be today exactly where I was. God forbid!

From 1951 to 1957 I went through all of the "withdrawal symptoms" essential to coming off the party spirit. I lay awake in bed at night and thought of all I had advocated that was wrong. During the day I studied the Word, and prayed, and sometimes wept. How precious it all seemed to me then. I read every copy of the Millennial Harbinger, every Christian Baptist, and all of Lard's Quarterlies, during that time. I finally became convinced that we had betrayed the restoration movement as it was in the beginning. In its stead we had contrived something of our own which we advocated and which pampered our hearts into thinking we were heirs of that wonderful idea of those who launched it.

I became conscious of the scriptures we had twisted to justify division which was always condemned by the Spirit. Finally I was ready to launch out. It was in 1957 that I first began to advocate what has now become much more popular than it was in those first days. What I advocated was an idea whose time had come. Gradually, as we gained courage and momentum, and as knowledge increased and multiplied, the Mission Messenger began to grow until it went to every continent on the globe.

In the Beginning will recover for you some of our feeble attempts to help men think, to let them see a brighter vision, and to lift them to a broader fellowship in Christ the Lord. As you read it, we sincerely hope that you will recognize it for what it is the first faint vision of a fellowship

which is truly non-sectarian, based upon His will for the lives of us all. It is not the last word upon the theme. Much more and better material will be written by others in the future. May God use it all to His purpose and to the glory of Jesus!

Chapter 2

Grilling the Editor

Editor's Note. The following recorded interview may be of some interest to our readers. It represents my reply to questions proposed relative to my views on current topics. It was recorded and has been transcribed from the recordings. There have been occasional deletions and alterations made in order to clarify my position. I trust that you will give it a careful reading.

1. *I have noticed the repeated usage of the term "restoration" in your writings. What do you mean by this expression?*

By the term "restoration" I mean the full and complete return to the ancient order as established by our Lord through the holy apostles; that is the reinstatement upon this earth of the community of saints as originally planted in conformity with the purpose of heaven.

2. *Does this mean that you consider that no existing religious organization has yet achieved this goal?*

Exactly! We have not yet arrived at the place where any congregation or group of congregations can assert that they represent the primitive order in its fullness. There remains yet much land to be conquered.

3. *Why is a restoration necessary in the first place?*

The ancient order began to be corrupted even during the days of the apostles. Paul declared while he was yet alive that "the mystery of iniquity" was already working. The plan of God was obscured, the sun was eclipsed, and the congregation forced to flee "into the wilderness." The actual bondage in spiritual Babylon lasted for 12 years, before the first rays of light began once more to penetrate the darkness. We are not completely free from the influence of Babylon to this very day.

4. *Is this attempt at restoration a new thing in the earth?*

Not at all. It began in England with such men as John Wycliffe in the fifteenth century, and was carried forward by Martin Luther in the sixteenth century. While these and their contemporaries were actually reformers of the existing order, they laid the groundwork for such men as Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott, Barton W. Stone, et. al., who actually sought to go back beyond the Roman and Protestant schisms, and restore the original order as ordained by God. Our efforts are enriched by their discoveries of the last century.

5. *Has progress in restoration been as rapid in the last fifty years as before?*

Not at all! Those who were the spiritual descendants of the men mentioned made the mistake of thinking that they had taken them all the way back to the original, and thus have rested on their

oars. They have spent much of the last half century trying to defend what they already have and wrangling with each other over what it is. As a result they have ceased to be a movement and have become a monument. A movement is ever changing. A monument stays where it is. It is visited by many to celebrate the accomplishment of dead heroes instead of living giants.

6. *What has been the end of all previous reformation and restoration attempts?*

Every such attempt has invariably ended by producing another sect, generally more narrow, intolerant and uncharitable than those which have preceded it. As men concentrate on what they have discovered, they build a wall around it to protect it. All sectism is built upon fear — a fear of losing what has been gained. It is a strange phenomenon that when one learns something and leaves where he is to embrace it, it is being faithful to the Word, but when another learns something he has not discovered, and goes on to accept it, he is departing from the faith.

7. *Do you see any tendencies to indicate that the movement for restoration which was launched a century ago may suffer the same fate?*

Indeed, the most casual observer can detect such portents upon every side. The aim of Campbell and his fellows was to unite all true believers in Christ in one body. The descendants are themselves divided into some twenty-five factions, each one of which proclaims it is the only faithful body on earth today, and designates all the others as sects. The original movement was vibrant and living. It penetrated all kinds of defenses thrown up by various individuals. But it was fair and open. Campbell allowed anyone to write for the *Millennial Harbinger*. He encouraged a full exchange of views regardless of how much they differed from his own.

The closed-door policy of many of our papers today effectively put a halt to the exchange of new ideas. They became a clearing-house for the traditions of yesterday. Nothing would upset one of their editors like a new thought expressed. The result is that we have become parrots instead of “birds of passage.” We are setting hens and not soaring eagles.

8. *What real contributions to restoration were made by the Campbells?*

They contributed much by their discovery that the blessings of God were contingent upon His ordinances. Thus they recaptured from error the place, nature, purpose and design of baptism, as well as the relationship of the Lord’s Supper to the community of the saints. They also began a work of rescue for some of the terms used by the Holy Spirit which had been much abused in the sectarian jargon of the day. Indeed, in his *Synopsis of Reformation* Campbell gives this first place, as well he might. We can never be too grateful to these pioneers who blazed the trail across the untrammelled wilderness of sectism. They did a noble job and made all of us their debtors.

9. *Do you have any well defined ideas as to what realms need further examination to effectuate the restoration?*

Yes, I do. Of course, I hold that every generation of men is obligated to make a complete and thorough investigation of God’s entire system of revelation, so that the faith of each generation

will not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. It is too easy to become traditionalists, and most people become such for two reasons — they are by nature hero worshipers and they are mentally lazy. I grew up with a Bible in one hand and a sermon outline book in the other. It was only when I divested myself of the latter that I became free in Christ Jesus. What a difference it made.

As a stimulation to my personal study I have listed ten categories in which I think we are yet influenced greatly by the sectarian spirit, and where considerable research will be required before we approach the walls of Jerusalem. I doubt that many will be delivered from their mistaken views along these lines. There is too much verbal assault, and too much persecution to be expected. They are guarded by too many important men who either cannot understand what is being said or prefer evil to truth.

10. It would probably take too long to enumerate all ten of these, but I wonder if you might mention a few of them which you consider to be of greater importance.

They are all important, for all have to do with our approach to God, and nothing is unimportant in that area. But I will mention a few. (1) A candid study of the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit. We need to recapture the original distinctions between such terms as gospel and doctrine, preaching and teaching. The gospel is good news. It is news of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. It is not a compendium of laws, a moral code, or a volume of ethics. Jesus Christ is the gospel and the gospel is Jesus Christ. The gospel was fully proclaimed on Pentecost and not one word was ever added to the message which Peter there delivered. The gospel is for the world and not for the church. It is an evangel and you do not evangelize the saved.

We need to batter down unscriptural distinctions in such terms as minister and communion. Everything the saints do together is part of their communion. The Lord's Supper is just a part of it. We commune when we sing and pray together. We need to study diligently such words as fellowship and heresy, which are bandied about by individuals with "an axe to grind." I am doing extensive research on these last two now and hope to publish something relating to them soon.

(2) The means of induction into Christ. We have reduced this to a sort of five step, kitchen stepladder method, by which men have become convinced that they can pull themselves up into God's grace and place Him under obligation to save them. We have the whole thing worked out in a simple and easy method, a sort of five-finger exercise, which has been handed down to us and is sacred because of its longevity.

The idea of a personal covenant with the Lord, based upon conviction, conversion and consecration is almost foreign to our thinking. The concept of a covenant with God is wholly unknown to thousands among us. The congregations are filled with many who were converted to water baptism but were never converted to the Lord Jesus Christ. They have confused the physician with his prescription, the captain with his orders, and the sower with his seed. Immersion in water is essential. But we should be immersed not because we believe in baptism but because we believe in Jesus. We have but one Savior. It is not a rite, ritual or ordinance, but entrance into a divine person.

(3) The subject of worship and what constitutes it. There is a general and widespread ignorance on the subject at present and the idea of “five items of worship” is no more in the Bible than the expression itself. Of all the Greek words translated “worship” not one is ever applied to anything we do when we assemble together on the first day of the week. The term “act of worship” is not even found in the sacred scriptures. Whatever I do in adoration of God is an act of worship, whether washing dishes or mowing the lawn. “Whatever you do in word or deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving God the Father the glory through him.”

(4) The subject of the official name of the ecclesia of God. In this matter we are following the lead of the world of sectism about us, without due regard to God’s revelation. We are defending our traditional pattern simply because we have always done it that way. These are a few of the ten areas of scriptural thought on which I feel we must make some adjustment if we restore the ancient order. It will be a difficult task for us. Many will not go along, preferring to stay as they have always been without disturbing the status quo. They confuse walking in the old paths with wallowing in the old ruts. Such people will become part of the problem and not part of the answer.

11. *What do you consider the greatest hindrances to resumption of the restoration movement?*

There are a number of hindrances. One is prejudice. Someone has said, “Reasoning against a prejudice is like fighting against a shadow; it exhausts the reasoner, without visibly affecting the prejudice.” We are generally opposed to anything which cuts across our thinking, and we condemn it without investigation. It seems ridiculous that anything could possibly be right if we have not known it.

Then there is traditionalism. Most of us, like the Chinese are ancestor worshipers. We want to do things like they do them “down home” although they may be wrong “down home.” I suspect pride is our worst foe. Seneca said, “Tis not the belly’s hunger which costs so much, but its pride.” And it has been very costly to us. We have berated and ridiculed other religionists so long, it goes against the grain to have to admit that we have been wrong on some things.

One of the greatest hindrances is the divisive state of those who claim to be “The Church of Christ.” In some localities there are as many as five congregations, all claiming to be the one, holy, apostolic, and catholic Church of God, not one of which will even be civil to the other, many of the members living in such mortal fear of “the powers that be” they will not even speak to each other on the street. It is difficult for the remainder of the religious world to see how a family can pull the drawstring of unity with one hand while slashing at each other with a meat cleaver in the other hand.

12. *Do you think what is generally referred to as “The Church of Christ” today is co-extensive with the scriptural expression “the body of Christ”?*

Of course, I might ask which “Church of Christ”? But I think I know what you mean. The congregation of God spoken of in the new covenant scriptures is identical with the one body mentioned in the same scriptures. It is composed of all the children of God. Not one saved person on earth is outside of it. God adds to it every person who surrenders to the sovereignty of

His Son and enters into covenant relationship with Him on the basis of the terms laid down by heaven. Every person on this earth, motivated by faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, who has turned away from sin, and submitted to immersion of his body in water on the basis of that belief, is a member of God's family. He is my brother. I am not sure that when we use the expression "The Church of Christ" that we use it in that sense. It is possible that we use it as a designation for a small and exclusive segment of believers who agree with our position on various points of teaching. Thus, we would imply that thousands of immersed believers in the Christ were not added to the family of God. This is, of course, a sectarian usage of the term.

13. *Do you believe that some of God's children may be in sectarian bodies?*

There are many people who belong to sects and yet are not sectarian. When fleshly Israel started out of Babylon they did not all leave at once. A contingent went out under the leadership of Zerubbabel, later another went out with Ezra, and still later another under Nehemiah. Those who were in Babylon until the last were as much God's children as those who had already arrived in Jerusalem. They were just in Babylon for a longer period. Thus it is with spiritual Israel in "Mystery, Babylon the Great." They may not all go out of Babylon at once, but as they become aware of their state, learn that they are in a foreign place, and have the glory of the city of Jerusalem pictured to them, they are led to evacuate the city of exile and start the trek toward Beulah land.

14. *Does this mean that it is possible to be saved in sectarianism?*

Let us put it this way! No sectarian can be saved, regardless of where he is. Sectarianism is a personal attitude toward truth. It is the "party spirit" and is condemned just as adultery, fornication, murder, lying, theft and drunkenness. When a man becomes convinced that the party spirit is sinful, he ought to leave it, just as he abandons adultery or lying when he sees the guilt attached to them. You might as well ask if one can be saved if he continues in adultery as to ask if he can be saved while he continues in sectism. If one of God's children sees that he is in a party which separates, segregates and aggravates the remainder of God's children purely out of partisanship, he ought to get out of it and do so at once. Otherwise he will be lost because of his factious practice.

15. *Would this not imply that some might have to get out of "The Church of Christ" in some places?*

Certainly. It might be necessary to leave "The Church of Christ" in order to remain in the church of Christ. If one is a member of a group that is sectarian in its attitude and practices, he would either have to reform them in harmony with God's revelation, or leave them regardless of what name they wear. But he must do this in love. If he hates those whom he leaves, he will prove to be as sectarian as they. "Passions, intrigues, dissensions and factions" are called works of the flesh and it is said "that those who act this way will not inherit the kingdom of God."

16. *Do you not personally oppose theological seminaries and the one-man minister system as well as other things which some baptized believers endorse, and if so, does this not make you sectarian according to your definition?*

Yes, I oppose both of the things which you mention. I oppose the first because I believe it sets up a plurality of bodies where God has set up only one; and I oppose the second because it sets up one minister where the Lord has set up many. But I am not creating an “anti-college party” or an anti-ministerial party.” I have convictions, very deep ones, upon both of these matters. I recognize that I stand almost alone. I do not deny that those who differ with me on these things are my brethren. I go among them, work with them for the glory of God, talk with them, and truly love them. There are many who hate me, speak evil of me and misrepresent my position. They cannot understand how it is possible for someone with my convictions to labor with them. But I feel no rancor towards them. I am too busy working for the kingdom to indulge in hate. My brethren might be right!

17. Are there not some who believe you are allied with a sect because you use more than one container for the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper and worship with congregations which have classes for Bible Study?

This is true and we should not forget that there is not a single group on earth that is not branded as a sect by some other group. We should rejoice that we shall be judged by the Lord rather than by men, for then no person could be saved. Many earnest, conscientious persons believe that for the Lord's Supper to be acceptable, the fruit of the vine must be dispensed in one container. While I do not have that view, and think it is unduly and unnecessarily exclusive I do not disfellowship those who hold it. I am not a leader of a “multiple cups party.” Those who hold to the one container are my brethren, and I love them. We have the same spiritual father and mother. I think it is sinful to call them “one cuppers” and to divide the family of God into “cups groups” and “one-cup groups.”

Such language is the terminology of narrow sectism and reflects the party spirit. I am trying to purge myself of it, although it is difficult to do so, because we have always used it as a reflection on those who differ from us. But the same God who is over us all is rich unto all them that call upon Him. A realization that these are really my brethren, and the cultivation of sincere love for them, which rises above partisanship, helps me to eliminate hurtful and hateful phraseology. I trust that some day many of us will actually be able to work together as one in Christ, but I know that I cannot promote unity while defending partisanship.

18. How do you regard the Mission Messenger as relates to the thing you are striving to achieve?

I am firmly resolved that it will not become an “official mouthpiece” for any sect, clique, party, or faction. The paper is my own individual enterprise. It is my means of communicating my views to my brethren and friends throughout the world. It is just a loudspeaker tuned in on a world frequency. Nell helps me to mail it out and is my constant stay and strength. God bless her! I know that many papers are recognized as official organs of various factions. The editors can often make or break a man. I feel sorry for brethren who are subservient to such a party spirit for they are not free men in Christ Jesus. Their lives are miserable.

I have asked several brethren to share regularly in this medium of expression and have invited all to do so to the extent of limited space. But *Mission Messenger* is purely a personal, individual

undertaking, and nothing more! Occasionally pressures are applied upon me to eliminate someone from writing with whom some of his brethren disagree. There are many who are anxious to use such a medium to get their views and opinions before the people, but they want to deny other brethren the same privilege and they become disgruntled if I publish something with which they are out of harmony. But so long as I publish this paper it will be a free journal and not the organ of a sect or faction. I thank God that he delivered me not only from the faction with which I was once associated, but from the factional spirit. That spirit exists before the faction and the faction grows out of it.

19. *Do all of the regular contributors agree fully with your views?*

I have never asked them, but I am almost sure they do not. I am sure that I do not agree with any of them upon every matter. It is not necessary that they agree with me upon everything to get their material printed. I do not agree with everything they write for the paper, nor demand that they agree with everything I write. But I do defend their right and freedom to think, speak and act for themselves. If I disagree with something they write, and I think it is important enough, I'll attach a dissenting note; they also have a right to reply to anything I say, and so do any of our readers.

Emile Gavreau said about the public press: "Careers, reputations, friendships, life-long labors; the sanctity of homes; confidences in business; errors long atoned for; feuds long buried; the guarded secrets of the heart; innocent pleasures, loyalties — all the things that hitherto were inspected and honored in the society of men, this monster (the press) violated, ripped up, disorged, blasted, and threw, mangled and bleeding, to the scavenging rabble, that fed ravenously upon it, and clamored always for more."

The tragedy of it is that all of this can be affirmed of the religious papers of our day in their one-sided and lopsided presentations. I believe in the sacred God-given right of every person to study the scriptures for himself and the corollary that accompanies it, the right to form private judgments upon what is read. If this is done by someone who deeply loves the Lord I will regard him as my brother in the Lord, even though we may differ about the ideas he has formed. Jesus died for men and not their opinions. I refuse to destroy that for which He died for something for which He did not die.

20. *What are your personal primary aims for the future?*

There are two of them which I think to be of vital importance. I want to help in my weak way to restore the primitive pattern for the ecclesia of God, and also to lift up my feeble voice in behalf of the unity of all the believers. I hold that the sheep of God have been neglected and driven out to wander among the hills of sectism. It is my fond hope, that if my life is extended sufficiently, that I may help to summon them to the high mountain where salvation and safety await. I would like to put my shoulder to the wheel of the Restoration vehicle and push it out of the mud and mire of neglect and indifference where it has been stalled so long.

21. *How do you plan to accomplish these objectives?*

I plan to go wherever the Lord opens up a door for me. My constant daily prayer is that he will open up great doors and effectual unto me even though the adversaries be many. Thus far about the only adversaries I have encountered are among the brethren I know best. I have spoken several times in large Jewish synagogues. I have participated in two Schools for the Christian clergy conducted by Temple Israel, and have publicly asked questions and filed objections which were well received. I secured permission from Rabbi Jacobs to attend weekly meetings at the Hillel Foundation for Jewish students and have contributed my part. I was the only non-Jew in attendance at the School of Judaism in Saint Louis.

I have met with Roman Catholic classes and discussed with the priest in the presence of the students. The discussions became so intense that I was asked not to return. I deeply regret that as I believe that we were accomplishing a great deal of good. I loved those who attended, even the priest, and I do not believe they regarded me as an enemy. On several occasions I have met with members of the clergy of the Lutheran churches and have discussed the implications of our various positions. I have held lengthy talks with members of the Concordia Seminary and have been upon their grounds many times. I have repeatedly eaten with young seminarians at their luncheon in the refectory and talked with them about sprinkling as a substitute for baptism.

In none of these conferences has anything but a spirit of humility and kindness prevailed. No one became angry or heated, despite our great differences. I shall miss no opportunity to go where I can find a hearing. It is ridiculous to refuse to go to a place where there is no one who sees things as I do. That is the place where I want to go. If the apostles had refused to go to a place where there was no congregation, there would be none on earth today. They purposely chose the very places where there were none who agreed with them and so shall I. Fortunately, I have lost all fear of what men shall do to me, and my whole trust is in God.

The vision of many preachers is frightfully limited. They refuse to go to a place where there is no "faithful church" and yet there can be no "faithful church" until they go. On that basis, the greater part of humanity would be doomed to hell, unless they accidentally stumbled on to the truth and started a congregation. Then they could get a preacher to come and tell them what was wrong with them. I want to go where people do not see things as I do. I get uncomfortable around a congregation where everyone is lined up with me. I want to get into virgin fields, or fields where Satan has been having a field day. I do not like to build upon another man's foundation all of the time. I want to go beyond the present regions. If I wait until there is a congregation there I will never go, and I know that if I never go, there may never be a congregation.

22. *Are there any encouraging aspects to be observed at present?*

Yes, there are. I do not worry about such things, and the word "discouragement" is not in my spiritual vocabulary. The One whom I serve opened up the Red Sea for His people, and caused the walls of Jericho to fall down before them. He has not lost any of His power. He has the whole world in His hand. No power on earth can stand against Him. The political attitudes of

all those who seek to manipulate God's people will some day fail. All I need to do is to get my bearings and march forward in faith. He will open up the way for me.

It is my task to sow and plant. It is his responsibility to give the increase. His word will not return unto Him void. All I need to do is to fulfill my part. But there are some good omens. Many people are being shaken, jolted and scared into studying more than ever before. I have spoken several times in denominational meeting-houses of late and been well-received. The question period which always follows my addresses have elicited many pointed and excellent questions. One encouraging feature is the increasing interest among some of my good Jewish friends.

23. Have you always held your present views with reference to restoration?

No, I have not! I came into this fellowship from a Lutheran background. My people on the maternal side were Danes. At first, I labored under the misconception that because we had discovered some truths which had been long hidden that we had found them all. Thus there was a time in my life when no problem was too great for me. I had all of the answers. I accepted without question the orthodox sermon outlines which had been handed down from previous generations, but when I saw they misapplied many scriptural texts, and violated most of the laws of Biblical interpretation, I began to investigate for myself.

I became convinced that we were well on the road toward creation of another sect. I saw the pressure groups manipulated by editors and preacher cliques, and beheld how the bulk of God's sheep were often exploited for the fleece. I learned how little any of us really knew, and how much more there was to learn. Accordingly, I began to lift up my eyes and look upon the fields. I saw how white they were to the harvest. My love for truth grew and with it a burning desire to share truth with my brethren and the world of mankind. I have made many mistakes which are saddening to reflect upon. I have wasted much time. However, I trust in God to extend unto me His amazing grace, and to save me through His mercy and love. Without that prospect I am sure that I would be of all men most miserable, but with it, I am lifted up and walk on higher ground.

24. What do you feel is the first great need of the congregations which are restoration minded?

The first great need is to exhibit toleration for those who differ with them. Toleration is not the endorsement of anything that is wrong but the simple enduring of one who thinks it is right. By remaining together and receiving one another in love we shall grow toward each other instead of away from each other, and we shall find that the word of unity will help to produce unity of the word. If we separate or drive one another out we will then be reduced to the need for fighting one another from that time on. This will only hinder us in our real purpose.

25. Do you think the holding of public debates will hasten the real restoration?

No, they may actually hinder it. I doubt that they will achieve any substantial good, for the simple reason that in modern public debates, two factions each select a champion and throw them both into the arena in defense of partisan views. Debaters today are actually representatives of party positions. I know that theoretically their purpose is to examine the

evidence, sift it, and determine what is true, but practically it does not work out that way. Debates, as now conducted, do not lend themselves to calm, unbiased appraisal of the issues. There is the constant temptation to use any means at hand to gain personal victory. The lust for combat fires the brain and kindles the blood. I would not want to become a professional debater or a recognized Goliath for any company of Philistines.

It is true that I have engaged in some public debates but not often from choice, and it troubles me that I like debating. I may be forced to debate again rather than to see truth stigmatized, but my honest opinion is that in the long run, the cause may suffer in a community where such forensic struggles are waged. A much better approach would be that of the forum. With an unprejudiced chairman, two speakers would sit down at the same table on a public platform. Each in turn would be allowed 15 minutes to question his respondent, and the audience would be permitted to question either or both for an hour.

I am losing confidence in hit-and-run speakers who will not permit their positions to be examined in free and open questioning. Why should I spend two hours of my precious time listening to a man air his views and haranguing an audience, when I am not given opportunity to request clarification, or to examine those views? I thank you for these questions and even if you disagree with the answers I have given I still love you very deeply and cherish you.

Chapter 3

Who Wrote the Bible?

The book I hold before you in my hand is easily recognizable. It is the volume we call the Bible. I say we call it that because it nowhere refers to itself by that title. Indeed, we do not know who first called it the Bible. The name originated from the ancient seaport on the Mediterranean Sea which came to be known as Byblos. It lay about twenty miles north of the modern Beirut, and was originally called Gebal. It became the center of the maritime trade in ancient times. Sailing vessels from everywhere converged upon it to secure loads of cedar and copper.

Egyptian dealers brought papyrus to Byblos for export. It was made from strips of pith taken from reeds which grew along the Nile. These were pounded together and dried into sheets which were then used for writing. We get our word paper from papyrus. There were warehouses filled with this writing material in Byblos. The papyrus soon took on the name of the city where it was purchased wholesale. At first the word “biblos” was applied to all little books of papyrus, but gradually it came to refer to the volume called “the holy Bible” to distinguish it from other books.

The Bible I am holding looks a great deal like other books. It is bound in blue cloth over boards. The type was set by a computer. The paper was made from pulp to which trees of the forest were reduced. It was printed on a press, gathered, stitched, glued, and bound like other books in your library. It is obvious that men had much to do with its production. But where did it come from? How did we receive it?

It will not be too much to concede that its origin was either natural or supernatural. If it was natural it originated with men. If it originated with men they must have been either good men or bad men. It would be incredible that bad men would have written it. It commends only what is good and condemns everything that is evil. It ends with all bad men in a lake of fire, suffering the pangs of eternal torment.

But it is the nature of bad men to excuse their evil. They constantly seek to justify it. They do not want to be held accountable. They try to make it appear that they are no worse in the final analysis than anyone else. They want to escape punishment. I doubt that wicked men would write, “There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek” (Romans 2:9). Certainly they would not write, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

While evil men would not have written it good men could not have done so. The Bible claims to be a revelation from God. If it is the product of men, that is a falsehood. If it is a sham and pretence, those who wrote it could not have been good, for good men would not have palmed off such a cruel hoax on the world. The Bible is unique. It could not have been an invention of unlearned men. If it had been, men today with better education, equipment and knowledge should be able to produce a better Bible.

William Jennings Bryan, the “silver-tongued orator of the Platte,” was called upon to deliver an address in Chicago, May 4, 1911, in celebration of the 300th anniversary of the King James translation of the Bible. In the course of his remarks he said: “Let the atheists and materialists produce a better Bible than ours if they can. Let them collect the best of their school to be found among the graduates of universities — as many as they please from every land. Let the members of this selected group travel where they will, consult such libraries as they please and employ every modern means of swift communication. Let them glean in the fields of geology, botany, astronomy, biology and zoology, and then roam at will wherever science has opened up a way; let them take advantage of all the progress in art and in literature, in oratory and in history — let them use to the full every instrumentality that is employed in modern civilization; and when they have exhausted every source, let them embody the results of their best intelligence in a book and offer it to the world as a substitute for this Bible of ours. Will they try? If not, what excuse will they give? Has man fallen from his high estate, so that we cannot rightfully expect as much of him now as nineteen centuries ago? Or does the Bible come to us from a source that is higher than man — which?”

Perhaps it would be wise to allow the Bible to testify in its own behalf. What claim does it make for its origin? Do those who penned it claim to have originated it? The answer is that they uniformly claim for it a divine origin. There are about forty-two writers. They wrote over a period of sixteen hundred years. The first was Moses. The last was John. Every chapter in Exodus, the second book of Moses from six to fourteen begins with the expression, “The Lord said to Moses.” In some of these chapters almost every paragraph thus begins. Now the Lord either spoke to Moses or Moses falsified. Yet history bears out that what God had predicted and promised came true.

John was an aged man when he wrote the Revelation letter. He had been banished to the isle of Patmos “on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.” He declared that he heard behind him a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet. He turned to see whose voice it was and saw a divine personage who identified Himself as the Living One who said, “I died and behold I am alive forevermore.” He communicated to John and commissioned him to write what he saw in a book and send it to the seven churches in Asia. What we have is that book.

In the interval of sixteen centuries between these two all of those who wrote said they did so at the bidding of God. Isaiah declared he heard the voice of the Lord (6:8). Jeremiah said the word of the Lord came to him (1:4). Ezekiel said the word of the Lord came to him and the hand of the Lord was upon him (1:3). Peter writes, “First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:20, 21).

There is something to be understood before one approaches the scriptures. It is foundational. It is basic. About it there should be no doubt. No scripture of prophecy is a matter of one’s own interpretation. He is not speaking of our application of our mental powers in an attempt to fathom what the prophet meant. He is dealing with the origin of the message. The prophets did not see events and then seek to interpret them. They were not forecasters of the future, basing their predictions upon what they saw.

Prophecy does not come from human impulse. No prophecy of scripture ever came that way. Isaiah did not see the conditions around him and hazard a judgment about the results. The prophets were motivated by the Spirit. They spoke from God. Isaiah began by crying out, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken" (1:2).

Paul said about his gospel, "For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:12). He said, "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you" (1 Corinthians 11:23). God chose to make known His will to men through men. When one whom God chose and qualified as an ambassador makes known the word of God there is a responsibility upon the part of the hearer. So Paul said "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

What it really is! The word of God. But we have a check-point. It is at work in you believers. Now if the believers demonstrate a life-style which differs from those about them and from their previous conduct, it can be attributed to the word of God as a motivating force. Jesus declared "Ye shall know them by their fruits." He asked some pertinent questions. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" Of course they do not. Grapes are gathered from grapevines. Figs are produced on fig trees.

Jesus continues, "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Wherever the Bible has been discovered it has worked reform. It has overthrown superstition. It has elevated mankind. Let us give you an example from the Book itself.

Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign over Judah. He was the son of Amon and grandson of Manasseh. Both of these were very wicked. It was said of the first that he filled Jerusalem from one end to the other with innocent blood. But they did not have Jeremiah the prophet, or Huldah the prophetess, or Hilkiah the high priest to instruct them as did Josiah. It was in the eighteenth year of his reign that Josiah commissioned Hilkiah to begin repair of the temple. Hilkiah found the book of the law which Moses had written many years before and sent it to the king.

When the king heard the words of the book he tore his clothing. He summoned all the people both small and great to the temple. Standing by a royal column he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant. He "made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant."

The result of this renewal was a great reformation. Idols were broken down. Altars were smashed to bits. Priests who had been appointed to conduct the worship for the sun, the moon, the planets and the stars were deposed. Cult prostitutes and homosexuals were driven out. Horses dedicated to the worship of the sun were removed with their chariots. The Passover was

celebrated again. It is written that “No Passover like this one had ever been celebrated by any of the kings of Israel or of Judah, since the time when judges ruled the nation.”

It was the restoration of scripture which worked the mighty reforms of Luther, the Augustinian monk. In the lonely castle at Wartburg where he had been a virtual prisoner for his own safety he meditated upon these things. One historian records that “The doctrine of the Church, the scholastic theology, knew nothing of the consolations that proceed from faith, but the Scriptures proclaim them with great force, and there it was that he had found them. Faith in the Word of God had made him free. By it he felt emancipated from the dogmatic authority of the Church from its hierarchy and traditions, from the opinions of the schoolmen, the power of prejudice, and from every human ordinance. Those strong and numerous bonds which for centuries had enchained and stifled Christendom were snapped asunder, broken in pieces, and scattered round him; and he nobly raised his head freed from all authority except that of the Word.”

A papal decree had forbidden giving the Bible to the German people in the vulgar tongue. But Luther had said “Would that this one book were in every language, in every hand, before the eyes, and in the ears and hearts of every man.” He saw that the translation of the scriptures was the one essential to delivering the people from what he termed “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church.” Scripture without any comment is the sun from which all teachers receive their light.” All of the tremendous gains which have been made, and which have swept like a tidal wave over the heart have come as a result of the translation of the Word of God in the vernacular of the people.

J. R. Green, who wrote a “Short History of the English People” which made a book of 872 pages, says, “No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth from the meeting of the Long Parliament. England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible. It was as yet the one English book which was familiar to all Englishmen; it was read at churches and at home; and everywhere its words, as they fell on ears which custom had not deadened, kindled a startling enthusiasm.”

Green continues, “But far greater than its effect on literature or social phrase was the effect of the Bible on the character of the people at large. Elizabeth might silence or tune the pulpits; but it was impossible for her to silence or tune the great preachers of justice, and mercy, and truth, who spoke from the book which she had again opened for her people. The whole moral effect which is produced now-a-days by the religious newspaper, the tract, the essay, the lecture, the missionary report, the sermon, was then produced by the Bible alone, and its effect in this way, however dispassionately we examine it, was amazing.

