

January 2004

Preach the Word

The inspired words of the Apostle make the sound of an emergency vehicle coming speedily down the highway: *"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry"* (2 Timothy 4:1-5 NIV).

These were some of the last words Paul wrote. He knew what was coming and he wanted people to be in the know. Today we often hear of preachers who simply say, "I just preach Jesus." Isn't it interesting that Paul didn't say that here. Other places he spoke of preaching Christ, (usually that is referring to the heathen) but here, in speaking of the church, he seems to broaden the scope. The fact that the New Testament contains so much more than just the four gospels indicates that there is more to preach than just Jesus. He is the hub of our message at all times, but the spokes encompass so much more.

Walter Scott, called by some the "Voice of the Golden Oracle," and a great Restoration Movement leader, said that the gospel was fourfold: "Facts to be believed, Commands to be obeyed, Promises to be enjoyed, and Threatenings to be avoided."

How interesting it is that much of the New Testament is made up of books that were written to correct problems in the church. In the above passage the evangelist is told to "preach the Word." He is given instructions that, in the face of those who teach what is not right, he is to correct those things.

Often times in our churches *today* there will be a class or series that deals with the cults and what they teach. This should be done. Often times in our churches *today* there will be a class or series that deals with some of the religions in the world (Islam, Buddhism, etc.). This should be done.

Often times in our churches of *yesterday* there were classes or series that dealt with what was being taught in the denominational churches. This should still be done.

Often times in our churches of *yesterday* there were classes or series that dealt with what was being taught in some Restoration Movement churches and colleges. This was done, but not enough, because when the great schism occurred in our Movement in the middle of the last century, it caught many not knowing the issues and brought a state of confusion to many congregations. Christians asked, because of being kept in the dark, "Why can't we all just get along?" But by that time things had deteriorated to where there could be no fellowship between light and darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Preachers (evangelists) and elders, take seriously the task that God has given you. Educate yourselves so that you know not just scripture, but also what is happening in the brotherhood right now. Preach the Word!

Mini-Messages....*Current Thoughts and Trends* is a magazine that culls other magazines for items of interest and importance. Our readers will be interested to know that this last year they have reported on many articles that have appeared in the *Restoration Herald*. You may be also interested in knowing that we received a request for the bound manuscripts from the first three Symposiums that were sponsored by the CRA from the Princeton Theological Seminary library. I find it interesting that we can get noticed and make some sort of an impact without compromising our core beliefs....Make sure you check out American Rehabilitation Ministries' websites at www.arm.org and www.abarc.org. Not only do they have some interesting information about their work, but you will also find some good Bible study materials....Rolland Steever is a regular columnist of this paper. With each column he usually sends a note. Here is the note he sent with the column on page 18. "In a conversation I had with J.D. Murch a short time before his death, he told me that at one of the conventions, he was sitting with McLean, who assured him that he did not agree with nor endorse the new direction of the Disciples. He was then well up in years and at a time when conservative voices were not allowed to speak. Pity that the good man had to put up with things at the last part of his life that ultimately destroyed the whole fabric of the Restoration Movement. If only our present generation could learn from that!"....Some may be a bit surprised to see the article on page 6. Last year, we carried an article by the same author on the same subject (NACC). We thought it only fair that if we printed the one from last year that we should also print the one from this year. Personally, we have heard many good things about the music part of the NACC this year. That was

to be expected. Bob Russell and the crew from Southeast understand and know how music is to be done and used. We compliment them on a wonderful job. We also heard some good things about Rick Atchley's message on repentance. We thank Bill Welker for his timely review of the NACC....In many church papers, we find that prayers have been requested for the President of the United States. This is as it should be. But very seldom do we see prayer requests for *all* the leaders of this world. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:2 that prayers should be made for kings and all those in authority. That takes in the bad leaders as well as the good leaders. I wonder if our refusal to pray for the bad world leaders has anything to do with the shape our world is in....Make sure you have a plan to read the Bible this year. The CRA has *Bible Reading Records* available. Call or write and get enough for your class or congregation.. LM

February 2004

The National Missionary Convention

This is being written the day after the National Missionary Convention has closed its meeting in Cincinnati. It was an exciting meeting as Christian people gathered with missionaries from all over the world for inspiration, instruction, and fellowship. Young people came to learn and have a good time, and did so by framing walls that will be used in a mission in South Dakota. Others brought and sorted clothing for Master Provisions. Thousands learned how to make their lives count more effectively for Christ.

