

January 2002

Beware of Evolution

An Associated Press story out of New York, by Richard N. Ostling, caught my eye. The title was *Jews Update Torah Commentary*. The article told how Judaism's Conservative branch has worshiped for almost a century using a commentary that had been written by a rabbi who had been born and educated in the 1800's.

The article said, "But the Conservative outlook has become notably less conservative over the decades, and a landmark publication at the start of this new century underscores that change."

The article goes on to tell about some of the changes that have been made in the new commentary that Conservative Jews are using. The earlier volume was written by Rabbi Joseph H. Hertz. Some changes that appear in line include doing away with the "thee-and-thou" vocabulary of the Hertz's volume. This is a change that is to be expected, but other changes should not be expected or accepted.

"Hertz's book said it's 'blasphemous' to think the biblical stories about Abraham and the patriarchs were mere legends or myths, as liberal scholars contend. Hertz also championed the Jewish tradition that the Torah (first five books of the Old Testament) was a unified work written mostly by Moses."

"He said the modern theory that the Torah was compiled from several conflicting sources was 'a desecration'."

But the new Conservative commentary says that "there is 'a historical kernel of truth' within the Bible's accounts." Moses is called a "folkloristic national hero" and the new commentary is not even concerned as to "whether he actually existed."

The editor of the new commentary says, "The people who wrote Torah were inspired, but it was not written by God. It was not written by Moses, either."

The article goes on, "In defining current ideology, a pivotal comment comes at Leviticus 19:19, which begins a section laying out several laws that have no obvious rationale behind them: 'Conservative Judaism tends to give the tradition the benefit of the doubt when it baffles us but does not morally offend us. When the tradition asks us to do something that does offend us morally, Conservative Judaism claims the right to challenge and, if necessary, change the tradition'."

"That doesn't mean contemporary Jews claim to know better than the Torah, the comment continues, but 'our judgment has been shaped by the values of the Torah and we are in effect calling to Torah to judge itself'."

That is "doublespeak" no matter how scholarly the person saying it tries to sound. God's Word is still "a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." I don't have to understand how a flashlight works to use it in the dark. All I need to do is to turn it on and walk by the light it shines into my darkness.

The article ends with these words: "In other words, the Torah evolved— and so must Judaism."

A few years ago I came into contact with an older Rabbi here in Cincinnati. We were working together to help our school district. On the opposite side of our position was another "Rabbi." When I asked about this young Rabbi I was told that he was working with a new synagogue in the city called "Beth Adam" meaning "house of man." It is a non-religious, humanistic synagogue. The older Rabbi did not want to say anything bad about another Jew, especially in front of a Christian, but he did say, "I don't know how he can call himself a Rabbi."

It is hard to understand how people can ignore the Bible's message to man. It is hard to understand how some can think that they have superior knowledge to all who have come before them (scientific knowledge does not necessarily equate with superior knowledge). It is hard to understand how some can ignore all of the past in the name of scholarship.

The Jews are not the only ones who are involved in a call by some to seek new things. That kind of thing has been around for years. Remember that Paul faced people on Mars Hill in Athens who spent their days "doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas" (Acts 17:21 NIV).

Those "latest ideas" are here and among those of us in the Restoration Movement. Some of these were dealt with early in the last century and looks as if will have to deal with them again today. What are these ideas? 1.) The place of baptism in God's plan of salvation. 2.) The authority of scripture for today. 3.) The place of women in the church. 4.) The polity of the Lord's church.

A generation is on the scene that will be (and is) trying to direct us in new paths. Some of their ideas may not be wrong, but some will be the way of that new Jewish Conservative commentary and I am afraid that they will tell us that, "Everything evolves and so must the Restoration Movement."

Beware of evolution!

February 2002

"What is the greatest weakness in our churches?"

At the last CRA-sponsored Symposium the question was asked of those of us who travel around to many churches during a years time— "What is the greatest weakness in our churches?"

The answer to any question that includes a superlative will most likely bring disagreement and discussion. But when that question was asked, there was no disagreement among the respondents. The greatest weakness in our churches has to be a lack of training in the leadership.

Think about it. The buck must start and stop with the leadership. A strong church usually has leadership that has been trained and is interested in sharing that training with the membership. How a congregation deals with any problem comes down to how the leadership deals with the problem. Good parenting does not come without training and good church leadership does not come without training. In fact, training is so important in the business world that there is a standard advanced degree (Master of Business Administration) for business leaders.

However, leadership training in the church is not always a high priority. Too many figure that if one is successful in the business world, he will do well in the church; if one has an executive or managerial position at work, then he will make an excellent church officer; if he can express himself well in public prayer, he will make a good elder/deacon.

Misconceptions abound when it comes to church leadership:

1. *"A church is just like any other business and should be operated as such."* True, the church should be operated with business-like procedures in much of what it does, but it is not a business— it is much more than a business. Business is interested in the bottom line called profit; the church should be concerned about the souls of those it reaches.