It seems to me that the Bible had to be given because of our deep need for it. Men required light and the sun was given for it. Would God withhold from man the moral light which was required to illumine his steps? It is true that Nature speaks of God. The heavens declare his glory. The firmament demonstrates his handwork. By familiarizing ourselves with her marvelous works and interlacing power we can learn a great deal. But there is still required a special revelation to inform men of the nature and origin of sin and the means of his salvation from it.

He who reads the book of Nature reads from a page that is blackened with men's sins. "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn." All of creation awaits with eager longing for God to reveal his sons. "For creation was condemned to lose its purpose, not of its own will, but because God willed it to be so" (Romans 8:19, 20). The fall-out from man's transgression has created a smog over the universe so that we see through a glass darkly. Genius is the interpreter of Nature but not the prophet of God. It may tell us a great deal of what is below the sun but can tell us nothing that is above it.

Reason is the placing of two known facts together in such a manner as to arrive at a third and new fact called a conclusion. But if one of the facts is supposition the conclusion will not be correct. It is possible to draw the wrong conclusion even if the facts are correct. Human reason is faulty. It has often betrayed its possessor. It is limited. There are things we cry out to know which we cannot discern. Conscience has its recurring moods of hesitation and bewilderment. The religious instinct may betray us into bowing before an idol, trembling in the presence of an eclipse, or shuddering at the contemplation of death. Much can be learned by Science in the study of man, but Science is limited to data which is at hand, to man as he is. It cannot probe beyond his beginning. It is forced into guesswork by his origin educated though that guesswork may be.

The inutility of man's power to think without enlightenment from God can be seen in the gropings of the most profound thinkers of ancient paganism. The finest truths uttered by them were splendid guesses rather than assured certainties. They were celebrated as much for what they did not reveal as for what they disclosed. Socrates advised his pupil Alcibiades to forego his sacrifice at the temple until a teacher from heaven could be sent. He said, "We must wait patiently until someone, either a god or an inspired man, teach us our moral and religious duties."

Plato, when addressing the Athenians, says that, "unless God, in pity, send them an instructor, they must remain in a state of ignorance forever." Xenophanes, founder of the Eclectic sect, closes his work on Nature with the sentence, "No man has discovered any certainty, nor will discover it, concerning the Gods, and what I say of the universe. For if he utters what is even most perfect, still he does not know it, but conjecture hangs over all." So God had to speak or man was doomed to remain in a state of ignorance forever. Pope has said, "Either God finally has spoken or there is no God, and man is the incomprehensible creation of chance, and the sport of the chance that has created him."

Those who deny the Bible as an authoritative statement of moral truth, generally prefer to live in a culture which has been shaped by it. Atheism has built no hospitals. One of us could hardly assess the effect of the book upon the lives of all of us. Most of us could say with John Wesley, "I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit, coming from God, and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf; a few moments hence I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing — the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one book. Here then, I am, far from

the busy ways of men. I sit down alone. Only God is here. In his presence, I open, I read his book for this end — to find the way to heaven.”

If the thesis be true that there is a need for the Bible, and the Bible was given to meet that need, we should be able to show that once it was given there was a noticeable change in man. That such was the case can be easily demonstrated.

Pascal wrote, “And it happened that in the time of the fourth monarchy, before the destruction of the second temple, the pagans in multitudes adored the true God and led an angelic life; women consecrated to religion their virginity, and their lives; men voluntarily renounced all the pleasures of sense. That, which Plato was unable to persuade a few of the wisest and best informed of men of his time to do, a Secret Power, by means of a few words, now effected in thousands of uneducated men.”

But in order to enforce our reasoning let us consider the state of the world when it was entered by the Christian faith. We shall not make reference to the sensuality and passion which were a way of life among the more uncivilized regions of the earth. Instead, let us look at the localities where the light and moral vigor of the heathen world were concentrated. Let us survey Rome and Greece, where philosophy held her court, and literature and the arts were cultivated with the utmost devotion and success.

Paul, who lived at this time, and who sought to take the teaching of Christ into the very territory in which we are interested wrote that, “Claiming to be wise they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles.” He further declares that they were “filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.”

Deities were multiplied until there was a god for everything and anything answered for a god. There was a god for the trees of the forest and each tree in the forest could become a god. Athens which became a center for learning was full of statues dedicated to different deities. Those of various countries were so crowded together that it was said, “In Athens it is easier to find a god than a man.”

Rome exceeded Athens in the number of her gods only, by having, as mistress of the world, all nations to collect from and all forms of paganism to countenance. In *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* Gibbon says, “the deities of a thousand groves and a thousand streams possessed in peace their local and respective influence; nor could the Roman who depreciated the wrath of the Tiber, deride the Egyptian who presented his offering to the beneficent genius of the Nile. Every virtue and every vice acquired its divine representative, every art and profession its patron, whose attributes, in the most distant ages and countries, were uniformly derived from the character of their particular votaries. It was the custom of the Roman to tempt the protectors of besieged cities by the promise of more distinguished honor than they possessed in their native country. Rome gradually became the common temple of her subjects, and the freedom of the city was bestowed on the gods of mankind.”

At the very time when Peter was announcing to the Gentile Cornelius the only remedy for sin and evil, the gospel of Christ, Seneca, the Stoic professor, was writing, “The world is filled with crimes and vices. Things are too far gone to be healed by any regimen. Men are battling for the palm of reprobate manners. Each day lust waxes and shame wanes. Trampling down all that is good and sacred, lust hies it whithersoever it will. Vices no longer shun the light. So barefaced wickedness become, and so wildly does it blaze up in all bosoms, that innocence is not to say rare, but is nowhere to be found.”

Contrast this with the letter of Clement to Diognetus. After eloquently demonstrating the vanity of the heathen idols, and the superstitious practices of the Jews, he continues: “The Christians are not separated from other men by earthly abode, by language or by custom. Nowhere do they dwell in cities by themselves. They do not use a different speech, or affect a life of singularity. They dwell in the cities of the Greeks and barbarians, each as his lot has been cast; and while they conform to the usages of the country in respect to dress, food and other things pertaining to the outward life, they yet show a peculiarity of conduct wondrous to all. They inhabit their native country, but as strangers. They take their share of all burdens as citizens, and yet endure all kinds of wrong as though they were foreigners. Every strange soil is their fatherland, and everyone’s fatherland is a strange soil unto them. They are in the flesh but they live not after the flesh. They tarry on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the laws, and they conquer the laws by their lives. They love all, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and yet are condemned; they are killed, and made alive. They are poor, and make many rich. They are blasphemed, and yet justified. They are reviled, and they bless ... What the soul is to the body, that Christians are in the world. The soul dwells in the body and yet is not of the body; and Christians dwell in the world but are not of the world.”

Chapter 4

Buried Treasure

When our Lord was upon earth he spent his entire life in an occupied country. Roman soldiers were garrisoned throughout Palestine, and were not always considerate of the feelings of the Jewish populace. Frequently unprovoked attacks were made upon their homes and anything of value was confiscated. Many of the country and village inhabitants had little use for the officials in Jerusalem, because they regarded them as collaborationists with the occupational forces.

For this reason many people hid their valuables in the earth, or in caves. Often the location was forgotten, or the individual who deposited the money, or other securities, was killed. It was not an uncommon thing for one to stumble rather casually upon a treasure trove, and this gave rise to one of the parables of Jesus. Our Lord told two stories of discovery which bear some relationship to each other.

The first is that of a gem merchant, possessed with an obsession that he must locate a flawless pearl. He traveled over the face of the known globe and finally found that for which he had diligently sought. The second is the story of a man who was walking through a field and inadvertently came upon a treasure that had been hidden. I am convinced that the point of these parables is the different way in which truth is discovered. Some men find it only after long and arduous sacrifice and effort. Others, almost without effort, seem to be kicking about, and there it is.

My purpose today is not to emphasize the methods involved in locating truth, but to draw attention to the fact that there is a hidden treasure available, and there is no greater adventure possible for the human mind, than to seek for it. I have long held that the Creator of the universe and the Author of truth, wrote two books called Nature and Revelation. Both of these have one feature in common — they release their knowledge constantly and on an ascending scale. Therefore, no generation will ever exhaust the possibilities of either.

I do not believe there is a single atom that has come into existence since God rested on the seventh day, but we are discovering new facts about atomic energy every day. Thousands of gleaming laboratories all over the earth furnish testing grounds for every conceivable kind of research into natural phenomena, and yet it is the universal opinion of scientists that we have just scratched the surface. I am persuaded that when our Lord descends from heaven with a shout, when the heavens shall be rolled back as a scroll, and the elements melt with fervent heat, there will still be unsolved problems in the physical universe.

In the same way I hold that there has not been a single truth added to the revelation of God since the lonely seer upon crescent-shaped Patmos, penned the words, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all,” wiped the ink from the quill, and rolled up the scroll. Since that day tens of thousands of books have been written on Biblical themes, and never a day goes by that the whirring presses do not turn out hundreds more in all of the recorded languages of mankind. Yet there are depths not yet probed, and veins not yet mined.

It is one of the tragedies of the ages that each generation thinks it has exhausted the possibilities of Biblical research and, instead of seeking for regions beyond, concludes there are none, and girds itself to defend the status quo. Almost every great breakthrough has come because of efforts of intrepid and courageous individuals, and almost every one has been violently opposed by the church. The fact is that history will show that we owe all of our spiritual progress to men who were branded as “heretics” and hounded out by their contemporaries.

Almost all of us are at least possessed of a passing knowledge of the troubles incurred by Galileo. When I read of his remarkable discoveries in the fields of mathematics, science, and medicine, and realize how each bit of modern research serves but to confirm what he taught, I am amazed that he could encompass within one mind all that he learned. But the institutional church of his day had declared the earth to be fixed, and the center around which the rest of the universe revolved, and when Galileo adopted the Copernican theory he was summoned to appear before Pope Paul V and admonished to relinquish immediately the heretical proposition that this is a solar system, and that the sun is the center.

Our position with reference to this is that it is exactly what you might expect from Catholics, and that popes are handy about plastering the label of heretic upon anyone who does not agree with them. But I suggest that we continue to assail Rome and not examine our own history too closely. We have had our share of Galileos also. It is abundantly evident that every religious movement eventually gravitates into the control of the priestly class, and when it does, the prophets are killed. Priests are interested in maintaining things as they are. Prophets are concerned with having things as God wants them. The first tells it like it is, the other like it ought to be. One wants to continue turning the cider mill; the other often upsets the apple-cart!

There has never been a reformation that was not sparked by heretics. The heroes of today are the heretics of yesterday. A heretic is one who has not yet waited long enough. One generation stones the prophets to death, the next gathers the stones and piles them up as a monument so their memory will live. In view of the unpopularity of original thinking, and the dangers incurred in Biblical exploration, precious little of it has been done in the realm of the Spirit. Thus, while we have made great strides in bringing the physical universe closer together we have accomplished relatively little toward uniting the whole family of God.

To some extent we have discouraged original thought and held a threat over the heads of those who engaged in it. This always results in three things. First, it produces sterility. Inbred thinking is like inbred social structure. It perpetuates and proliferates weaknesses until eventually virility disappears. In the spiritual realm it produces a generation of parrots who proclaim over and over the same inherited sermon outlines whether relevant to cultural needs or not. And anything which produces parrots is for the birds.

Second, it creates an atmosphere of unhealthful fright. Men whose inner beings throb and pulsate with the urge to speak forth the whole truth are held back, perhaps because of one elder, or an organized clique or claue, whose theme song is “I Will Not Be, I Will Not Be Moved!” It is hard to chase the devil while looking over your left shoulder to keep an eye cocked on your brethren. Most preachers are never allowed to get up steam of their own. They are kept hot

under the collar from the warm breath of a posse of vigilantes blowing down the necks of their Drip-Dry Arrow shirts.

Third, it stifles the spirit of adventure. The word of God is loaded with hidden treasure never yet brought to light. But much of it will not be found by those who get a vicarious thrill from reading “The Gold Bug” by Poe, or “Treasure Island” by Stevenson. All of us have the longing for adventure when we are young. I used to lie in the hay-loft on a rainy day trying to decide whether I would be a lion-tamer, an Arctic explorer, or something useful, like a pirate. But when I really met Jesus Christ the problem was settled, and the greatest adventure possible began.

I am aware of all of the implications of the statement of Jesus about accepting his teachings as a little child, but I personally wonder if he may not have included in it the wide-eyed wonder with which a tow-headed kid accepts the challenge of that which lifts him in imagination out of his everyday world. As some of you know, a few years ago I did a series of articles entitled, “Adventures in Religion,” and I confess that it was an exhilarating experience in my life.

It seems too bad that the church has to get old, and grow senile, and its members become sedentary, and want to doze in the rocking-chairs on God’s front porch, and growl at the “Jesus Folk” who can walk barefoot on the rough sidewalk or pebbly driveway. The church was never intended to be a retirement center or a vacation retreat. It should be a research center, a truth laboratory, the headquarters of a divine exploration society. Certainly it should not have the atmosphere of a morgue.

Of course there are no truths new to God, but there are truths which can be new to us. They are old when measured by time, but new when judged by our understanding. And some which were once known, have since been lost, and need to be rescued from the ocean floor and brought to the surface again. We are indebted to every person in the world who shares a truth with us, but we must ourselves become explorers of God’s rich domain and bring to light those concepts which will brighten the world.

The great Pennsylvania oil deposits were discovered by an astute observer. A farmer noticed that his cows would not drink from the waters of a creek which flowed through his pasture. He found an oily scum on the surface of the water. He decided to sell the place as soon as he could find a buyer, and he did so. The new owner also found the scum, but he had it analyzed and found it to be oil of a high quality seeping up from a subterranean depth. The original developer continued to pump until his wells began to slack off a bit. Then he sold out, congratulating himself upon his cleverness. But the next investors drilled deeper and discovered a pool which made the first one seem like a puddle.

Those who think they have already discovered all there is to find are always upset when I talk like this. They write me blistering letters and accuse me of encouraging people to “go beyond” the doctrine of Christ. They ask me to name one thing in God’s plan they have not restored. Most of the time I just write “Humility” on the bottom of their letters and mail them back. But the trouble with such brethren is that they suffer from delusions of grandeur and fantasies of infallibility. No one will go beyond the doctrine of Christ as long as he delves deeper into it.

His tunnel may bring him up outside of our party walls, but he will not be the first person to escape from prison unexpectedly.

I am quite convinced that there are depths we have not yet explored, and when we get more fully into them we will find ourselves increasing in appreciation for God's grace. For example, a few years ago, while I was in Scotland, I became interested in studying the relationship of the *synagogue* and *ekklesia*, or synagogue and church, as we would say. When I returned to the United States I haunted the libraries of great seminaries, reading assiduously and following every new lead as far as I could go.

Repeatedly I found reference to Vitringa, the Dutch scholar of many years ago. I wrote for information to the librarian at Yale, who informed me they had an ancient copy of his work, but it was in Latin. He doubted that it had ever been translated into English since theological studies several centuries ago were all conducted in Latin. But, from the librarian at Princeton, I learned that an English translation had been made by a Gilbert Fellowes. I put four book-finders from the "Antiquarian Book Society" in Great Britain on the trail. One of them wrote that there was a copy in the shelves of the library of the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. I arranged an inter-library loan and was able to have this old leather-bound volume for thirty days inspection and study.

The result of my research changed many of my concepts about the *ekklesia* of God. I could see why James would write about a gathering of the saints and say, "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, etc." (James 2:1, 2). I received a wholly different impression about the perennial argument over the name the church should wear. The nature and structure of the primitive community of the saints was suddenly clearer in my mind. I came to understand why the destruction of Jerusalem, by Titus, in A. D. 70, was essential to the preservation and purity of the Good News.

Of the greatest importance was the insight and incentive that I received for work with the Jews of our day, and the many visits I made to their modern temples and synagogues stemmed from the almost accidental resolution made one day in Scotland to study the relationship of two institutions existing side by side, but sometimes in direct conjunction in the first century. And while I never have developed the theme in class or in print, my book *The Royal Priesthood* is a by-product. A great deal of the research for it was done in the library of Temple Israel.

I must not bore you with this type of thing but I should like to mention that, among other things, I was forced to change my mind about the Pharisees. When I came to understand their purpose and aim I knew why Jesus told the multitudes, "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do." I also knew what he meant when he said, "But do not ye after their works: for they say and do not." My respect for the Pharisees was increased by a knowledge of their goal, and this was good, because, while I am quite convinced that we have failed thus far in restoring the first-century church, I do think we have succeeded beyond our dreams in restoring the first-century Pharisees.

There are hidden treasures in many of the words which the Spirit employed. We tend, because of familiarity with them, to run over them, as one would drive a car over gold-bearing rock. Occasionally there is a glint in the sunlight, but we are too busy to stop and investigate. Fortunately, we have better tools with which to labor in our generation. The spades of the archaeologists have uncovered all sorts of meaningful records which are flashlights to illuminate words and passages in the divine record. Each new find corroborates the authenticity and validity of God's revelation. In doing so, it provides us with additional information as a foundation for study.

I think, for instance, that we have not exhausted the possibilities involved in such expressions as "the glory of God." We ought to be deeply concerned about it, because we hope to share in it. I find myself being drawn more and more into a study of "the glory." This is because of my deep interest in the prayer of Jesus for oneness of the believers, as a condition of universal acceptance of the supreme fact of the ages. Many of our brethren who can quote John 17:20, 21, have never stopped to underline the words "glorify," and "glory," in the chapter in which these verses occur.

But the prayer of Jesus is not only for a sharing of oneness in the faith, but of sharing in the glory of God. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (verse 5). "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee" (verses 20, 21).

What connection is there between the glory of God and oneness in Christ? There must be some relationship because Jesus goes right on to say, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." Does this teach that our oneness is a given unity, and that it is not related to sharing intellectual concepts, ideas, opinions, and doctrinal interpretations? If the glory which God bestowed upon Jesus, is in turn bestowed upon his disciples that they might be one, what is this glory, and how does it produce this oneness?

Our Lord continues in these words: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." To be one as God and Christ are one is made contingent upon receiving the glory. The glory existed before the world was made. It was shared with Jesus and now he shares it with the new creation, and he does so that they may be one as he and the Father are one. The divine unity is a sharing of glory, and to possess this unity we must possess this glory.

This means that the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the saints. "I in them, and thou in me." By sharing the divine glory we become one, not only with one another, but with God and the Living Word. "That they may be made perfect in one." And when this marvelous, transcendent relationship exists two things will result. The world will know that God has sent Jesus, that is, that heaven invaded the earth. And it will know that God loves all of his sons as he loved his only begotten Son.

Now I must confess that I have never yet seen an exhaustive treatise on the nature of the glory of God. There are some excellent word studies, and many precious gems have been mined, but I suspect that there is a great deal more to be discovered. Since Paul declares that one of the

things belonging to his kinsmen in the flesh, the Israelites, was *the glory* (Romans 9:4), perhaps we must await the conversion and commitment of some of these to the Messiah, in order to increase our fund of knowledge.

Not long ago I was thinking about this aspect of it, when I discovered that the Hebrew root word for glory is one which literally means “weight,” that which is heavy. Immediately I recalled the words of Paul, given in comfort to the harassed and tormented in this life. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Since that time I have not been able to eliminate either the thought or phrase from my mind. Glory is not an evanescent, fleeting quality. It is not as light as a feather but as solid as faith in the eternal values.

But this is enough about one word and the great unexplored vistas which lie ahead to challenge us. We have not yet scaled all of the snow-capped peaks of revelation. We must enlist mountain-climbers who will toil upward, risking prestige and reputation with the party, to survey distant ranges. There must be “spelunkers” in the church, brethren who cannot rest easy until they have explored the deepest recesses of the cavern of truth. And when they have gone more deeply into God’s word they may learn that we should have been emphasizing “the unity of glory” rather than thinking so much of “the glory of unity.” For there is no glory in simply being united. The power is present when we are united in and for the glory of the Lord.

The blessing of recovering hidden treasure from the word of God lies in the fact that it helps to consecrate life and sanctify death. And frequently a word or phrase which seems inconsequential will prove to be of inestimable value. A deep-sea diver who specializes in the exploration of wrecks on the ocean floor, recently told how he brought up a small encrusted object which, when carefully pried apart consisted of a handful of antique Spanish silver coins. I felt almost as much pleasure as he did when I discovered what lay beneath the surface of the little word “depart,” in the statement of Paul: “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which for me is far better.”

The Greeks used the word for “loosing the hawser” of a ship moored to the dock, and allowing the vessel to drift out to the unknown sea. Nothing is more majestic to me than the sight of a huge liner slowly backing out into the harbor in preparation for a voyage to far-away lands beyond the horizon. In life I am bound to the dock. I am not free. Though I may strain at the ropes I am still held captive. But death is the harbor-master who lifts the ropes and casts them off and frees me to sail into the sunset. Tennyson caught the picture in “Crossing the Bar,” when he wrote, “And may there be no moaning of the bar, when I put out to sea.”

But the Greeks used the word in another sense. It was their term for “striking a tent,” that is, taking down a tent and rolling it up, at the end of a campaign. When a weary battle was over, and the sound of fighting had died away, the order was given to take down the tents, and prepare to go home. That is the way Paul regarded death. He had fought a good fight, and he was now ready to move out of the tent in which he had been living under great hardship. The earthly tabernacle was to be folded up and deposited in the container made for it, while the soldier, mustered out, stacked his arms and prepared for the journey back home. When the Christian dies, he does not leave home, he goes home!

There was also a third way in which the word was used. It was employed to describe the removal of a load from the back of a pack animal at the close of day. Picture, if you can, a long train of camels or donkeys, each carrying a heavy burden, plodding along through the heat of the day. The animals grow ever more footsore and weary. Then as the sun turns the western sky to red and gold, and the cool breeze of the dusk fans the desert, a halt is called, and the loads are lifted and thrown to the ground. The welcome rest has come at last.

Death is the lifting of the load. No more sorrow, pain and grief can cause heaviness. There shall be no more pain, or sorrow, or weeping. All of this is caught up in the word “depart” as used by Paul, and it makes death more tolerable, more welcome and friendly. And there are hundreds of words such as this, flecked with the precious ore which, once released will brighten our lives, kindle our hope afresh and give meaning to the frail existence which is ours in this world.

It is for this reason that I trust that none of you will be content to simply camp upon the slopes to which our fathers have attained. There are higher mountains yet ahead, and more noble peaks to be ascended. Do not be content with a mere holding action. We were not called to hold the fort but to storm it. Our task is to climb walls and not build them. If you make of yourselves divine researchers in the fields of God, you may yet recover for us some glowing bloom of truth, and there will be one less flower “born to blush unseen and waste its fragrance on the desert air.”

We must use our Bible classes as launching pads to put us into orbit, and not allow them to become simply feeding stations where we come to fill ourselves on the food which others have processed, and grow lazy and torpid because of the ease of picking up that which others have scattered. The mind must be exercised if it is to become strong, and this means that it must be taught the art of meditation, a word which, in the Hebrew, means “chewing the cud.”

Just as a cow regurgitates the food she has collected in her first stomach and chews it over and over to derive every particle of nourishment from it, so we must recall the things which we have studied to mull them over in a serious fashion and extract from them every bit of precious meaning. The sheep of God, like all other sheep, were intended to be ruminants, and only as we ruminate upon truth can we survive.

Chapter 5

Preaching Under Difficulty

I think that, among all of the preachers of the gospel mentioned in the Bible, Timothy remains one of my favorites. This probably results from my knowledge of the circumstances which combined to make it difficult for him to achieve his goal. It has been said that you can prove by the law of aerodynamics that a bumblebee cannot fly. The size of his body, coupled with the shortness and frailty of his wings makes it impossible for him to lift his body into the air. Fortunately, the bumblebee has not studied science, and does not know what he cannot do, so he goes on and does it anyway. It must have been a little that way with Timothy and preaching.

If he had been attending the Sunrise School of Preaching in Lystra, he would undoubtedly have been voted the student least likely to succeed. Just about everything was against him. And if you are discouraged by some of your little hang-ups and setbacks, it might serve a good purpose for you to review a few of his handicaps.

1. Timothy was the offspring of a racially-mixed marriage. His mother was a Jewess, but his father was a Greek. We do not know what possessed Eunice to fall in love with a man of another, and a despised race. She was Orthodox, and she knew what the social penalty was for one who was married to a Gentile. I wonder what transpired at home when she informed her mother of her intention. In any event she went ahead with her plans, and we hope that when little Timothy arrived on the scene, all was forgiven.

But I would also like to know what happened when the baby approached the eighth day of his life. Eunice had been reared in the unfeigned faith of the Law. She realized that without circumcision her baby would not be recognized as one of the covenant people. Perhaps his father thought that this rite was silly and unnecessary, and he may have actually forbidden it. In any event, we know that the little lad was not circumcised.

2. So Timothy was the scion of a home which was divided over religion. And I can personally testify of the impact of such schism upon the mind of a tender child. When I first remember the home into which I was born, I recall that my father was an agnostic and my mother a devout Lutheran. Hers was a family tradition running back for several generations in Denmark. And although I was sprinkled and christened before I was a month old by the Reverend Mr. Peterson, I was still a pawn for family strife after I became old enough to realize it.

It is a tribute to the grace of God that our family eventually became united in Christ. We are not certain that the father of Timothy ever became a believer. There is a reasonable presumption that he did not. Was he a patron of one of the philosophic cults, or a worshiper of false deities? We do not know. We are certain of one thing, that an unpretended faith dwelt in the grandmother as well as the mother of Timothy.

3. Timothy was reared in a pagan environment. He was far removed from the center of Jewish influence, the temple, the priesthood, and the daily liturgy. The children with whom he played

and attended school were from heathen homes. He was subjected to all of the superstitions with which the area was rife, and it was one of the worst in Asia Minor.

4. Timothy was subjected to prejudice, probably from both Jews and Greeks. Circumcision was an explosive issue, filled with opportunities for demonstration of open hostility, and this undoubtedly created a traumatic situation for a growing lad. Even when he was grown and had been converted to Christ, it was necessary for Paul to circumcise him because of the Jews who resided in that region. He would have been barred from synagogues and homes alike if this surgery had not been performed, and even then was no doubt looked at askance because it was not done on the prescribed day.

5. Timothy appears to have been emotional in his own personality. Paul wrote him that he prayed for him both night and day, and eagerly longed to see him. He stated that one reason he was so anxious to visit him was because he knew of the weeping in which Timothy engaged during their separation. Certainly this was a demonstration of tender concern, but it suggests to us that the young man found it difficult to be “a loner,” and was deeply affected when absent from the man he respected so highly.

6. He was also weak and sick a good deal of the time. Although one needed a good physique and a healthy body to endure the rigors of travel by land and sea, Timothy was undoubtedly handicapped. Paul writes to advise him to “Stop drinking water, and use a little wine for the sake of your stomach, and to help your frequent illnesses.”

Whatever the condition which beset Timothy, we can be certain that it was constantly recurring and chronic, and was either intensified by drinking the water at Ephesus, or induced by it. At the time, wine was recognized as one of the best medicines available to aid digestion and soothe stomach upset. This was before the days of Tums and Di-Gel. The prescription of the apostle helps us to realize the misfortune which beset the young preacher.

7. One hardly needs to read between the lines to realize that Timothy also suffered from times of depression in which he probably doubted the wisdom of continuing to pursue the work of an evangelist. At such times he allowed the gift of God to be unused and its power to erode away, while he gave way to unnatural fears and unwholesome attitudes.

It is interesting to study the psychology of Paul in snapping him out of his mood and getting him back into the service. Perhaps you will pardon me for mentioning the method employed by which to renew his spirit.

1. The apostle tells Timothy how much he meant to him. He states that he daily thanks God for making it possible for him to come to know him. Paul had much for which to thank God because both he and his forefathers had long since served God with a clear conscience, but in spite of all that had happened, it was a high spot in his life to know Timothy.

2. The faith which operated in Timothy was a rich and priceless heirloom from his mother and grandmother. They had clung to it, cherished it and nourished it, even in a pagan world. And their faith was genuine. It was real. If Timothy failed or washed out, he would break the hearts

of those who loved him most. From a child they had taught and prepared him in the sacred scriptures, and he was their hope of keeping the light shining.

3. Paul reminds him of the time when he was ordained to go forth as an evangelist. One who possessed the gift of prophecy had designated Timothy as a potential candidate to further the work of evangelism. When the day came for the local presbyters to lay hands upon him and dedicate him to this holy function, the apostle also laid hands upon him and bestowed an enabling gift. Apparently there was a fervency about Timothy at this time that was beautiful to behold.

4. Paul tells him that the purpose of God's gift was not to produce craven fear in the heart. One who loses confidence and draws back from his responsibility is not pleasing God by such action, but is unfitting his life for the fulfillment of the divine purpose.

5. Timothy is again told what God provides for one who is completely committed to the divine will. He is made the recipient of inner power which will not desert him in difficult times, nor become depleted by distress. God supplies the power to perform his purpose. One need never shirk back in despondency. If he marches forward at the command of God he will open up the way as he did for Israel.

God provides love. This is the greatest deterrent to discouragement, the dynamic to devotion, and the dedication to daring. Love eliminates fear like the sun burns away the fog, or drives away the night. And he who gives us love also gives us the spirit of self-control. There is no adequate way to translate *sophronismos* into English. William Barclay writes that someone translated it as "the sanity of saintliness."

Certainly by this time we can all see that the letters which Paul wrote to Timothy were simply that — letters of an older preacher to a young one whom he loved, written to encourage, strengthen and fortify him for the difficult work in which he was involved. Paul was not writing "to lay down the law to Timothy," nor to lay down a law for us. He was expressing himself in love when he said, "That is why I send you this reminder to keep at white heat the gift that is in you and which came to you through the laying of my hands upon you; for God did not give us the spirit of craven fear, but of power and love and self-discipline."

I don't want you to get a false impression about Timothy, or conclude that he did not make it, or that he became a wishy-washy, muddle-headed, whining minister of mediocrity. The tremendous lesson to learn from all I have said is that, in spite of his physical, sociological, cultural, natural and temperamental handicaps, he did not give up. And the apostle paid him high tribute for the victory he won.

Of course, we are liable to credit all of this to the fact that he had received a special gift through imposition of the hands of Paul, and excuse our own laziness and neglect by saying with a deep sigh, that if we had been as fortunate as young Timothy we too might have made the grade, instead of having the grade we made. Many a man lets his teeth decay while bemoaning the fact that he was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and any of us should know that a good set of teeth is worth more in the mouth than a good set of spoons.

But I happen to know of a man in our age who was much like Timothy. I learned his story from others in a simple rural area where I held a good many meetings. His father died when he was but a little lad, and the widowed mother was left to depend upon her own efforts and the mercy of the neighbors for survival. The boy, Tom, hired out to work for nearby farmers from the time he was old enough to drive a team of horses. And he seemed to be imbued with the idea that he wanted to become a preacher of the Word.

He read the Bible every spare minute. He memorized so much of it before he got out of the eighth grade that people thought he was developing into a religious fanatic and would “crack up.” He grew into the habit of practicing public speaking while riding the cultivator and was subjected to all kinds of merriment and ridicule. When he was in a crowd someone would say, “I hired Tom to plow that ten acres down by the creek, and he can’t tell the difference between a cornfield and a mission field. He held a revival up and down the rows and converted six stalks of corn and a hickory sapling. Apparently his message is corny because I could see all of the stalks bending their ears as he went by.”

But Tom would not be discouraged, and finally a couple of men went over to his mother’s house one night to talk with him. They told him that they came as friends but they wanted him to know that his obsession was a crazy fantasy, and he ought to give it up, and that everyone was laughing at him behind his back. He was sixteen years old at the time, but instead of giving up he asked the men if they would try and arrange for him to speak at the Sunday morning meeting.

When nothing else would prevail they agreed, and when the time came Tom made a miserable failure. He was nervous, distraught and shaky. He had to give up and sit down after about ten minutes. His subject had completely fled from his memory. The elders told him that he had now demonstrated that he did not have what it took, and asked him to give up the crazy notion. It was then that he asked his mother to move to a distant state and to a city where some of their relatives resided. This they did.