Across from the CRA booth was a mission that works on the other side of the world. I talked several times with the great-grandson of the founder of the mission. Also across the aisle was a camp that works hard to influence young people to use their lives in the service of Christ.

On one side of us was a Christian college devoted to raising up preachers to work in the harvest fields all over the world.

On the other side was a booth representing a mission working in the Dominican Republic. They were giving fresh cups of coffee (a nice neighbor to have next door).

We got to visit with interesting people from all over the world. Leah Moshier stopped by. Leah and Dolly Chitwood started an orphanage (Kulpahar Kids' Home and Christian School) in India some 57 years ago. What a blessing to speak with her. Knowing people like Leah helps one understand the statement in Hebrews 11 about some people of "whom the world is not worthy."

Another I was so pleased to meet was a gentleman who stopped by the booth. His story is that he had just returned from Liberia. He had gone on a short-term trip to help the Christians. Liberia has been in civil war and unrest. The war broke out again while he was there and he had to flee for his life. He told of one of our preachers in the country who had been shot, but not killed. The gun was aimed to finish the job, when the commander of the rebels stopped the soldier and said, "Let him alone. He is a preacher."

Stories abounded from all over the world. People came from many different backgrounds simply to attend. We had several opportunities to explain the Restoration Movement to some attending from other religious groups. We also provided reading materials for these searchers.

Next year, the National Missionary Convention will be in Peoria, IL. The President will be Chris DeWalt. It would be well worth your while to attend. Dates for the NMC are September 30- October 3, 2004. E-mail for more information to wbirney11@aol.com. Or you can check out their website at nationalmissionaryconvention.org.

We don't have a report on the final figures, but the display area included more than 450 spaces. (Two observations from the display area: 1. From the looks of some displays, their mission coffers are full to overflowing. 2. Care needs to be taken in who is allowed to come and speak and/or display. There was at least one Charismatic denominational group there, handing out materials and gathering names and addresses.) Over 162,000 registered as a show of support. Over 1,900 teens attended. There were 23,000 name badges made. One preaching service had well over 7,000 in attendance.

Walter Birney is the unassuming Director of the NMC and does an outstanding job year after year in putting together the nuts and bolts of the convention. He is ably assisted by his wife, Iva Lou.