2. *"A good man will make a good leader."* Yes, church leaders should be "good men," but they need to be so much more than that. They need to be men in whom the Spirit of God lives and guides; men who know their own weaknesses and thus rely on God and His Word; men who love God, His Word, and His people and are not ashamed to show it.

3. *"He was raised in the church, comes all the time, and so he has to be a good leader."* Professional sports has shown that individuals can go through public school systems and even be graduated from college and still not know how to read. What makes one think that because someone attends all the time that he is a candidate for church leadership? Just because someone has driven a car for thirty years does not make him a mechanic. The writer of Hebrews (Paul) told of some who should have been teachers by the time he was writing, but instead they needed to be taught the fundamentals (5:12).

Ray Schuh works with the Upstate New York Mission and tells in his latest "The Schuh String" of two congregations, one in Canada and the other in Buffalo, NY, that are both having problems due to weak leadership. Both congregations had come under the influence those who were not committed to New Testament Christianity and thus were steering the ship toward a different shore. Thankfully, each congregation has at least one person who understands the difference and is seeking to change the direction. We hope for their sake that it is not too late.

Recently I received a set of church by-laws in the mail belonging to a newer congregation. It is fairly easy to see who must have written the document in question since almost all power and authority is in the hands of "the pastor." One can understand new and uninformed people being led astray, but the tragedy is that a group of "elders" in a nearby congregation has decided that they should unite the flock of which they had been made overseers by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28), with the one-man ruled congregation.

Most of our congregations follow the Biblical prescription for church polity in that they have a multiplicity of elders who shepherd the flock, but a prescription only half-followed can do more harm than not following it at all. You see, the Biblical prescription not only gives instructions to the evangelists to ordain elders, but it also says that leadership is to be trained.

Just as Christ Jesus said in the Great Commission that we are to make disciples through our teaching and baptizing, He also went on to tell us we are to continue to teach them all that He has commanded. The job of teaching does not stop at the baptistry. It continues on and on and on.

So it is with church leadership. Paul wrote to his son in the faith, Timothy, the evangelist, and said, "*The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also*" (2 Timothy 2:2 NASU).

How foolish it is to give someone a job and then provide neither the equipment or knowledge needed for the job. If we want our churches to prosper for longer than just one person's ministry, then training of the leadership is necessary.

What do they need to know? First and foremost they need to know Scripture. Then they also need to know: how to pray, how to speak in public, how to make a call (evangelistic, sick, get-acquainted, etc.), church history, and principles of the Restoration Movement. The list probably never ends.

How wonderful it would be to answer the question, "What is the greatest weakness in our churches?" with the answer, "I'm not sure what our greatest weakness is, but one of our strengths is found in our leadership." It can be done, but it will take a lot of time, patience, fortitude, and good solid instruction. Let's work on it!

March 2002

Be Strong and Courageous

The entering of the Promised Land by the Jews, under the direction of Joshua, was a defining moment in the history of the chosen people. For 40 years they had wandered the wilderness, but not without purpose. They had been learning to trust God and work together for a common good. They had been being molded from a group of slaves into a people with a common heritage, interest, and goal.

Estimates are that there could have been more than two million people in that wilderness ready to enter the Promised Land. There were more than 600,000 men over 20 years old. If each man had a wife and one child, the total is quickly at 1,800,000. That is a lot of people to lead. But when God speaks to Joshua about the job that he has for him to do, there seems to be one thing that he tells him, and tells him, and tells him again.

Joshua had served for about 40 years as Moses' servant, but now he was to take the lead. In Joshua 1:6, God tells Joshua to be "*strong and courageous*" because he was going to lead God's people to inherit the land that God swore to the forefathers. God was saying, "Joshua, you are simply carrying out my wishes and fulfilling my plan. Be strong and courageous when you do this. It is not your plan. It is not your idea."

If something is God's plan, then we dare not be cowards when it comes to carrying out that plan. We may not know what the future holds, but we do know Who it is that holds the future. If God says to conquer the land and that it is His plan to conquer the land, then it is His responsibility to see that the job gets done. It is our responsibility to obey Him.

In Joshua 1:7 God says to be "*strong and courageous*" in obeying God's law. Don't go to the right or to the left, but follow it just as God has given it.

How good it is to know that we do not have to stand in our own wisdom or strength when following God's Word. His Word is our authority. There is a lot of authority behind a sheriff's badge. There is a lot of authority behind a judge's gavel. There is a lot of authority behind a parent's word. There is an infinite amount of authority behind God's Word. With the authority of God's Word we have no reason to be afraid of mere men.

God explains to Joshua just how important His word is when He says, "*This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success*" (Joshua 1:8 NASU).

The formula for success in the sight of God is given in the above verse.