To shorten this narrative let me mention that two years before I came into the area, Tom had been called for a series of gospel meetings. His messages kindled a fire in the hearts of the hearers. The audience grew to such proportions that several hundred stood outside the house to listen. Standing on the same platform where he had made his failure he preached with such power and fervency that people were led to Christ at every service. He immersed more than a hundred persons in two weeks, including most of the grandchildren of the very ones who had advised him to give up the idea that he could preach the gospel.

Now, with your kind indulgence, I want to note with you again the apostolic charge under which the evangelist goes forth into the world to fulfill the purpose of God in his life. It is found in 2 Timothy 4:1, 2. “I charge you in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching.”

The greatness and majesty of an action can often be judged by the nature of those in whose presence it is performed and who are called upon to witness it. Frequently the newspapers show a picture of the president of the United States signing into law a bill submitted by the Congress.

Generally he is surrounded by a group of dignitaries and high officials, and their presence as witnesses adds dignity and luster to the proceedings.

The charge delivered by Paul, who was an ambassador for Christ, was pronounced in the presence of the Father and the Son, and thus we can be sure that it was given with their approval and sanction. There are three things added about Jesus which are calculated to enforce the charge and increase the solemnity attendant upon it.

1. Jesus is judge of the living and the dead. Those who accept responsibility for any phase of service must do so with the understanding that they will give an account for the manner in which they discharge the task. When Daniel Webster was asked to state the most important thought which ever occurred to him, he replied, "The most important thought I ever had was that of my individual responsibility to God."

2. Jesus is coming again. The evangelist is charged in view of his appearing. Now the word for appearing is an interesting one indeed. It is *epiphaneia*, and this is the word which was used when the Emperor went to visit one of the cities or provinces. It was always a tremendous event, a great holiday filled with pageantry and color. And it necessitated a lot of preparation.

Houses were painted, streets were cleaned, public buildings were decorated, and all of the citizenry attired in the finest clothing possible. The approach of the Emperor was heralded by a trumpet, and when he arrived he bestowed gifts and honors upon the deserving. It was my good fortune to be in North Ireland just before a visit of the Queen. Everything was carried on in anticipation of this great event, and a state of constant readiness was maintained. This is the way in which we should look forward to the coming of the Son of God.

A number of years ago, in Omaha, a mother had taken her little girl to hear a very famous evangelist, who spoke on that Sunday afternoon on, "The Second Coming of Christ." The mother supposed that her little child had not listened very intently, but as they were walking home, the little girl looked up at her mother, and asked, "Mother is Jesus really coming back again?" "Yes, darling," the mother replied, "he is coming." "Well, is he coming to Omaha?" "Yes, he is coming to Omaha, dear." "Mother, is he coming to our house?" The mother said, "Yes, he is coming to our house, but why do you ask that." The little girl replied, "Well, if he is going to come to our house, we'd better hurry home and get ready for him."

3. Jesus is coming in his kingdom and glory. The first time he came in the form of a slave, but when he comes again it will be as King of kings, supreme in all the universe. I must ever be conscious that the message I carry is not a common message. I am on business for my king. The word I carry is his word.

Then, what does it mean to preach? The answer is simple. The Greek word means "to proclaim as a herald." It may be difficult for us to grasp the significance of this because of our modern inventions for disseminating news. We are conditioned by the printing press, the radio and television. But before there were any of these media, the news was carried and announced by the mouths of men.

Accompanying the armies were fleet-footed runners. It was the duty of these men to carry the tidings of battle to the waiting populace. Often the people gathered on the wall and its ramparts with eyes glued to the horizon, waiting anxiously for sight of the runner with the news of the battle. The most famous of these in history was no doubt the anonymous Athenian who ran the eighteen miles from the plains of Marathon to Athens with news of the defeat of the Persian army under Darius the Great by the Athenian forces under the celebrated general Miltiades.

These runners were heralds and they were especially welcome when they brought news of victory. Their coming meant that there would be great joy in the city. It was precisely this picture Paul had in mind when he talks about the victory in Jesus which saved the lost race of mankind. “But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a proclaimer? And how can men proclaim unless they are sent? As it is written ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who herald good news.’”

Do you consider yourself a herald who has just come through the fire of conflict and been delivered from impending death? Do you feel your heart bursting with the message of deliverance, which you want to make known to those who are still wavering between hope and despair? Are you more concerned with getting through with the good news or with getting your salary on time? Is the comfort of the message of greater priority than your own physical comfort? These are questions which we must face if we are to be heralds of the king.

We are to be urgent in season and out of season. That is simply another way of saying that we must be on the job all of the time. “In season” means when everything seems just right, and “out of season” means when everything seems all wrong. Sometimes when things are stacked against us, God has done the stacking. If we are discouraged and disgruntled, and sitting on the sidelines, the work will lag at the very time that it ought to get going. John Wesley once said, “Get on fire for God, and men will come to see you burn.”

Benjamin Franklin wrote in *Poor Richard's Almanac* these words: “The man who does things makes many mistakes, but he never makes the biggest mistake of all — doing nothing.” Thomas Edison said: “When everyone else is quitting on a problem, that is the time when I begin.” The preacher who moves because he cannot see anything left to do where he is, will not likely do much where he goes. The problem is not with the community but with himself. There is no excuse for a Christian to have “tired blood” as the television commercials label it, for we are operating with the blood of Christ and not with our own.

One who proclaims the word is charged with the solemn responsibility to “reprove, rebuke and exhort.” The first carries the idea of conviction, and this necessitates pointing out guilt or sin so plainly and forcibly that one is judged at the bar of his own conscience, and there falls under condemnation. One cannot be faithful to his mission and let a sinner feel at ease in his sin. Nathan convicted David, Daniel convicted Belshazzar, John the Baptist convicted the Pharisees and Sadducees who made the trek out to the place where he was baptizing. More than anything else today our world needs to be brought to repentance. We stress baptism so much that we often immerse those who have not turned from their sin, and we fill the congregation with

“incubator babies,” who have to be pampered the rest of their lives, and who never grow up in the faith.

To rebuke is to censure and admonish. It is unfortunate that we live in an age which is permissive. When “anything goes,” everything does. But we do no man good when we condone his evil. We become his worst enemy while trying to be his friend. Even Paul was forced to ask, “Am I become your enemy by telling you the truth?” No one can faithfully teach all that is found in the letters of the apostles without rebuking evil. Many of these were written for the very purpose of correcting existing ills, and human nature has not changed.

Exhortation is the encouragement to do that which one is capable of performing. Just as many a gem “of purest ray serene” lies hidden in the earth, never to gladden the heart of man, so many a talent has been undiscovered and the world is the poorer for it.

Sir Walter Scott, in his later years, used to tell how shy and backward he was when a youngster. Upon one occasion, as a mere lad, he was visiting a castle in Scotland, to which the famous poet Robert Burns came. Burns spoke kindly to the boy, and said in departing: “You will be a great man in Scotland, my lad. You have it in you to be a writer.” Scott went home and cried all night for joy because of these few words of recognition.

It is possible that Alexander the Great would never have become a world conqueror at all, if it had not been for Clitus, the boyhood friend who encouraged him to press on, and who saved his life at the battle of Granicus. It is a tragic mark against the character of Alexander that he killed his friend, striking him down with the sword in a drunken rage. But I think that it is interesting that the graffiti of ancient Greece, portrayed a friend in the simple drawing of a person, across whose tunic were written the words “Summer and winter.” A friend is one who encourages you “in season and out of season.”

All of us are aware of how much David depended upon Jonathan, who unselfishly encouraged him to fulfill his destiny as king. And who is there present in this audience, whose own spirit has not been refreshed by reading the words which David penned? I go to Paul for exhortation and comfort as if I had personally known him all my life, or as if he and Tertius lived across the street. And if there come those moments when I wonder about my course or ability to carry on, I go to the divine medicine chest, and read the directions on the prescription as given by Paul, and I am ready to go again.

I am thoroughly convinced that the Good News about Jesus is the message our world needs to hear. I have not one doubt about its dynamic power. It has changed my life, strengthened my spirit, quelled my fears, and given me a vibrant hope for the future. It is the bread of life when I am hungry, the water of life when I am thirsty, the staff of life when I am weary, and the strength of life when I stumble. God’s word is like the cool shadow of a rock in a weary land.

In the cathedral at Dijon, France, there is a great and massive pulpit chiseled from stone. Just beneath it is the figure of an angel sitting. It is beautifully and delicately carved. It is the recording angel, holding a writing tablet in one hand, and in the other a pen poised ready to

write. The face of the angel is turned expectantly upward to the pulpit, waiting and ready to record what the preacher says.

I want to remember that the recording angel is always present when I speak, whether in a cathedral or a country-church building, whether in a living-room or an assembly room in a Student Union building on campus. And although I may forget the words that I speak, heaven will not. Some day I will face them again. Every word, and every secret thing, shall be brought into judgment. It is for this reason that it seems appropriate for me to close as Paul closed his first letter to Timothy.

“O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith. Grace be with you.”

Chapter 6

Three Great Errors

The restoration was the result of the Second Great Awakening, which was a partial spin-off from the French Revolution, among other historical events. It would require too much time and space to document this, and I will forego the pleasure of doing so. It began primarily with sober and serious Presbyterians with an occasional assist from some Methodists and Baptists, and it began as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects,” as Alexander Campbell referred to it in 1835.

Actually, it was not “*the* restoration movement” at all, as if it were the only one. It was a restoration movement. It was but one of about sixteen such movements which were launched in those heady days. It was a cultural something, which seemed called for by the times. Some of the movements merged into contemporary sects, but a great many of them died with their emigrant founders. The term “restoration movement” was hardly used by our fathers. They spoke of it as “the current reformation.”

This served to distinguish it from the Protestant Reformation which Campbell declared “is proved to have been one of the most splendid eras in the history of the world, and must long be regarded by the philosopher and the philanthropist as one of the most gracious interpositions in behalf of the whole human race.”

He continued “We Americans owe our national privileges and our civil liberties to the Protestant Reformers. They achieved not only an imperishable name for themselves, but a rich legacy for their posterity. When we contrast the present state of the United States with Spanish America, and the condition of the English nation with that of Spain, Portugal and Italy, we begin to appreciate how much we are indebted to the intelligence, faith and courage of Martin Luther and his heroic associates in that glorious reformation.”

These men were not unaware of the difference in setting and its effect upon their ideals and purposes. The great contrast with Rome and its political intrigues, its rich hierarchy and its mendicant supplicants, its art forms and statuary, its political structures and pompous liturgy, with the American frontier was everywhere manifest. Too, the stolid German character, demonstrated by both the nobility and peasantry was a far cry from the reckless American who was ever restless and ready to challenge the wilderness.

Thomas Campbell relied upon the freedom and liberty of the new world to spread the good news of a united Church. “Dearly beloved brethren, why should we think it a thing incredible that the Church of Christ, in this highly favored country, should resume that original unity, peace and purity which belong to its constitution, and constitute its glory?” Again, “The favorable opportunity which Divine Providence has put into your hands, in this happy country, for the accomplishment of so great a good, is, in itself, a consideration of no small encouragement.”

As a frontier movement among all of the churches some success was recorded. There was an appeal to the simple and unsophisticated mind in the idea that one could be a Christian and a

Christian only. It began to appear that sectarianism might be swept from the map in the Western Reserve and in the Missouri Territory where it was not as entrenched as it was in New England. Most of the labor was done and most of the gains were registered in the new settlements farther to the west. As Thomas Campbell had said, "The cause that we advocate is not our own peculiar cause, nor the cause of any party, considered as such; it is a common cause, the cause of Christ and our brethren of all denominations."

But it was not to continue so. There were a great many obstacles to the achievement of the noble purpose. The very independence which gave it birth seemed to work against its continuance. Men were free enough to begin to unite across the various lines but not free enough to continue to do so. They had not caught the vision of their leaders. They had not dreamed their dreams. Some of them were willing to unite provided their party could be the prominent one. Others were caught up in the developing cults of Mormonism and the Shakers.

Then too, the power of the sectarian spirit was not properly evaluated. Attacks began to be made by the clergy whose creeds had been assailed. The reformers were accused of plotting the overthrow of the Christian faith. Campbell was branded a traitor and a heretic. He was bitterly assaulted in journals and periodicals. His followers were called Campbellites and it was pronounced with a smirk and a sneer. As time went on there were mistakes made. Some of them were grievous. They resulted in the inception of another denomination. It proliferated into a number of different parties. Today these have lost their original goal of the unity of all believers. Yet it appears that there is the beginning of a re-evaluation.

This first little trickle which betokens the melting of the glacier of indifference and unconcern is precious. It betokens the first warming rays of the sun of righteousness have been effective. Whether it can continue to flow until it becomes a mighty river or will be stifled by the deep freeze of partisan coldness is a question. It is the first indication of a breach with the sectarian attitude. In many cases it began with those who had been more exclusive and bitter than their fellows, as it did in the beginning with Campbell and Stone. This is good because such men have tasted the dregs of the spirit of intolerance and rejected the draught. They will not easily return to it.

I would like to detail three of the many mistakes we have made as a people. In doing so I lay myself open to attack and make myself vulnerable. It seems to me that someone must speak about these matters and I dare not ask another to do what I am unwilling to do for myself. Those who read will probably understand my concern, those who do not will continue to warn against me as if they were thoroughly familiar with what I had said.

BECOMING THE CHURCH

Our gravest error was in allowing the restoration movement to become, in our minds, the church. Nay, even worse and more insulting to the divine intelligence, we made it "the Lord's church," with bold effrontery designating it the "Church of Christ." This immediately changed our aim and goal. We ceased to be a movement and became a monument. A monument marks the accomplishments of the past. People go to it to pay homage to their heroes. We honor the

memory of Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton Warren Stone and Walter Scott. But where are their successors today? Who is carrying on the work they begun?

Movements are human in origin, but the church is divine. The church did not need to be restored. It had never died. It is impossible for a body to die while its head lives. Movements come and go. They rise and wane. They ebb and flow. But the body goes on forever. When we transmuted the movement into a church we embalmed it. It became rigid and immobile. It must now contend with other “churches” for a place in the sun. The very moment we became a church we automatically inherited rivals, many of them more hoary in age and more respectable than ourselves.

This meant that what Thomas Campbell referred to as “our dear brethren of all denominations” were no longer our brethren. He declared, “You are all, dear brethren, equally included as the objects of our love and esteem.” When we became a church we slammed the door upon them. We became exclusivists of the worst kind. All of our “dear brethren” were now with us. Those who were not with us were not our brethren. The body of Christ now met at a certain location in a certain building, and its chief purpose became to attack all who were not in that location and in that building.

Alexander Campbell, in his debate with Rice, alleged that “We have neither national, provincial or sectarian church. We have many *churches* but no *church*. Nor do we desire a church, in that sense of the word.” We have now created a sectarian church. It has other grounds for fellowship than the supreme truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. It has other tests of union and communion than the foundation which God has laid. Its devotees have renounced the restoration movement, departed from the one faith, and ceased to be a force for unity. Their hand is against every man who does not conform to them, and every man’s hand is against them.

What steps can be taken to remedy the situation. One simple one is to take down the sign “Church of Christ.” The New Testament church has no title or name. It is simply the body of Christ, identified by its location. It is a fellowship of the ransomed ones, a community of the saved. The Church of Christ is universally recognized as another sect. It is regarded as in the same category with the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, or the Presbyterian Church. The idea that it is a haven of rest for every child of God has long been lost. It is now judged by its particularities and peculiarities, and not by its universalities. It is no longer a meeting place for Christians, but for a certain kind of Christians, subscribing to certain things.

The Church of Christ as it exists today can never unite the Christians in all of the sects. It has forfeited its right to be recognized as the restoration movement. It has lost its aim, forgotten its goal, and has settled down to becoming one of the churches in the community. Yet it could become a rallying-ground for the needy, the seeking, the harassed and driven people of our day. It could do this without giving up a single truth it has ever held. Is it not a logical thing to do or can we afford the price of a lost world, as the cost for our attitude.

TESTS OF BROTHERHOOD

By the very act of proclaiming a movement the church, we created of ourselves a sect. We shut ourselves off from the saved of God who met under another name and sought to praise Him in other places. Many of these were as righteous as ourselves, conscientiously following in all the things of the Word as they saw them. They were caught up in the sectarian web, but were not sectarian.

Our second great error occurred in 1889. It happened at Sand Creek, in Illinois. The aging brick building still stands. It is empty now. The pews are there. But no one has occupied them for years. Wasps and mud-daubers flit about the interior. Squirrels play in the cemetery outside. Sand Creek was the place where the Address and Declaration was read by Daniel Sommer. It was a reverse of the “Declaration and Address” read just eighty years before by Thomas Campbell at Washington, Pennsylvania.

The Sand Creek Declaration mentioned that “Some of the things of which we hereby complain, and against which we protest, are the unlawful methods resorted to in order to raise or get money for religious purposes, namely, that of the church holding festivals of various kinds, in the house of the Lord or elsewhere, demanding sometimes that each shall pay a certain sum as an admittance fee; the select choir to the virtual, if not the real, abandonment of congregational singing; likewise the man-made society for missionary work, and the one-man imported preacher-pastor to take the oversight of the church.”

Loaded language was used in referring to these matters. They were called “Unpleasant, and as we see them vicious things.” They were labeled objectionable and unauthorized. Those who endorsed them were called innovators. In conclusion it was said, “We state that we are impelled from a sense of duty to say, that all such that are guilty of teaching, or allowing and practicing the many innovations and corruptions to which we have referred, that after being admonished, and having had sufficient time for reflection, if they do not turn away from such abominations, that we cannot and will not regard them as brethren.”

The document was signed by representatives of five Illinois congregations. It was approved by David Lipscomb of the Nashville, Tennessee congregation. It proved to be a Pandora’s Box of evils turned loose upon the land. It resulted in divisions, law-suits, claims and counter-claims, which turned the sword of the Spirit against brethren and spilled their fratricidal gore all over the landscape. For generations it perpetuated civil war, hatred and hostility which made of the movement the most bitterly fought and contested territory on the American scene.

It represented the first attempt to “not regard as brethren” those who differed in matters of interpretation and implementation. The few things increased into many. Legalism supplanted love. Motivated by the idea that there was a specific pattern, with all disagreeing as to what it was, the principle of the Sand Creek document became the basis of Church of Christism with its withdrawal of fellowship. Cheap orthodoxy becomes the order of the day and honest dissent paid the penalty.

The first great mistake was disfellowshipping the Christians within the sects. The second great mistake was disfellowshipping the Christians within the restoration movement. Under threat for advocacy or acceptance of anything which differs from the established norm, research stopped and true study ended. The Bible became a book of proof-texts. It was searched not to find what to believe, but to prove what was already believed.

There was no weightier matters of the law, no justice, mercy and faith. Tithes of mint, anise and cumin became as important as trust in Jesus. Indeed, they were used as tests of faith. The attitude toward cups, classes and colleges supplanted the attitude toward the cross of Christ. Clever lawyers twisted the Word of God and manipulated their own ideas for political gain. Passions became inflamed over minor matters, and division occurred over secondary issues.

The kingdom of God became a hodgepodge of things. One could not be a citizen of it who regarded the Sunday School for example, as a matter of indifference. He was forced to take a stand. It was either or else. There was no middle ground. He had to become a partisan to become a Christian. It depended upon what kind of partisan he became as to what kind of Christian he was. To one side he was “loyal,” to the other he was “disloyal.” If, as the result of concentrated study, he made a change, he was regarded as a convert by one side, and a “turncoat” by the other.

The men who read the document thought they were sincere. They were seeking to protect what they considered as erosion of the faith. Actually what they did was to intrude upon the opinions of men with their own opinions. Not everyone was willing to grant the right of others to legislate for them. The address sowed dragon’s teeth. Everyone of them sprang from the earth a soldier in full panoply ready to fight. Debates occurred everywhere. They increased the tensions already existing. Tempers flared. Families divided. Hostility developed. Peace disappeared from the movement.

CEMENTING THE DIVISION

In 1906 actual division occurred and was recognized. It became a formal thing. The organ was blamed for it, but the division would have occurred if there had been no organ. Men had thought division. It had been preached from the pulpit. It was urged upon men as the will of God. The organ was visible. It could be seen. It was tangible. It could be felt. Men could vent their spleen against it. They did so by literally chopping the offending instrument into bits and throwing the pieces into the backyard. But the rancor existed in human hearts before it was overtly declared.

Slowly there had developed two approaches to interpretation of the Word of God. They were opposed to each other. One said that anything not specifically mentioned in the scriptures was acceptable provided that it did not violate any other scripture. The other said that anything not specifically mentioned in the scriptures was prohibited by the silence of the scriptures. An elaborate argument about the silence was worked out. These two ideas were destined for a crash because they were on a collision course. They met at the point where the instrument was introduced and disaster was the result.

The peculiar thing is that the Bible did not enjoin either of these presuppositions. No one who spoke where the Bible spoke, or remained silent where it was silent, could utter either one. Both had to be siphoned out by the dubious proof text method which consisted of taking wholly unrelated passages and from them weaving a fabric favorable to a foregone conclusion. Both of them were spectacles donned before reading the scripture. By wearing them only one result could be achieved.

And so occurred once more what Thomas Campbell called “the heinous nature and pernicious tendency of religious controversy among Christians.” Debates were held. History was searched. The revelation of heaven was meticulously gone over with a fine tooth comb. Not one organ was ever debated out. And the reason is that the organ was not the real criminal. We did not divide when the organ was introduced, and we would not unite if it were taken out.

We divided when we quit loving each other as brethren. We will unite again when we resume loving one another. The question is whether we want to win a debate or a brother. “By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” Love makes no demands. It assesses no requirements. It stipulates no conditions and requires no proof. It does not say that if you give up this or that I will love you. It loves you where you are and as you are. If you have something which hinders the closer walk you give it up, but you will be loved if you never give it up.

It would be a noble experiment to see what would happen in a community where division has occurred if one side were to continue to love the other as if nothing had happened. This would mean recognition of the division but paying no attention to it, treating it as if it were not there. It would include building no walls, erecting no barriers, and not working in a partisan sense. This is the Christian alternative to division the divine balm to be poured into a gaping wound to begin healing from inside out.

We made an inglorious fracture of the movement when we divided over instrumental music, as we thought. And we will never recover from it until we love one another enough to go back and repair it. With our first mistake we ceased to be a movement, with our second we ceased to be a restoration movement, with our third we ceased to be a force for unity. Ever after, men would ask “If you have discovered the secret for unity, why are you divided?” All of the answers we have stammered out, all of the half-truths we have uttered, all of the quibbles we have made have not been satisfactory.

This does not mean the adoption of instrumental music. Far from it. It only means the adoption of brethren who use it. It means recognizing them as brothers, and treating them as such. It means weeping with them when they weep, and rejoicing with them when they rejoice. It means letting each person stand or fall to his own master. It means recognition that the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy, which the Holy Spirit gives. And when someone serves Christ in this way, he pleases God and is approved by others.

We need to rise above the grievous mistakes of our fathers. We have done so in the political realm. Could anything have been more horrible than the violence of the Civil War? Could anything have been more awful than the burning, looting, pillaging, murder and rapine which

blighted a great part of our nation? Who is there among us today who wants to continue the smoke and conflagration of that frightful conflict. Who wants to perpetuate the holocaust that swept a great part of our glorious land?

Yet the kingdom of heaven is still subject to brutal attack. Brethren war against brethren. Those of the same family lift up the mailed fist against each other. Let us reverse the decisions of yesterday. We have led the world in sordid division. Now let us lead in a return to unity. Let us dedicate our lives to the undoing of the deeds of yesteryear and to the promotion of peace on earth to men of goodwill. "On Zion, God's holy hill, there will be nothing harmful or evil. The land will be as full of the knowledge of the Lord as the seas are full of water." Lord, hasten that day!

Chapter 7

Positive and Negative

According to the definition of the word, perspective means “to view through.” It refers to looking beyond the mere form or structure of a thing. Obviously it makes a difference where a man stands as to what he will see when he looks. One who views the world from the bed of a valley will see a totally different scene than one who has ascended from the valley to a surrounding mountain. The color of the lens through which he looks will also affect the impression he receives.

It is undeniable, I think, that the mind-set influences our interpretation of what we see. And that is a composite of many factors. It would be difficult to enumerate all of them. We are the product of our prior training, coupled with all of the things we have done to ourselves. Our prejudices and biases, our areas of conformity and rebellion, our ideals and our adjustments to our failures to achieve them, make of us all individuals whose attitudes differ and whose approach varies. We need to constantly examine ourselves to be sure we do not trample upon reality.

As a body of people we have learned to look askance at anyone and anything that differs from our norm. Like ancient Israel, “We have seen so much, but what does it mean to us? We have ears to hear with, but what have we really heard?” (Isa. 42:20). We are quick to disclaim anything we have not already incorporated as a part of our theological stance. We have doomed ourselves to go along in the same old rut and have forced ourselves to listen to the same old thing, whether it has any value or not.

While awaiting my train at the station in Nashville, Tennessee, I looked over the array of literature displayed in racks by the various denominations in the city. I selected some reading material from each section as I like to know what others are thinking, and I can learn from all. The “Church of Christ” rack yielded up a booklet bearing the title, “A Church That is Neither Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish.” As I read, I thought how typical it was of the negative attitude which is so characteristic of my brethren. Most of their time, money and effort is utilized in telling the world what they are not. Perhaps they have more to boast about in that department.

“Faithfulness” in these days is judged almost solely upon what men disclaim in doctrine or practice. A congregation is deemed “faithful” because it does not support colleges, have a hired minister, contribute to orphan homes, teach in Bible classes, use individual cups, use fermented wine, or expect the Lord Jesus to come before the millennium. It just depends upon what section of the country you may be in, what segment of believers you may be among, or what the latest fight is about. Whatever the current criterion, it will not particularly concern what you believe, but what you do not believe.

A congregation may thus be “faithful” if it is in the doldrums, composed of lazy, indolent, indifferent members, who never talk to a neighbor, distribute a tract, or contribute a cent to support an evangelist in the field, just so long as it does not have a “regular preacher.” Its leaders may talk about the Lord’s system of mutual ministry, but frequently that is neither mutual

nor ministry and the members have to be punched, prodded and programmed before they reluctantly agree to do anything. Yet the church is “faithful” because of what it does not have.

Another congregation may be “faithful” whose members have never supported one aged widow or cared for a single helpless orphan. The members may spend their Lord’s Day afternoons driving about in luxurious limousines, attired in the latest fashions, while there are those who languish in hospitals to whom a visit would be like a cool refreshing draught to the spirit. The aged members are neglected, forgotten, and condemned to eke out their days in little cubicles which their old age assistance will cover. No one thinks of taking them for a drive in the country. But the congregation is “faithful” because it does not support orphan homes or homes for the aged.

Now we could run the entire gamut of factions and fractions and the story would be the same. It is not the life of surrender, consecration and closeness to God which is the mark of faithfulness in these days. It is not what you are but what you are not that counts. We do not minimize the necessity of opposition to all evil in faith or practice. It is essential that we stand against what we conceive of as detrimental to the rule of our King. But real Christianity is a positive force. There is a grave danger that we shall conceive of it as wholly negative and thus live helpless and powerless lives.

The divine power provided by the Holy Spirit is not intended to make us always go in reverse. It is not the power of recession but of progression. It is not condemned to be perpetually neutral. It is described as “the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might.” It is not the power of retreat but of ongoing. There is no shield for the back of the disciple. He is expected to press the fight and to face the enemy. We are followers of one whose bugle never blew retreat.

I trust that I may be allowed to live until I can see my brethren who love the Christ gain a sufficient degree of courage that they may go anywhere, meet anyone, and contend for the truth under all circumstances. I would like to see them have a knowledge of God’s word and the English language, so that they would unhesitatingly pass out a tract, bearing the title: “A church that is Catholic, and composed of protestants and Jews.”

THE CHURCH IS CATHOLIC

The church of God is the only truly Catholic church in the world. The word catholic means “1. Universal or general; affecting mankind as a whole, or affecting what is universal in human interest. 2. Comprehensive in sympathies or understanding, liberal. 3. Of, or pertaining to the church universal, specifically, designating or pertaining to the ancient undivided Christian Church or a church claiming historical continuity from it.”

It comes from *kata*, throughout, and *holos*, the whole. It consists of all true Christians. There cannot be two “catholic” churches in the same realm at the same time. The church for which our Lord paid with His precious blood embraces within its fold every saved person on the face of this material globe. There is not one such being outside of it. There may be movements within the

church as there are within the ocean. But they are not catholic unless they affect every life within the divine fold.

The church for which Jesus gave his life is catholic as pertains to:

1. *Scope.* Its ambassadors were told to “Go into *all the world* and preach the gospel to *every creature*” (Mark 16:15). They were instructed to “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations” (Matthew 28:19). The apostle says “Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about obedience to the faith for the sake of his name among all the nations” (Romans 1:5). Again, “But is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the nations, according to the command of the eternal God” (Romans 16:26).

2. *Nationality.* “In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him” (Acts 10:35). “It is the power of God unto salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). “But glory and honor and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality” (Rom. 2:10, 11).

3. *Social Classes.* “There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, *bond nor free*” (Col. 3:11). “Whatever good any one does, he will receive the same again from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free” (Ephesians 6:8).

4. *Sex.* “There is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God” (1 Cor. 11:11, 12).

5. *Languages.* “Thou has redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9). “Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people” (Rev. 14:6).

6. *Membership.* “And the Lord added to their number daily such as were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

One who claims to be a Christian must either be a member of the catholic church of God, or of a sect. The Greek Catholic Church is neither Catholic nor is it the church of God. The Roman Catholic Church is not the church of God. It is a sect; indeed, the mother of many sects. It is Roman, but it is not Catholic. That which makes it Roman keeps it from being catholic. It cannot be provincial and universal at the same time.

Any person who contends for the church with which he is affiliated, yet admits that it is possible for people to be saved outside of the circle of communion which he recognizes, is a member of a sect. The church of God, the body of Christ, is not a sect. It contains every redeemed person from every kindred, tongue, people and nation.

As God looks upon it there is one body (Eph. 4:4). There is only one and can never be another. One can no more create another body than he can make another Holy Spirit. The body is a divine organism and not a human organization. Everyone who has been baptized has been baptized into that one body. Not one has ever been made the member of a denomination. Not one has ever been baptized into a party, either the one of which we are members, or any other. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

Jesus is not the head of a party. He is the head over all things for the community of believers, which is his body. That church is catholic. It is the fullness of him who fills all in all. It is the body of Christ. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” Every person who participates in the body and blood of Jesus is a member of that great catholic, universal, cosmic church. “Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the same loaf.”

We have splintered the body into fragments. We have shattered it into particles. We have ripped it into shreds. Yet as God looks at it, it is one body. Oh, if we but had the vision of God. If we could just see things as He sees them. If we could just view them as He views them. What a difference it would make. We need a physician to heal our wounds. We need a repairer of breaches to mend our breaks. We need to recapture the concept of the catholic church in the very best sense, and labor to let the world see it.

COMPOSED OF PROTESTANTS

A protestant is one who makes or enters a protest. The verb form of “pro” and “testare” is to be a witness. It is a mistake to think that to protest means to be against something. Indeed, the first definition of *protest* is “to assert; affirm, aver.” One makes a protestation of faith in the Messiah when he publicly acknowledges him, for the word means the “act of protesting, or solemnly declaring true, existent, or the like; a public avowal.” Any person who makes an affirmation or declares a truth is a protestant. One who is not a protestant in any sense would be in a sad condition.

Of course, a protest is also “an expostulation; complaint; objection or remonstrance.” One who objects to being designated a protestant proves the designation is correct by his objection. It is not an uncommon thing to see a man *protesting* that he is not a *protestant*. One thing wrong with members of the church of God in these days is that not enough of them are protestants. They accept anything that comes along, submit to being robbed of their rights, privileges and prerogatives without ever raising a protest. No man can be a true follower of the Christ without being a protestant. One reason why our Lord was killed was because he was such a strong protestant.

COMPOSED OF JEWS

Every member of the body of Christ is a real Jew; every real Jew is a member of the body of Christ. This is clearly taught in the New Testament, which also teaches that no one can be a

Christian without being circumcised. “In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:11, 12). Only those who are thus circumcised are real Jews and in covenant relationship with God.