Mini-Messages...Preachers need to be careful as to what meetings they recommend to their people. Those who plan meetings need to be careful as to whom is allowed to lead or speak or display at such meetings. The problem spoken of in the December issue (article by Phil Young) were caused in part because some people, from one of our congregations, were encouraged to attend a denominationally led meeting in California. The warning given in James 3:1 has to be applicable not just to teachers, but also to those who allow false teachers a speaking place or encourage people to hear such teachers....The November, 2003, issue of *The Australian Christian*, a journal of Churches of Christ in Australia, reported news of the recently held Sunstate Convention made up of the associated churches of Christ in Queensland. The theme of this largely debating/business conference, was "The Next Level." Here is a quote from that report which may be of interest to you: "*Other motions discussed by the Conference included separating baptism from membership, which was approved after much debate.*" A number of Bible believers in churches of Christ in Australia are quite upset about this next level that the Conference has taken their denomination. One brother has written of this vote: "In essence the conference has endorsed 'open membership', although avoids the term 'open membership.' The persons who are upset deem it as 'open membership.' Whilst the endorsement ignores baptism for salvation, by its acceptance of the unimmersed as members it reveals its own view regarding baptism for salvation." Someone who was at this meeting said, "Sadly, the membership/baptism (issue) was not debated at all and only a minimum of opinions accepted. They had a concert on and were running short of time. So they called for the vote after a few hurried opinions for and against." For a group who wanted to go to "The Next Level," I wonder why they wanted to go down and away from Biblical teaching? How far behind can some of our churches be from following their example?....Would you like to have a copy of all of the 2003 *Restoration Heralds* on a CD. They are now available for just \$10.00 a CD. In the future, we hope to have other years also available... Part of the Episcopal church has already accepted the homosexual agenda by the selection of a homosexual priest to be a Bishop. John Shelby Spong is an Episcopalian Bishop. He writes a column that appears on the internet. Read the question and part of the Bishop's answer that appeared recently. Question: "If, as you say, the stories of Jesus' miraculous birth are pious legends, what are the implications for staging a children's Christmas pageant in a small suburban church?" Answer: "There is no reputable New Testament scholar in the world today, either Catholic or protestant, who regards the birth stories of Matthew and Luke as history. I say reputable because there are a few evangelical fundamentalists and pre-Vatican II Roman Catholics who have not yet caught up with the last 150 years of biblical scholarship." I don't know that we have any "scholars" that would go that far, but we have at least one who is now saying that the "Beloved Disciple" of John is a legend like Pecos Bill or Paul Bunyon. It has also been reported that another "scholar" says that he took a "vow" about four years ago that he would never read *The Restoration Herald*. So much for academic integrity!....Please take a good look at the Spring Seminars being offered at the CRA. Of the first one, March 18, by Jerry Paul, George Faull has said that Jerry's teaching on the model prayer is some of the finest teaching he has ever heard on the subject. This will be good for everyone....Our thanks to a special group of volunteers from Mason Christian Village who so graciously help us in getting out special mailings. Volunteers are the heart of every ministry. We really appreciate ours....Please pray for the unity of our Movement. LM

March 2004

Tribute to Jim Willoughby

I cannot give adequate information about the early days of James L. Willoughby. I met him when he and his wife, Virginia, placed their membership with the congregation where I was ministering. I had called in their comfortable home and found out that they owned their own business. It was what brought that business into being and what they had done with it that is the real "Rest of the Story." Here is the way he related it in a "Faith-Promise" program at the church.

Years before, he was attending a congregation and became convicted during the "Faith-Promise" program at that church, that he needed to make more money so he could give more money to missions. He tried an upholstering business, but that didn't do what he wanted. A friend approached him with a problem he was having in making something he needed. Jim said, "I can make that." He did, and from that he developed some suction cups.

After making his new suction cups, he needed a way to market them. Jim said, "I put my suction cups on a coat hanger and went to Chicago to find a suction cup salesman. When I found one, I went into his office, threw my suction cups on his desk and said, 'Here, sell my suction cups. They will last ten times

longer than anything you are selling now.” He went on to say, “I was so naive, I didn’t realize that a suction cup salesman doesn’t want to sell something that is going to last ten times longer.”

According to Jim, the salesman put the cups in his desk drawer and forgot about them. Then one day, a customer came in complaining about how quickly the suction cups he was getting from the salesman were wearing out. The salesman immediately reached in the desk drawer and pulled out Jim’s suction cups, gave them to the disgruntled customer and said, “Here, try these.” The customer did and was pleased. He represented the Kraft corporation. From that point, Jim’s business flourished.

Jim and Virginia kept their “Faith-Promise.” Missions became the over-riding reason for Jim’s life and business. A visit to the business showed how important missions was in Jim’s life. Two complete walls in his office had nothing but pictures of people from around the world that he had helped and maps of certain areas of the world. He was especially interested in Southeast Asia and made many trips to Thailand, Cambodia, and Myanmar (Burma). I know very little of what he did, but I can tell you that he financed the building of a beautiful Bible college in Mae Sot, Thailand, and financed the establishment of an orphanage in Phnom Pen, Cambodia. I know that he also helped in South America, the Philippines, and India. He did not forget home, and helped a mission in downtown Cincinnati as well as a mission on the eastern end of the city.

Once, when I was about to leave for a trip to Ukraine, he placed \$5,000 in my hand and said, “Give it away over there.” I asked if he wanted receipts and his answer was, “No receipts are necessary. When you see a need, then try to help. If you can, bring back some pictures.”