God then says a third time that Joshua is to be "*strong and courageous*" because God is going to be with him. Paul asked in Romans 8:31, "*If God be for us, who can be against us?*" The answer is "no one." If we are doing the will of God, and have His presence with us, they what is there to fear?

We are in an historic time that calls for great strength and courage on the part of every Christian. We cannot change this world if we continue to hang together in our ghettos and tell each other how wonderful the Christian life is and how good we are. We must cross the river wearing the whole armor of God and confront the enemy.

The article by Harold Orndorf tells about just one time when this good brother took a stand. It had to be difficult for Bro. Orndorf. It had to be difficult for Joshua, Elijah, the rest of the prophets, the apostles, and yes, even our Lord.

In more modern times, it had to be difficult for the reformers to go against the grain of the entire religious world. It had to be difficult for the restorers (Campbells, Scott, Smith, Stone, et. al.) to take an unpopular stand against the wisdom of the clerics of their day. It had to be difficult in the first half of the last century for people to stand against the liberalism that too often came from their dear institutions and beloved friends.

God never said that it would not be difficult. What He said was, "*be strong and courageous.*"

The Great Commission has not yet been fulfilled. We see the signs of this all around us in the sin that is in the world. The best way, in fact, the only way, to really change this world is to change the hearts of men and women, boys and girls.

The task we have is not about budgets and buildings, or meals and meetings, or boycotts and breadlines. The task we have is to confront people with the Lordship of Christ.

Lets take the task seriously and go forth and "*be strong and courageous.*"

P.S. The passage in Joshua 1 ends with Joshua reminding two tribes (Reuben and Gad) and half of another tribe (Manasseh) of their responsibilities. Their answer is classic: "*They answered Joshua, saying, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you as He was with Moses. Anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous."*

Their answer is that they will obey, but they want Joshua to follow God and "*be strong and courageous.*" Strong and courageous leadership will inspire others to be strong and courageous.

See **April's** editorial under the North American Christian Convention articles.

May 2002

Are They Doing It With Mirrors?

I really enjoyed watching the recent winter Olympics. Two of my favorite things were curling and aerials. I enjoyed the curling for two reasons: (1) I could actually see where that 45 pound rock was going (not like hockey where it is a rumor that a puck actually exists), and (2) it was perhaps the only sport where someone my age had a chance of winning.

I enjoyed the aerials for another reason. I watched as people did things in the air that even when shown in slow motion were almost beyond comprehension. The twisting, turning, and flipping all at once staggers the mind. I found myself saying the same thing about the aerials that we often say when watching the floor exercises of gymnastics, "No one can do that. They have to be using mirrors."

In Bible interpretation there are things happening that lead one to believe that the interpreters must be using mirrors with all of their twisting, turning and flipping, because no one can honestly get things like that out of the text.

For instance, look at the homosexual community and their view of the Bible on the issue of homosexuality. I hope that all of our churches would hold that homosexuality is against the law of God. We think that the Bible speaks in a pretty clear way in saying that homosexuality is not only wrong, but it is sin.

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are about as clear a prohibition against homosexuality as one could possibly find. But "gay" theologians (it is very hard to type those words together) say that those particular passages only bar God's special ministers and has nothing to do with the common man. To get that view they must remove the verses from their context, but that is easy when you take the Bible and twist, turn, and flips its meaning to suit yourself.

The account of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 takes on some more twisting, turning and flipping. Christians look at the account and realize that the sin for which they were judged was homosexuality. But here come the "gay" theologians and we stand in awe as they contort that scripture in a way that rapes it of its meaning. They say that the sin for which those two cities were destroyed was (are you ready for this?) inhospitality and not homosexuality.¹

But those "gay" theologians are not the only ones who like to twist, turn and flip scripture to their own ends. There are some doing it even among our own churches.

The Bible is pretty clear about women teaching or preaching in the church. (By the way, does anyone have to be reminded that the church is not a building, but a people?)

"But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Timothy 2:12-14 NASU).

The twisters, turners, and flippers would try to wrest this passage from the Holy Spirit and make it out that it came from an unmarried man who didn't like women, or that it was just a cultural thing and doesn't apply to today.

The problem there is that Holy-Spirit-inspired Paul does not reason from culture or opinion but goes back to the beginning. He speaks of the order of creation and the deception in that first sin.

Paul is not saying that it is all Eve's fault, but he is saying that God established an order of leadership at the very beginning.

Several fallacious arguments are given for the presence of women preaching today.

1. "I know of churches where the women held the church together because there were no men." That is wonderful. Without men in the fellowship of the local congregation, there could be, and would be, no teaching to men by women or the exercising of authority over men. The issue is not what happens where there are no men to teach or lead, but when there are men to teach and lead.

2. "Women do most of the work in the church today so why should they be penalized?" Since when is work done for God a penalty? We are all to be servants. If anyone, man or woman, simply wants to be the up-front leader, then perhaps they need to study again, or for the first time, what it means to be a servant of Christ. We should be seeking to serve rather than seeking glory.