There are those who claim to be Jews outside the body of Christ, just as there are those who contend they are catholic or protestant outside of it, but the first are not real Jews any more than the others are really catholic or truly protestant. “For he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal” (Rom. 2:28, 29).

Instead of delivering talks on why we are not catholic, protestants, or Jews, why not let the world know we are? I will be happy to see the day come when my brethren will not, through ignorance, surrender perfectly good words to a group who will capitalize and misuse them, but will have the courage to take a positive attitude toward the new covenant religion. I want to see them bold and brave enough to flood the communities with a non-sectarian tract about the church that is catholic, and composed of protestants and real Jews.

Chapter 8

The Sheep on the Hills

The prophet Ezekiel paints a graphic picture of the flock of God scattered among the hills, a prey to lurking beasts, and filled with fear and distress. He attributes their condition to two sources. First, the shepherds who were to feed the flock, fleeced them and fed themselves. Instead of searching for those who were driven away and seeking for those who were lost, they ruled them with force and cruelty.

As a result, God declares that He is against those shepherds and will hold them responsible, even requiring his flock at their hand. It is interesting to note that those who are called shepherds by Ezekiel (34) are called pastors by Jeremiah (23:1, 2). The word is identical in the original Hebrew. Jeremiah writes, "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, saith the Lord ... Ye have scattered my flock and driven them away, and have not visited them; behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings saith the Lord." It is apparent that God's sheep have been scattered by the very leaders to whom they looked for guidance and instruction.

Another factor in the production of the condition is the arrogant, proud and boastful attitude of the fattened members of the flock. They are depicted as pushing and thrusting with side and shoulder, and horning the humble and meek aside, until they are scattered abroad. They are charged, not only with eating the best pasture and drinking the pure water, but also with trampling the remainder into muck and mire, and fouling it and defiling it for the rest. "And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have fouled with your feet?" This is an apt portrayal of religion in many places today, where the sheep are exploited by an official board, forced to meet a budget they did not arrange, and subscribe to a program they did not originate. They must knuckle under or get out.

"My sheep wandered through all the mountains and upon every high hill, yea my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did seek or search after them." That is a picture of the flock today. They are wandering through the mountains and hills of sectarianism. They are separated and scattered because of neglect, abuse and cruelty, to which they have been subjected. This is not the will of God. It is his desire that they be together, that there be but one flock and one shepherd. He does not want them divided by partisanship or factionalism but united in love and peace. They were scattered in "a cloudy and dark day" but a brighter day is coming.

God has designed that his sheep shall be brought out from the people, gathered from the countries, and restored to their own estate, where they shall be fed in a good pasture, upon the high mountains of faith and truth. There will the flock be safe under the supervision of one shepherd, the prince of David. They shall have a covenant of peace, and will dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. None shall make them afraid. They shall know that the Lord is with them and they are His people.

We live in an age of cacophonous sounds of a strident nature. One says, “Lo, here is the Christ,” while another says, “There he is.” The command of the true shepherd is “Do not believe it.” He said, “For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, the very elect.” The burning question of this day is not where you stand upon some secondary matter, but “What think ye of Christ.” There are scores of things which may be right but they are subservient to the greatest question of the ages. Our eyes must be upon the shepherd, not upon his rod or staff, important though they may be.

Our appeal goes forth to all of the scattered flock wandering over the hills which have been created by men. We would do our humble best to search and seek after every good and honest heart “scattered upon the face of the whole earth.” Every person in the whole wide world who possesses such a heart is my brother — either in prospect or reality. They do not all bring forth the same degree of fruit. Some produce thirty fold. Some produce sixty. A few may produce a hundredfold. But all are God’s children and all are my brothers and sisters, for the kingdom of heaven is likened unto them.

Those who have heard and learned, and come unto Christ, believing in Him, and demonstrating their faith by immersion into His death, are the sons of God. Never mind where they are. Do not be concerned about what mountain or hill they wander over. They are His children, and my brothers, wherever they may be wandering as the result of the cloudy and dark days. Those who have not yet been immersed into our dear Lord, because of lack of knowledge, environment or teaching, need only to have the truth brought to bear upon their good and honest hearts, and they will accept it.

The promise of God still obtains. “As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.” Clouds obscure the vision. They make it impossible to keep the trail. They conceal the form of the shepherd. Some feel they are following him when they are really going off on a tangent. And thick darkness hides the trail from sight. It is not a matter of arrogant accusation for those who have lost sight of the way under such circumstances. Ours is a rescue mission. We must find them and guide them home again.

We plead with all who believe in Jesus, and yet are divided from one another, to be no longer content with the meager pasturage upon the hills. The hand of God beckons on to the high mountain where is the good fold. Salvation is not in the hills. It is not the wish of heaven that we should be divided in heart and spirit. If we are content to be, without doing anything tangible to remedy the state, it is proof that we have been betrayed by Satan. Everyone of us should be actively engaged in trying to get people, not to come to us, but to come to Him.

Let us heal the breaches in Zion. Let us repair the walls and set up the gates. Let us restore the good way and walk in it. Our dear Lord does not want those who believe in Him to be split into divers sects. Even small communities are often fractured into Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran and Roman Catholic fraternities. Some of these represent the adherence to a certain order; others to a certain ordinance. One signifies the man who gave them being, the other make

a point of being both Roman and universal. How it must grieve the heart of God to see such division among these who profess faith in Jesus as the hope of the world.

Those who compose these bodies all affirm emphatically that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. They do not deny a single fact connected with his personal ministry. They are divided over the interpretation they place upon these facts, or their opinions about them. They each demand that every person have the same opinion as do they about the things they have deduced from what Jesus has said. They bind upon the consciences of men things they cannot possibly accept.

But it is true that God loves every one of them. It is true that Jesus died for every one of them. It is true that God wills they should all be one. It is true that Jesus prayed they might be one. Is it true, then, that they can never answer that prayer? Is there no solution for the problem? Are we doomed to go on until we die in our divided state. Our appeal will never fall with favor upon the ears of those who love the party spirit, regardless of the party to which they are attached. Our appeal is addressed to the good and honest hearts in all parties. Let us arise and return in spirit and in fact to Him who died for us all. Then shall we be a blessing as he has promised, "And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing."

I want to see the showers of blessing. I want to see the parched earth revived again. I want to see the flowers bloom and the fruits borne. I want to wet my searing lips in the rain from on high. I want to be a partaker of his promise. "And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I brake the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hands of those who enslaved them." That is what I crave. It is what I long for. I want to dwell securely where none shall make me afraid.

God has given us a revelation from heaven. It is like the rain and snow which comes down from heaven. It does not return to heaven but waters the earth. It causes it to spring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater. Thus it is with the word which goes forth from His mouth. It will not return unto Him empty, but it will accomplish His purpose. It will prosper in the thing to which He sent it. We have tried to catch that rain in our own cisterns. We have sought to keep others from drinking of it unless they use our dipper.

But it is a divine love letter to the world. It is not to be caught and treasured in a sectarian cistern. If we love its author as we claim to do, let us labor to help fulfill His eternal purpose. Let us seek to unite in Him, and upon the basis He has given. It is later than you think! The world hovers on the brink of despair and destruction. We have but two alternatives. We must convert the world to Jesus, or the world will commit universal suicide. All that is essential to leading the world to believe in Jesus, is for those in the world who believe in Jesus to become one. This is His own blessed assurance. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for all them also who believe on me through their word; that they may all be one ... that the world may believe that thou has sent me."

The cost of a divided people is a lost world. Can we afford to pay that tribute to our fractured state. Does any person of reason doubt that if we all became one tonight that the world would be a better place tomorrow? Have we not exported our divisions to places in the world which are not ready to receive them? Each sect sends its own missionaries to reproduce abroad the same kind of institution which sent them forth. Thus, we have not only fractured ourselves into warring clans over here but have set humble native peoples at each other's throats in their homeland and done so in the name of Jesus.

What would be the glorious result of the unity of which we speak? Wars would cease and the rumble of cannons die away. The power of nuclear fission could be directed toward the relief of mankind. The shrieks and groans of dying men upon the battlefields of the earth would be heard no more. The mighty energies of the universe could be expended in the betterment of all mankind. We could safely travel any place upon earth. Prejudice and hate would fade away. The desert would blossom like a rose. We would experience a true brotherhood of man under the benign fatherhood of God. Fellowship based upon mutual sonship would exalt the peoples of the earth.

In the face of such a benign prospect, how pale and insignificant are the doctrines and dogmas of men, the opinions and interpretations which rend the hearts, and set us back into the jungle of passion under the reign of fang and claw. Sectarianism, division, party strife and schism must be dethroned. They cannot be tolerated in a heart in which the Lord is sanctified. Let us seek the one Lord, the one faith, the one body. Let us come unto Him through the one baptism He has appointed.

What can we do? Those of us who love the Lord more than men, who exalt His revelation above human rationalization, who seek to restore the one body to its primitive perfection, must seek to study together, to investigate, to question that we may know "the Way." Regardless of what party we may now be in, we must seek the ultimate destruction of all parties by merging through mutual acceptance of the truth, into the grand concourse of all saints which will compose the one body.

We must further our aim in love. Nothing that is not of eternal value is great enough to divide the church over here. "Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name" (Mal. 3:16). To help in my very feeble way, I offer personally to go to any synagogue, cathedral, or church building which I can reach, at home or abroad, and express my views on these issues, and submit to questioning at any length. I will respect those who differ and love their souls. I will patiently listen to their views.

Brighter days are coming. A mighty army of earnest seekers after truth is being raised up all over the earth. Men are beginning to discard the shackles of slavery devised by human agency. The sheep on the hills are lifting their gaze to the high mountain peaks of safety. Their ears are tuned to the sound of the voice of the shepherd. Men are examining their positions by the Book, rather than by the light of tradition. The campfires of the pilgrims can be seen flickering all along the road to Jerusalem.

Let us here issue a word of warning. Let not those who are fortunate enough to have discovered the green pastures first, devour and tramp the residue with their feet. Let not those who have been drinking of the deep waters foul the pure stream by jealousy and bigotry. It is no time for those who have found certain great and abiding principles “to thrust with side and shoulder, and push the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad.” Brethren, make room for them. Let them in.

God’s sheep are coming home from the hills. There is room on the mountain for every good and honest heart. His house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace. The mountains and the hills before you shall break forth in singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Will that not be a glad day when there will be singing on the hills of Zion?

God has reserved thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal! Longing eyes are looking upward. Hungry hearts are turned heavenward. The sheep are starting to move toward the shepherd, slowly at first, but with gathering momentum. They have heard the voice of the shepherd again as it echoes among the hills. He has promised to them “within his house and within his walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters, an everlasting name that will not be cut off.” Don’t stone them or beat them back with force and with cruelty. Let them come home to the prince of David. They are his sheep, and not ours. We also are His sheep. We are a part of the gathering throng.

Chapter 9

The Spirit and Liberty

Within this tenement of clay called the body, dwells a spirit. God hath “formed the spirit of man within him” (Zec. 12:1). That spirit is the inward man which can be renewed daily, even while the outward man perishes (2 Cor. 4:16). It is strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 3:16). It is the spirit, held captive in the body, which longs and groans for the day of adoption when the body shall have redemption (Rom. 8:23). It is the spirit, confined to an alien realm, which aspires to a higher sphere; which yearns and gropes and reaches out to embrace its creator and to know again the bliss of perfect union which was so rudely shattered by sin.

The spirit of man can expand and grow only in the atmosphere of freedom. It was never created to be dominated, brutalized or made subservient to men. It should never be subject to coercion or undue pressures. Our fleshly parents gave us our physical bodies, and they may chastise them for our social need, but they did not give us our spirits and these are not subject to them. “We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?” (Heb. 12:9)

We are accustomed to the anguished cry of parents who have reared their children in a certain sect, that, when they became older they “left the faith.” Sometimes it is said that, in their marriage they went to a different church. Did they do, either? Did the boy renounce his faith in Jesus? Did he turn his back upon the Savior? How could he go to a different church when there is only one? If he still loves Jesus, and recognizes Him as his head, is he not as much a member of the one body as he ever was. Should we not rejoice in his fidelity to our precious Lord rather than whining and making trouble for his family.

Our fathers may set forth principles of religion which they deem to be worthy, and while we are young they may take our bodies to the place where they worship, but in the final analysis we shall be judged, not by what they thought God meant, but by what He said. And here we must reason with God as individuals, for we shall be judged in that manner. Is not the whole purpose of the faith to develop in each of us a certain kind of character? Is it merely the recital of empty liturgy, the grinding out of ritual which may be, meaningless to us. And when we see the kind of character or lifestyle in evidence, may we not conclude that Christ is there?

A man and a maid decide to form a union, and in marriage they create a social unit called a home, or family. It was the first such unit created by God and received His blessing. Over this unit the husband and father is the head. But this gives him no rights or prerogatives in the spiritual realm. “He shall cleave to his wife and they shall be *one flesh*.” “But he that is joined to the Lord is *one spirit*” (1 Cor. 6:17). “The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife” (1 Cor. 7:4). To which it may be added that neither one has any jurisdiction over the spirit of the other. “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth” (Rom. 14:4).

In the dim and distant past I have heard parents say, "I would rather follow my daughter to the grave than see her married to a Baptist." Sometimes it was to a member of the Christian Church, although it was generally the Baptists, because there were a lot more of them. This is the bitter and vitriolic language of sectarianism which intrudes itself into the most sacred relationships of life. It creates barriers and walls where there should be none. It makes a wife unable to respond to the caresses of her husband whom she regards as an alien in spite of his dedication. She fears to give herself fully to him, lest she prove untrue to her father and mother, and the way in which she was reared.

Marriage is too sacred to make it into a tug-of-war to see which one can proselyte the other. It might astound one to realize how many divorces have resulted from the party spirit carried into marriage. It might be still more amazing how many couples have given up on religion, to the utter impoverishment of their children who so desperately need Jesus as a focal point of life. He could be their shadow of a rock in a weary land. Almost every frightful drift in our day has resulted from loosening our grip upon Jesus and the erosion of our faith. It is natural for a ship to drift aimlessly when it has slipped its hawser and is no longer moored to anything solid. We have already paid dearly for that work of the flesh — the party spirit — but we shall pay even more dearly. "They that do such things shall not inherit eternal life."

It should be a source of comfort to us to realize that no one else can control or manipulate our spirits. Many are exercised in conscience, because, as they grow older, they find their thought pattern differing from that of their parents. They suffer inner pangs of chastisement because they are torn between loyalty to the belief of the parents and fidelity toward God. But no parent can form a code of spiritual conviction for his offspring. He can teach what commends itself to him to be the truth, he can exemplify his teaching by his conduct, but he cannot tyrannize the minds and hearts of his children.

Wise parents will teach their children to love truth for truth's sake; they will encourage them as they develop, to seek and search for truth as the chief aim in life. They will make such amendments and adjustments in their own thinking as are necessary to conform to newly discovered truth, and freely admit their past errors to their children. Thus will be produced emotionally mature children who will not hesitate to adopt truth, regardless of the cost.

It is the truth that makes men free. But for truth to accomplish this it must be free, and not shackled by human dogmatism or political pressure. A veil upon the heart in approaching God's revelation will shut out the light of truth, as effectively as a window shade while drawn will exclude the light of the sun. This is the problem of our Jewish friends today. Their heart is not turned to God, but to a defense of Judaism. They fear to depart from the traditions of their fathers. "But whenever the heart of the nation shall have turned to the Lord, the veil will be withdrawn. Now by 'the Lord' is meant the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, freedom is enjoyed" (2 Cor. 3:16, 17).

Those who are in the Christ have been called unto freedom (Gal. 5:13). They are exhorted to be free men (1 Peter 2:16). Even a slave, whose body was purchased by an earthly master was still free. "For a Christian, if he was a slave when called, is the Lord's freed man" (1 Cor. 7:22). His body still belonged to a master, but his spirit was free in Christ. "You have all been redeemed at

infinite cost: *do not become slaves to men*. Where each one stood when he was called, there, brethren, let him still stand — *close to God*” (1 Cor. 7:24).

There is the big problem of the ages! Men are not content to let him stand where he stood when he was called. They must mould, shape and alter him to fit their pattern. If he does not do so, they conclude he does not belong to God, because he will not bow to them. After he is called they will work him over, and make him conform to their pattern — Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian — or dare I say it? What is the answer to all of this. It is the words of scripture, “*Do not become slaves to men — stand close to Christ.*”

Ever since the day Christ set men free, there has been a constant struggle to maintain that freedom. In a less enlightened era, the rope, the stake, the cross, the rack, and the whip were employed to torture the bodies of men to bring their consciences and opinions in line with the orthodox religious views which prevailed. In these days men employ more exquisite means of torture, such as ridicule, malignant whispering, misrepresentation, lying and boycott. The same spirit which lighted the fires of Smithfield, and prompted the Spanish Inquisition, motivated the “powers that be” at Freed-Hardeman College to arrest Leroy Garrett and cast him into a filthy jail cell, because he would not conform. He was treated as all dissenters are treated when they cannot be answered.

But we cannot bring the hearts of men into subjection by force or tyranny. Even atheistic communism learned that lesson in Hungary! We are limited in our attempts to change the minds of men, by the very nature of Christianity, to reason and persuasion. Christ’s spirit must be equally dear and honored, no matter where it is manifested. To confine God’s love or his good Spirit to any party, sect, or name, is to sin against the fundamental law of the Kingdom of God. It is to break that living bond with Christ’s universal church which is one of our chief helps to perfection.

Charity and sincerity are characteristics of the true religion and it must utterly disown bitterness and hypocrisy. These things must not once be named among us. They are unworthy of Jesus and unworthy of His followers. These are the weapons in the arsenal of false and vain religion, which must deceive where it cannot persuade, and force where it cannot deceive. Of what good are abuse, ranting, cavilling and misrepresentation? Can we adjust the hearts of men with a wrench as we would tighten a resistant lug or bolt? Can we use the thumbscrew on the mental processes and force them into a certain mode of thought.

Is not an error in thinking a species of intellectual lameness? Will such lameness in another hurt me any more than if he had a crooked leg or a deformed arm? Will a wild opinion do me any more injury than a wild look out of his eye? Why should I become so enraged or provoked by his internal defects any more than his external ones? Shall I try to force every cripple I meet to walk as I do, by twisting his deformed leg, or shall I not rather lead him to the physician and surgeon of my acquaintance who can straighten the crooked member? And how shall I regard him during the straightening process — with sympathy and charity, or as an object of my spite and ridicule?

I must maintain the dignity of every man's spirit. To do otherwise is to reflect against me and not against him. I cannot force another to grovel and kneel before me without first losing my own dignity. I must defend his right to think, reason and act for himself, or establish the principle by which I will lose my own right to do so. If I fail to see in my enemy the image of God, though defiled and shattered, I shall fail to restore myself to that image. One who is egotistic, proud, arrogant, conceited and boastful, and who feels that God belongs exclusively to him, reveals he does not yet belong to God.

These are the sins I fain
Would have Thee take away;
Malice and cold disdain,
Hot anger, sullen hate,
Scorn of the lowly, envy of the great,
And discontent that casts a shadow gray
On all the brightness of the common day.

Chapter 10

Wild Grapes

Have you ever read the song of the vineyard by Isaiah (5:1-7). It is a portrayal of God's disappointment with his people. It demonstrates how little esteemed are the blessings which heaven bestows. The Lord planted his vineyard in a fertile hillside. He fenced it for protection; gathered out the stones, thus removing obstacles and impediments; planted it with the choicest vines; constructed a tower for guarding it; and made a winepress in anticipation of the fruit. But when the time of vintage arrived it consisted of bitter and acrid wild grapes.

The vineyard was the house of Israel. The men of Judah were the pleasant plants. From them God expected to glean a harvest of justice and righteousness. Instead he received only oppression and strife. The lament of the husbandman is thus recorded: "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

God's great disillusionment with his people is aptly portrayed in Psalm 80, where David makes a statement and asks him questions. God brought a vine out of Egypt. He drove out the nations and planted it. He cleared the ground for it, and it took deep root and overspread the land. The mountains were covered with its shade. The mighty cedars were protected under its branches. Then the question is asked why its walls were broken down so that even the casual pedestrian could pluck its fruit. The boar from the field ravaged it and all that move in the field feed on it.

Now for the application. After the congregation of God was given two great wings like an eagle, and fled into the wilderness, to be nourished by God in the secret recesses of the heart for more than twelve centuries, the time came when under the intrepid leadership of Wycliffe, Tyndale, Luther and Huss, as well as other noble souls who loved not their lives unto death, the veil which had eclipsed the face of truth was slowly lifted. As the word of God began to have free circulation, however, men followed leaders and thinkers of great ability, who sought to codify their interpretations and make them the basis of fellowship and salvation. Thus the work of the reformers crystallized in the formation of a group of intolerant schismatic sects, the adherents of which battled against each other with a fury unsurpassed by even the papal dogmatists.

Then, after the commencement of the nineteenth century, and in the midst of the Second Great Awakening, began a movement which seemed destined to sweep the world for Christ. It was launched by men of deep conviction who were affiliated with various sects. It did not begin in America. The fire first burned in the bosoms of honest individuals in Ireland and Scotland. But it was in this new land where there was no establishment of religion, where men were reaching, grasping, seeking and searching for new homes, new fortunes and liberty, that a fertile hillside was created for planting the new reformation vineyard. Here where men were free to think, free to speak, free to act, to question, challenge and dispute, it seemed that providence had combined her talents to provide the proper setting for the great drama of the ages.

The choicest vines were planted. Persons of noble character, high ideals and brilliant intellects, abandoning the parties of which they were members, resolved to be no longer partisan defenders,

but to use their talents and fortunes to advance the cause of the absent King to whom they declared allegiance. They did not seek to unChristianize others. They recognized all truth regardless of who held it; they rejoiced that Christ was preached regardless of who proclaimed Him. They opposed error but loved all men; they sought to maintain even the human dignity of an opponent. They did not “stoop to conquer.”

It was not their idea to plant another church. Instead, men of various sects formed themselves into “a religious association under the denomination of the Christian Association of Washington, for the sole purpose of promoting simple evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men.” They were chiefly Presbyterian, but were joined by some Methodists and a few Baptists. One could still worship where he was affiliated and remain a member of the association.

Article IV of their constitution declared, “That this Society by no means considers itself a Church, nor does at all assume to itself the powers peculiar to such a society; nor do the members, as such, consider themselves as standing connected in that relation; nor as at all associated for the peculiar purposes of Church association; but merely as voluntary advocates for Church reformation; and as possessing the powers common to all individuals, who may please to associate in a peaceable and orderly manner, for any lawful purpose, namely the disposal of their time, counsel and property, as they may see cause.”

To further their “lawful purpose” they composed a “Declaration and Address” to share their thinking with “all that love our Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity, throughout all the Churches.” One part of it said, “Dearly beloved brethren, why should we deem it a thing incredible that the Church of Christ, in this highly favored country, should resume that original unity, peace, and purity which belong to its constitution, and constitute its glory? Or, is there anything that can justly be deemed necessary for this desirable purpose, both to conform to the model and practice of the primitive Church, expressly exhibited in the New Testament? Whatever alterations this might produce in any or in all of the Churches, should, we think neither be deemed inadmissible. Surely such alteration would be every way for the better, and not for the worse, unless we should suppose the divinely inspired rule to be faulty, or defective. Were we, then, in our Church constitutions and managements, to exhibit a complete conformity to the apostolic Church, would we not be, in that respect, as perfect as Christ intended we should be? And should not this suffice us?”

Seldom did two of them agree in all points. They held widely divergent views as to the work of the Spirit, the functions of grace, the nature of man, the subject of future judgment and the problem of eternal punishment. But they conceived that Christ was greater than their personal views, and they tolerated the divergences of opinion, believing that to make of an opinion a test of fellowship, would only create two diverse parties, and they had too recently fled from partisan division to the city of refuge.

They built into their Declaration and Address the necessary safeguards to prevent division. Consider this: “That although inferences and deductions from scriptural premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God’s holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians further than they perceive the connection, and evidently see

that they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore, no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the Church. Hence, it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the Church's confession."

In a practical sense, it was observed by Alexander Campbell: "But men cannot give up their opinions, and therefore, they can never unite, says one. We do not ask them to give up their opinions: — we ask them only not to impose them upon others. Let them hold their opinions, but let them hold them as private property. The faith is public property; opinions are, and always have been private property. Men have foolishly attempted to make the deductions of some great minds the common measure of all Christians. Hence the deductions of a Luther, and a Calvin, and a Wesley, have been the rule and measure of all who coalesce under the names of these leaders. It is cruel to excommunicate a man because of the imbecility of his intellect."

It was not long until there came an opportunity to apply the principle to see if it would work. Aylette Raines, who preached that all men would be eventually restored without exception, applied for membership in the Association which also sheltered the Campbells. Thomas and Alexander Campbell were present at the meeting where Jacob Orsborne brought the matter formally before the gathering and asked that it be definitely and finally settled. Thomas Campbell, after expressing profound regret that such matters would have to be introduced, said: "Brother Raines has been with me the last several months and we have fully unbosomed ourselves to each other. He is philosophically a Restorationist and I am a Calvinist, but notwithstanding this difference between us, I would put my right hand into the fire and have it burned off, before I would hold up my hands against him. And from all I know of Brother Raines, if I were Paul, I would have him in preference to any young man of my acquaintance, to be my Timothy."

The very sound of such a plea fell like welcome rain upon a parched earth. The religious world was jaded and jaundiced. The petty bickerings and fierce antagonisms of the sectarian world had driven many to skepticism and infidelity. The plea that all who recognized the sovereignty of Jesus could be one in him, and no one surrender any truth he ever held, was one to rally the thinking hearts. It appeared that simple as Christianity. Some believed it was a millennial harbinger.

What happened to the powerful movement to restore the ancient order and to unite all believers in the Christ? As it was in the days of Isaiah, it has come to pass again. In spite of all that heaven did in behalf of the vineyard, it is producing wild grapes, bitter, acrid, poisonous with venom and hate. The noble effort of the giants of yesteryear has been diverted by men of pygmy stature into an excuse for civil and fratricidal strife which makes it a laughingstock to the world. Those who know it best make sport of it. The restoration movement which proposed to unite all in Christ is now shattered into more than two dozen warring factions, each of which proclaims itself to be the bride of the Messiah, and all of which are contesting the provisions of His will before the court of human opinion.

That you may savor just how wild are the grapes we have produced, let us mention but a case or two by way of illustration. The Son of God left the community of saints a feast of fellowship, by

which the citizens are to proclaim His death until He has returned. All who are sealed unto God are to participate in unity of purpose. “We are all one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.” But the children have fallen out with each other and because the Lord has delayed His coming, they have taken to smiting each other. The very expression of unity and fellowship of the one body have been made one of the most frightful causes of division and disfellowship.

Think of it! Men have divided over whether the bread which represents his body shall be leavened or unleavened; whether it should be prepared with oil or some other ingredient; whether it should be passed whole; whether it should be made of wheat or some other grain. Congregations have actually been rent asunder over whether the fruit of the vine should be fermented or not; whether it should be passed in one container, several, or many. Here is the spirit of intolerance and the love for factionism gone to seed. And when factionism exists in the hearts of the members, it does not make any difference how they partake of the elements — *it is not the Lord’s Supper*. When a congregation is filled with the party spirit, until the members eye each other with disdain and suspicion, they need not be concerned about how they prepare or pass the emblems for they are an abomination unto God when they pretend to communion with him and hate their brethren.

The one who died in agony for my sins has bound me to eat the bread and drink the cup in memory of him until he comes. When I sit down at the table with the saints, I shall not scrutinize or examine the bread to see if it is leavened or unleavened, or made with oil or not. I am not told to examine the bread. I am told to examine myself that my motive in participating be without reproach. I shall not concern myself with how it is broken and how it is passed. I am told to eat the bread and thus share in his death. Regardless of the grain from which the flour was made, whether there is yeast in it or not, it is bread, sanctified by the giving of thanks to its purpose and I shall seek to discern the Lord’s body, rather than trying to discern what my brethren are thinking.

I know that factionalism is sinful! It is a work of the flesh. To build a party around a type of bread, or a manner of presenting it is a sin! A man may have scruples as to the type of bread. I should recognize them in the community of saints, and out of love should determine to keep from offense of my brother. It is a sin for either of us to build a party so that the body will be rent into a “leavened Party” and an “unleavened party.” And that goes for the cup of the Lord. There is no such thing in Christ as “multiple cups churches” and “one-cuppers.” These terms represent divisions created by men.

They are semantical, divisions of vernacular, and they belong to the vocabulary of narrow, intolerant, factional spirits. They are disgraceful and sinful. Those who love the Lord should purify their hearts of the attitude which creates such unscriptural verbiage so that they may purge their tongues and pens of such language. We are disappointing God with our wild grapes of hate, bitterness and the party spirit. God help us to rise above the schisms we have created.

Chapter 11

Fear of Love

It was while he was sitting on the hill that day, with his disciples gathered around, that Jesus opened his mouth and taught them. What he was saying seemed almost casual. Too casual. Yet those who heard and took it to heart would never be the same again. Not with the second mile lifestyle! But it was the freewheeling, uninhibited and unrestricted love which made the real difference. This put the finger on the Grade A, number one problem of the whole world. It created for us an opportunity to compromise and try to cover up by explaining away what He said, so that the guilt of the excuse actually became greater than our frightful tampering with his teaching.

“For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” That separates the men from the boys. It also separates the righteous from the wicked. Of course there is nothing wrong with loving those who love you. That isn’t the point. It’s loving *only* those who love you, when there are a lot more people in the world who need loving and need it desperately. Some of them are quite loveless. Some are real problems — sticky problems. Even tax collectors, social outcasts shunned by polite society, and given the brush-off by nice people, love those who love them. No one can file claim for a reward for acting like a tax collector.

“And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?” What about one who does not even want to salute his brethren? One who slips out of the side door or goes down the other side of the street, to keep from meeting and greeting certain ones? It is implied that disciples of Jesus should do more than others. They should be more friendly, more hospitable, more generous, and more kind. They should be less egotistical, less selfish. Merely coming up to the standard of the Gentiles is not enough. To greet only your brethren is still to fall short. It is to miss the mark! The love that Jesus commanded is as wide as the ocean, as boundless as eternity, and as high as the heavens. It is not peanut-sized, and is bigger than life.

In the face of such teaching all else becomes secondary. Differences in social standing, dress style, ethnic background, race, all fade into oblivion. The things which loom so great in our sight, which become such frightful barriers to fraternization are swept away by Him who taught us to love the evil and the good man, to become children of the Father which is in heaven. Every person on earth needs to be loved and appreciated. Everyone needs to be shown courtesy, be given a greeting, and be warmly received.

We live in an age of frustration, disappointment, and discouragement. In a land of plenty men are not satisfied; living in luxury and physical comfort they are not at ease. Our educational institutions are filled to overflowing, but so are our courts for juvenile criminals. In spite of the numerous organizations dedicated to mental hygiene and social welfare, there are more neurotics and insane than at any time in our history. A symptom of our times is found in the tremendous upsurge of publications dealing with how to attain peace of mind, and the variety of suggestions is so great, and often so contradictory, as to upset the minds of some who were relatively at

peace. The manufacturers of sedatives, tranquilizing drugs and barbiturates are having a field day. America has one big headache and hangover. She is paying the price for insecurity.

In this state of crisis what contributions are being made to the welfare of humanity by believers in the Messiah? When He came personally into the world it was in much the same state as now, except that wars had been ended by the sway of a universal empire. The very extremity of man was an opportunity for God. The sun of righteousness beamed brighter because of the darkness of slavery, corruption, degradation, immorality and suicide of the world. If ever Christianity should be able to exhibit itself to the greatest advantage, it is under such conditions as presently obtain. Instead, the nominal disciples of the Master, seem actually to be enlarging the problem rather than providing a solution. The moral defections of those reared under Christian influence, the nervous and mental breakdowns suffered, constitute an alarming barometer of unhealthy attitudes.