Twice, he asked me to visit Southeast Asia and check out the field and do some ministering there. Each time, he took care of all expenses. On one of the trips, I had also been asked to go to Australia and speak for the Australian Christian Convention. I was going to go directly from Bangkok after our mission trip. Jim had paid for all the tickets and when I tried to reimburse him for the Australian part of the trip he simply said, “Weren’t you going to do the Lord’s work?” When I answered in the affirmative, he said, “Then keep the money. I wouldn’t know what to do with it.”

The accouterments and the luxuries of success were not important to him. He drove an old Ford Taurus that needed to be replaced. Virginia had planned on replacing the Taurus while Jim was making one of his many trips to visit a mission field. He somehow must have thought that she might do something like that, because just as he was leaving he turned to her and said, “My car better be here when I get back.”

The business makes industrial suction cups. He was very successful at what he did. In fact, Jim told me that a man had come by his office a year or so ago and told him that he was now the number one suction cup producer in the world. Jim said that he had no idea. But more than suction cups were made there. If you have seen the blue plastic fish banks that IDES has used for years, know now that it was developed and produced by Jim.

Jim and Virginia did not wait until they were blessed to start using the resources God had given them. No, they made a commitment before they had anything that they would serve God and whatever He put in their hands they would use for Him. They kept this commitment. Thousands have benefitted from one couple’s faith-promise commitment.

I called and asked him to give his testimony at church during a “Faith-Promise” program we were having. He said, “No, I’m not a public speaker. I’ve got a heart problem and just can’t do it anymore.” About an hour after we hung up from our conversation, the phone rang and it was Jim. He said, “God’s been so good to me, I guess I have to do it.” What a blessing that testimony was and still is.

Jim would be embarrassed by this column. He wanted all glory to go to God and that is where it is going. It is just that God works through his servants in ways that can be an encouragement to others. For that reason we have told just a part of this story. To tell the whole story would take more pages than we have in this issue. You may not have known or heard of Jim Willoughby before you read this, but he is known in heaven and in quiet places around the world that worship the true God.

Jim went to be with the Lord on December 3, 2003. He was returning from a trip to Southeast Asia. He went wearing a nitroglycerin patch and popping nitroglycerin pills. (He really didn’t care too much for doctors.) While changing planes in Tokyo he suffered a heart attack, but chose to tell no one. He stood in the back of the plane most of the way home to get some relief. Once home, Virginia talked him into going

to the hospital. Surgery was a must to repair some deteriorated by-passes from 18 years before and clear a 100% blockage. When the doctor tried to restart Jim's heart, it wouldn't start. Jim had gone home.

"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them'" Revelation 14:13 (NKJV).

Mini-Messages.... We received a letter in which a former missionary sent his thanks for 20 years of receiving the *Restoration Herald*. He said in part, that the *RH* "gave us a sense of the pulse(s) of the Restoration Movement. I don't always agree with everything you print (and I suspect you would be skeptical of unquestioned acceptance since you seem to place a high priority on critical thinking.). Now that we are back in the US, I see even a greater need for responsible nay-saying such as found in the pages of the *RH*...The non-instrumental brethren have the luxury of dozens of periodicals while we...[don't]...Keep up the responsible nay-saying!"...Former Senator Bob Dole was interviewed recently. The interviewer asked why, when he was running for President, he didn't attack President Clinton like so many politicians do to each other. His comment was classic. He said, "I viewed him as an opponent not an enemy." Lawyers will argue a case in court and then eat lunch together. Why can't Christians discuss differences without feeling that the other person is an enemy? How many churches would not have split if Christians had discussed differences in a mature way. The Devil is our enemy. The brethren are not the enemy....Pray for your elders this week. LM

April 2004

A Sad Verse

There are many sad verses of scripture. In Luke 15 there is one that tells of the older brother hearing of his young prodigal brother's return, and it says, "*But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him*" (15:28 NASU). How sad that someone would not rejoice with his father when the father's child and the brother's brother had repented and come home. How sad that a father would have to beg a child to rejoice and join a party celebrating a loved one's return. I wonder if we have those in our fellowships who refuse to rejoice when an erring child has come home? (Have you ever seen someone leave just before baptisms?)