3. "Some women are better speakers than men." So what does that mean? Do we ignore what God has said because we *feel* we have a pragmatic reason to do so? Since when does pragmatism overrule scripture?

The whole thing comes down to a view of scripture. Do we believe that scripture is inspired of God? Do we believe that God has superior knowledge to man and actually does know best? Or can we get scripture to teach what we want it to by twisting, turning and flipping? Perhaps some are just using mirrors.

I'm afraid that this will not be the end of this discussion. It will be pushed by those with agendas and by those who are simply uninformed. But no matter what points they bring up, 1 Timothy 2:12-14 will still be in the text and no matter how much twisting, turning, flipping and using of mirrors, it will always be there.

1. *The Gay Theology* by Kent Pilpot, published by Logos International, Plainfield, NJ.

June 2002

"But that was then and this is now..."

I suppose that there are many reasons to study history. Perhaps the greatest reason is to learn from the mistakes of the past so that those who come along later do not make the same mistakes. We would do well to take heed to Thomas Cranmer's advice to his son to "learn a little history."

One hundred years ago our Movement was in the midst of a great re-evaluation and much introspection. We were one of the fastest growing religious groups in the United States, but the wheels were starting to wobble and getting ready to fall off.

Education was an area where there was a problem. According to Jim North (*Union in Truth*, Standard Publishing), "Because Disciples schools did not figure in the top-ranking schools in the country, many Disciples became interested in what could be done to improve them." Souls were being saved, but that didn't seem to be enough for some. They wanted the prestige that *proper* educational institutions could give.

To make a long and complex history short, what eventually happened brought the movement almost to a halt as man began to critique scripture instead of vice-versa. Higher criticism (what a misnomer!) came to prominence and students were not built up in the faith but had their faith destroyed as a liberal view of an errant scripture was taught.

Eventually we lost a slew of colleges that had begun in the 19th century. We had to build new schools in the 20th century to replace the ones we lost.

But that was then and this is now. Surely we have learned history's lesson. That could never happen today.

Open membership was another problem area. Some churches started accepting as members those who had not been immersed at all, let alone for the remission of sins. Reports came from a church now and then that this type of thing was happening. Gradually the truth became known. North tells of how H. L. Willett wrote a "severe indictment of the sectarian spirit among the Disciples and a plea to return to the genuine desire for Christian unity. Willett said Disciples must learn that members of other denominations believed their opinions were scripturally right too, and he implied a hesitancy in insisting on immersion as an essential to unity. Understandably the book was criticized by the *Christian Standard*...."

North continues that conservatives were upset with Willett because, "he seemed to them to be arguing for an interdenominational recognition, soft-pedaling immersion in the process."

The comity agreement for evangelism became a natural progression. Why not work with others who do not immerse in evangelism? Surely no one will get the idea that one way is just as good as another way.

Today the Disciples of Christ freely practice open membership and seek to merge with almost anyone who breathes (example: the United Church of Christ). The path taken at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century led to major unbelief and practices foreign to the New Testament.

But that was then and this is now. Surely we have learned history's lesson. That could never happen today.

Polity eventually came to the front as Disciples sought to be "one of the bunch" of denominations on the block. If we gave up our freedom in Christ and put someone over us who could help get us organized and tell us what to do (sounds like Israel seeking a king), then we would be accepted by the others (denominations) and invited to dine at the table of the learned and noble and famous.

Congregational freedom and autonomy was given up for the structured life of denominationalism. No more were calls made like that of Alexander Campbell who said that he wanted to see those within denominationalism "called out" of denominations.

The ultimate happened in 1964 in the International Convention in Detroit when the Disciples voted to convert their convention to a delegate convention, thus putting power in the hands of a few people. North says of this, "...there was great opposition to this, but it was adopted nonetheless."

It did not take long then for "restructure" into an "official denomination" to take place. Kansas City, 1968, the vote was taken and by that time the delegates were in place and the vote passed. The Disciples of Christ *denomination* became a reality.

But that was then and this is now. Surely we have learned history's lesson. That could never happen today.

North speaks to the issue of how and why things changed.

"There is an interesting pattern that begins to emerge after this 1921 convention. Whenever the situation was simply open membership, the overwhelming majority of the Disciples voted strongly against it. The conservatives were able to make the argument convincing that an abandonment of immersion was an abandonment of New Testament teaching. Most Disciples would respond to a call to the ideal of biblical authority. Open membership as such was always voted down in these years. But when the convention or missionary society leadership reinterpreted the issue into terms of freedom or liberty, the middle of the road moderates and the uninformed followed this line of interpretation."

But that was then and this is now. Surely we have learned history's lesson. That could never happen today.

North goes on in his book to point out how immersion received much of the discussion at that time, but that was not the "prime issue." He goes on to quote L.A. Chapman who said that the real issue "lay in a different understanding of the basics of New Testament teaching."