It is high time that we awake out of sleep! The expenditure of effort to promote factionism and hate will take its toll of wrecked minds and sick bodies as certainly as we now live. Hate and fear are toxic poisons. They will kill as certainly as arsenic or strychnine! Many of my own brethren are the most unhappy people on the earth today. They are gloomy, morose, and despondent. They are fearful and unbelieving! They are worried and scared! They are spiritually sick! Many who put on an outward show of gay spirits are troubled with worries, jealousy and envy. They cannot save the world, because they have nothing real to offer it. What would be the gain for men to leave the world where they have been fighting their enemies to come in the church and start fighting their brethren?

Why is it that Christianity does not arouse the vibrant passions, kindle and enflame the spirit, and surcharge men with the thrill and joy that the first believers experienced? It is because men persevere in right actions and service to others, merely through force of habit, or because of social consciousness, or to escape from the brooding thoughts engendered by an imperious conscience. It is the lack of a guiding principle which poisons the springs of happiness in action, and makes life dull and spiritless.

The guiding principle of Christianity is *love!* But it is not love for a particular race, nationality, faction, congregation, segment, or group. It is love for mankind not for a certain kind of man. To be children of God implies more than entering into a relationship with God; it entails the responsibility of growing Godlike in character. But "God is love!" The expression of that love was universal, "God so loved *the world.*" God had wisdom and power, but we are not told that God is wisdom and power. His was a divine philanthropy. He loved men because they were men, made in his image. "But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us ..." (Titus 3:4, 5).

It is an amazing thing that under the guise of religion we are being taught today to *not love men!* The human heart was made to love. But it cannot retain a vacuum. If love is educated out of it, hate will rush in to fill it. Love is the most powerful, vital and active force in the universe. It is world-shaking and revolutionary. Nothing can stand before the application of its full potential.

But a universal love for mankind is designated sentimentality, it is ridiculed, scoffed at, belittled even by those who profess to be children of that God who is love.

We are urged to love our group, our race, our church our nationality, our sect. We are afraid to love all men. To do so will upset our “little world” of security. It will make us vulnerable. We will be turned out of our little nest we have woven about ourselves. The churches of our land are employed to foster prejudice and animosity “in the name of Christ.” We are taught to have nothing to do with Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists, Jews, Moslems, Buddhists or Negroes. All of these are caught up in the human predicament. Each one is treading a path toward the grave.

God loves everyone of these. He sent His Son to die for them. The Son came among those who hated him. He ate with publicans and sinners. He visited in the homes of Pharisees. He touched lepers and the unclean. He forgave the woman caught in the very act of adultery. But we are told not to visit people who differ with us. We are instructed to keep away from them. They are not “faithful.” We are! So our physicians are ministering to “the well.” We have no sick among us. We do not really love the spiritually sick. If you want our love and service, you will have to get well. You must not be a problem.

Have you ever heard our brethren try to explain Matthew 5:43-48? Then, have you ever watched them try to put it into practice?

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, *that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.*” Love! Bless! Do good! Only by this means can you be the children of God. Jesus came to reveal God as a “servant-God.” When the apostles were arguing heatedly about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom, Jesus arose from supper and girded himself with a towel and washed their feet. He accepted the role of a servant.

The world of mankind is divided into friend or foe as respects relationship to each of us. Every person I meet falls in one or the other of these categories. There are some who love us and some who hate us. There are some who bless us and others who curse us. But both are men and if we love mankind as such, we will have no problem of loving the various categories within the human realm. God made us men, but we have made various things of ourselves. We should love men because God made them, and in spite of what they have made of themselves.

Celsus, who was a bitter critic of the early Christians, and the target of apologies written by Origen, said, “These Christians love each other even before they are acquainted.” If I am a true child of my Father, I shall desire and yearn for every man to be my brother. Man was created in God’s image, and in whatever respect he has lost that image I must help him repair or regain it. He did not shatter that image because he was a Jew, a Negro, or a Japanese. Sin antedated the advent of racial differences. In the attempt to help one regain the spiritual image of God, I am not to see him as a Jew, Japanese, or Negro, but as man. “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.”

One of Jimmy Dolittle's flyers after spending many months in a dirty prison camp, where he was brutalized, said: "They were ignorant and mean, but we thought there was some good in them. The only way to develop that goodness was by understanding and education — not by brutally mistreating them as they did us. You can smile if you want to, but it made sense to me in that prison camp, and it still does. So I am going to a missionary school for training, and then I am going to return to Japan and spend the rest of my life there, teaching the importance of love among men."

Henry W. Shaw said, "Love looks through a telescope, envy through a microscope." To restrict our love to those who agree with us on some points of religion, is to deny at once the very basic element of Christianity, the equal and infinite value of every human soul. To love all men is actually looked upon as a sign of weakness. The truth is that it takes a strong man to really love his enemies. Weak men hate, despise and feel envy. Cowards are jealous, embittered and distrustful. Love makes one vulnerable. It exposes his very being to exploitation. When Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," he was meek, but he was not weak.

Those who are afraid to love all, may actually love no one. It is observable that those who cannot love all men, end up by disliking most men. Those who would restrict their love to their own brethren, do not even love those brethren, and will backbite, undermine and seek to destroy them. It is amazing that through the years those who have not learned to love, and who censure a deep affection for others than those with whom they associate, will divide those associates, and soon will not love even a part of them.

Tertullian was the first important Christian writer in Latin. He was born in Carthage, the son of a Roman centurion. He studied law and actually practiced in Rome. It was while there that he became a convert to the faith. In his *De Oratore* he wrote, "Do we suppose that we can approach the god of peace without being ourselves men of peace? Can we ask for forgiveness of sin with our own hearts full of hatred? How can the Father who condemns anger, receive us if he sees us full of spleen against our brother? It is not only anger that the Christian man should abjure, but everything that may hinder his prayers. He should breathe a spirit in harmony with him into whose presence he comes. The God whose spirit is holiness and joy and liberty, cannot receive a soul defiled, angry, or enslaved. Opposites cannot meet, without sympathy, no relation is possible."

Our problem is not so much of having love dwell in us, as it is of our dwelling in love, as a state. God who made all men, cannot live in a heart that hates any man. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Dwelling in love means that it forms the world in which the Christian abides. He eats love, drinks it and breathes it. He has no life aside from love. No man can say he is like God whose love is partisan, national or racial. "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world." Many bold blatant race-haters will be sniveling cowards in the day of judgment. There can be no boldness when they are stripped naked and are seen as they truly are.

Paul begins with man and his misery. He talks about him in his wretchedness. He speaks of him under condemnation. But John begins with God and His perfection. God is the Absolute Being. He is the Great I Am, whom no eye hath seen or can see. All perfection dwells in Him. He is at

once life, light and love. He is the inexhaustible source of life the sole principle of everything that is. John gives us a concrete notion of His moral goodness when He says that God is love. Love is not only a manifestation of His being. It is His very essence.

Love is so assuredly the absolute truth, that he who loveth is of the truth. When the inspired record says, "Hereby we know that we are of the truth" it is because the preceding verse says, "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." When love is reduced to its essence it is truth, and that truth in the absolute is a person. It is God. How silly it is for feeble man whose mind can only comprehend so much to say there is no absolute truth. How foolish it is for him to try and walk as if that were so and he was left to guide himself without chart or compass.

Truth is all that God is. To be of the truth is to be born of God, to possess Him, to be what he is. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him. "We know that we have crossed the frontier from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." Every person on this earth who is born of God and knows God is my brother. If I allow sectarian walls to be built and separate me from him I am a murderer and there is no eternal life abiding in me. I must seek out, search out and recognize all who are the children of God and I must love them, or I will suffer the fate of those who do not confess Him. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

The lever which will move the world to Christ is love. Regardless of how pure your doctrine will be, it will repel, instead of compel, when set forth in bigotry, intolerance and animosity. Even though you may divest yourself of everything, sell all your possessions and distribute them to the poor, it will avail nothing without love. If you consign your body to the flames and allow persecutors to fasten you to the stake and reduce your mortal frame to ashes, and have not love, it will only be burning flesh unless it is done in love for Him "who loved us and gave Himself for us." No one can be forced to accept Jesus Christ. You cannot drive men nor compel them. You cannot argue nor debate them into the new relationship which is eternal life.

The real test of faith in the Christ is the reformation worked in your own life. "For we ourselves also were at one time foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." We must learn to see ourselves thus. We must quit trying to make it appear that we were guiltless and admit our guilt. We must make it apparent to all that we have changed. We have heard the call of the shepherd. We have heard the voice of our Lord. Now we have become associates of the Father and the Son, purveyors of love unlimited.

Jeremy Taylor said, "Love is the greatest thing that God can give us, for himself is love; and it is the greatest thing we can give to God, for it will also give ourselves, and carry with it all that is ours. The apostle calls it the bond of perfection; it is the old, the new, and the great commandment and all of the commandments for it is the fulfilling of the whole law. It does the work of all the other graces without any instrument but its own immediate virtue."

Chapter 12

Waging Peace

The word for peace in the old covenant scriptures is *shalom*. It literally means “wholeness.” It is the original used in Joshua 8:30, 31. “Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in mount Ebal. As Moses the servant of the Lord commanded the children of Israel, as it is commanded in the book of the Law of Moses, an altar of *whole stones*, over which no man hath lift up any iron; and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings.” The stones were *shalom*, because they were unhewn. They remained whole as in their natural state.

It was used in Nehemiah 6:15 where the wall was completed. “So the wall was *finished* in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days.” To finish means to make whole. In the Septuagint Version *shalom* is often rendered *soteria*, salvation which means “to restore to wholeness.” The terms saved and made whole are used interchangeably in the new covenant scriptures. “And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace” (Luke 7:50). “And he said unto her, “Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace” (Luke 8:48).

Sin has shattered the personality. It has fragmented man. It is as if a beautiful vase had been struck with a rock or other foreign object and left in pieces. Then someone comes and with the eye and hand of a master craftsman puts the pieces together again and restores the vase to its former state. The vase cannot save itself. It has to be saved. It is dependent upon a power from without. The intimate relationship between peace and salvation is important to any proper understanding of our trust in God.

In the revelation of God peace seldom is used to describe what happens with the cessation of hostilities or the signing of a truce. It is not mere absence of war. Its lack is characterized by a breakdown of personal relationships with Jesus. “For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” These are strong ties by nature. Anything which disrupts them must also be powerful. One of the proofs of the magnetic power of Jesus is his effect upon the natural ties of the flesh. He transcends all such. “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

Peace is the restoration of those broken relationships through Jesus. Just as the relationships of life break down because of attitudes toward Jesus so they are restored by an attitude toward Him. “There is no peace, saith the Lord unto the wicked” (Isa. 48:22). His very coming was announced by “a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace toward men of goodwill.” He said, “These things have I spoken unto you, that *in me* ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Peter declared to the household of Cornelius that “the word of God was sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace *by Jesus Christ* (he is Lord of all)” (Acts 10:36). Our peace is not a written agreement. It is not a signed document. It is not a creedal statement. It is not a book of ethical precepts or legal commandments. It is a person, a divine person who came to share the lot of us all. “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us” (Eph. 2:14). He did not demand that the circumcised become uncircumcised. He did not demand that the uncircumcised become circumcised. He simply removed the wall between — *so making peace!*

Jesus is the great wall-wrecker between men. Just as he removed what seemed to be an insuperable wall between Jew and Gentile, so he labors to remove every wall between the believers today. As he used the cross then, so he uses it now. It was by the cross that he reconciled two divergent peoples unto God in one body. It is by the same instrument that he effects the same thing in our day. As men cease to emphasize their opinions and interpretations and exalt the cross of Jesus they see their differences disappear. No one can exalt an opinion or a man unless he denigrates Jesus, or places him in an inferior role.

Those who were sometimes afar off were made nigh by the blood of Christ. It was not by adoption of a rite which had no relevance in Christ. At the same time the blood made us near it wiped out everything which alienated and made us afar off. It purged away our alienation. We became fitly framed *together*. We were builded *together*. It is that togetherness we are to keep in the bond of peace. To break it up would nullify the work of the cross. It would count the blood of the covenant wherewith we were sanctified an unholy thing.

Peace within begins with our justification. And justification means to declare one sinless and to treat him thus. It does not mean that he is sinless, for no man could ever qualify. But God, by His abundant grace, can reckon us as such, and do so freely, for the scripture says “we are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24). And the ground of our justification is faith, absolute unresolved trust in the merit of His blood. This is “the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all who believe” (Rom. 3:22).

One can never know that absolute and perfect peace within as long as he has a conscience laden with guilt. With remorse for his past sins gnawing away at him, internally, with constant uneasiness as to whether he has been forgiven, with the fear of death before his eyes, he will not only chastise himself within, but will lash out at others about him. He will be of all men most miserable. He will isolate himself from his best friends and make enemies of those who love him. All of the troubles, all of the aches and pains for the body of Christ have been caused by those who did not believe they were justified, and who try to project their guilt toward others.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Man is aware of the fact that he is a sinner. As such, he is drawn by the lusts of the flesh. He fulfills all the desires of the flesh and of the mind. He is a child of wrath. He is an enemy of God and alienated from Him. In this frightful state God, who is rich in mercy and filled with great love, lets down a rope which man can grasp, and he is raised up from an otherwise hopeless condition. He must be reconciled to God, and the death of His Son makes this possible. By faith

in that tremendous act of history, the most momentous thing which has ever occurred in the annals of this world, man is restored to a proper relationship with God.

He becomes a part of the new humanity. He is a new creation. Old things pass away. All things become new. He is at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He stands in the grace of God. He rejoices in the hope of the glory of God. And everything falls into proper perspective. Tribulations, patience, experience, hope. He is dead to the past in Christ. He lives only in Jesus. He has no time for anger, wrath and malice. Hatred is foreign to his new way of existence. He is delivered from plotting the downfall of others.

The word *eirene*, the Greek word for peace, occurs in every book of the new covenant scriptures except 1 John. In every instance but one, in the Authorized Version it is rendered by "peace." It signifies that state of harmonious relationship attained by acceptance of the grace of God. It is active, not static. It is aggressive, not latent. It is from God, who is frequently called the God of peace. It is from Christ who is called the Lord of peace (2 Thess. 3:16). To be in perfect peace is to be whole and complete. It is to be saved, in the very fullness of that term.

The religious world is in turmoil. Believers in the Lord Jesus are fractured into hundreds of warring camps. The partisans in these splinter groups are often filled with bitterness and hatred. They have carried over into the Kingdom their previous dispositions. "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by men and hating one another" (Titus 3:3). They are acting as if the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior had never appeared, and as if He had never saved us. All of this is contrary to the will of the Father. It is opposed to the prayer of Jesus. But the condition exists and it is useless to deny it. What should be the attitude of one who deeply loves the Christ and his fellowmen, as respects the problem of disunity and strife?

It would seem that his course is clearly outlined in the new covenant scriptures. First, he must recognize the party spirit for what it is. It is a work of the flesh. It will debar one who practices it from inheritance in the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19). This will eliminate the possibility of mistaking a desire for unity for mere ambition to build up a party. Secondly, he must actively engage in the attempt to promote peace. He must be a *peacemaker* if he would be called a son of God (Matt. 5:9). He cannot be indifferent, unconcerned or unmoved by the rents in the body of the Christ. He dare not withdraw into the castle and snap and snarl at those who are actively engaged in trying to do something. He must seek to promote harmony or forfeit his right to be called a son of God.

In the third place he must recognize that peace is not an accident. Unity is not a chance happening. Peace must be sought and pursued (1 Peter 3:11). It is a fruit of the Spirit which is reaped by those who sow the seed (James 3:18). Not only must peace be planted, but it must be tended. It must be fertilized. It must be cultivated and nourished. It must be aimed at. It cannot be hit upon by those who wave their weapon aimlessly and pull the trigger. "Aim at righteousness, faith, love, and *peace*, along with those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart." A state of division exists. It is contrary to God's will. We are charged with bringing about unity. Unity is the result of purposeful planning. It is never accidental. It follows then

that true children of God must have a definite, positive approach to this problem, and they must be working on it.

We must not think we can be saved by maintaining the status quo. If a man is struck by an automobile in front of my house, I cannot shrug it off by saying that none of my immediate family are hurt, therefore, it is no concern of mine; nor can I be justified by criticizing the methods of help used by my neighbors. So it is while the body of Christ lies bleeding and broken. I cannot excuse myself by saying it does not affect my congregation or group, nor will I be justified by sitting in an ivory tower complaining that the bandages and remedies applied by others are inadequate and useless. What am I doing to bring peace to this troubled world. I must face this question some day. I want to face it now. It is not a question for the “sweet bye and bye.” It is a question for the “now and now.” Peace will reign in the world to come. But will it reign in this present evil world?

Peace must be waged! Some men wage war and endure hardship, privation and suffering to attain their objectives. Yet war is hell, according to one of the great generals of the past. By the same token peace is heaven. What am I willing to sacrifice as a soldier for peace, with a part of my uniform the footgear of the preparation of the gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15)? Can I slog along across No Man’s Land, wading through mud and gore, seeking my objective? Or will I stay in General Headquarters and play it safe? The soldier for peace must make himself vulnerable.

Can I continue the campaign if others mistake my motives, seek to undermine the strategy of peace, misrepresent what I say, and hate me for not hating others? Can I endure it to be called a rebel, a heretic and a traitor? These are all terms in the vocabulary of the factionalist. Can I endure the long hours of study, the absence from loved ones, and the constant pressure? That all depends upon whether the Cause in which I have enlisted is a passing fancy, a shimmering delusion, or a real and consuming passion.

If I am dedicated to the Christ, crucified to the world and sanctified by the Spirit, then “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself.” The disunity, bitterness, party spirit and division which exist today have come from the seeds of animosity and hatred, planted in fertile soil by our forefathers. They separated from one another in their anger and fed the growing atmosphere of distrust by their stubbornness. Shall we continue to walk in the same weary rut like a blind horse on a treadmill? Will we bequeath to our children and grandchildren a granary stored with the seed of distrust and malice? If peace is a fruit it cannot be gathered until men prepare the soil and sow the seed. Shall I not leave a heritage of working for peace? Shall I not show them the gate leading to blessing, rather than to death?

How can peace be waged? Perhaps we have *practiced* disunity so long we do not know how to *plead* for unity. I will venture to state a few convictions which I feel must be a part of the strategy for peace. Peace must be waged in love. “If there is ... any incentive of love ... complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (Phil. 2:1, 2). Love is the incentive to unity and not vice versa. We do not love each other because we are of the same mind; we come to be of the same mind because we love each other. It is not unity which promotes love, but love which promotes unity. “If you love those who love you, what reward have you?” (Matt. 5:46). I must begin, continue and finish in love.

It is inconceivable that I would mistreat, abuse, or take unfair advantage of someone whom I love. Therefore if one differs with me upon matters relating to the service of God, I must make a difference between the person and what he advocates. Jesus died for him. He may not have died for what he argues. It will help me to realize that he is sincere about what he says although I may deem it to be in error. He cannot say anything else if he really believes it. I cannot suggest unity based upon the sacrifice of honestly-held conviction. I can receive him while mentally rejecting what he assumes is correct.

I must listen to what he says, weighing it carefully and dispassionately, always acceding to what is truth, and then, in kindness, reasoning with him, on points of disagreement. It is quite sectarian to imagine that he is wrong upon everything because he is mistaken about some things. My first task should be to see where we can agree, rather than to ferret out areas of disagreement. We can stand together upon anything that both of us conceive of as truth. And from that we can reason toward greater agreement upon other matters.

Under no circumstance must I sacrifice principle in order to have the good will of men. However, I must distinguish between those things that are basic and essential to a relationship unto God and those matters which are incidental. “It is my prayer that your love may be more and more accompanied by clear knowledge and keen perception, for testing things that differ, so that you may be men of transparent character” (Phil. 1:9, 10. *Weymouth*). Love accompanied by clear knowledge and keen perception. What a trio of excellencies! To be willing to talk together, to exchange views in love, to treat each other as equals, does not imply an acceptance of all the varied viewpoints at once — or ever!

All truth is equally true but it is not all of equal importance. It is true that the scriptures teach that Methuselah was 969 years old when he died. And I believe that. But it is not nearly so important as the fact that Jesus died for my sins. It is a fact that after the Supper Jesus and the eleven sang a song and went out to the Mount of Olives, but that does not strike a responsive chord in my heart as does the account of what transpired in the Garden of Gethsemane. I have known men to get so intense in debating about the way in which the supper was served that they never got around to its real purpose.

Any strategy of unity for those who have been estranged must begin with *association*. It cannot begin anywhere else. If a married couple have gotten on each other’s nerves until the wife has had to leave, they will never be together again until they begin to meet. So long as they stay aloof and nurture their hatred they will grow farther apart. The same thing holds true in the realm of religion. If there has come a formal break it can never be repaired until the two sides begin to associate together.

We do not shoot men full of peace nor bombard them with unity! Peace and unity come as a result of patient striving in love, of long years of fruitful discussion and contact, of mutual understanding arrived at through long periods of prayer and study together. Unity can never be secured by two persons or groups who draw their rigid battle lines, and seek only to replenish their own supply of ammunition from God’s arsenal so they may blast each other into submission. Such a course makes for wresting the scriptures, creating arguments where God has

made none, public debates with their rabid followings, and the drawing away in sadness of those hungry souls who ask for bread and are given a stone, who ask a fish and are given a serpent.

Fair treatment of those who differ with us, a recognition of brotherhood in Jesus of all immersed penitent believers — these do not mean endorsement of error, compromise with false concepts, nor acceptance of interpretations that we believe to be wrong. They rather constitute only the foundation upon which we all may explore our major problems, and from such contacts as are established build a better and brighter prospect for tomorrow.

It is only those who have an inner fear that they lack truth who shrink back from contact and withdraw into the confines of partisan citadels. Let us feel a sense of compassion for those who dare not face the battle, but let those who possess the vision and courage not be daunted, but press the battle for peace. “For God hath called us to peace.”

Chapter 13

Thoughts on Fellowship (1)

“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9).

The church of God at Corinth consisted of called saints, those who were sanctified in Christ Jesus (1:2). The state or condition to which they were called by God is expressed by the term “*the fellowship* of his Son Jesus Christ.” To this state they attained through “the grace of God which is given by Jesus Christ” (1:4). Because they were called into such a state they were to avoid all schisms among themselves (1:10). Being bound by a common tie, they were to avoid those things which would disrupt the community, or place strains upon their union. They were to “endeavor to guard the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). By this means they would “walk worthy of the calling wherewith you are called.”

What is involved in “the fellowship of Jesus Christ our Lord”? How do we attain unto it? Who are participants in it? How do they remain in it? What action will separate them from this state? How do we guard it? Surely these are matters of grave importance, and should challenge the thinking of every person on earth who believes that there is a God, and that Jesus Christ is His Son, and our Savior. The state of fellowship represents a complete change in relationship. The prior condition is described as being alienated from the life of God.” The new state is described as one of sonship, in which the participant is “an heir of God through Christ” (Gal. 4:7). From a state in which there was no sharing in the blessings of God, a transformation takes place in which the one who is called becomes a sharer of the divine bounty as a son.

It is our conviction that the community of saints in Christ Jesus is the earthly culmination of that eternal purpose which is described as “a plan for the ages to gather together in one all things in Christ” (Eph. 1:10). The mystery of fellowship was hidden in God from the beginning of the world (Eph. 3:9). In other ages it was not made known unto the sons of men, but in this final age on earth, it was revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. The purpose of this revelation was “to make all men see” (Eph. 3:9). If, then, we are to see the truth upon this wonderful subject we must go to the revelation contained in the Christian scriptures. Our ideas, opinions and notions relative to fellowship mean nothing unless they coincide with God’s revelation. Our task is to ascertain from the new covenant scriptures what significance and meaning is attached to the term by the Holy Spirit.

The concept of fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, belongs to mankind only since that Son came in the flesh. This is abundantly clear to the student of the first epistle of John. Judaism provided an elaborate system of rules and ceremonies by which its adherents were kept apart from God, each other, and the world about them. The keynote was struck at the foot of Sinai, when their constitution was to be announced. Bounds were placed about the mountain so that the people would not come near. The threat of death was held over the Israelites. They were literally fenced off from God. “For they could not endure the order that was given, If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned. Indeed so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, I tremble with fear” (Hebrews 12:20, 21). The ritualism of the law maintained barriers

between the people and God. The Almighty communed with them from the thick darkness of the most holy place. He was separated from them by a thick veil.

The temple had its court of Gentiles, and across its barrier no Gentile dared step to mingle with the chosen race. Josephus, in his description of the Temple says, “When you go through these first cloisters unto the second court of the Temple, there was a partition made of stone all round, whose height was three cubits. Its construction was very elegant; upon it stood pillars at equal distances from one another, declaring the law of purity, some in Greek and some in Roman letters that no foreigner should go within the sanctuary” (*The Wars of the Jews*, 5, 5, 2). In 1871 one of these prohibiting tablets was actually excavated. The wording on it reads, “Let no one of any other nation come within the fence and barrier around the Holy Place. Whoever will be taken doing so will himself be responsible for the fact that his death will ensue.”

There was the Court of the Women with its partition enclosing it, and there was the court of the People, who were Israelites and males, then there was the court of the Priests, and finally the Holy Place itself. The temple was a series of barriers which discouraged fraternization at all under the threat of death. Even in the Greek world the caste system reared its ugly head and Cicero wrote, “As the Greeks say, all men are divided into two classes — Greeks and barbarians.”

The death of the Messiah marked the end of this state with its exclusive and artificial barriers by a startling symbol. As he expired on the cross “the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom” (Mark 15:38). That veil was thirty feet high. If it had rent from the bottom to the top it might have been urged that it was done by man. But to be rent from the top to the bottom is assurance that man had naught to do with it. The significance of this is graphically depicted by the writer of the Hebrew letter: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh: and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Hebrews 10:19-22). The boldness and full assurance which is ours should be contrasted with the excessive fear and trembling at Sinai. There the command was “Draw not nigh!” Now the invitation is “Let us draw near!”

The death of Jesus not only established a nearness of the people of God expressed by His language, “I will receive you, and be a Father unto you” (2 Cor. 6:17, 18), but it also removed barriers which separated men from their fellows. “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us ... that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Eph. 2:14, 16). It is worthy of note that the work of achieving unity is not credited to man. That is the work of Jesus. He made both one. He broke down the barrier of separation. He abolished in his flesh the enmity. He made in himself of two one new man. He reconciled both unto God in one body. He came and preached peace.

It is through Him we all have access by one Spirit unto the Father. “*Therefore ... ye are fellow citizens with the saints*” (Eph. 2:19). Not because of what we have done, but because of what He has done. The unity is achieved by the Spirit. It is called “the fellowship of the Spirit” (Phil. 2:2). All we can do is to guard and maintain that “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Any

person who erects a wall of partition to divide, separate and segregate brethren, regardless of what that wall may be, thereby opposes the work of God's Son and does despite to the Spirit of grace. He runs counter to the divine purpose in the world.

The temple with its sacerdotal orders and its ritual pageantry is gone. It "stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation" (Heb. 9:10). What has taken the place of these things since Jesus has entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:24)? My answer is that the *koinonia*, the fellowship of God, through the Spirit, has displaced the ceremonies and rules of the Mosaic dispensation. These things "could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience" (Hebrews 9:9). There was an impenetrable barrier between the person and His God, for "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest."

What a change has been wrought by grace. The veil has been rent! We have access unto the Father by one Spirit. From an aching heart to an accepted heart in one beautiful act. I need not climb a sacred mountain nor make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to feel a closeness with God. It is no longer a question of this place or that place, of this spot or that one. "Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father ... the true worshiper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." The true worshiper does not think of attempting to worship God with things. He does not attempt to confine Him to a specific place. God is a Spirit. He is unconfined and unconfined.

The spirit of man is that part of man which looks beyond the carnal, the physical, the fleshly. It is the part of man which dreams dreams. It is that part of man which cannot always be confined in a prison-house of flesh but which will someday break through the barriers of sense and feeling. True worship is when the spirit, the invisible and immortal part of man, speaks to and meets with God who is immortal and invisible. This is not done on sacred mountains. It is not confined to golden temples. God is a Spirit and he seeks a worship which is in spirit and in reality.

My body is a temple. My heart is a most holy place. God dwells in me even as I dwell in Him. "This is a great mystery, and I take it to mean Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32). What a fellowship! What a joy divine! We mutually come closer together. "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8). "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Cor. 6:16). This fragile structure of clay houses the Deity. The symbol of God's presence in the tabernacle was the Shekinah, visible as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The Holy Spirit rests upon us as the cloud did upon the tabernacle in the wilderness.

"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom we also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:21-22). A holy temple! A habitation for God! How this transcends the kind of ritual which is done over and over, grinding out devotions like a heathen prayer wheel. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God and ye are not your own" (1 Cor. 6:19). What a wonderful temple. What a glorious tenant. He is with me every hour of every day. Worship is not something offered in five special acts. It is the prostration of myself

before the Spirit, the bowing of myself before His regal presence. It is the very consciousness that He is with me in everything I say and do.

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you” (1 Cor. 3:16). What a transformation. In other days we had to go up to God. “Three times in the year shall all the males appear before the Lord God” (Exo. 23:17). Now God has come down to us. He has appeared before us. He dwells in us and walks in us, not at stated seasons, but every hour of the day and night. How foolish for men to talk about sacred seasons and holy days. There are no special sacred places and no special sacred days. Every place where a Christian is is a sacred place. Under the old regime nothing was sacred unless it was fenced off from the profane on every side. The word profane means before the temple. It referred to that which was left outside when one entered a pagan place of worship so that it would not be constituted sacred. Under the new order all that God has made sacred, and nothing is profane except for one who defiles it by his sinful attitude. “For the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (1 Cor. 10:26).

Fellowship has to do with sharing. It can never be divorced from this idea. Through grace Jesus shared our lot. “Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood he also himself likewise took part of the same” (Heb. 2:14). “He emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7). “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Cor. 8:9). The Christian life is a shared response to God called forth by the gift of God of which we have been made partakers. We are made partakers of Christ through the gospel. Our obedience to the demands of the gospel, introduces us into that state or condition called fellowship with God. We are in fellowship with each other only because we sustain the same relationship to Him. We cannot create that state. We cannot invent the terms by which we enter it. We are called into it by the Father.

1. Fellowship with God is not conditioned upon perfect knowledge of the divine revelation. “If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know” (1 Cor. 8:2). One who professes that he knows everything, is guilty of a highly inflamed imagination.
2. It is not contingent upon attainment to a life of sinless perfection. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). “For we all make many mistakes” (James 2:2).
3. It is not contingent upon an ability to explain or expound every point of doctrine. If it were we could not grow after becoming members of the body. “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness.”

It is contingent upon a complete surrender of self to the Christ, and a willingness to follow as He leads. On the divine side, fellowship is a union with and a participation in the life of Christ through the Spirit; on the human side it is a communion with brethren whose mutual relations were transformed by the Spirit. If fellowship were limited only to those who had perfect knowledge, led perfect lives, or could explain every point of doctrine perfectly a lot of us would never experience it at all. It is regrettable that those who create such terms only eliminate themselves.

Chapter 14

Thoughts on Fellowship (2)

The word “fellowship” is generally from the Greek *koinonia*. This word is rendered fellowship 12 times, communion 4, communication 1, contribution 1, distribution 1, to communicate 1. Actually the term *koinonia* has such varied aspects no single English word is able to express them all. It is so rich in meaning that it more than exhausts the meaning of any term we have. It is a derivative of *koinos*, the word for common. “Common” has two different meanings in English. It can refer to that which is jointly held by a large group, and it is in this respect that Jude speaks of “the common salvation.”

It can also refer to that which is commonplace and vulgar as contrasted with that which is rare and distinguished. In this sense, it came to be applied to that which was unhallowed or not ceremonially clean (Cp. Acts 10:14, 15). The word vulgar is from *vulgus*, the crowd, the common people. The Latin Vulgate was a version which was given to all and made available to the commoners. This is comparable to the word “profane” from the Latin. This refers to that which was *pro fanum*, that is, left outside the temple or sanctuary, and thus not consecrated. We speak of profane history in contrast with that which was inspired, and had a sacred origin.