3 John 9, is another sad verse. The apostle John writes, "*I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say*" (NASU). Here we find those so caught up in their own importance that they will not share what the apostle wrote with the congregation. This too has its modern counterpart when some refuse to preach or teach from the Word. In effect they are saying that their words are more important than that of an apostle. This also takes place when Bible college professors refuse to give credit to the writers of Bible books, but count on their modern scholarship to know who the "real author" was.

When it comes to sad verses of scripture, I think that none can be sadder than I Kings 19:18. It is a message of hope to Elijah, but at the same time it is a sad message: "*Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him*" (NASU). Elijah has just faced Ahab, Jezebel and "*450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah*" at Mount Carmel. He is tired. He has to run to get away. He is feeling sorry for himself as he pleads with God and says that he is the only one left who stands for God. Then God lets him know that there are still 7,000 who have not bowed to Baal.

The thing that is so sad about this is that Elijah *felt* that he was alone. That should never happen to God's servants, and yet it happens all of the time. Scores are the men who have occupied pulpits who leave or get broken, because they feel that they are alone.

How much better it would have been if that 7,000 would have been on top of Mt. Carmel standing with Elijah. How much better it would be if congregations would stand with their leaders instead of making them feel like they are all alone. Someone once said to a preacher, "Don't worry. We are right behind you." The preacher answered, "I would rather that you be right beside me."

There is so much going on in the world right now that calls for Christians to take action. One brother wrote and said that he thought the *Restoration Herald* should send a letter to all of our churches telling

them about things where we all should be taking a stand and writing a letter. He is correct that there is so much more that Christians should be doing.

I drive around the country and see 10 Commandment signs in yards, but is there more that we can and should be doing?

Abortions abound and there are those who picket, but is there more that we can and should be doing?

Pornography runs rampant and there are those who try their best to close the outlets of this garbage in our society, but is there more that we can and should be doing?

Lawmakers propose not just silly laws, but laws that harm the family, children, and marriage. Radio personalities speak about these things and we wring our hands over the whole corruption of society, but is there more that we can and should be doing?

Television makes stars out of flaunting homosexuals and tries to throw their life styles in our faces. We talk about how bad it is, but is there more that we can and should be doing? How many called or wrote to CBS after their Super Bowl half-time show?

Bible colleges change their focus to producing "Christian leaders" rather than preachers (an economic and ego driven move) and we simply cry, "Why isn't someone doing something?" We forget that we (the individuals in the church) are someone.

There are things that can be done. There are organizations that can help keep us all informed about various needs concerning family and law matters such as Focus on the Family, and the American Family Association. We need to be informed and we should take the responsibility to make sure that we are informed. There are questions that can and should be asked of individuals and organizations. If they want money, then they should be more than willing to answer questions.

What I am saying is that there are times when we all get the Elijah complex and feel like we are alone. We are unaware that there are others who believe as we believe and feel as passionately as we do. The way to deal with this is to stay close to God in Bible study, prayer and obedience. And when we see something that is wrong, something that needs to be corrected, something that should be changed, then take a stand. Write a letter. Make a phone call. Send an e-mail. Begin to inform others. And when we do, my guess is that you will find that you are not alone, but there are others also, who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

Don't hide in a cave like Elijah. Stand on the mountain in sight of all. Listen to the voice of God through the Word. Get back to doing His will.

I wonder if the 7,000 had stood beside Elijah on Mt. Carmel, against those false prophets, if Elijah ever would have hidden himself in a cave?