But isn't it more than that? Isn't the real issue back then, and now, really the Lordship of Christ? North then quotes P.H. Welshimer and rightly says that he "put the issue rather plainly."

"If you remove the authority of Jesus, you destroy the meaning of baptism. If you eliminate the inspiration and the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures, you take away the meaning and the sacredness of baptism, and hence it would be of no important to practice anything and call it baptism.

"This is a fight for more than an ordinance. It is a fight for loyalty to Jesus Christ and for an appreciation of His authority, the inspiration of His word, and the compliance with stipulated conditions that remission of sins may be granted."

Are some of our wheels wobbling and getting ready to fall off? Are some of our colleges leaning the wrong way? Is our scholarship seeking recognition of academia rather than the "well done" of our Lord? Have some of our congregations already abandoned the biblical position on baptism? Are there some who would like to see us form into "an official denomination?" Has decision making in too many places been placed in the hands of the privileged few? Can it be that history might repeat itself?

But that was then and this is now. Surely we have learned history's lesson. That could never happen today.

July 2002

Preserving Fidelity

I have a friend who was raised in the church and because of his job has moved more than a few times. He once confessed to me that he thought he could become an elder in most of our congregations in just a short period of time by attending three services a week (Sunday morning and night, and mid-week) and tithing. He is probably correct.

In this issue we announce the adding of two more trustees to the board of the Christian Restoration Association (see page 23). We are happy to make this announcement.

We are often asked how the Christian Restoration Association, after 80 years of history, has been able to stick to its original purpose and Biblical views when other organizations seem to take a turn to the left after so long a period of time. The answer we give is simple: the leadership, or in our case, the trustees. The trustees of any organization (elders of a church) are the real integrity of that organization. As the trustees go, so goes the organization. If they are men of faith, then the organization will be one of faith. If they are men of integrity, then the organization will be one of integrity. If they are men of courage, then the organization will be one of courage.

The trustees of the CRA must be men of faith. Our constitution demands it.

"Section 1. Trustees - The responsibility for directing the work of the Association shall rest upon a Board of not less than nine Trustees, all of whom shall be active members of the church of Christ and each of whom shall be required to subscribe in writing to the definite statement of belief provided below. The Trustees shall hold office for life or for so long a time as they care to serve, provided only that it shall at any time be within the power of the Board to dismiss any Trustee for cause upon a majority vote of the entire Board.

"Section 3. Statement of Faith - I believe in God, the Creator, the Father, and the Saviour; in Jesus Christ His only begotten Son, our Lord and Saviour and Himself very God, and in the Holy Spirit, the Guide and Advocate.

"I believe that the church of Christ as established under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in New Testament times is the pattern for our work today and that it is our duty to restore that church in its faith, ordinances and fruits, and in its freedom from man-made creeds and ecclesiastical establishment.

"I believe in the full, final and unique inspiration of the Bible, so that it is the infallible word of God and therefore the all-sufficient rule of faith and life."

Not one word is said about a trustee's wealth, status, or size of church. The concern of our founders was in the faith of the individual.

In Acts 6, when the first deacons were chosen, the congregation was to select men who were "*full of the Spirit and wisdom.*" Money wasn't mentioned. Influence wasn't mentioned. Status wasn't mentioned.

In the requirements for elders given in 1 Timothy 3, and Titus 1, again, nothing is mentioned of wealth, influence, status, or even education. The important thing was a man's walk with the Lord.

Maybe the early church had something there that we need today.

August 2002

Occupying Till He Comes

The CRA is interested in history's lessons, but we are also concerned about the prospects for the future. It is with the future in mind that the CRA, working with the Lord and through His people, has built the new CRA Bream-Burrus Building.

On the front page there is an announcement concerning the dedication service for our new home. We hope that you will be able to attend. We have already had scores of people come by and take a look. We hope that you will come by also. This building was built with the idea of using it for the welfare of God's people. With that in mind, there are a few dates that I would share with you at this time.

September 19– "A Day with Wayne Smith." This will be our first official seminar in the Elliott-Foster Seminar Room. This will be mainly for preachers, starting at 9:30 a.m. and ending around 3:00 p.m. Wayne is well known in our brotherhood as a man with a big heart. He will share that heart with all of the preachers present. There will be time for questions and answers. Wayne will give to everyone who is present a copy of his book of sermons that he has preached over the years at the North American Christian Convention. Cost of this seminar is just \$10.00.

September 20– "Dedication Day" for new building. The time of the service will be 7:00 p.m. We are hoping that all of our good friends will be able to attend.

October (date to be announced). "How to Help Your Church Grow" will be a seminar brought by Jeff Faull. Jeff is ministering with The Church at Mt. Gilead in Mooresville, IN. During his ministry the church has grown to over 1,000 in weekly attendance without compromising the New Testament position. Jeff says, "We still have classes at Mt. Gilead in the Restoration Movement." This will be a seminar for any and all in positions of leadership in the local congregation. Cost: \$10.00.