The basic definition of *koinonia* as given by Joseph Thayer, is: “Fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse.” In its application to the New Testament usage, he divides it into three parts: (1) The share which one has in anything, participation; (2) intercourse, fellowship, intimacy; (3) a benefaction jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution. It is interesting to note that this last is a use unknown to profane authors. It is an acquired meaning given only by the New Testament writers, and even though Thayer defines *koinonia* as “a collection, a contribution,” he adds, “as exhibiting an embodiment or proof of fellowship.” Actually, the gift or benefaction is not the *koinonia* at all, as we shall later demonstrate. It is a manifestation of it. The *koinonia* (fellowship) is already existent and prompts the gift. We shall learn that for Christians, the only genuine riches we have are those we share in the Christ, and we supply the bodily needs of each other because we all alike are redeemed and in Him. The sharing of earthly goods is a spontaneous expression of our sharing in the divine wealth.

The word for “fellow” came into our language from the Old Norse term for a comrade or associate. The suffix *ship* is Anglo-Saxon in origin and is generally found in connection with nouns denoting persons. It relates to a state or condition in which such persons move. We speak of friendship, partnership, and sonship. Ignorance of this fact prompts many to use ridiculous and absurd expressions. Indications of some of these regularly come from the disciple brotherhood. Men write and ask me if I *fellowship* cups, classes, colleges, fermented wine, orphan homes or instrumental music. I would like for someone to tell me how to do so, if I wanted to.

One of the most tragic misconceptions is based on the idea that fellowship is synonymous with, or equivalent to, endorsement of anything or everything the other “fellow” may hold or advocate. In any final analysis this must lead to the conclusion that no two persons could ever be in

fellowship until they both reach perfect knowledge and complete agreement upon every minute detail. The folly of such a view can easily be detected by any thinking person. We do not make other kindred terms subject to such unreasonable interpretation. Can *friendship* exist between those who do not agree upon all issues. Can *partnership* exist between persons who are unequal in knowledge and attainment, and who possess divergent views? Certainly there are many close friends who disagree upon some matters, and many partners who associate in business in spite of divergent opinions.

We are to be in fellowship “with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). Does this mean that God did not accept us into fellowship until our understanding of all things is equal to his divine knowledge? If so, how can we “*grow in grace and knowledge of the truth*” after we come into Christ? Now, if God being perfect, can be in fellowship with us in our ignorance and imperfection, why do we set up a standard for others which he did not set up for us? If it be argued that John meant only the apostles were in fellowship with the Father and the Son, the difficulty is not lessened.

Were James and John in the fellowship of Jesus when they were making the demand that one of them sit on His right hand and one on the left when He came in His kingdom? Were the others who became angry at this in His fellowship? Was Peter in His fellowship when He tried to thwart His death by saying “Be it not so, for this shall not be unto you.” Was he in the fellowship of Christ from Pentecost to the time of his vision on the housetop at Joppa? Certainly he did not realize that God had removed the restrictions upon eating of meats and zealously followed the ceremonial regime of Judaism. Nor did he previously grasp the great truth that “God is no respecter of persons.” If he could be in the fellowship until he learned these truths, may not others be in the same fellowship, while learning the way of truth more perfectly?

The fact is that the fellowship of the new covenant is not based upon unanimity of opinion, interpretation, or even understanding of scriptural doctrine. It does not imply nor indicate endorsement of the position of one with whom we may differ. Fellowship is one thing; endorsement of the position taken by another is a wholly different thing. Fellowship of Christ, and in Christ, is a state or condition into which we are called by God through the gospel; endorsement of an interpretation or idea of one in or out of the fellowship is a rational act of our own minds. It is the jumbled, mixed-up thinking on this point that has created the factionalism, partisan spirit, and sectarianism, so rife among the heirs of the restoration movement.

Not long ago I attended a meeting conducted by a young brother. He announced in the newspaper that he would hold a “gospel meeting.” His gospel consisted of informing the partisans who were present that grouping of students in classes to study the sacred oracles of God was a tool of hell and an instrument of Satan. This was the Good News of salvation! It was for this Jesus died on the cross. It was this to which all of the prophets gave witness. After the meeting I introduced myself to him, and he in turn introduced me to several about him. He was careful each time to say “Mr. Ketcherside.” As I spoke to him and to each of the others, I addressed him as “brother.” During what he referred to as his sermon the speaker alluded to “the brotherhood” several times. I asked him if he considered me a member of it, and if not, to tell me what I would have to do that I had not done to become a part of it. He hemmed and hawed and was hesitant to commit himself on either count.

Later, at my urgent invitation, he attended a service where I was speaking. I mentioned my joy at his presence and requested him to lead in prayer. He shook his head in refusal. Afterwards he told me he could not “fellowship” me because I did not oppose Bible classes, and he was afraid that if he prayed to God at my request, it would consist of “fellowship.” I felt sorry for him, for I grew up in the same kind of bigoted and partisan relationship. I can recall how we used to discuss whether it was right to call a man a “brother” who disagreed with us on colleges, orphan homes, classes, cups, instrumental music, or the millennial theory.

I was afraid to call upon a man to pray to God who was not of “our group,” for I realized what “the brotherhood” would do to me if they found it out. I did not want to be put through the meat grinder or sausage mill. It seems incredible to me now that we once drove out from us one who addressed a Christian Church elder as brother and asked him to lead in prayer. I am thrilled that the grace of God delivered me from such littleness. I have recently very carefully scrutinized my heart on all of these controversial issues. I find that I have not materially altered my position on a single one of them. I am stronger than ever in my previous convictions on most of them. But I am no longer afraid of what men will do unto me! I refuse to be the mouthpiece of a faction, or the cat’s paw of a clique! I am no longer a party pigeon or a Simple Simon. I want to belong to the Lord and bow unto Him only. To us there is but one Lord!

I have learned that those who differ with me on these issues are my brethren, because of their relationship to the family, or household of God. We are not brothers because we have the same opinions but because we have the same Father. We also have the same mother, for Jerusalem which is from above is the mother of us all. If having the same Father and Mother does not make us brothers, pray tell me what it would take. Every baptized penitent believer on this earth is my brother, and we are in *fellowship* because we are a part of the brotherhood of Christ. That is the only *brotherhood* on this whole wide earth in which I am the least bit interested.

I do not agree on much with most of those who are in it, and do not fully agree with any of them, but fellowship in God is one thing, and perfect agreement is a wholly different thing. My father had six children, and they often differed with each other and even with their parents, but it never once occurred to me to deny they were my brothers and sisters because we argued loud and long. We were brothers not because of what we had done but because we were introduced by birth into a family state or relationship. The relationship into which we are introduced by the new birth is the fellowship of the new covenant. We have been in fellowship with a lot more people than we ever realized, or even yet realize. I am in fellowship with every saved person on this earth, that is, if I am saved. When I was younger, the family of God was a little one but now that I have grown out of my own provincialism, that family has increased perceptibly. Praise His name!

Every person who has received Christ Jesus, and thus has been born of the water and of the Spirit, who has experienced the riches of the glory of God’s mystery “which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,” is in the fellowship. They are *partakers* of the inheritance of the saints in light, having been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of the Messiah. Having been called into the kingdom and glory of God, and having been sealed by the Holy Spirit they are in *communion* with God and with every other person on earth who has been born again. They are the beneficiaries of the grace of our Lord, of the love of God, and of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14).

When the apostle wrote to Corinth he told them they had been called into the fellowship of Jesus Christ. They were torn by partisan strife, tolerant of immorality, intolerant of the scruples of the brethren, imploding each other in heathen courts, and even so factious they could not eat the love feast together. He was fearful of coming among them lest he find quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, deceit and disorder. Yet he did not tell “the faithful” to go and start a “loyal” congregation! He did not even intimate that he would split them and take out a group when he arrived. He asked, “Do you not know that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you fail to meet the test” (2 Cor. 13:5). What was the test? Was it an attitude as to classes for Bible study, individual cups, fermented wine, unleavened bread, orphan homes, etc.? These are tests which men have concocted to shatter and split into factious groups those who are in the fellowship.

God devised no such tests. Jesus Christ can be in men, who in their weakness and ignorance, differ in opinion as to these things. Paul said “What we pray for is your improvement” (2 Cor. 13:9). Not once in all of the divine revelation of God was a congregation of believers ever advised to split or separate. Not once was a group of believers told to come out from, or separate themselves from the other believers. If so, where is the place? Paul did not advise the congregation of Corinth to divide. He did not advise the establishment of two “Churches of Christ” in Corinth — one a “heathen courts congregation” and the other an “anti-heathen courts congregation.”

Here is what he wrote: “Mend your ways, heed my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.” Never in the checkered history of the saints has this exhortation been needed more than at present. Every word needs to burn and sear our hearts until “we put no obstacle in any one’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry” (2 Cor. 6:3). The Christian life is difficult enough in these days without adding an extra burden of hate and animosity kindled by the factious spirit. Let us labor for unity!

Chapter 15

Thoughts on Fellowship (3)

The essence of true spiritual investigation is to attempt to understand the real meaning contained in the revelation of God. The Holy Spirit conveyed to mankind the will of the Father in words employed by men in their communication with each other. Our task is to determine the meaning which God attached to those words. In order to do this we must divest ourselves of prejudice and bias, otherwise we will read into the scriptures our slanted views. It is an acknowledged fact that every sect in Christendom claims spiritual authority for its exclusive doctrines. Those who go to the word of God expecting to find confirmation for a preconceived idea will generally find it, although they get out of the scriptures something which God did not put into them.

What is generally true of the religious world is also applicable to the various factions in the disciple brotherhood. As a case in point we mention the controversy over the use of mechanical instruments in public worship, in which some of the arguments in its defense are about as ridiculous as those used by its opponents. Both groups have gone to the Book to confirm their respective positions. They found that for which they were looking. On the subject of “fellowship” even wider divergence is found among the two dozen splinter groups, few of whom even take the time to find out what God meant by His use of the term.

A short time ago I wrote a prominent leader in the faction which makes a test of fellowship out of the matter of grouping students to instruct them in the word of the Lord. I presented to him a hypothetical case as follows. There is one brother in a congregation who does not think it is right to have classes to study the word of the Lord. All of the other members have a deep conviction that it is right and proper to do so. The elders go to the dissenting brother and express their regard for him and their respect for his personal views. They encourage him to come and participate in the corporate worship and mutual edification, and assure him that no reflection will be made against him if he waits to come until the classes are concluded. They confirm their love to him as a brother in Christ.

I asked the brother who is a factional leader these questions. What would you advise this brother to do? What scriptural basis would you give for such advice? He replied that he would advise the man to leave the congregation, call for a “loyal” preacher, and try to establish a “faithful” church. In the event that none of the members of the “disloyal” group would come out and take their stand, he would advise the man to move off to a locality where he could worship with a “loyal church.” And as a basis for this conglomerate scheme he cited just one scriptural text — 2 Corinthians 6:14-15.

Brethren, regardless of your position on grouping students to study the sacred oracles that is sectarianism gone to seed! This preacher, in spite of his protestations of “loyalty” is slashing the body of God’s Son to pieces. He is ripping it into bloody shreds. He is giving counsel which may destroy the souls of those who heed it, and is actually doing despite to the Spirit of grace. And he demonstrates his utter ignorance of the very basis he quotes for his divisive advice. We propose an investigation of this scripture which has provided a weapon for carving the church of God into ribbons.

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? and what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”

Nothing is clearer to the honest student of God’s word than the fact that the primitive disciples of our Lord regarded themselves as a community of saints, separated from unbelievers and idolaters by faith in the Messiah as the hope of their salvation. Through the bond of this faith in Him, they were linked together as a family of God. They constituted a temple or shrine in which dwelt the living God. Their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, constituted the basis of their communal life. The believers were not always agreed among themselves, as witness the congregation at Corinth, but those in Christ who disagreed were not “unbelievers” and were never so designated.

They might hold different views in Christ about the validity of the gifts of the Spirit, or about the proper conduct toward eating in idol temples, or toward the resurrection or the millennium, but these did not make them unbelievers in the great basic truth which united them. There was room in Jesus for differences over many items, and the umbrella of God’s love sheltered them all. They were still children of light. They constituted the temple of God. They were not disenfranchised by their views honestly held and advocated.

There were two great communities upon earth. One was the church, the other was composed of the pagan world. The first was a *koinonia* of light, and in Him is no darkness at all. The temple in which God dwelled through the Spirit was aglow with the light of His presence. It was a kingdom of light not because of the perfection in life and knowledge of those who composed the temple, but because the Light of heaven dwelled therein as the pillar of fire rested upon the tabernacle in the wilderness. It was not the material of which it was composed that lighted the tabernacle, and it is not the stones which compose the living temple which have the light. “In Him was life and the life was the light of men.”

The other was a *koinonia* of darkness. It was the habitation of Belial in whom is no light. Those who walked in it were past feeling, having given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. They had their understanding darkened, because they were alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their heart. They were a dominion of darkness from which we were delivered by Him and transferred into the kingdom of his beloved Son.

Each of these communities had its sacrifices. Each expressed its fellowship the only way it can be expressed, by communal acts. Since eating and drinking together was an open manifestation of fellowship, this came to be the symbol of the mystic bond which united them. One temple sacrificed to God; the other to idols. One temple brought man into sacred unity with heaven; the other into fellowship with the demons who motivated the idolatry. The apostle writes: “What say I then? that the idol is anything, or that which is sacrificed to idols is anything? But I say,

that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of demons" (1 Cor. 10:20, 21). Be sure to note the usage of the terms "fellowship" and "partakers."

We are now prepared to note the passage in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. The admonition to "Be ye not unequally yoked together *with unbelievers*," has no application whatsoever to any alliance or association between members of two branches, or sects, in Christendom. It has been frequently misused with reference to the marriage of a member of the Church of Christ with a Baptist. Regardless of the advisability of two people who have been reared in different legalistic frameworks seeking to form an intimate union, this passage does not deal with it topside or bottom.

Most brethren are not willing to take the recommendation or command to "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." This would break up at once every marriage on earth between people of two sects. But a Baptist is a believer in Christ in the fair sense of the term. The problem of sectism among various kinds of believers is post-apostolic. It did not occur during the time of the apostles and there is nothing written about how we ought to treat each other with our various theological speculations. But to label such people as unbelievers when they freely confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is to do serious injury to the word of faith.

Sometimes it has been used to keep a brother from buying a filling station in league with a Methodist. How silly can we become? Most of us at sometime or other in our lives are linked with people of various religious opinions. Workers in automobile assembly plants, teachers in the public schools, and employees in almost every kind of establishment in the world are forced to work with those who see things differently than they do, but these people are not pagans. They are not heathen.

The instruction certainly has nothing to do with whether a girl from a "one cup congregation" should date a boy in a "cups generation" as the distinction is so naively and childishly made by some of the brethren. Regardless of whether such ought to happen, or whether they are suited to one another or not, it was not the purpose of the Holy Spirit to suggest it here, and some of the more common applications made of the passage would be downright amusing, if it were not for the serious fact that factional leaders, with more ambition for personal power than love for unity in Jesus, cram such thoughts down the theological throats of gullible and unsuspecting partisans, who in their ignorance defeat the very purpose of the cross, and do so under the guise of "loyalty" to Him whom they crucify afresh and put to an open shame.

In the scriptural usage of the term "believer" it refers to every person who accepts Jesus for what He claims to be regardless of their hang-ups on various concepts of doctrine. It has no concern with legalistic hang-ups which have separated the Christian world. It refers to one who is not a pagan or heathen. By the same token the word "unbeliever" refers to one who is afar off, who has no love for Jesus and no concern for His kingdom. To apply it to those earnest souls today who may understand some of the implications of the doctrine of the new covenant scriptures differently than we do is to do an absolute injustice to those who are as much believers as we are.

What does the passage mean? The *koinonia* of heaven is expressed by the terms righteousness, light, Christ, believer, and temple of God. The *koinonia* of the underworld is expressed by the terms unrighteousness, darkness, Belial, infidel, and idols. There is a community attached to Christ. It includes the angels of heaven and the men on earth who have acknowledged Jesus as their prince. There is another community presided over by Belial. It includes the demons of hell and those on earth who are idolaters, refusing to acknowledge the sovereignty of God over their lives. The two are absolutely incompatible. There can be no more fellowship between these communities than there is between their respective princes. They have *nothing* in common. So long as God walks in us and lives in us, we cannot participate in idolatrous rites, practices and services.

What is meant by the expression, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing?” This is the handle that fits every factional tool ever devised. It has been used as the wedge to shatter us into fragments. It is the axe in the hand of spiritual demagogues used to split and splinter those who met and worked together for years. It has been made the agent of separation, heartache and tears, and in many localities has clabbered the milk of human kindness, and inspired such gall and bitterness, that those who once sat together at the Lord’s Table, have set up rival tables, and treat each other with such lack of courtesy and compassion as is not so much as named among the Gentiles.

First of all suspicion has been sown, generally secretly and clandestinely. Those who are soft have been sought out like termites look for soft wood. Suspicion leads into doubt of faithfulness to the thing that is made the rallying-ground and when the time comes the boom is lowered and division comes. Then there are two opposing parties who regard each other across well-defined lines and proselyte each other with a fervor which was never shown in former days when the world was on one side and the church on the other.

Does the scripture mean that when my Baptist neighbor, who is so kind, generous, and friendly, invites me to listen to his preacher in a special meeting, that I must draw the garments of my self-righteousness closer about me, to keep from being defiled by his touch, and insult him, because he does not know that I am to “be separate and touch not the unclean thing”? What is the unclean thing? Is it a Bible class for little children, individual cups, fermented wine, a special way of breaking the loaf, colleges, orphan homes, etc.?

Remember the preacher to whom I posed the question about the brother who did not believe in classes, would advise him to try and rend a congregation at peace among themselves in Christ, and this was the scripture he gave for dividing believers in the Lord! To him “the unclean thing” was a system of grouping students to teach them to develop faith in the Christ. Could ever a more damaging, destructive idea be advanced from that which would take the word of God and completely ignoring its purpose, use it in such a manner as to shatter the body of the Lord? This is carving the body of Jesus into bits with the sword which he furnished to subdue an alien world.

The unclean thing which we are not to touch, refers to the contaminating lust and vice associated with the impure mystery of idolatry. The term is not even remotely related to differences among brethren as to interpretation of various scriptures. It would be impossible to describe the

degradation and degeneracy growing out of idolatrous worship, and believers in the Christ are to have nothing to do with such practices or those who engage in them. It was an age of moral suicide, of unnatural lust, and of murder. What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?

Even though modern sectism is deplorable, it is still a condition existing among believers in the Christ. Our opposition to it must not be based upon the idea that our religious neighbors are infidels or idolaters, motivated by a voluntary love for an attachment to Belial. My Baptist and Methodist friends are firm believers in the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. They are certainly mistaken about certain items contained in His will and they have exalted their love for a party above their love for a unity of all believers. But to quote the verses under consideration and apply them to those who are of a different order in Christendom, for the purpose of forbidding association, even in order to reason with and teach them, is to make of us the most rabid of all sectarians. These people do not constitute a realm of “darkness” or “unrighteousness” as the terms are used here. Many of them live above moral reproach and have never engaged in filthy or immoral conduct because of idolatrous leanings. They are frequently good examples in moral behavior for some of their attackers. It ill becomes a preacher who is carrying on an affair with another man’s wife, to get on the radio and slash away at others of the religious community as sectarian and in “darkness” when their lives are a credit to his own.

Every honest, sincere believer in the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth is my brother, either in prospect or in fact. If such a believer has submitted to immersion on the basis of his faith in Jesus, he is my brother in reality, a child of God, and a member of His family. He may not have understood all of the blessings accruing from baptism into Christ, and he may have been mistaken as to the time of the bestowal of some of them, but his ignorance of effect or time will not nullify God’s grace or promise, if he surrenders his will to that of the Messiah. Since his birth, he may be in error about many things pertaining to his responsibility, worship or service, and he may require a tremendous amount of teaching and adjustment, but he is still my brother, and I will teach him as a brother, and not count him as a pagan or an infidel. If our hearts are both honest we will grow ever closer to each other as we both “grow in grace and knowledge of the truth.” The transformation in our lives through conformity to the life of Christ, will produce uniformity of heart and thought in the two of us.

Not all believers have been immersed. Some are still in the womb of the new covenant, the Jerusalem that is from above. What shall be my attitude toward these who are in that state? It will be the same as that of a family toward an unborn child. We do not revile, castigate or belittle a child in the womb. We rejoice that it has been conceived and with an air of expectancy prepare for its arrival. So I shall labor to aid those who have been conceived by faith, to come to birth and full delivery into the glorious fellowship of the sons of God. If they die before delivery I shall mourn our loss; if they are born again I shall seek to nurture, strengthen and support them until they can walk alone. To this I am dedicated, believing it is the will of him whose slave I have become.

Chapter 16

Thoughts on Fellowship (4)

Some brethren are concerned about my explanation of fellowship and they are unable to reconcile it with traditional explanations of certain scriptures. It is difficult for them to see how we may be in fellowship and differ on any point, although most of them claim to be in fellowship and differ on many points. One of my most regular critics is thoroughly convinced that those who employ instruments of music have abandoned the faith and jumped off the deep end, while he is just as certain that those who oppose cups and classes are extremists of the worst kind. Boiled down to its real meaning, any one who agrees with him perfectly is thinking clearly while those who differ in either direction are candidates for exclusion.

It was said that when Charles V was trying to bring the world to a uniformity of belief, and employing the thumb-screw and rack to achieve it, he was one day experimenting with three clocks in his retreat at Yuste. Unable to make the three clocks keep exactly the same time, he gave it up in disgust, exclaiming, "Here I was trying to make a whole world believe exactly alike, and I can't even make three clocks keep the same time." Wesley once said, "I have no more right to object to a man holding a different opinion from mine than I have to differ from a man because he wears a wig and I wear my own hair. But if he takes his wig off, and shakes the powder in my eyes, I shall consider it my duty to get rid of him as soon as possible."

One passage which seems to give the brethren trouble is Amos 3:3. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" It is assumed that this teaches absolute unanimity of opinion as a requisite to fellowship in the Christ, and since I contend that fellowship is a state or condition into which we are called by God, through acceptance of His Son, and that we may walk together in Him while we are learning, even though we now differ in some particulars, it is concluded that my contention is contrary to God's plan and purpose.

Accordingly, it will be necessary for me to take time out from my outlined study on fellowship to deal with this problem, and while I am anxious to get on with my theme, I do not want to travel with such rapidity that I ignore objections which brethren consider valid. We have thought disunity and practiced it so long that it will be difficult for us to reverse our trend and go the other direction. Some of us will never be able to do that. We will continue to pursue our intractable and implacable way until death do us part.

It is obvious that my thesis is in conflict with the common *interpretation* of Amos 3:3. That interpretation is fortunately limited to preachers of the Churches of Christ. I do not know of many others who are naive enough to offer an argument for conformity based upon it. I do not think that my position is in conflict with what Amos said, but it is in conflict with what some brethren *think he meant* by what he said. This would point up to us several grave dangers. One is that of jumping at conclusions while ignoring the context, or setting of a scripture. A text without its context is a pretext, as someone has pointed out.

Another danger is that of creating an unwritten creed out of our interpretations. We are obligated to accept what God says: we are not obligated to accept what any person thinks that God meant.

The basis of God's judgment will be His word, not some interpretation of it. He will open the books and we will be judged out of the things written in those books, every man according to his own works. God will not open up the books I have written, nor will he use the *Mission Messenger* as a basis of judgment. I may be judged by what I have written, but you need not be.

Either my general proposition is in error, or the common interpretation of Amos 3:3 is wrong. Before I ever began this series of discussions on fellowship, I carefully listed every passage which might be deemed as being in opposition to the thinking which has crystallized in my heart. I examined critically every one of those passages. If even one had been in apparent controversion of my view, I would never have expressed that view. I confess that I looked for a way out. I wanted to discover a scripture which would justify my position. This passage was first on my list. In my examination of its bearing on the subject, I became convinced that it has been misused and sadly abused. I have been no less an offender than others, and I must apologize for my weakness and error.

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” Of course they can. They do so all of the time! I have never fully agreed with any brother upon every interpretation of the holy scriptures, yet I have walked in soul-stimulating partnership with many of them for years. Many a married couple has walked and worked together in spite of serious disagreements at frequent intervals. I doubt there has ever been a married couple that has not fallen out over something, when both of them were capable of thinking. Anyone who says he has not had an argument with his wife in twenty-five years would probably lie about other things if he got the chance. Many congregations have worshiped together in spite of varied and diverse concepts. Their love for Jesus was greater than their love for their own views and interpretations. To affirm that two cannot walk together until they have reached absolute agreement upon all issues is to deny the testimony of human history, and give the lie to our own experience. Anything less than perfect obedience would not be enough, for it would prove that two could walk together who were not agreed.

The common explanation is a good indication of what happens to those who engage in textual preaching. Nothing else has scrapped the scriptures, or disjoined and butchered God's revelation, to the degree it has been done by the popular method of preaching from a text. We want to deliver a talk on unity. Amos 3:3 looks like a good foundation, so we lift it out and start to work. And the sad result is that we employ it in such a manner as to actually divide God's people and create disunity. The purpose of any talk on unity should be to bring brethren closer to the Christ and to each other, but if you convince them that it is impossible to please God and to walk together if they are not agreed upon every point, then when they disagree on any point, they will sever relations and think they are doing God service.

But what did Amos mean? To understand this you will have to know a little bit about the man and his mission. Amos was not a recognized prophet, nor a product of the school of prophets (7:14). He was a lowly herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore figs, which were used as food by the very poor. God summoned him to travel north and pour out a condemnation in the very courtyard of the king of Israel, the ten tribe northern kingdom, with its capital at Samaria. The statement in which we are interested occurs in one of the denunciatory speeches delivered by

Amos. It is only one of a series of questions, intended to show the reason for his sudden appearance on the scene as a prophet. Here is the contextual matter.

“Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

Can two walk together except they be agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all.

Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?”

The prophet is here using the common logical argument that for every effect there is a cause, and the cause is adequate to produce that effect. If a lion roars in the forest you can be sure he has prey. He is silent when stalking other game. If you hear a young lion in his den you can be sure he is devouring something. If a bird is caught in a snare it is because the trigger (gin) was set; if you see a trapper run to take up his snare it is because he has caught something. A trumpet is sounded in a city when danger approaches. It is a signal for the people to run for cover. In the same manner when one of God’s prophets speaks, you can be sure there is a reason. God no more speaks aimlessly through his prophets than a watchman blows his trumpet for his own entertainment.

The expression “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” is only one facet of the argument. The term agreed is from *yaad*, which Strongs’ Exhaustive Concordance says is a primitive root. It is defined “To fix upon (by agreement or appointment); to summon (to trial), to direct (in a certain quarter or position), to engage (for marriage).” It is obvious that the point under consideration is that when you see two people walking together, it is the result of an appointment to meet at a stated time. The purpose of the meeting is not under consideration. They might meet to debate their differences as they walk along together, but the fact they are walking along together, indicates an agreement to meet. They had an appointment.

It is possible in our thickly populated areas of today, that one might run into an acquaintance and walk along with him, but Amos did not live in such an area. J. R. Dummelow, M. A., in his comment on the passage says, “R. V. ‘Have agreed,’ have an appointment. If two people were seen walking together in the desolate regions with which Amos was familiar it might be assumed they had not met by chance. Nothing happens by chance. There is a reason and cause for Israel’s calamities.”

There is not one thing in the definition given by Strong which has to do with absolute agreement as two people walk together. The original word relates to an initial agreement to meet, regardless of the purpose. It does not cover the period of marriage, but relates to the

engagement; it does not cover the trial in court, but relates only to the summons; it does not cover the purpose of the meeting, but merely an agreement upon time or place. I might agree to meet my dentist at a certain time, and we might be together by appointment. But that does not argue that I am in harmony with all of his views upon technique. I'm not!

I do not argue that absolute conformity upon all matters of interpretation is not an ideal for which we should labor. I do argue that it is not a prerequisite to fellowship in the Lord. We do not come into relationship with the Christ because we understand every point of theology, but because we have come into Him, we seek to reach a greater degree of mutual understanding. We are not in fellowship because of complete unanimity of opinion but in spite of our divergences of opinion. We walk together because we have made an appointment with Him to do so. If we wait until we get together upon all of our varying opinions, we will never walk together at all!

God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, has quickened us together, raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4-6). We are together because of grace, the undeserved kindness of God. We walk with God and He walks with us and in us. Is this conditioned upon our perfect understanding of all things as God sees them? If God can walk together with me while I am learning, seeking, searching, and yearning to know more about His will, can I not walk with all others in Him who are in the same condition? Jesus walked with two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and asked them, "What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?" After hearing their stumbling explanation, he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken," and beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures concerning himself. Will He who then walked with foolish men who were slow to believe all that was spoken, refuse to do so now? Or, will His gentle grace abide with us, through His Spirit, that our hearts too may burn within us while He talks with us on the road?

God's purpose as to ourselves has not yet been perfected. It cannot be as it pertains to each individual, until the individual reaches the ultimate in his spiritual attainment. The temple of God is a growing structure. Each generation finds it reaching outward and upward. The ropes are lengthened and the stakes are strengthened. It is not static, but active. Strangers and foreigners become fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. These are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Jesus is the chief cornerstone. In Him "the whole structure is joined together, and grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:21). The act of joining the stones together is a divine one; the act of growth is a natural one, aided by the Spirit. Growth always indicates change and adjustment. We must make that in order to fit more fully into the plan of Him "in whom you are builded together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." The fellowship is the joint participation in the Christ which makes us a part of the building. We are held together, not because of ability, genius, attainment, accomplishment, or opinion, but by the cement of love. That cement allows for soul expansion as "we grow up in every way into him, who is the head, into Christ" (Eph. 4:15). How shall we treat each other while we are growing?

Chapter 17

Thoughts on Fellowship (5)

The divided state of believers in the Messiah is one of the most tragic blights upon our modern world. It is the chief deterrent to the subjection of this alien world to our King. We must face up to the full implications of this condition, for we will not escape in the final judgment, any personal responsibility for creating or perpetuating it. We dare not slight or try to ignore the situation. This fact was clearly recognized by our forefathers and they sought to alleviate and eliminate the sectarian status. Thus Alexander Campbell wrote:

“Tired of new creeds and new parties in religion, and of the numerous abortive efforts to reform the reformation; convinced from the Holy Scriptures, from observation and experience, that the union of the disciples of Christ is essential to the conversion of the world, and that the correction and improvement of no creed or partisan establishment in Christendom could ever become the basis of such an union, communion, and cooperation as would restore peace to a church militant against itself, or triumph to the common salvation — a few individuals, about the commencement of the present century, began to reflect upon the ways and means to restore primitive Christianity.

The resultant effort amazes every student of the history of the church of God, Sectarian citadels were shaken to their very foundations. Those who were “tired of new creeds and new parties in religion” imbued with an unquenchable desire for unity in order to achieve the purpose of the Messiah upon earth, attained such goals as made it appear that this whole nation might be brought to the foot of the cross. Of the fierce ambition which burned within the hearts of these worthies, Campbell wrote:

“Next to our personal salvation, two objects constituted the *summum bonum*, the supreme good, worthy of the sacrifice of all temporalities. The first was, the union, peace, purity, and harmonious cooperation of Christians — guided by an understanding enlightened by the Holy Scriptures; the other, the conversion of sinners to God. Our predilections and antipathies on all religious questions arose from, and were controlled by these all absorbing interests. From these commenced our campaign against creeds.”

It is interesting to note the simple way by which it was proposed to unite all Christians. We quote again from Campbell:

“A deep and abiding impression that the power, the consolation and joys — the holiness and happiness — of Christ’s religion were lost in the forms and ceremonies, in the speculations and conjectures; in the feuds and bickerings of sects and schisms, originated a project many years ago for uniting the sects, or rather the Christians in all the sects, upon a clear and simple bond of union; upon having a ‘thus saith the Lord’ either in express terms, or in approved precedent, ‘for every item of faith and of religious practice’ ... making faith in Christ and obedience to him, the only test of Christian character, and the only bond of church union, communion and co-operation.”