Mini-messages....On page 18, Kent B. True asks, with tongue in cheek, "Why not baptize your own babies." As silly as that sounds, there was an article in the Spring 2002, *Stone-Campbell Journal*, published by College Press and edited by a professor at Cincinnati Bible Seminary on "Infant Baptism and the Boundaries of Christian Fellowship." The concluding paragraph said, "If Churches of Christ (a cappella) and Christian Churches (independent) are willing to consider the practice of infant baptism as a valid practice, the implications for unity could be tremendous." Be careful here. There are many who want to speak of unity, but not restoration. Unity still comes through restoration. Restoration will NOT come via unity....Don Nash has written a review of the popular book, "*The Purpose Driven Life*" by Rick Warren. If you are interested in having a copy send \$1.50 to Don Nash, 104 E. College St, Grayson, KY, 41143...Lake Aurora Christian Camp in Lake Wales, Florida is to be commended. They purchased some land that was just north of the camp property. On that property was a bar. There is now a restaurant there. The camp was able to close down the bar. According to Bill Redmon, the executive director of the camp, the neighbors are thrilled with the action taken by the camp....Evangelist Ray Bennett reports that after being on radio station WGMD in Delaware for 25 years they are threatening to take him off the air because they have received one complaint from a non-Christian. The station is now listening to each tape Ray sends it to see if the message is acceptable to them. Pray for this situation....Chuck McCoy, regular monthly writer, has textbooks that he has written on Old and New Testament Survey and Apologetics available on CD. Write or call him and get your copy....I need your help. Does anyone know of any scripture that tells us by command or precedent that we are to pray for the lost? If you can help, please contact me at thecra@aol.com. I would appreciate any help you can give me....I do know that we are to pray for the leaders of the world (1 Timothy 2). Why not do that today! LM

May 2004

“What Would It Look Like If They Were?”

I read somewhere that someone once asked the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein how it could have been that people could have been so stupid to have believed that the sun revolved around the earth. He is said to have responded, “I agree, but I wonder what it would look like if the sun really did revolve around the earth?” The point being, that it would look exactly the same.

For some time now we have been concerned about what seems like a move to take our churches and form them into a denomination (shades of restructure of the 1960’s). A guest speaker at the 2002 NACC said, “Don’t be afraid to call yourselves a denomination.” I wonder if he was coached to say that.

The October issue of the *Restoration Herald* carried a strong article concerning “*The Subversion of a Movement and The Betrayal of the Churches.*” For some it may have been too strong, thinking that things like this can never happen. After all, we learned our lessons in the middle of the 20th century concerning these things, but new kings have taken the throne who have not known Joseph.

Joe Carson Smith identified (*Restoration Herald*, October, 2003) three “players” that are directing us down this road to denominationalism. They were identified as the *Christian Standard*, the North American Christian Convention, and the Church Development Fund originally based in California and now nationwide.¹

Let’s take another look at these. First there is a cross pollination at the top of these organizations. The two editors of the *Christian Standard*, and a past editor, are on the 10-person Board of Stewards of the NACC. The Executive Director of the NACC is on the 10-person board of Church Development Fund and the Chief Executive Officer of the Church Development Fund is on the Board of Stewards of the NACC. The President of this year’s NACC is automatically on the Board of Stewards, but he also serves on the Board of the Church Development Fund.² I’m sure that these are honorable men, but in a brotherhood as large as we have, why must so few hold so many positions?

Yes, they have said that they refrain from voting if something comes up involving their other institution, but how difficult it must be for those who do vote to vote against something that relates to the organization of their fellow committee men.

Christian Standard says that it does not accept advertising, yet these three organizations have gone together to sponsor “The Blueprint Tours.” Advertisement for “The Blueprint Tours” in its pages automatically gives advertising to the NACC and the Church Development Fund. Funny how that works.

The NACC was never to become an ongoing ministry, but thus it became one with just a vote of a few people. It was never to have joint relationships with other organizations, but that has gone by the way side. Allow me to quote from a March, 2000, *RH* editorial³: “The NACC adopted a document in 1969 called the *NACC History and Purpose*. It was published in 1973. Part of that document says, ‘It (NACC) shall have no affiliation with parties, factions, agencies, institutions or special interests; neither shall it seek to imprison the fellowship of Christian brethren within the frontiers of any single form of human organization’.”

Have such affiliations developed? One preacher wrote to the CDF asking how much money it was giving to the NACC each year as a “Ministry Partner.” The answer came back that the CDF had entered into a “confidentiality agreement with the NACC” and thus could not divulge that information. Doesn’t the NACC belong to the people?

The CDF, although having done many good things in our brotherhood, now seems to want to control larger segments of our brotherhood than just their own growing businesses of making loans, buying property, designing buildings, etc. Now they have created a “Nationwide Church Planting Ministry” called Stadia. The goal is to bring all local church planting organizations under the banner of Stadia and thus the CDF. With this, Stadia is expected to “provide a unified, organized approach to church planting by finding, training and deploying individuals who are committed and qualified to serve as church planters across the

country.”⁴ This is wonderful! A national organization based in California will know what is best and who is best for each area of the country. What a relief that local congregations will no longer have to be concerned, but can just turn their money over to Stadia and sit back!

Here is some history to ponder. In the early days of the Christian Restoration Association, we sent evangelists all over the country, to start churches in areas of the country where we had few churches. We did not have local evangelistic associations in those days. These men would go into a community, rent an auditorium, and then start a three or four week revival. When the revival was over, there was a nucleus for a new congregation. During a ten year period, CRA evangelists started 122 congregations. One evangelist was sent to Southern California. His name was C.C. Root. Root started many congregations in S. California, while being supported by the CRA. He did such a good job that he eventually wrote to the CRA and said that support was no longer needed in that area of the country because they were starting the Southern California Evangelistic Association and the churches of S. California would now pay his support. The CRA gladly stepped aside, thankful that the vision had grown and knowing that a local area knew best what their own needs were. About this time, local evangelistic associations sprang up all over to start new churches in their areas and the CRA stepped out of that field of activity.

It is an age old argument of whether a large centralized government is better than a small local government. We tend to think that people in a local area know their needs better than someone in an office many miles away.

It has also been widely reported that the CDF has tried to add an already on-going seniors ministry to its stable. They have reached some sort of mutual agreement with that ministry at the present time. Already there are CDF ads appearing quite prominently in seniors’ programs and magazines. Seniors would be a great source of income to the CDF. There is, of course, nothing wrong with helping seniors, but all of this under one entity is dangerous for the independent welfare of our people and Movement. Again, these are honorable men, but even honorable men make mistakes in judgement. What decisions will those in coming generations make? Will they go farther than their honorable predecessors did?

More and more we seem to be moving in the direction of becoming an evangelical denomination. It used to be that once in a while a “guest” (code for “denominational”) speaker would be at the NACC. That number has been increasing at a steady rate until this year the NACC is advertising 12 “guest” workshop leaders.⁵

But now comes the *piece de resistance* that shows where this train is going. The Executive Director of the NACC made a presentation to the presidents of the Bible colleges in February of this year. He was proposing or announcing that the NACC is adding to its work something called “Ministry Connect.”

1. A minister, looking for a church, will pay a one-time fee of \$130.00 to be added to the program. He fills out an extensive personality and doctrinal belief profile designed around a computer program that projects leadership strengths.

2. A church, looking for a preacher, pays \$595.00 when it has a staff opening. The church describes the opening and fills out a related computer program questionnaire to identify the type of leadership characteristics the church is looking for.

3. The NACC/Ministry Connect then provides up to ten candidates, selected ostensibly through the computer program, (controlled by someone at the NACC) that provides the best match for the church. The Executive Director of the NACC felt that since it is all done by computer there is no potential for abuse. (Anyone want to buy some good “swamp land?”)

One Bible college president referred to this as a “national placement service.”

Perhaps these men are not moving us toward a denominational status, but to paraphrase the words of Wittgenstein, “I wonder what it would look like if they were?”

Endnotes:

¹. The Church Development Fund is based out of Anaheim, CA, and has offices in Atlanta, Indianapolis, Phoenix, and Portland. According to their Offering Circular of February 1, 2003, they expect to pay their officers (salary, ministerial housing allowance, book allowance, and retirement contributions) “in this fiscal year...approximately \$1,644,012.”

². Information checked and correct as of November 2003.

³. Go to our website: thecra.org. to read previous editorials.

- ⁴. Cornerstone, vol 24, number 4, winter 2003, published by the Church Development Fund.
- ⁵. Christian Standard, February 15, 2004, p. 7.