October 25-26– Symposium 2002. Theme: "The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit." Place: Sharonville Convention Center. See the ad on page 3.

November 7– "How To Have an Effective Missions (Faith-Promise) Program In Your Church" will be lead by Gerald Moreland of the great Markle Church of Christ in Markle, IN. Gerald has been with that congregation for over 25 years. This congregation has one of the finest missions' programs in the country and is consistently one of the leaders in the state of Indiana in missions giving. This seminar will be for anyone who is involved in a local congregation's mission program. This seminar will begin at 9:30 a.m. and end around 3 p.m. Cost: \$10.00.

The CRA is here to be a "Helping Hand to the Churches." We are looking forward to the future of helping many congregations grow into all that they can be for the sake of Christ Jesus our Lord.

In Luke 19, Jesus gives the account of the man who went away to receive a kingdom. Before he left, he gave money to some of his servants and said, "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13). The word for "occupy" means to conduct business. He wanted his servants to conduct his business faithfully until the day that he would return.

The passage doesn't take a great exegete to understand what is being said. Our Lord has ascended into heaven and has left His servants (that's us) to carry out His will. He wants us to conduct His business until He returns. Part of that business is "making disciples" (Matthew 28:19).

The CRA presents the above events in hope that these offerings will aid us all in "occupying" until He comes.

September 2002

Unity by Restoration for Evangelism

If something is said often enough and loud enough, people will often believe it. One clear example from our national crisis is the statement that the separation of church and state is found in the Constitution of the United States. Fortunately, that is not true.

David Barton of Wall Builders says, "In 1947, in the case *Everson v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court declared, 'The First Amendment has erected a wall between church and state. That wall must be kept high and impregnable. We could not approve the slightest breach.' The 'separation of church and state' phrase which they invoked, and which has today become so familiar, was taken from an exchange of letters between President Thomas Jefferson and the Baptist Association of Danbury, Connecticut, shortly after Jefferson became President."

It is not only in the political realm that statements that are untrue are often made. It also happens in the realm of God's Kingdom, the church. The recent NACC in Columbus provided the opportunity for this very thing.

One brother, who should know better, used Mark 9:38-40 to try to prove that people in denominations should be considered Christians by those of us in the Restoration Movement. Let's deal with the scriptural citation first. Mark 9:38-40 (and Luke 9:49, 50) tells us that the disciples did not know this miracle worker. Jesus shows no surprise, so He must have known the man. Christ knows those who are His. The fact that the man was actually working miracles shows that He knew Christ and had received power from Him. Because the disciples did not know him did not mean that the man did not know Christ. I think it is also fair to assume that the unknown disciple was not teaching anything contrary to what Christ taught or Christ would not have given the man the authority to do the miracles.

The man was not among the enemies of Christ so Jesus could say, "*For he who is not against us is on our side*" (NKJV). The whole passage takes place in the midst of a discussion about service. The disciples were concerned about greatness while this unknown was committed to service.

To use this passage today to prove that people in denominations are Christians goes far from the text. To do that, one would have to prove that the man was actually teaching something that was contrary to what Jesus wanted taught. The scripture does not give such information. It simply teaches that a man was working miracles in the name of Jesus and these disciples did not know him.

A second thing this brother said in trying to prove his point was when he pointed to the Lunenburg letter. The Lunenburg letter is a letter a lady from Lunenburg wrote to Alexander Campbell questioning Campbell for saying that "we find in all Protestant

parties Christians." The woman was a follower of Dr. John Thomas who had carried baptismal doctrines and practices to an extreme. (See *Union in Truth* by James B. North).

The problem our friend at the NACC had was that he used only Campbell's first reply to win his point. Campbell actually had three replies in the *Millennial Harbinger* to make himself clear. In Campbell's third reply he says of some who had read the first two replies: "The builders up of parties tauntingly say to our brethren (because of those first two replies) 'Then we are as safe as you,' and 'You are coming over to us, having now conceded the great of all points— viz. that immersion is not essential to a Christian'." Campbell never denied the importance of immersion to becoming a Christian. Campbell then takes several pages to continue his answer.

In part of that answer he tells of "four significations" for the word "Christian." In his third he says "But as soon as controversies arose about the ways and means of putting on Christ or of making a profession of his religion, in a new and special or appropriate sense 'a Christian' means one who first believes that Jesus is the Christ, repents of his sins, is then immersed on confession into Christ's death, and thenceforth continues in the Christian faith and practice."

Campbell then goes on and shows that the way in which he used the word "Christian" in his first reply was "in its best modern acceptation" (see 1837, *Millennial Harbinger*, p. 567).

The brother who thus quoted incompletely would have done better to quote Campbell's third reply where Campbell quotes himself from the 1825 *Christian Baptist*, "I have no idea of seeing, nor wish to see, the sects unite in one grand army. This would be dangerous to our liberties and laws. For this the Saviour did not pray. It is only the disciples dispersed among them that reason and benevolence would call out of them."

The word "denomination" was seemingly used in a positive way more at this NACC than I ever remember. It was as if by using the word over and over again in a positive way, that the concept would be accepted. One church planter said that he tells people we are a denomination so they will hear him. That sounds like "situation ethics," since the last time I looked we were not a denomination. Do our leaders want us to accept denominationalism? Do our leaders want us to become a "denomination?" The organization is in place in the new setup of the NACC. The name "Stone-Campbell" is being pushed. The defenders of denominationalism seem to have a hearing.

A guest speaker at the NACC said that we should not be afraid to call ourselves a denomination because he figures that God has given parts of truth to the various groups for emphasis. (By the way, if we have to have an outside speaker come in to tell us what we are like, wouldn't it be better to have a panel instead of just one speaker? In a panel we could have a Jewish rabbi, a Roman Catholic bishop, a Mormon leader, and perhaps a Hindu guru. Then we would really know.)

If our heritage is really to be found as being one of the bunch on the denominational tree, then why did our earthly forefathers debate the issues that denominationalism champions? Why did they leave denominationalism and refuse to call themselves by anything other than Christian? Why was there a division in the last century when some wanted to organize into a denomination?

If our movement is just one for unity then why have there been no mergers since 1832? Barton W. Stone died in 1844. Thomas Campbell died in 1854. Walter Scott died in 1861. Alexander Campbell died in 1866. Unity was not the only goal for those early reformers.

Listen carefully, my brethren. They may say it often and they may say it loudly, but denominationalism is still wrong. The program for which we plead is a unity of God's people that is not brought about by union with one another, but by the restoration of New Testament Christianity in faith and practice for the end result of evangelizing this world. It is not in the acceptance of this man or that man's teaching, but in the acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:21; John 14:15; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 6).

October 2002

Getting Down to Business

I just tried to call someone at a church. I heard a nice voice, but it said that if I knew the extension I wanted, I should push those numbers. I didn't know. It then told me a number to push for a directory. The directory told me to push the numbers on the pad that would spell out the first three letters of the last name of the person I wanted. I tried. I got his wife's answering machine. I listened to her polite message, but then had to hang up and try again.

This time when I got to the directory, I pushed for the secretary. She wasn't in, but there was a wonderful voice message telling me to leave a message and she would get back to me. I really didn't want to speak to her, so I hung up and tried again with another number on the directory. I was finally ushered to the general voice mail and then I left a message and someone finally returned my call. It was so good to talk to a real live person again.

Another time I was simply buying a few groceries. At the check-out stand I patiently listened to the conversation between the checker and the bagger. Before long I knew how long each had worked that day and how much longer they had before their break. Then they launched into what they each did the night before. The only time I was included in what was going on was, "Paper or plastic?" from the bagger and "\$18.95" from the checker.

Still another time at a deli counter the girl asked what I wanted with an attitude that said, "You have disturbed my rest. Make it fast." I asked for a pound of ham. She cut and weighed it, then placing it upon the counter she dead-panned, "Anything else, sir?" I ordered some pastrami and got the same reply a moment later when she put the meat on the counter ... "Anything else, sir?"

I looked at her this time and said, "Yes, I think Jesus would smile at His customers." She said, "What?" I said, "I think Jesus would smile at His customers." Again came the refrain, "What?"

I said, "You are wearing a bracelet that says, 'W.W.J.D.?' I think that He would smile at His customers."

She looked at her bracelet, then at me, then back at the bracelet, then again at me. Then she smiled at me and said, "Have a good day, sir."

Chances are you have had occasions similar to some of the above. Zig Ziglar, the super-salesman, says that no matter what business you are in, you are in the people business. Churches, colleges, camps, para-church organizations, all Christians need to remember that our job is to reach, save, and serve people in the name of Christ.

As wonderful as phone systems are, a contact with a "real" person is much better. As brief as the encounters we have are, even at a checkout counter, they are precious moments when a good word about Christ can be shared.

Our Master once told us that even a cup of water given in His name is important (Mark 9). Service to the least important people equals service to Christ (Matthew 25).

Christians, remember: Whatever business you are in, you are in the people business. That is our Father's business. It is our business. Let us be about our Father's business!

November 2002

Tribute To Whom Tribute Is Due

On September 20, 2002, the Bream-Burrus Building of the Christian Restoration Association was dedicated to the Glory of God. By unanimous vote of the trustees of the CRA, the building was named in honor of Harvey C. Bream, Jr., and Luther Doniphan Burrus. Here are the tributes that were read in their honor as we dedicated the building.

Tribute to Harvey C. Bream, Jr.

There are a few well-known people in this world who can be introduced by just saying their first name. Among the independent Christian churches/churches of Christ, Harvey Bream is one such man.

Some men can be scholars. Some men can be evangelists. In our friend Harvey Bream we have one who has the mind of the scholar, and the heart of the evangelist.

He became a trustee of the Christian Restoration Association in 1951.

In 1952, he became a general representative and evangelist for the CRA. Burris Butler said of him at that time, "Those who have been closely acquainted with the CRA have felt that its greatest need is a field-worker and evangelist having certain qualifications. He must be a man of unquestioned integrity, unimpeachable and unflinching Christian faith, possessed of a knowledge of the issues facing New Testament Christianity in these days, and having the grace of humility and a willingness to learn. He should be acquainted with, and completely sold on, the purposes and aims of the Association he is to serve. In the opinion of his fellow trustees, Harvey Bream, Jr. is the man who meets these qualifications."

After 50 years, his fellow trustees continue to have this opinion of Harvey.

For several years he served as Associate Editor of the *Restoration Herald* with Robert E. Elmore as the editor. In 1961, he became the editor and served in that position until 1970, when he moved to the Cincinnati Bible Seminary to be president of what was not only his alma mater, but the school that was begun by the CRA in 1924.

For over 50 years he has served on the Board of Trustees of the Christian Restoration Association. His wisdom and counsel have been priceless. It is with great esteem, love and respect that the Trustees of the CRA have chosen to dedicate this building by placing on it the honored name of Harvey C. Bream, Jr.

Tribute to Luther Doniphan Burrus

The May, 1986, the *Restoration Herald* carried the following tribute to Don Burrus when he was made trustee emeritus of the CRA.

"Mordecai's words to Esther are certainly apropos for Luther Doniphan Burrus, 'thou are come to the kingdom for such a time as this.'

"At a very critical stage in the history of the Restoration Movement, when our liberty in Christ was in jeopardy, when local churches were threatened with the divestiture of their property, there stepped into the breach a man whom God had been preparing.

"Reared by Godly parents, equipped with a brilliant, rapier-like legal mind, saturated in the principles and in the history of the Restoration Movement, he came to the fore when brother Robert E. Elmore, editor of *The Restoration Herald*, and The Christian Restoration Association were being sued by the state secretary of the Iowa Christian Missionary Society and the case was being tried in the Federal courts of the land.

"With his assistance, the Christian Restoration Association emerged victorious. He played a very significant role in the subsequent rash of court cases that broke over the Movement across the land. His grasp of the issues and his wise counsel were invaluable.

"Not only did he contribute significantly to the preservation of our liberty in Christ and to the preservation of the autonomy of local churches, but he contributed considerably to the decision-making process in the meetings of the C.R.A. Board of Trustees with his wise counsel.

"The churches of Christ and Christian churches in general, and the Christian Restoration Association in particular owe him a great debt of gratitude and pay tribute to his faithfulness as a Christian, an elder, a Bible school teacher, a trustee (for 32 years and now Trustee Emeritus), and a helper of God's people."

By action of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Restoration Association, we are happy to place the name of Luther Doniphan Burrus on this building as a fitting honor for this great Christian gentleman and statesman.

December 2002

Luther Doniphan Burrus Goes Home

Last month in this column, we carried the tributes that were read at the dedication service of the Bream-Burrus Building concerning both Harvey Bream and L.D. Burrus. This month we carry the notice of Bro. Don's home-going.

- May 11, 2001, the CRA broke ground for the new office and seminar center. It was announced at that time that the building was being named in honor of Harvey C. Bream, Jr., and Luther Doniphan Burrus. Both men were totally surprised to be honored in this way.
- September 20, 2002, the Bream-Burrus Building was dedicated to the Glory of God!
- September 27, 2002, Luther Doniphan Burrus went home to be with the Lord. His memorial service was at the Lyndon Christian Church in Louisville, KY. His minister, Phil Neyhart, conducted the memorial service assisted by Harvey C. Bream, Jr. and Lee Mason.

Brother Don, as he was affectionately called, touched the life of every Christian Church/Church of Christ. Churchill said, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few." That could well be speaking of the debt we all owe L. D. Burrus. People may not know his name, but they have felt his influence. This brilliant (IQ 188) lawyer was able to put the law issues in proper perspective with historical New Testament Christianity and thus train the lawyers that represented the independent churches against encroachment by the Disciples of Christ. In great part, because of Don, our churches are still free. It is a shame that more of our church people did not know about him. It is a shame that more preachers, elders, and Christian people weren't at his memorial service to salute this great man of God.

At his death, Don was a Trustee Emeritus of the CRA. At his memorial service, Harvey Bream said, "I believe with all my heart that God raised up Don Burrus for that important time."

We will miss him, but his influence through the CRA will live on and will be felt in every free congregation in the land. If anyone is interested in studying those important court cases, Don's copies of the court records have been given to the CRA and will be available for research.