What is the present status of those who are spiritual heirs of the “few individuals who began to reflect upon the ways and means to restore primitive Christianity?” Are they tired of new parties in religion? Are they seeking to restore peace to a church militant against itself? Do they still look upon the union, peace and harmonious co-operation of Christians, as an object of supreme good? Do they deem this object worthy of the sacrifice of all temporalities? Are they yet laboring on the project of uniting the Christians in all of the sects?

Far from it! They have been enticed into the business of producing sects. The noble ideal has been shattered. There are more than two dozen splinter parties which have grown out of the restoration effort. Each of these claims to be the one holy, catholic and apostolic church. Each contends that it alone is the kingdom of heaven. Each one is “the brotherhood.” Each one is “the loyal church.” There is no project to unite the Christians in all of the sects, for each sect claims, like Rome, to have all the Christians there are under its inconsistent wings. This is the bread upon which we have been fed, this is the factional milk we have drawn from the paps of our factional religious mothers, and upon it we have been nurtured and nourished into spiritual dwarfs of bigotry, hate and exclusiveness, which say, “Stand by thyself, come not near unto me, for I am holier than thou” (Isa. 65:5).

Physical dwarfs sometimes develop warped personalities. In a world of men of normal stature they must be over-assertive, pugnacious, resentful of every imaginary slight. They must walk with a swagger, cultivate a deep voice, and growl at every one else. Napoleon, the little Corsican, set out to capture the world, to prove his power despite his diminutive stature. The same psychological reaction may be characteristic of spiritual dwarfs. Little men may appear big if they can rationalize all others into inferiority. A small faction can appear of tremendous importance if its members can be made to believe they constitute the sole survivors of the Israel of God, and are the exclusive recipients of God’s grace, while every other person on the face of the earth is doomed to damnation because he does not see eye to eye with them on every minute point of practice. But such delusions of grandeur are fatal to the intellect and deadly to the heart.

Indicative of the effect of such attitudes is the wresting of certain scriptures which may be twisted to justify schism and the party spirit in direct contradiction of those passages which forbid and condemn it. Men now love the party spirit. They advocate disunity and preach division among brethren. Under such circumstances any passage which seems to condone separation is seized upon with joyful abandon. As an example I cite Ephesians 5:11, which says, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Brethren seem to be overjoyed that they find here the expression “Have no fellowship.” All they need to do is to make the term “works of darkness” elastic enough to cover the item currently in dispute, and another division is born.

A short time hence I was in correspondence with a brother who was contending that one could not scripturally engage in the Lord’s Supper, except with fermented wine. He was bitterly partisan. I asked him for the scriptural ground upon which he made this a test of fellowship. He merely wrote down in big letters Ephesians 5:11, underlining it twice. Upon such ignorance of the intent of God’s plan or purpose a new sect is introduced into the strife-torn religious world.

Did Paul who wrote in one verse instructing the congregation at Ephesus to manifest “all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love,” write in another verse for the same brethren to fracture into splinter parties over opinions and preferences? Did he who wrote, “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” write again to the same group to “have no fellowship?” Even a cursory examination of the context would demonstrate the folly of any such interpretation.

“Have no fellowship with the unfaithful *works of darkness!*” Are these works to be interpreted to refer to classes to study the Bible, individual cups, leavened bread on the Lord’s Table, orphan homes, and other such matters? Brethren should not add the stigma of being ridiculous to that of factionalism? Whether the things enumerated, or a score of others in the same category, are right or wrong, this passage is not even remotely related to them. “The works of darkness” in verse 11 are the “things done in secret” in verse 12. These refer to the indescribable vices and licentious practices of the mystery cults of the Gentile world. Under cover of darkness and in the inner recesses and secret chambers of idol temples such gross sensuality was engaged in that the depth of depravity can hardly be fathomed by minds not attuned to base immorality.

Fornication, unchastity and idolatry debar from inheritance in the kingdom (verse 5). These things bring the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience (verse 6). Because of these considerations the disciples were not to be partakers with them (verse 7). The state in which they existed had been changed. The apostle said, “You were sometimes darkness.” Once they were steeped in idolatry and all of its filthy and abominable practices. “Now ye are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.” To get a true picture of the darkness of which the apostle writes, one need only read Romans 1:21-32 and ponder the significance of the statement, “God gave them over to a reprobate mind.”

Now to apply these passages to those in the realm of Christendom who are of a different order than ourselves and cite them as *the basis* for a refusal to be partakers with them in their rituals and worship is to stultify any claim we make to fairness as scholars of the sacred oracles. There may be, and there are, good and sufficient reasons why we cannot endorse, assist or participate in the religious performances of many about us, but they do not fall within the category of characters described by Paul. The divided state of believers in Christ is a sad and dreary thing to contemplate, yet in every sect and segment, there are good men and noble, those who are pure, chaste and holy in life. We owe much to the scholarship of such men in the Church of England, Methodist, Baptist, and Quaker communions, as well as others. It ill becomes us to accept the fruit of ripe research from their hands, and then bite the hand from which we take it.

Please observe that we are now dealing with whether or not such people are *Christians*. Our present treatise does not concern what they *are*, so much as what they are not. And we affirm that they are not the type of characters to whom Paul alludes in this passage. No sincere believer in the Messiah, who is morally above reproach falls under this condemnation. To assume that a man is degraded or degenerate because he honestly disagrees with us upon the subject of baptism, for example, is a greater reflection against our reasoning powers than against his. Many of my neighbors are members of the Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist and other protestant sects, which today portray so graphically the deplorable state of division into which the world has

fallen. But they are not walking in the darkness of which Paul wrote, nor do they have fellowship with the unfruitful works which he contemplated.

Theirs is the wrong of perpetuating a party to the division of God's people. This is a work of the flesh. But there is a difference in the influence upon society and the moral tone of the world in some of these works, as every logical reasoner must admit. Moreover, many of the adherents of the various religious parties are to an extent innocent victims of birth, environment and other circumstances beyond their control. And many love the truth, seek after it, and sigh for a greater knowledge of it. They pray for the unity of the church of God and long for a better day for Zion.

A person in one of the numerous sects of Christendom today may be a child of God, or he may not. That is also true of those who are in "The Church of Christ." Certainly one who is a child of God and still attached to a sect or party, is a child of God *and something else*. The mere fact that a man is in the Baptist party does not argue that he is not a child of God, but he may be a child of God *and a Baptist*, in the partisan sense of that term. I am a baptist, but not a Baptist. Our task is not to deny that he is a child of God, but to get him to cease being a partisan, for the party spirit is a sin. The dividing of God's children into schismatic groups labeled by partisan names, designed to keep them apart, is sinful. God wants all of His children to be one in Christ. All who are truly His children are dedicated to the destruction of all religious parties, regardless of which one they may be associated with at present. A follower of the Lamb cannot condone, defend, uphold or perpetuate the party spirit. If he finds himself in a human party, he must either transform it or come out of it, if it's impossible of reformation.

We must be careful that in our opposition to the party spirit we are not mere partisans. I am fully convinced that many of my brethren are opposing sectism from a sectarian standpoint. They are interested in getting people out of "their sect" and into "our sect." Of course they would not admit that, but that is what it amounts to. No doubt they are honest in their endeavor for they too are the victims of the circumstances of birth, training and environment. Some feel that sectism cannot exist in a religious body bearing the name "Church of Christ." They think it serves as an amulet or charm with special powers for exorcising the demon of sectism. But some of the most partisan and bigoted sectarians in our modern world operate under that title. The very usage of the term in a segregationist and separationist fashion is indicative of the sectarian spirit.

There was a "Christ party" at Corinth. They were condemned in the same language as those who called themselves after the name of Paul, or Cephas, or Apollos. It is just as sinful to divide the body of Christ by saying, "We belong to Christ," with the intent to separate yourselves from other brethren, as to say, "We belong to Paul," for the same purpose. It was to the members of this party that Paul wrote, "Look these facts in the face. If any man is fully persuaded as regards himself that he belongs to Christ, let him consider again with himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also am I" (2 Cor. 10:7).

Paul had accepted the Good News and been immersed into the Lord, and he did not propose to be dispossessed of his citizenship by those who claimed to belong to Christ in a special way, because they had formed an exclusive party wearing the name "Christ" to distinguish them from other persons who had been immersed into Jesus. There are scattered sheep on the hills of sectarianism today who could say to those calling themselves "The Church of Christ," as Paul

said, "Let them consider again, that just as they are Christ's so also are we." God's children have not all been gleaned from Babylon yet, and it will not help to wall off a little segment of Babylon and label it "Jerusalem."

What is the essential equipment for those who would help answer the prayer of Jesus for unity of all who believe in Him through the testimony of the apostles? It is possible that we cannot detail all that is required. We have exercised such poor personal judgment in the past, and have so often mistaken the factional spirit for the spirit of righteousness, that we may be in a poor state to make suggestions. However, in humility and sincerity we mention the following as attributes of him who would walk toward the greatest goal that can challenge the thinking of the slaves of God on earth.

1. A firm and unshakable conviction that sectism is a sin, a work of the flesh, and will keep all who willfully indulge in it out of the kingdom of heaven.
2. The ability to distinguish between the person and the party to which he belongs. Many are attached to sects who are not sectarian. Wholesale denunciation without recognition of the varying attitudes and degrees of knowledge is unwise and unreasonable.
3. A rigid determination to be non-partisan and to call upon all men to rally to the cross, that at this common center we may become truly one in the only One who has a right to draw all men unto himself.
4. A spirit of forbearance and patience while men are learning. The road from Babylon to Jerusalem will not be covered in a day. Let us be content to contribute our little bit to the great work of the ages, and He who made the ages will weave it into His pattern so the thread will not be lost. No one of us can develop the whole pattern of God for the whole world in his lifetime.
5. A love of truth for truth's sake, which will crucify within us the dogmatic spirit, and make us realize that our intellectual "Geiger counters" may indicate a rich deposit of heaven's precious ore in areas where our human wisdom would cause us to pass by and leave unexplored. Let us prospect every inch of ground for truth.

Chapter 18

Thoughts on Fellowship (6)

Fellowship in Christ is that blessed and glorious state or relationship into which we are called by the gospel. All who are immersed into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as believing penitents are in that fellowship. We are holy *brethren* because we share in a heavenly call (Heb. 3:1). We are fellow heirs and members of the same body, because we are partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel (Eph. 3:6). In view of this we are to live “in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together we may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:6). In order to do this we must “welcome one another, as Christ has welcomed us, for the glory of God” (Romans 15:7).

We are joined and knit together as a body (Eph. 4:16). We have access in the one Spirit to the Father (Eph. 2:18). We must be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” seeing that there is only one body and one Spirit (Eph. 4:3). So long as the Holy Spirit dwells in any man he is bound by an invisible cord to heaven; and by the same token, he is bound to every other person in whom the Spirit abides. This is “the fellowship of the Spirit” (Phil. 2:1). It is created by the Spirit, and it is maintained by the Spirit. Any alliance of those who are not indwelt of the Spirit is a selfish and useless one. Any fellowship that is of the Spirit is at once meaningful and active.

Because we sustain that relationship we are urged to “complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (verse 2). We complete the joy of the apostle when we are able to walk and work together in the same mind. This does not mean to be of the same opinion. It does not mean that we are cut out by a kind of divine cookie cutter. But we have the mind of Christ. We do not come into the fellowship because we are of the same mind, or have the same love but we come to be of the same mind and have the same love, because we are in the fellowship. It is the beautiful garden in which we “grow up into Him in all things.” It is the atmosphere in which we “grow in grace and in knowledge of the truth.” God brings us into fellowship through grace; we grow together by mutual eagerness to maintain that unity.

One of the greatest tragedies of this age has been the lack of eagerness to maintain unity. There has been an eagerness to divide. It has become almost an obsession. It is a passion which engulfs us and fragments us, but there seems to be a decided reluctance to unite. Men have no fear of separation, but live in mutual dread of ending it. Nowhere does the word of God counsel division among believers. In scores of passages unity is urged. Yet we could not be more divided if the word of God had commanded it. No one is so unpopular in some circles today as he who speaks for unity. Brethren take counsel together to stop the mouth of one who pleads for it, and if they cannot stop his mouth, they stop their ears.

This is the sad state to which Christendom is reduced by our littleness, fears, frustration, bigotry and hatred. Is it any wonder that under such circumstances we seek and earnestly look for scriptural warrant for our ungodly procedure? We are a Bible believing people. We have

boasted so long that we do nothing without scriptural backing. So it becomes necessary that we search the scriptures to justify what we are doing. We have charted our course by ourselves; we must alter God's chart and map to condone it. We now place a ban upon unity and a blessing upon division. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight" (Isa. 5:20).

Think of the frightful cleavages that invest the realm of Christendom. If you disregard the great division between Romanism and Protestantism, and regard only the latter as filling the nominal Christian domain, behold the almost three hundred sects and cults which cumber our own fair country. If you restrict your narrowed vision to the heirs of the restoration movement, you must contemplate no less than twenty-five splinter parties, each one belaboring all of the others as sects and factions. Nor is the end yet, for the germ of the seed which has produced this state is not dead or dormant, and there must follow more division, factionism, strife, contention and bitter debate. We will bequeath to our children and our children's children a legacy of hate and intolerance, so they will bite and devour one another, and long after our bones molder in the earth, the feuds will go on and damn our offspring to the flames of hell. With all of our modern skills and scientific acumen we have not yet solved the problem of how all believers in Christ can be one. Is it any wonder we cannot solve our national and international problems? The greatest challenge to Christendom today is to find an answer to the prayer of Jesus. There has to be one!

Those who love God and revere His word will seek for the answer in that word. But they must learn how to handle it properly. It is a sword, and such a weapon in an unskilled hand may slay more friends than enemies. We want to deal in this essay with one passage of scripture which we have used in a factional sense. It has been used over and over to create and widen schisms in the body of the Lord. We refer to 2 John 9, 10. "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed, for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds." This is the handle that has been shaped to fit every factional tool man has invented. It is the seasoning which flavors every partisan pot.

In Tennessee, a man reaches the conclusion that it is a sin to teach little children the word of God in a Bible class in the meetinghouse. This is made his party test of loyalty to Jesus. "If any man bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not." In Texas, a man decides that the fruit of the vine must be passed to the congregation in one container. To do otherwise would be to negate the value of even partaking of the Supper. This is made his party test and "if any man bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not." In the same factional strain, one in his congregation concludes that the fruit of the vine passed in one container must be fermented. This becomes his party test, and "if anyone bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not."

To one "this doctrine" means a special way of breaking the bread, to another it refers to the support of orphan homes, to another our relation to civil government, to another it has to do with certain regulations of marriage. But whatever the party test, one must bring *this doctrine*, or he is an outcast, and must be given the cold shoulder, disregarded as a brother and treated like a pagan. Schools have arisen to be identified with one facet or another of *this doctrine*, and the

students go forth gleefully preaching their peculiarity and fragmenting the body of Christ with gusto.

Did the apostle of love intend to create such a conglomerate mess as we now behold? Did he who wrote that “we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” also give instruction to club the life out of them or to drive them forth when they could not conscientiously agree with some childish point of interpretation? Did he who said “Any one who hates his brother is a murderer,” provide us with a verbal dagger by which to stab our brethren to death doctrinally? Did he who condemned Diotrephes because “he refuses to welcome the brethren, and stops those who want to welcome them and puts them out of the church,” lay down a principle which would propagate the Diotrephesian cult in every congregation? Did the holy apostle initiate the beginning of a Russian-type purge which would make every congregation the lurking-ground for fright and terror? Was he referring to individual cups, Bible classes, leavened bread, fermented wine, a special method of breaking the loaf, orphan homes, colleges, radio programs, instrumental music, tuning forks, baptisteries, collection plates, and a host of other items too numerous to mention? Was this a concealed blast against the congregational support of Herald of Truth whether such support is justified or not?

Whatever *this doctrine* was, the man who did not bring it was not to be welcomed when he came, nor speeded on his way with good wishes when he left. We are of the opinion that we can only understand what John was talking about in consideration of the background and circumstances under which he wrote. John spent his final days in Ephesus, laboring in the vicinity of Asia Minor. Ephesus was the home of Cerinthus, a Jew who studied in Alexandria, and who is credited with being the original propagator of the theory which was destined eventually to divide almost every congregation in the Greek world. He was a contemporary with John. It is a conviction of ours that John was spared to deal the death blow to this cult of Greek mysticism, even as Paul was destined to save the church from the inroads of legalism derived from a mistaken idea of the role of Judaism in God’s plan.

The first and second epistles of John were written to deal with this problem. No one can rightfully understand them if he ignores this fact. We cannot here enter into a full analysis of Gnosticism, its origins, nature and effects. The word is from the Greek *gnosis*, i.e., “Knowledge.” Paul alludes to it in warning Timothy to avoid “the contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge (gnosis)” and affirms that “by professing it some have missed the mark as regards to the faith” (1 Timothy 6:20). Timothy was in Ephesus, which was “the eye of the storm” when that was written to him. Although, because of its speculative nature, Gnosticism finally took many forms, it generally denied the pre-existence of the Son of God in some fashion. It clearly affirmed that he did not come in the flesh.

Cerinthus taught that God was exalted above all contact with the world of nature and sense, that the world was created by angels, and presided and ruled over by one of them, who was the Sovereign and lawgiver of the Jews. He affirmed that Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary by the natural process of birth, and developed and grew in such a degree of wisdom, and of favor with God and man, that he was deemed to be worthy of divine honor. At his baptism by John, the Logos, that is, the divine wisdom and energy, descended upon him, thus making him the Christ (the anointed one). By this supernatural endowment of the divine *pneuma* he was permitted to

work miracles and reveal the divine purpose, which the Logos could penetrate. Cerinthus further taught that when Jesus was arrested, the Logos left him and returned to the Father, so it was just the man who died, and not God, or the Son of God. It was affirmed that man could not kill God and that anyone who could be killed thereby proved he was not God. One who is familiar with the teachings of the Jehovah's witness cult will at once recognize the similarity in their doctrine and that of the Gnostics.

John wrote to refute this dangerous theory which had already infiltrated most of the congregations during his lifetime. It was aided and abetted by the philosophic turn of mind of most Gentile converts. This will explain many of the statements and emphases in his gospel record. The great representative of the Alexandrian school was Philo. He was contemporary with Jesus and was born about a quarter of a century before him. In attempting to synthesize a system which would bring together the best in Aristotelian philosophy with Christianity, he affirms that God is the absolute, eternal and invisible Being. This God is separated from the material universe by an abyss which excludes all idea of immediate contact.

He was not the creator of matter. Matter existed from all eternity. It was not permitted, it was not possible, for the blessed God to come in contact with matter. He has arranged the universe by means of the *Logos*, which is represented, now as one, now as manifold, and in which the Mosaic creative word, the King of Israel's personification of wisdom, and Plato's world of ideas appear to coalesce. So John starts out in his account of the Good News with the affirmation, "In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God." One can only imagine what a controversy this aroused. It was like throwing a lighted brand into a barrel of gunpowder.

But he then declares that "The Logos *became flesh* and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). The idea that the *Logos* came and brought his own tent with him cut across all of the philosophic brilliance of that day. It was impossible, according to the philosophic idea that God could become material, for all matter was essentially and inherently evil by nature. So John begins his first epistle by asserting that he had personal audible, manual and visible witness of the word of life, that this life had pre-existence with the Father, was manifested to the witnesses, and proclaimed to others so they might also have fellowship with the proclaimers, the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-3). The message of the proclaimers was that *God is light!* To say that one has fellowship with God while denying the manifestation of God (in Jesus Christ) is only to lie, and to walk in darkness. "To walk in the Light" (i.e., to be in God) is to be in fellowship with one another and in contact with the cleansing power of the Son of God (1:5-7).

No one can be in the light (that is in God) who is not in the Son, for they sustain a divine relationship. "No one who denies the Son has the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also ... If what you have heard from the beginning abide in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he has promised us, eternal life" (2:23-25). What was it they had heard from the beginning which must abide in them, so they could abide in God? "*The life was made manifest, and we saw it ... and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest unto us.*"

To say one is in fellowship with the Father while denying the pre-existence and revelation of the Son makes one a liar (1:6). “Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son” (2:22). There are many kinds of liars, but the one with whom John was dealing while writing this epistle was the one who denied the Messiahship of Jesus. The Gnostic was not a follower of Jesus, but an antichrist. These men had created a party or heresy, for we read, “They went out from us because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us, but they went out that it might be plain that they were not of us” (2:19).

The saints were not to believe every spirit. They were to test the spirits, because many false prophets were abroad. The criterion was simple. “Every spirit which confesses that Jesus is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God.” By this the Spirit of God could be identified (4:1-3). “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God” (4:15). “Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God, and every one who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and obey his commandments” (5:1, 2).

We are now ready to appreciate 2 John. It was written to a sister in the Lord. Some of her children were followers of the truth (verse 4). The congregation may have met in her house. John wrote the same thing to her in verses 5 and 6 that he wrote in 1 John 2:7-9. He tells her that many deceivers have gone out into the world (verse 7) as he previously had said, “Many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). He identifies these as “men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh” (Cp verse 7 with 1 John 4:3) and labels them in both instances as “antichrist.”

In verse 9, he tells the sister, “Any one who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.” The doctrine of Christ is the testimony “that the Father has sent His Son as the Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14), that is, that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (4:2). Those who go ahead and do not abide in this conviction do not love God, but those who retain this conviction, have both the Father and the Son. As phrased in 1 John 2:23, “No one who denies the Son has the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also.” To “deny the Son” in this expression is equivalent to the expression “does not abide in the doctrine of Christ” in the other place.

The instruction is “if any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house, or give him any greeting: for he who greets him shares his wicked work.” The abuse of this passage by men motivated by a partisan spirit is indescribable in its awful effects; only eternity will reveal the tragic loss of souls caused by such abuse. It has been quoted to justify driving out into the cold those humble souls who would not bow to clerical domination; it is the whiplash that has cut into the hearts of sincere believers in the Lord who would not do abject obeisance to an arbitrary interpretation of some despotic and tyrannical faction. It is the sword that has spilled the blood of the saints, the axe that has wrecked the house of God; and the rude hand that has torn the fabric of fellowship into a hundred bits and flung the pieces into the face of Christ of Calvary who died that we might be one in Him. Dear Lord, forgive us the sin of mistaking zeal for your kingdom with the blood lust of the sectarian spirit! Let us know your will.

Most of our brethren are better than their creeds. Their hearts transcend their practices. They will not only receive into their houses those to whom they profess to apply this scripture, but will ardently canvass a community seeking to get them to come. They bring in a bevy of eager-beaver college students to work the area and get as many as possible to attend. They put out flyers and stick advertisements in the paper with the blatant notice “Everyone Welcome!” They compass land and sea to make one proselyte.

In their preaching they do not hesitate to apply 2 John 9, 10 to a preacher who believes in instrumental music. He is guilty of the Number One sin. Yet, when one attends he is greeted with a toothy grin and a huge smile and given an old-fashioned down home greeting. An usher will scamper half way across the auditorium to give him a songbook open to the proper hymn. He is encouraged to “participate in the worship” along with other sinners who are present. However, if someone makes the mistake of calling on him to lead in prayer, it creates a furor of gossip, and the man who did it will lose his job, for compromising truth with error. It is alright to pray provided you have a tune to it, but it is wrong to do so to four-four time without a melody attached.

Such is the mixed-up mess and the messed-up mix to which our puerile reasoning has brought us. We could not be farther from the truth or more hypocritical in our application of it, if it were God’s will. The book plainly tells us not to receive into the house a false teacher of the kind John had in mind. It specifically tells us to give him no greeting. Whoever you apply the first part to, you are obligated to apply the second part to. I do not believe that most of our brethren are willing to apply the remedy prescribed to one whom they have diagnosed as needing it. I have never seen them give “the bum’s rush” to one who disagreed with them. I have seen them argue with one until after midnight, with everyone so sleepy no one was really listening. The only one I have ever seen conducted to the door and sent on his wobbly way was an occasional drunk who was staggering by and dropped in to take a rear seat and start crying in his suds.

The thing that strikes most of the brethren is the phrase “Receive him not!” It is right down their alley. This furnishes them the right to reject anyone who is bold or simple enough to assert an opinion contrary to the unwritten creed. It affords them ground for renouncing the scripture which says, “Accept one another, then, for the glory of God, as Christ has accepted you” (Romans 15:7). For the glory of God. If it is to God’s glory to accept all whom He has accepted it contravenes His glory not to do so. But our brethren are selective. If a really prominent Baptist, one who has been president of a Baptist school, shows an interest, they can get together in a back room and agree to spirit him in on his previous baptism. A run-of-the-mill, common, everyday, garden variety Baptist will have to be baptized “scripturally,” that is by one of our preachers, to get into the Lord’s church. Politics make for strange bedfellows, and strange bedfellows make for politics.

Men may have God, and God may have men, who sincerely differ on Bible classes, individual cups, leavened or unleavened bread, fermented or unfermented wine, lesson leaves, baptisteries, and a host of other things. Men may abide in the “doctrine of Christ” of which John speaks, and hold conflicting views about implementation of God’s will for us in this age. It is a matter of our attitude toward truth. But those who split, tear and rend the body of God’s Son, then try to call heaven’s blessing upon their destructive ways, by quoting as justification, “If any come and

bring not this doctrine, do not receive him into your house, nor give him a greeting,” are the real factionists and troublers of Israel. Such a spirit is more dangerous to the well-being of the church of God than some “innovations.”

Those who profess to be defenders of the faith, those who pose as champions of orthodoxy may be intolerant advocates of unwritten human creeds. We are not apologists for error, nor do we excuse divisions in Christ, of those who are earnestly striving to know His will, but we do not propose to settle our problems by driving out of the house our brethren who disagree. We shall not throw the baby out with the bath water! The members of the present factions and dissident groups need to get on their knees before the Savior lest they be forced to do so before the Judge of all the earth. It is time to repent. Reformation must precede true restoration. Let us all love the brethren, and in that spirit resolve that we shall end factionism and party strife. The night is far spent, the day is at hand!

Chapter 19

Thoughts on Fellowship (7)

Dr. Erich Lindemann, while directing clinical work at Massachusetts General Hospital made an epochal discovery. He specialized in research with patients suffering from mental and physical illness induced by grief and sorrow. Many of these developed severe sickness or depression years after the loss of a loved one. The researchist uncovered the basic fact that to repress feelings of grief may lead to morbid and abnormal relations later on. In our modern culture, the idea has obtained that emotional outbursts are to be avoided, and that one should be ashamed of tears and paroxysms of sorrow. Psychiatry has now discovered that expression of grief is a healing process for the soul, while repression of sorrow leaves wounds and scars on the fabric of life. Joshua Loth Liebman, in his book *Peace of Mind*, points out how the Bible long ago taught this elemental truth and cites the open and unashamed expression of sorrow by Abraham, Jacob and David as examples.

This is but one case among many where men have discovered that the real teaching of the Bible is in direct contradiction to the accepted view and common practice. We are glad when men like Dr. Lindemann find the solution to problems of mental stress and depression, so they can help the victims of emotional disturbance to have a happier existence. During the 1940's and 1950's groups of psychiatrists and students of mental health began experimenting with music to soothe their patients. Apparently this development began independently in several mental health centers almost at the same time, and thus constitutes another case of what might be called simultaneous invention.

Great and dramatic results were reported by various researchers. Some noted specialists feel that in some patients it can have an effect which transcends that of any drug they can administer. Yet, in the Bible, we read of the same treatment in the case of Saul, who showed openly signs of being a schizophrenic of the worst kind. But the Bible records the first instance of the use of music in such a case of a disturbed personality. "It came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well and the evil spirit departed from him" (1 Sam. 16:23).

We believe that the Bible has long held the answer to a problem which has vexed and plagued the disciple brotherhood. It has been there all of the time but our very familiarity with the Book has drawn cataracts across our eyes and obscured our vision. The problem is that of division, strife and factionalism, with all the kindred ills which attend it. It is everywhere manifest and is detrimental to the achievement of the purpose of restoration, the unity of all believers in the Christ. The answer is simple, but it is exactly opposite to the generally accepted position. That the present view is not achieving the proper purpose is evident in the fact that factions are multiplying and the possibility of unity recedes farther into the distance with each passing year.

The discovery we are going to mention can revolutionize our lives, revitalize the restoration movement, recharge our spiritual batteries and change our whole relationship to the religious world. It can make us apostles of world brotherhood in the van of a great movement to lead mankind to a closer walk with God and with each other. But it is so simple you may be inclined

to underestimate it and overlook its power-packed vitality. You will need to think upon it for a long time before the full potential dawns upon you. You will need to understand what a tremendous change it can work in your own life and practice by transforming your attitude and altering your perspective. The unlimited possibilities it will provide will be in direct contrast to the spiritually restricted life which has been yours. Through grasp of this great truth God will open up for you “a great door and effectual.” Read what follows carefully and thoughtfully. Let the words trickle down into your consciousness.

Fellowship in Christ is not the result of our agreement upon matters of opinion and interpretation; but our agreement upon things comes as result of our fellowship.

Do you ask what is so great about that? First, it is the exact reverse of what most of us have been taught and have taught. It may, therefore, produce unity where our previous attitude has produced division and disunity. It is obvious that our past course has produced grievous disorders in the ranks of the spiritual. We have been looking for something which cannot and does not exist outside of Christ, as the very ground for our proper association in Him.

Second, it begins with fellowship and ends with agreement; whereas we have been trying to start with agreement and work toward fellowship. But it has been impossible to agree because we have had an improper attitude toward each other. We have regarded each other as aliens, enemies and opponents. We have been suspicious of each other. We have been fearful of one another. We have credited each other with false motivations. In this spirit the area of disagreement has widened. Fellowship has been thrust further away. We thought that we could not love each other as brethren until we agreed, yet we could not agree until we loved each other as brethren. This produced an impasse with a new faction given birth almost every year.

It would seem that if a doctor tried the same prescription time after time, and each time the patient died, he would want to begin to change. Common sense would seem to dictate to us that we are abject failures in one of the greatest enterprises upon earth, and that if we continue to pursue our present course we will end up hating one another and spiritually bankrupt. There simply has to be a better way than the one we have taken. It has led us in all of the wrong places.

Third, this places our fellowship in proper perspective. It makes it infinitely greater than any matter of interpretation or any difference of opinion. In the past even minor opinions have been deemed greater than fellowship. As a result fellowship has been sacrificed at every disagreement. The body has been cleaved asunder every time a wart appeared. In reality, there is room for differences and disagreements inside the circle of fellowship, provided the royal law of love is not forgotten or forsaken. As it is, this sovereign principle has been disregarded and dethroned every time there has arisen a disagreement. Love is the spiritual law of gravity which draws us toward a common center. So long as it is operative, we all may differ greatly on many things, and still remain in the domain of Christ, even as men may differ in the political world and still remain citizens of the United States.

Fourth, fellowship is attained at once through the grace of God, while agreement upon spiritual implications and interpretations may be the work of years, and achieved only through intensive study and mutual intercourse of thought. We are called into the fellowship by God. We arrive at

understanding through the exercise of our rational faculties. To recognize that fellowship is a state or relationship into which we are brought by divine power, and to conceive of every immersed believing penitent as being in that relationship, will allow our own spirits to expand and the love of God will then be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given unto us.

Fifth, this concept, if understood and taught, will assure that not another division will ever occur among those who sincerely love Christ. Moreover, a number of breaches now existing will be healed. We recognize that “there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized” (1 Cor. 11:19). In the past, the genuine ones could not be recognized, because they joined up with one or the other of the factions. We take it that if two parties were created in the church, the genuine ones would not be recognized if they aligned themselves with either. The genuine ones are those who refuse to be factional.

If a congregation is divided into parties over an interpretation of Revelation 20, and there is a pre-millennial and a post-millennial faction formed, the genuine ones, regardless of their views on the millennial question, would recognize all as brethren, and refuse to become partisans in the matter. Those who are genuine exalt Jesus above any opinion and refuse to divide those who are in Him; those who are factional exalt an opinion above Jesus and refuse to recognize those who differ as even being in Him. Our misconception of the New Testament teaching has tended to make more of us factional than genuine!

But what about our guarding of the truth? There is a great difference between guarding the truth and an opinion about the truth. Truth need not be protected. It was given to protect us. It needs to be turned loose and not kept tied up or kept in prison for its own protection. But an opinion about truth is always subject to examination and scrutiny by others. And their opinion may be as good as ours.

Fellowship is not a fruit of agreement but agreement is the fruit of fellowship! Does the Bible teach that? Do we come to be in the fellowship because we are of the same mind, or do we come to be of one mind because we are in the fellowship? Much depends upon the answer you give. If we come into fellowship by agreement upon opinions, then how many things must we agree upon, and which ones, before fellowship commences? If we must agree upon all views and opinions then no fellowship at all exists today for no two persons are wholly agreed. If we need not agree upon all, who is to determine which ones we may eliminate from the area of agreement without impairing fellowship? If we decide which opinions and views we must agree upon to have fellowship, what happens if one learns more on some point and changes his mind? Shall he be put out of the fellowship for “growing in knowledge”? On the basis that fellowship is contingent upon agreement in matters of opinion, no congregation existing a hundred years ago could now be in fellowship, and no congregation now existing would be in the fellowship a hundred years from now if our Lord tarry that long.

No such difficulty is encountered if we regard fellowship in the proper light. Allowance will be made for ignorance on many points a century ago, and for the increase of knowledge a century in the future. Neither ignorance nor growth affect fellowship unless the first is willful and the second disregards the principle of love. One cannot be too ignorant to be in the fellowship and

cannot grow too greatly to be a part of it. There will be room for minds that are liberal and conservative to work together in love, the first lending fresh outlook and new vision, the latter exercising proper restraint to keep the progress within the pale of God's revelation. But is this concept scriptural. We assert that it is!

Every admonition in the New Testament to be of one mind, to agree among yourselves, or to speak the same thing, was given to those who were in fellowship. In no case were brethren told to achieve peace in order to be in fellowship, but, having been called into fellowship, they were to achieve peace. "And above all these put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ dwell in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body" (Col. 3:14, 15). It was those who were in the one body who were to put on love, and to allow the peace of Christ to rule.

Paul wrote to the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi with their bishops and deacons and instructed them to "Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love being in full accord and of one mind" (Phil. 2:2). His joy began when they entered the fellowship of Christ. As they grew closer to each other in that area and achieved unity of thought and purpose, his joy and theirs abounded. "I shall remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith" (1:25). On what basis were they told to achieve the same mind, the same love, and full accord? The previous verse hinges its accomplishment upon "encouragement in Christ, the incentive of love, the participation (fellowship) in the Spirit." With such encouragement, incentive and fellowship they were to labor toward unity of thought. But while they were struggling the fellowship was not impaired!

The church of God at Corinth was composed of those who "were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9). It was because they were in the fellowship, that the apostle said, "I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same judgment." They were rent into schismatic groups but were still in the fellowship. Paul pleads with all of them *as brethren*, regardless of the party names they wore. To them all he recommends love as the answer to their predicament, for "love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, endures all things" (13:4-7). Paul rises above all partisanship in this letter. He takes sides with neither group, not even with those who said "We are of Paul." He addresses them all as brethren, and admonishes them "as my beloved children." He says, "Finally, brethren, farewell. Mend your ways, heed my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace and the God of peace will be with you" (2 Cor. 13:11).

Let us again state this revolutionary principle. *Fellowship in Christ is not contingent upon agreement upon matters of interpretation and opinion; but agreement in these is contingent upon fellowship.* What practical changes will be made by recognition and application of this law.

Perhaps we can best illustrate by example. A group of brethren from another section of the country reared in a different traditional background, and in a congregation which is opposed to Bible classes, move to a northern city to find employment. They find a congregation of saints

meeting there and attend with them to break bread. The procedure is different than that which they have been accustomed to and some things are very difficult for them to see. Fortunately, all of them are sincerely motivated by a deep love for Christ.

They meet together in Christian love to discuss the problem. All agree that they are brethren. All recognize that they are in the fellowship, not because of personal agreement, but because of their relationship to God through the Holy Spirit. All resolve not to tear the fabric of fellowship because it is greater than any personal view relative to teaching the Word of the Lord, however dear that view might be to their hearts. They first decide to list and discuss those things in which they stand together, believing that emphasis upon these will lay a more solid foundation for discussion of differences. They find the area of agreement much greater than the area of disagreement, and they concede that it would be foolish to give up this ground which has already been gained in their struggle to possess the small remainder in unity.

All are patient and kind. No one is jealous or boastful. No one is arrogant, rude, irritable or resentful. No one insists upon having his own way. (Read 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5 again). The brethren who have moved to the city, agree to work with the congregation in every way possible and to allow each one's personal conviction to be the determining factor as to how far he can go in cooperating with the classes for Bible study. As several years pass, their love for each other is deepened through sharing in times of joy and sorrow, prosperity and adversity, health and sickness, and pain and death. Their children have married and they are bound together by ties of affection. The congregation grows so large it is deemed best to plant another.

The brethren who have opposed the grouping of students ask permission to form a new congregation in which they can conduct a teaching program more in conformity with their views. Consent is given and all labor together in planting the new unit. They continue to meet together once per week for mutual study of the word, they exchange physical labor upon the two meetinghouses, and also exchange talent for the purpose of edification. They recognize that because brethren meet in two different places and hold some varying views does not justify disfellowship, and frequent association will mean a closer unity as they come nearer to the ideal of Christ.

Would not such a course be better than the procedure generally followed? Would it not be more consistent with the tenor of the sacred revelation? Then, why have we not acted in this fashion? There is just one answer. "For you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving like ordinary men?" (1 Cor. 3:3). Christians are to be extraordinary men. They are not to be conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of their minds. Men of the world quarrel, fight, separate into cliques and parties. When we do the same, we are conformists to the world. We can only be transformed when our minds are renewed by some great overwhelming, powerful thought. We will never achieve unity by devising ingenious human schemes and drawing up formal professions. The very existence of these testifies to a lack of love.

We are today exactly where our thinking has brought us. We will be tomorrow exactly where our thinking takes us. If we will change the tragic picture of division, desolation and spiritual destruction, we must alter our thinking. So long as we seek to achieve fellowship by agreement

upon propositions we will divide every time someone learns a new truth. Unity will not be achieved by external documents and forms. It must come from within. It must probe the deepest thoughts of our hearts. It must plumb the very depths of our beings. It must bubble up through all of the debris of years of wrong thinking and seek the surface of new lives.

We must feel that we are one in Him with every other person who has accepted Him as Lord. That feeling will do more to promote peace, and prove to be a surer bond of lasting union than all of the pacts, concordats and comity agreements men have written. We are in fellowship! We are one in Christ Jesus! We have been raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places! We were all part of the original redemption agreement. We were all set free by the grace of God. The Holy Spirit dwells within us as a seal of our fellowship with God and with each other. Under the benign influence of that Spirit, let us move closer to having one mind, the same love and full accord. God hasten the day! Peace must be waged, as others wage war and strife.

Chapter 20

Thoughts on Fellowship (8)

Martin Luther wrote about the “church fathers” in these words, “Though they said nothing decisive about justification by grace, yet at their death they believed in it. *The worthy fathers lived better than they wrote.*” That last sentence is applicable to most of our brethren. Their practice is better than their unwritten creeds. Many secretly believe what I am writing about fellowship. They rejoice that I am saying it. They eagerly await the day when it will become the norm and they can exit from hiding and affirm the same truths which I express.

Others practice it and just as openly deny it. When they meet a brother, of whatever stripe, outside of their bailiwicks they are the very soul of courtesy and attention. They will climb up beside him on a stool at the local coffee shop and fraternize with him as if the two had no differences on earth. It is only when one is in the pulpit that he feels vulnerable and threatened and must take a hard-nosed position. The same warm and affable person when by himself becomes cold and indifferent when representing the last bastion of faithfulness, as he regards the church which pays him.

The day is coming when more and more brethren will begin to get their eyes open and will free themselves from the frightful bondage of the spirit which holds others aloof. What is now being said will be of such general acceptance that few will remember the need for saying it. There will be those who will hold on for a long time to the legalistic position. They will equate it with the faith once delivered. But one by one they will come to see it for what it is, a human tradition passed along to curse them by feuding fathers.

Tolbert Fanning, wrote far back in 1844, as follows: “What is the love of the brethren? Perhaps on no subject has the human heart been driven to greater extremes, than what is generally termed love of the brethren. The boundaries of each faction, are usually the limits of the love of the respective denominations; while the deep and abiding hatred of most religionists is limited only by the universe. Romanists love their own; Calvinists love Calvinists; Arminians love not all Arminians, but each Arminian sect rejoices in itself alone. Deep seated party prejudice is the ‘love of God’ in party religions. Baptists feel in their souls that they love Baptists, and hence fancy that this prejudice is the love of the brethren, and indubitable evidence of a passage from death unto life.”

To this poignant statement might well be added in our generation the “Churches of Christ.” It is well known that the brotherhood is restricted to those who agree upon certain things which have been elevated to a prominence they do not possess and are made tests of fellowship. Each group has its own brotherhood and there is no such thing as the “brotherhood.” If deep seated party prejudice produced this state among those who are not of us, as enumerated by Brother Fanning, pray what produces it among us?

Alanson Wilcox in “A History of the Disciples of Christ in Ohio” relates that in 1804, Barton W. Stone made a trip to Meigs County, Ohio, for the purpose of immersing a Presbyterian preacher named William Caldwell. While there he accepted an invitation of the Separate Baptist

Association to preach to them. He says: “The result was that they agreed to cast away their formularies and creeds, and take the Bible alone for their rule of faith and practice; to throw away the name Baptist and to accept the name “Christian,” and to bury their Association, and to become one with us in the great work of Christian union. Then they marched to the stand where we were preaching, shouting the praises of God and proclaiming aloud what they had done. We met them, and embraced each other in Christian love.”

That is beautiful and blessed. But it could not happen today. Instead, these brethren would have been rebuked for being disorderly in meeting and would have been met with signed propositions demanding a debate. How have the righteous fallen and the faithful perished from among the children of men. We need to weep as we read these stirring tales of yesteryear from the pens of those who were so on fire for the unity of God’s people that they allowed nothing to stand in the way.

In this current series which I am doing on fellowship, the *koinonia* of the disciples of our Lord, it is appropriate and important that we consider the related term *koinonos*, which designates the sharer or partaker. As William Barclay points out in “A New Testament Wordbook” this term in classical Greek means a companion, a partner, or a joint-owner. In secular usage it was a business term. In Luke 5:10 we are told that James and John were *partners* with Simon in a fishing enterprise. In the same sense Paul informed those who asked about the status of Titus that he was his *partner* (2 Cor. 8:23). When asking Philemon to receive back his runaway slave as a brother, the apostle says, “If you consider me a *partner*, receive him as myself” (verse 17). In the New Testament, therefore, the word is used of partnership in either secular or spiritual pursuits.

The Galilean fishermen who became ambassadors for the Christ would not need an explanation of what it meant to be a *koinonos* in the Lord. They understood its implication from the partnership of the fishing nets. They had been joined together by a common objective, they had mutually toiled and endured hardship, and had shared in prosperity and adversity, depending upon the size of the catch and the vagaries of the market.

When Paul seeks to enforce the point that those who eat the bread and drink the cup together are in fellowship, he cites an example. “Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices *partakers* of the altar?” (1 Cor. 10:18). A certain portion of some sacrifices was to be eaten by those qualified under the law. Those who thus ate were partners or sharers in the benefits and blessings derived from attendance upon the whole service centered about the altar. Paul extends his reasoning to show that one cannot be in partnership with the Lord and with demons at the same time (see verse 21). There is nothing in common between God and idols. One exists in the mind of the worshiper. The other exists independently. So there can be nothing in common between ourselves and both at the same time. “You cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table and the table of demons.”

We share with each other in Christ because He has shared His bounty and grace with us. We are not in the fellowship because of our attainments in wealth, power, prestige, wisdom or knowledge. They do not necessarily debar from fellowship, and neither do they enhance it. The mere fact that one may be worth a huge amount while another is in poverty will not affect their

fellowship in Christ. It is not based upon that. The fact that one may be in a political office and the other a virtual unknown will not affect our fellowship in Christ. He received us both regardless of circumstances and brought us into the glorious fellowship. We were made partners, not through anything we did, or because of any accomplishment of our own, but because of the riches of His grace.

We are not in the fellowship because we understand everything alike, or because we have reached a certain stage of spiritual development. We did not come into the fellowship by making an “A” on a test on doctrinal matters, or by passing a test. The fact is that we are in all sorts of developmental stages from lisping babes to mature men. Even those who are mature have much yet to learn. The fact is that we will never pass beyond the disciple stage in this life. “The brotherhood we are told to love” (1 Peter 3:17) does not consist merely of those who agree with us upon some controversial point such as Bible classes, colleges, individual cups, the pastor system, contribution baskets, long hair, or a manner of breaking the bread. There are those who would like to limit it to those who wear ties, have their hair cropped and have no beard. But they are schismatic and factional in their outlook. They suffer from restricted vision and spiritual astigmatism. “The brotherhood” of Christ stems from the fatherhood of God. Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren because we have the same Father as himself. He said “Go to *my brethren*, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father” (John 20:17).

Every person on this earth who is a child of God is my brother. He is in “the brotherhood.” When we talk of the brotherhood in such a manner as to exclude any of God’s children we are sectarian. We are also ignorant. We reflect not upon the children but upon the Father when we deny their paternity. In an attempt to defend our own views we actually exclude God. Such a partisan usage of the term is quite frequent. It is promoted by factional leaders and editors. I regularly receive a number of journals and reports of those preachers who contribute news to them. All speak of work “in the brotherhood” but they do not speak as the Bible does. They do not mean the same thing by the term that the word means.

To one the brotherhood is limited to those who oppose classes, to another those who use fermented wine in the Lord’s Supper, to another those who break the bread in a certain fashion, to another those who oppose orphan homes, to another those who object to individual cups, to another those who employ instrumental music, to another those who oppose its use.

It is a rather strange phenomenon that all of these various factions have a paper, and generally the editor and certain chosen cohorts in his favor, constitute the ruling hierarchy of each “brotherhood.” Regardless of how you stand in the grace of God, if you do not continue in the good graces of the editor, you will be ruined and hounded out of the brotherhood. You must “walk the chalk line” and bow to the whim of the editor, or you will be “drummed out of the corps.” Nothing is more certain than your falling into disgrace if you dare to oppose the pet project of “the powers that be.” Why men will allow themselves to become so enslaved that they dare not think for themselves constitutes the anomaly of the ages.

Pressures are exerted to keep people “in line” and brain-washing methods are employed to stifle individual thinking and to confine men behind the “paper curtain.” It has long been a question with me as to whether the schismatic spirit produces a faction which then creates an editorial

mouthpiece, or whether an editor creates a faction “in his own likeness, and in his own image.” But there is no denying that the sectarian spirit is so rife, and there are so many “brotherhoods” in existence, that the one thing which is unique in these days is a wholly unsectarian plea, and when brethren hear it they say like the ancient Athenians, “May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears” (Acts 17:19, 20).

It seems incredible that angels and archangels waited with such wonderment the birth of a little chiefly American party to save the church from the frightful error of teaching the word in Sunday Schools. Or, that John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah to announce the advent of a kingdom whose great objective was the preservation of the world from the awesome tragedy of singing praises to God accompanied by an instrument. Even more astounding is it that Jesus, heralded by all of the prophets, introduced by a chorus of angels, and proclaimed throughout the world to every tribe, tongue and language, ended up reigning over a little problem filled group.

I am thrilled that I have been delivered from the “Mickey Mouse” mentality which kept me from being a *koinonos* with precious souls who love my Lord so much and seek to obey him to the full extent of their understanding. For years I thought the kingdom of heaven was an institution. I did not know it was a reign or rule and that everyone who enlisted under that sovereignty was a citizen. At that time it was composed mainly of those who lived in one section of our own country. There were few books and little knowledge. We were mainly ignorant in spite of our sincerity. We were hostile toward others, very suspicious, and always combative. But when Jesus struck the scales from my eyes, and removed the fetters from my heart, the kingdom expanded and the family grew larger.

Any group which forces you to believe something other than the great fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, as a condition of admission to their fellowship, has laid another foundation than that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ. And that “something else” is the creed of that group, and the group constitutes a sect in the fair import of the term. And any group which establishes admission to brotherhood upon any other basis than the new birth is doing despite to the Spirit of grace, and opposing God’s plan for the ages.

We are participants with God because we share in the divine nature. The very word *koinonos* is used in this connection. “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be *partakers* of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4). Being partners in the divine nature brings us into intimate relationship with all who share in that nature. It effectively frees us from all the demands of the carnal human nature. We are no longer debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh. Sin has no dominion over us.

It also obligates us to use our faith as a foundation and upon it to build a life structure using as materials the “excellencies” which are enumerated. The new life is not static, stunted or stifled. We are to grow and glow. This indicates that when we are called to glory and virtue we are far from being spiritually perfect or intellectually mature. We are one in Him, not because of personal attainment but because of His grace.

Due to differences in early training, environment, and temperament, as well as variations in aptitudes, skills, and opportunities of study, there will be many things upon which we will disagree. These differences can be resolved if they need to be. There are some matters on which we may always differ, but they are of such little consequence as to warrant no particular effect upon us; there are others of a graver nature, but upon these we should bestow more abundant study and consultation. The whole problem is one of attitudes — toward God, His word, and each other. A recognition of kindred ties in Jesus will enable us to treat each other as brethren while we draw closer to Him and each other in our efforts.

Chapter 21

Thoughts on Fellowship (9)

This is the final article in a series on the above topic. In all of these we have humbly set forth our convictions without regard to our past ideas and conclusions. We have not sought to bind them upon others. We respect and love those who disagree with the thoughts suggested. It is not at all necessary to concur with our statements to be received in the Lord, or to be loved and respected as our brother in Him. We trust that our readers have been stimulated to think, reason and discuss relative to the important problem that confronts us. Our views may not be so important but none of us doubt that fellowship in Jesus is very important. We begin herewith a summary of our views.

1. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are divided and torn into warring sects, and these defeat the purpose of our absent King. But they are still believers. They have heard the good news proclaimed and have sought to reply to its demands upon their lives. Regardless of how far apart they may seem to be they differ as believers and not as unbelievers. It is this which makes the whole thing so tragic. They have been splintered by following the ideas which have crystallized in the minds of men. Not one of the divisive things has been created by God. It is not belief of the gospel which is the problem but the something else in each case.

2. His will is that all who believe in Him should be one, and for this He prayed on the night before His death. The thing of paramount importance to Jesus as He faced Gethsemane and Golgotha was the unity of all who accepted Him as the Messiah and God's Son. With the shadow of the cross falling across His pathway He prayed that all who believe in Him through the apostolic testimony should be one. He prayed that this oneness might be of the quality that existed between Himself and the Father. He wanted us to be one in them and wanted it to be a visible unity which the world could see. For he realized that the world could not be won to believe in Him until those in the world who believed in Him would be one. It may seem strange that God would condition the salvation of the world upon such a fragile thread but He did so. We pay the price of a lost world for our divisions.

In some indefinable way our unity is connected with the glory which Jesus dispenses and which Jesus had with the Father before the world began. He declares, "I gave them the same glory you gave me, so that they may be one, just as you and I are one. I in them and you in me, so that they may be completely one, in order that the world may know that you sent me and that you love them as you love me." That may yet be a mystery unto our human minds but the design of it is clear. Our disunity reflects against the glory of God and keeps Him from being magnified.

Just as the Shekinah, representing God's glory in the days of Israel and going before them as a pillar of cloud and fire, brought them together around the holy tent, so the glory of Christ draws us like a magnet to a common center and unites us in the greatest force on earth. The farther we get from the glory of God the more divided we come. The closer we come to it the closer we come to each other. It leads us in our pilgrimage and tells us where to camp.

3. Religious division and sectarian strife is not the normal condition of the body of Christ. Like cancer in a physical body it is a malignant growth and an abnormal state. If medical researchers ever accept cancer as a normal condition they will cease to dedicate themselves to research dealing with its cause and cure, and we will be doomed. Likewise, if we accept sectarianism as the normal state, declare there is nothing to be done about it and cease to labor to determine its cause and cure, we will be doomed to incessant warfare amongst believers, and none of us can be wholly guiltless.

It seems to me that we are in that state now. We have accepted division and agreed to live with it as long as we can, just like a man with an inoperable malignancy. No one becomes greatly exercised about it. No one is worked up over it. Each party is so busy proselyting and trying to grow larger and fatter that it accepts with nonchalance the cancer eating away at its inward being. There are no researchers carefully examining what has brought us to this sad state. We have resolved to go on, each in his own way, without reference to other believers.

Sickness is not normal for the human body. It is the result of sin, either directly or indirectly. Had man continued obediently before God there would have been no disease to plague him, no pain or discomfort. Likewise our sad state in the kingdom of glory is a distortion of the design of the Creator of the body of Christ, It is a hideous growth upon its fair face, making it the subject of odious comparisons by the world which beholds it. We need to see it as it is, revolting, disgusting, and an abomination unto God. We can never be complacent about it. We can never endure it

4. Moved by a fervent desire to help answer the prayer of our benign and blessed Lord, we have sought to investigate the subject of fellowship anew, and we have set forth our own findings in this series of articles. What we have suggested may help only if we do not accept these conclusions as final, but use them as foundations for future exploration and study. Not one of us has the last word to say on the subject of our disunity. It is so mixed and mingled with the temperaments of those involved, so deeply ingrained in their personalities, that it can never be solved by any one person.

I am not so naive as to suppose that everyone will take what I say and seek to implement it. I have become a controversial figure. Many will not read what I write because of their personal feeling toward me. It is impossible to take the position of neutrality on all of our issues as I have without incurring the displeasure of numerous ones who think those issues are all important. I have written with the view that others may stumble across what I have written after I am gone and find that it makes sense. They will not be motivated by prejudice or hatred toward me.

The walls will not be broken down in a day as were those of Jericho for we cannot perform miracles with ram's horn trumpets. But if we can carefully hack away at the structures created by men to keep us apart it may be that we can weaken them until in the after years they will be reduced to rubble and the people of God be restored to one another. If it is in His will that they be removed no one can forever stand against them. It is in this firm conviction we have written in love and without rancor.

5. The question of sectarian strife is a major one with many roots. There is no simple answer or solution. Casual and careless thinkers frequently demonstrate their immaturity by professing to have a glib answer for every problem. It is possible that over-simplification is one of the chief faults in our reasoning. Certainly, it generally ignores the thinking of the other person and his reason for so thinking.

The greatest fallacy of the latter part of the twentieth century is the either/or fallacy. It is appealing because of its ease of application, but it is just as wrong as if it were hard. It ignores the gray areas and brushes away the fog, without seeing what is involved. Our divisions were mostly inherited. They are sanctified by our fathers, now dead and sleeping in the cemeteries. It appears to us that to be true to them we must maintain the status quo. I challenge this. Our fathers were mistaken about many things. Mine was and so was yours. The best way to be true to their memory is by being honest with ourselves and with our God. It will avail nothing to hide truth in order to honor traditions. No skeleton hand reaching out of the grave can point the way for me to walk. New occasions teach new duties!

6. We have suggested that the issue of fellowship is confused because we now use the term in a sense in which it was never employed by the Holy Spirit. It is frequently equated with endorsement of another's position. But fellowship is a state or condition into which we are called by God through the gospel. Our entrance into that relationship which is described as being "in Christ" is contingent upon the belief of one fact, and obedience to one act. That one fact is that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. The one act is immersion of such a penitent believer in water. This act inducts one into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Such an one is added to the body of Christ.

We do not fellowship things, but persons. The word "fellow" demonstrates this. It is sheer ignorance to ask if one fellowships instrumental music, and folly to ask if he fellowships cups, classes, or colleges. The question is whether or not he is called into the fellowship of those who share the opinion that such things are right or wrong. He is really called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ, and in that fellowship he can hold an opinion contrary to the general norm about all of the above and a hundred other things and this does not affect his standing with Jesus. The great question is "What think ye of Jesus, whose Son is he?" You can be right about Jesus and wrong about a dozen other things and still be saved, but if you are wrong about Jesus you can be right about everything else and still be lost. Is Jesus Lord of your life? That is the real issue.

7. Unfortunately, and in opposition to the will of the Father of all light, those who believe in our precious Lord are divided and scattered over the hills of sectarianism. They are kept apart, segregated and separated by human creeds, interpretations, and opinions, which have been made tests of fellowship. To alleviate the abnormal condition we must eliminate these factors. We should guard against any future division among believers by resolving never to make anything a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. This one principle accepted and adopted now, will guarantee that no other cleavage will ever occur among earnest believers in the Savior.

8. The problem of offsetting divisions already in existence, some of which are of long standing, will not be so easy. The peacemakers will be called compromisers. Those who plead for unity of all believers, and are devoid of the party spirit, must be prepared to endure misrepresentation, abuse, and false accusation. They must steel themselves against retaliation when their motives are judged as evil. They must never allow themselves to cease to love and pray for those who try to undermine and overthrow them. But the healing of schisms and repairing of breaches is so important to the work of God that it must be dearer than wealth, prestige or even life itself. A restoration must be preceded by a reformation — a change in attitude. The work can only go forward in love, an all pervading love which knows no limit so far as humankind is concerned.

There can be no recovery of the lost ground of fellowship without association. This means association with those whom we once regarded as unfaithful. And this means making oneself vulnerable. It means going among others and openly sharing with them, doing as Paul did at Corinth, commending what you can and refusing to commend what you cannot. It does not mean arguing or debating with them. Sometimes it means deferring judgment. At other times it means withholding it until a later time. “The rest will I set in order when I come.” But the repair of every rupture begins with the resumption of associations, whether it be in the domestic, political or religious world. Men must sit down and talk, and to do that they must meet. The peace-makers are the ones to initiate such talks. Gradually, the party spirit will erode away as each gains confidence in the good intentions of the other.

9. There must be a willingness to examine past acts which have resulted in division, and a readiness to admit mistakes. There must be a heart yearning for oneness, a fervent desire to see the will of God done on earth as it is in heaven. Division did not come over night. Unity will not be achieved in a day. Patience and forbearance are prime requisites. We must be willing to plant the seed: the increase will be given by God.

Much of our problem has been augmented by our exclusiveness through the years. Division generally began with a small matter but it has gathered accretions through the years because of ignoring it. It is like a wrecked vessel on the bottom of the ocean. When a salvage crew dives down to bring up treasure, the thing rescued from the briny depths may have all kinds of accumulation clinging to it. There must be care not to neglect something that is really precious. Our task is to get together and scrape away a lot of rust. We may find ourselves much closer to each other than we suspected.

10. If it be true that all who have accepted Jesus as God’s Son, and have been immersed by His authority, are children of God, and by this fact constitute a brotherhood, we can regard each other as brethren while we discuss our differences in humility and seek a solution to our problems. We lose nothing by being kind, considerate and courteous to those who disagree with us. A recognition of brotherhood is not evil. But we must want unity. We must wage peace as others wage war. And this means the development of a strategy for peace, and its proper implementation. Many have no such strategy at all despite the fact that it is one of the most important things in the midst of a divided world.

Those who prefer to maintain the status quo will never answer the prayer of Jesus. They stand athwart His path and hinder the accomplishment of the divine purpose. We must be discontent

to perpetuate human parties with human names and human aims. These but pamper our pride. We must sigh and cry for something better than what we have. We must pray for unity and toil to achieve it. We must agonize in prayer, and bombard the ramparts of heaven night and day with our petitions.

Above all, we must love every soul for whom Jesus died. The love of God must be shed abroad in our hearts. It must be the motivating principle of our lives. Then, regardless of what men may do to us, we will triumph over hate and envy. We will serve those who would destroy us, help those who would ruin us, and do good unto all men. Love never fails. It never quits either. If we stand upon love, we will stand forever. Nothing can shake us. And this will work as leaven, for it is the leaven of God. It is our only hope of survival. It is the key to future happiness and security. There is no other alternative. We must love all men or perish! We must find the way to oneness, or miss the way to heaven.

One thing essential to offsetting division is fairness and justice. The mind of an editor must not become our criterion of scripturality. The voice of dissent must be heard. We are not like Russia where men are sent to Siberia for voicing something different than the party line. Let those who disagree be allowed to speak up. Truth has nothing to fear by presenting both sides of an issue so that honest and qualified readers may study them side by side. Through equity and kindness we may be able to heal schisms of long standing. Every tendency toward unity of the Spirit should bring rejoicing. Love is the golden key to unlock for us the store-house of God's grace. Let us make use of that key!

If Christ were to come back and walk the streets of any of our great cities today, the heart that bled for the sin of mankind, would bleed afresh because of the condition existing among those who believe that He is the Son of God. He would behold the party spirit parading under the guise of faithfulness, see hate wearing the livery of love, and selfishness enshrined as sacrifice. In the name of Christianity, he would hear men bear false witness against brethren, and behold the malignant spirit stab character and defame reputation. He would see church buildings rising as temples of pride, and visualize the haughty spirit of the Pharisee in modern dress as men still pray in effect: "Lord, I thank you that I am not as other men are."

Sectarian division is our modern scandal. It has raped the church and pillaged God's sanctuary. And because all of us are a part of the Christian realm we are shamed and debased by what has transpired. Because I am a human being I cannot be unaffected by man's inhumanity to man. The tortures and barbarity of Dachau and Buchenwald must rise up to torment my dreams, for all humanity suffered in the gas chambers of those German prisons. The stiff fingers of those who died in the Holocaust point straight at the heart of every person on earth. In the same way, every division that has ever occurred in the Christian world, every rent in the fabric of brotherhood, cannot leave me untouched, even though I do not consciously acknowledge it, and though I seek to disavow it.

Every new schism that appears, every sect that is spawned, every faction that is created must affect me, whether remotely or otherwise, for it makes the task of arriving at unity a greater one, it postpones by so much the answer to the prayer of the blessed Lord, it increases the pressure of endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. I cannot be unmoved or

untouched by religious dissension anywhere on earth, for, being a follower of the Nazarene, I am partaker in the momentous effort which cost his life. When a little congregation in a far away place, kindled by jealousy and inflamed by passion, erupts, until those who walked together now walk apart in their partisan spirit of self-righteousness, this pebble flung into the pool of Christianity, creates ripples which will not only break against the shores of my heart, but will not spend themselves until they foam out their mire upon the beaches of eternity.

No one of us can be utterly free from a sense of shame while bigotry, intolerance and factionism exist in the name of religion. We are Christian, and the rents and tears in the Christian fabric reflect against us all, as surely as injustice, inequality and cruelty to human beings in any part of the earth reflect against us as human beings. We cannot disavow our responsibility by arrogantly enquiring if we are keepers of our brethren. We cannot, like Pilate, wash our hands, and be free of the fatal guilt of the mangled body of Jesus, so long as we have made no attempt to pour in ointment and balm and bind up the wounds.

I am impelled by a sense of urgency, because I believe that our civilization staggers today on the brink of a precipice. I think we are doing a crazed and drunken dance on a narrow ledge above the valley of destruction. Unless we can make the Christian concept work, our children, or our children's children, may become mere statistics in an atomic holocaust, their burned, scared and charred bodies mingled with hot steel and choking rubble. Time is running out. The sun is setting. Day is ending. Gog and Magog are gathering for the fray. There is but one thing that can save our world from disintegration. Jesus said that his disciples were the salt of the earth. If that salt loses its strength the earth cannot be preserved. There is no other alternative. We must restore the saving quality of the salt, or we shall all perish.

It is this which prompted me to begin to plead that we increase our labor in love to heal the breaches in the walls of Zion, that we wage peace as diligently as others wage war. Only the peacemakers will be called the children of God. Happy are the peacemakers, says the prince of peace. We must find the way to unity or our boasted glory will lead to the grave. We must recapture the sense of spiritual kinship with all sincere believers in the Messiah. We dare not compromise truth. We dare not forsake principles. But we must find the solution to the problem of division. We cannot fracture ourselves into strength, nor split ourselves into the unity of the Spirit.

Unity will not come by accident. We will not simply stumble into it. We cannot ignore the causes of disunity and restore it. But time is of the essence. The shadows are lengthening. The storm clouds gather. The winds of destiny are moaning and rising. Brethren, do not tarry much longer or it will be too late. "Now is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation."