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RELIGIOUS DECISIONS

E. H. Vines, Sr.

"How long halt ye between two opinions?" (1 Kgs. 18: 21.) What about decisions? Decisions are made up of two elements: a positive side and a negative side. Decision has its place in every phase of life. Decisions must be made: yea or nay—for or against. So, when people make decisions in religious matters, it must of necessity be right or wrong. It's accept or reject God's divine Truth. One must accept and do all that God requires—no more or no less: else a complete rejection—a dethronement of Bible authority. Christ said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (Jno. 12: 48.)

When Elijah asked the question: "How long halt ye between two opinions? the people were hesitating, and seemed to be in a state of indecision. Which will it be, God or Baal? "They answered not a word." But when Elijah, by the act of God, showed to the Israelites, beyond any shadow of a doubt,

DO I HAVE TO ATTEND ALL SERVICES?

To many people it seems most unreasonable that anyone should even expect them to attend all the services of the church. Actually, why should a devout Christian be concerned with the question of whether or not he must attend all the services? Can you imagine a rabid athletic fan whose son plays on the "first string" asking the question, "Must I go to every game?"

It isn't at all a question of whether or not he must go. He wants to go, and will go if at all possible. He will arrange his business appointments and social engagements so that they will not conflict with game schedules.

We know many devout Christians who likewise arrange their schedules so that there will be no conflict with any of the services of the church. Every Christian should do this. Many of our people who miss Sunday night and mid-week services do so by choice rather than by a conflict of schedules. A conflict of interest means that your soul is in peril. With the faithful there is NO conflict. (The Echo)

"And let us bestow thought on one another with the view to arousing one another to brotherly love and right conduct; not neglecting—as some habitually do—to meet together, but encouraging one another, and doing all this the more since you can see the Day of Christ drawing near. For if we wilfully persist in sin . . . there remains nothing but a certain awful expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which is to consume the enemies of God . . . (Heb. 10:24-27—Weymouth).

that the "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel was indeed the God of Israel; the record says, "And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God." (v. 39.)

Today, we have the same God that Elijah called upon, with many infallible proofs; by signs, miracles, and wonders, that the Lord, He is the God, and has, through His Son, given us "the perfect law of liberty" which is able to guide us unto all Truth, yet many good people are in the same condition that the Israelites were, and seem not to know that they are serving Satan rather than God. The apostle Paul said, "know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin into death, or obedience unto righteousness." (Rom. 6:16.) Again, some people are almost persuaded to become Christians; but their love for world prevents a full persuasion. How deplorable it is when accountable beings should be undecided about the salvation of their souls! The situation in the church is about the same with many good people, they are almost persuaded to leave institutional decisions; but the pressure placed upon them prevents a full persuasion.

What wonderful opportunities and advantages we have in living under the gospel dispensation over the ancient Israelites! However, in spite of such wonderful grace, how astonishing it is to see so many members of the Lord's church come to a place in their life where they are not satisfied with the Lord's Way, and decide to take after some schemes that originated in man's wisdom for doing the work of the church. Many who claim to be gospel preachers have decided to make laws where God has not spoken. This is nothing but pure sectarianism—creed making; and is leading many sincere people into transgression. It is a "great transgression" when man presumes upon God's silence. See Psa. 19:13. The apostle John said, "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (2 Jno. 9.) Those who do not stay completely within the boundaries of the doctrine of Christ are transgressors, and without God—godless.

God dwells in the church which is "the temple of the living God" here among men, and the local church, wherever it may be, that decides to practice anything for which there is no Bible authority, transgresseth the doctrine of Christ, and hath not God. Thus it becomes a godless church—a church in which God refuses to dwell. "I will come quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." (Rev. 2:5). Thus the penalty for making the wrong decision. A tragedy indeed! Innocent people involved!

Do you want to worship in a godless church? What is your decision?

THE SAFE WAY

Irven Lee

Every true Christian is eager to see the truth spread and cover the earth. All who read the New Testament carefully understand that the great mission or commission under which we work is to teach all nations. The gospel is to be preached to every creature.

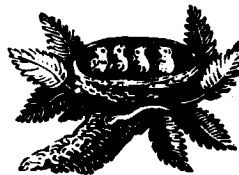
We are allowed much liberty to use many available means of teaching just as we may use different means to travel. Some teaching may be done from the pulpit, of course. Some of the most effective teaching is done privately by what we might call the "I beseech you" method (Acts 20:20; 5:42). The New Testament itself is an example of teaching by means of written material. Radio, printing, and television are now available for teaching the old message. We need to teach in season and out of season as we have opportunity.

We are free to use different methods of teaching, but the church is not free to turn its teaching work over to some corporation. Some central agency that would seek funds from thousands of churches is not of God, even if its announced purpose is to preach the gospel. The church is free to use different methods, but it should do its own work. The corporation is not a method. It is a separate body that must use methods itself.

The book of Acts and other New Testament books give wonderful examples of zeal in preaching the Word, but there is no hint of a central agency or district headquarters. There was nothing larger than the local church. No missionary society was established by the early church, and it would have been as appropriate then as now. If we follow the New Testament pattern we will not form any central agency for church support.

God hath chosen the simple things to confound the wise. (See I Corinthians 1.) One point of the pattern of simplicity is the simplicity of the organization of the church with its local overseers. The congregation is a complete unit under Christ. It is to obtain its funds from the free will offerings of its own members, and spend its own funds under the direction of its own elders. A missionary society would be no more scriptural by some other name.

Trust



Said the robin to the sparrow,
I would really like to know
Why these anxious human beings
Rush about and worry so.

Said the sparrow to the robin,
Friend, I think that it must be
That they have no heavenly Father
Such as cares for you and me.

Author Unknown

© Bob West

"FELLOWSHIP"???

Edward O. Bragwell

"Fellowship" is a good Bible word. Those baptized on the day of Pentecost continued in "fellowship" (Acts 2:42). The Corinthians "were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Cor. 1:9). The Christian is not to "have fellowship with devils" (I Cor. 10:20). Paul asks, "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" (2 Cor. 6:14). Paul wrote about "the fellowship of the ministering to the saints" (2 Cor. 8:4). James, Cephas, and John gave "the right hands of fellowship" to Paul and Barnabas that they might go to the heathen (Gal. 2:9). Paul calls the gospel to the world (Jew and Gentile) "the fellowship of the mystery" (Eph. 3:9). The Philippians are commended for their "fellowship in the gospel" (Phil. 1:5). Paul writes to the Philippians about "fellowship of the Spirit" and "fellowship of his sufferings" (Phil. 2:1; 3:10). John wrote, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ . . . If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another. . . ." (I John 1:3, 6, 7).

It should be apparent to the serious Bible student that there is a vast difference between modern day usage of the word, "fellowship", and the Bible usage. Churches become involved in social and secular activities and then tag them: "Fellowships." Common meals become "Fellowship Dinners" or "Fellowship Breakfasts" (I noticed in the bulletin of the Madison Street church in Clarksville about their "Fellowship Breakfast") Dining rooms are built and called "Fellowship Halls." Game rooms become "Fellowship Rooms." Sporting events are called "periods of fellowship." Brethren can be sold on these things, which the church has no business being involved in, if they are given a religious flavor by labeling them "Fellowships." After all does not the Bible say something about fellowship over there somewhere?

The defenders (when one does attempt to defend) of such unscriptural activities sometimes point out that the basic meaning of "fellowship" is partnership or togetherness. Yes, but partnership and togetherness in what? There is no hint of a church feast, church party, nor church play house in the Bible word, "fellowship." The basic meaning of the word, "baptize" is to dip or plunge under, but just any dipping of anything could not be called Bible baptism. If so, the old swimming hole in Little Bear Creek back home has been the scene of more "baptisms" than I had thought—even one old black cat! It makes just as much sense to call any dipping "baptism" as it does to call a gathering of just any kind "fellowship." It would be just as logical to have a "church wash-day" on which members washed their clothes and justify it under the heading of "baptism" as it is to seek to justify activities that do not belong to the church's work under a heading of "fellowship." Both would show a misuse of Bible terms.

It is no wonder that some have said that at the very mention of the word, "fellowship," that they can nearly smell coffee and taste donuts. Fellowship is a good word, let's not use it to sell the church into "social gospel" apostasy.

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THEY DON'T TELL US HOW?

Ross T. Saunders

Oftentimes we hear individuals upholding various views by the expression, "they condemn what we are doing but they don't tell us how to do it." Of course, this remark could be pressed to the ridiculous. To begin with, it is an ambiguous charge. What is meant by it? And in the second place, it is a false charge.

Most honest thinking people know that just because someone else does not offer an explanation of "how to do it," that does not prove the scripturalness of what is being done. If the proper attitude existed among brethren, we could readily decide whether the present practice was right or wrong, and then come to a knowledge of the Truth to see "how" to perform a work. The truth about the matter is many are not trying to find the Lord's Truth on the subject of institutionalism, but use such charges in their defense. If their only defense is "you don't tell us how," then we must admit that such a defense is extremely weak.

But we said that "they don't tell us how" is an ambiguous, and false charge. It is ambiguous in that it does not relate the nature of "how." In what respect do we not tell "how" to care for the indigent or preach the gospel? If they mean that we do not tell specific methods and means of supplying the needs of the poor saints or preaching the gospel, then there is no need to tell how, because all of us know that there is flexibility in such areas. But if they mean that we do not tell how to organize, the charge is false. It is this "how" over which we are divided.

The Bible tells us "how" to organize the church. We learn in the New Testament, that there were elders in every church. Acts 14:23. In I Timothy 3, and Titus 1, we read the qualifications by which these are to be appointed. Qualifications are also included in Paul's letter to Timothy, for the appointment of deacons, who are servants in the church. Paul wrote to the Philippian church, addressing his letter in just this manner: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." Phil. 1:1. The elders or bishops, had the oversight in the local church. Acts 20:28. The elders had the oversight or charge of the flock "which is among you." I Peter 5:2-3. These facts cannot be denied. It is just as sinful to "add" to this organization under the guise of "aid", as it is to "add" the instrument of music to the worship under the guise of "aid." If not, why not? Organizationally, this is "how" the Bible tells us to engage in any work.

But this organization is being by-passed today, by one eldership supervising works for many churches. This is true in the "Campaigns for Christ" that I have read about. It is also true in brotherhood radio programs. The same principle is true in the area of benevolence except that a completely human organization functions for the churches instead of one eldership. It is again true in the field of education wherein colleges function in edification of the churches. In each of these cases, the churches are relegated to fund-raising bodies under a central organization. Of course, we can readily see the opened gate to apostasy, for if one area of work can be done by one group of elders for many churches, it can do so for all churches. And if one church can conduct one type of work for all churches, it could scripturally conduct all types of work for all churches. This could eventually lead to a "mother church" in the strictest sense of the term.

At the base of the expression, "you don't tell us how,"

RELIEVING THE PRESSURE

Edward O. Bragwell

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance of their own desires"—2 Tim. 4:3 (New American Standard Version).

When one's standard of conduct begins to bind his conduct, something must give. He may alter his conduct to fit the standard, but too often he alters the standard to fit the conduct. Like those of the text, he seeks teachers who will make the standard fit his practice. Thus, he finds temporary relief for the pressure.

Once I watched the wife cut out a dress. Being the prudent man that I am ("prudent" does sound better than "cowardly"), I silently watched as she used the same size pattern as before — but just allowed a little around the edges. I guess this seemed to be the easier way out. I thought how typical this is of many brethren. They get their lives out of step with the pattern (The Bible), but seem to still want to use the pattern—so they just allow a little here and there.

People often get themselves involved in situations and then go looking for some teacher who will tell them that they are alright.

Churches get involved in questionable, to say the least, activities — then hunt teachers who will try to make enough allowances with Biblical language so that the brethren can feel comfortable in their error. As the digression grows other allowances have to be made until someone talks about "where there is no pattern"—as if we may not always need the Pattern for the church and her practices.

We must confine our practice to the doctrine of Christ—with no allowances: "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." (2 John 9).

is the matter of prejudice. Most people use the statement just because they have heard someone else use it, and it is the only thing they can think of in defense of what they are doing. This is indeed a pathetic situation, because the church is being divided by a practice that can only be defended by trying to create prejudice. They would have no need for such charges if the Bible taught their practice. Preachers are much to blame. They have preached these prejudicial epithets to people, hoping to blind their minds to the fact of their inability to give scripture for what they are advocating. They know their strength lies in their ability to draw the minds of people from "a thus saith the Lord" to "this is a good work" (in their opinion). The Bible tells us to engage in "good works, which God hath before ordained (prepared) that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10. We must have a "thus saith the Lord" for the work and for the organization by which it is done. The Bible does not only tell us to worship, but also tells us what is to be done in worship, and it not only tells us to serve Christ by works, but tells us what we are to do in His service. Then He tells us not to go beyond what He has written. 2 John 9; Rev. 22: 18-19; Gal. 1:8-9.

Brethren, "be not deceived" by these remarks of prejudice, but soberly search the scriptures, for therein is the Truth that shall make us free. Let the church be the church, governed only by the authority of Him who died for it — Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

THREE OVERLOOKED SPECIFICS

Bill Hall

Bible authority falls into two classes, general and specific. General authority leaves certain details to human judgment. Specific authority leaves nothing to human judgment. God's command to Noah to build the ark out of **gopher wood** involved specific authority. There was no human judgment to be exercised as to the kind of wood to be used. The Lord's placing **bread and fruit of the vine** in His supper involved specific authority. There was no human judgment to be exercised as to the elements to be used in the Lord's supper. This simple principle is universally accepted among believers in Christ and His word.

It is the writer's conviction, however, that there have been three Bible specifics that brethren have overlooked in connection with the work and organization of the Lord's church. A discussion of these follows.

(1) **A specific work.** Evangelism (Phil. 4:15, 16; II Cor. 11:8, 9), edification (Acts 2:41, 42; Eph. 4:11, 12), and benevolence (I Cor. 16:1, 2; I Tim. 5:16) are specified as the work to be done by the church. This falls in the class of specific authority, and the kind of work to be done is not left to human judgment. Thus, the spending of the money contributed on the Lord's day for recreation, banqueting, campsites, education, rehabilitation of unwed mothers, etc., is without Bible authority. These things may seem to be good according to human judgment, but this is a matter not left to human judgment.

(2) **A specific organization.** The local congregation with her bishops and deacons (Phil. 1:1; Acts 6:1-7; 11:27-30) is

specified as the organization through which the work is to be accomplished. This, too, falls into the class of specific authority, and leaves no room for the exercise of human judgment as to the organization to be used for the work of the church. Thus, church contributions to other organizations set up for benevolent or evangelistic purposes, are without Bible authority. Again, these things may seem to be good according to human judgment, but this is a matter not left to human judgment.

(3) **A specific area of oversight.** "The flock of God which is among you" (I Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28) is specified as the area of oversight of any given group of elders. This, too, is specific, leaving no room for the exercise of human judgment in the matter. Thus, brotherhood projects, such as the Herald of Truth, Direct Mail Evangelism, Worlds Fair Evangelism, Campaigns for Christ, etc., which place the eldership of one congregation over the work of many congregations, are without Bible authority. Again, these things may seem to be good according to human judgment, but this is a matter not left to human judgment.

Let us never try to inject human judgment into areas where God has specified. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (II John 9). Brethren, is that which you are doing according to the doctrine of Christ, or according to the judgments of men? Yes, we must still have Bible authority for all that we do, teach, and practice!

"THE MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS"

Edward O. Bragwell

The first major apostasy from truth is outlined by Apostolic prophecy (2 Thess. 2:7-9). It gives a very vivid description of any large movement away from God's order: (1) Lawlessness begins under cover working as a "mystery" or concealed element. (2) There are various restraints that may keep it from revealing itself fully at first. (3) Eventually it is revealed with its true colors. These steps can be seen as we look back over the present "we-do-many-many-things-for-which-we-have-no-authority" movement.

First, there were the years when we only heard emotional appeals for support of "poor orphans." This was used to whip us with sentiment for the church-supported benevolent societies (misnamed, "Orphan Homes." Of course this inordinate play for sympathy has lost much of its momentum as folks see that the "Antis" have not turned any orphans away nor starved any widows. People know that we teach James 1:27 with all earnestness. But with all the emotional appeal created about the "poor orphans" bearing upon the minds of good-hearted brethren — they overlooked the fact that human societies to do any of the work of the church is without scriptural authority. While this "little thing" was being done, many good people were unwittingly being conditioned to accept a host of other things without Scriptural authority.

But now the lawless spirit is being openly revealed more and more in those churches. From a Nashville News report we read of the plans of one of the Churches of Christ (?) in that area. They plan (1) "An Extended Care Facility which would be available for those needing more treatment than is available in the normal home, but less than that provided by a hospital," (2) "An elementary school," (3) "a baseball and softball diamond, and outdoor facilities for

basketball, volleyball, and shuffleboard . . . facilities for weightlifting, boxing, wrestling (I kind of doubt that this is what Paul had in mind in, "Fight the good fight of faith"—EOB), basketball, sewing and game rooms for other activities. (I wonder WHAT other activities they would have room or time for—EOB). There was more to the report, but this is enough—wheh!

From a New York bulletin, note: "Sunday evening, June 19, the a capella chorus of the West Islip church will present a special message in song. This will likely be one of the most inspirational evenings of the year." Now a "church of Christ Chorus" is different from a sectarian choir. Yep, they are spelled different! From the same place we recently read a defense of "social drinking" from the pen of the preacher.

In an appeal from the "Otter Creek Church of Christ" in Nashville on behalf of the Korean work under their sponsorship we are supplied with this information. The church is operating (1) "A widows and Children's Home," (2) "two medical clinics," (3) "A farm and dairy," (4) "Korea Christian College . . . five Junior High Schools and one Kindergarten is in operation in church buildings."

But one says, "We don't support all of those things—we just send to orphan homes." But what restrains a church that supports "orphan homes" from supporting the others? Is it conviction that those things should not be supported by the church? Or are they restrained by other factors that may soon be removed? What preacher in this area, who favors a congregation's sending to benevolent institutions, will openly speak out against the other things mentioned (with the possible exception of social drinking)? We would be glad to hear them.

HERESIES AMONG YOU

Wayne Moore

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5: 19-21.)

This brief article will not deal with all the works of the flesh, but it is intended to deal with "heresies" (divisions, dissensions arising from diversity of opinions and aims). Division in the church of Christ is wrong. They which bring in such things that cause division "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

There are those who "serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." (Romans 16:18). One thing that the Lord hates is "he that soweth discord among brethren." (Proverbs 6:19.) The Christians are encouraged to "mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye learned; and avoid them." (Romans 16:17). This comes after the teaching and admonishing. "A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject." (Titus 3:10.) Every Christian must endeavor to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:3.) This is not "peace at any price." This is the "unity of the Spirit"—as the Spirit directs. There will be "false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." (2 Peter 2:1, 2.)

Division exists in the church today. Who is causing it? Why is it here? "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." (1 Corinthians 11:19.) One thing is sure—the one who teaches a "thus saith the Lord," book, chapter and verse, is right. Whoever teaches anything else is wrong. Paul taught that the Lord would not come back until after there was a "falling away." (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3.) He told the Ephesus elders that grievous wolves would enter in among them, not sparing the flock; that of their own selves men would arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them; and that they should watch. (Acts 20:28-31.) Those who have no love for the truth will be sent a strong delusion that they might believe a lie and be condemned. (2 Thessalonians 2: 10-12.) In every generation there has been division. It must come. Divisions will show who will stand for the Lord and who will not.

The falling away that Paul spoke of did come. Men did follow the falling away. Later men came and advocated a return to the New Testament order; and men followed the return. The churches of Christ grew, until some of the "educated progressives" thought of a way through which all the churches could work in evangelizing the world—the missionary society. Yes, this was another organization—an organization in addition to the one body the Lord gave: the church. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4.) Men followed this idea. They argued that the society did good work, and one cannot condemn a "good work." "Good men are in charge," they said. "It is only an expedient." "The society systematizes the work." "Souls are being saved." "We must have cooperatives to do the job." "The Scriptures do not say, Thou shalt not." "Those who oppose the society do very little." "It is just a method, a means, a way." "There is no method prescribed in the New Testament." "Many great men favor the society." "The society does not interfere with congrega-

tional independence." "The society is in harmony with the spirit of the New Testament." "The contributions to the society are voluntary." "God organized the local church, but did not organize the universal church (all the churches together): therefore, we are free to organize any way we see fit."

This society—this other organization—divided the church of the Lord. Who was responsible: the ones who stood for what the Scriptures taught, or the ones who brought in something God did not command? Division came. The churches were divided. Somebody caused the division. But who?

Who is causing the division in the church of the Lord today? Who caused the division when the missionary society started in 1849? The ones who brought it in, or the ones who opposed its existence? Who divided the churches when instrumental music entered in 1859? The ones who introduced it, or the ones who opposed it? Who, today, are causing division in the body of Christ? The ones who have brought into existence human organizations to do the work of benevolence with the support of the church or those who oppose the church's using its resources in such a way? Somebody is causing the division. Who?

The man who speaks as the oracles of God does not divide the body of Christ. (1 Peter 4:11.) The man who teaches another gospel is condemned in the Scriptures. (Galatians 1:8, 9.)

THE INADEQUATE CHURCH

Jere E. Frost

Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and His word of eternal truth gives us confidence that His church reflects heaven's wisdom and that it is therefore structurally sound and implicitly perfect. There is absolutely nothing, for which it was designed, for which it is not adequate. But therein we find the title for this article and the slant of our study—the church is inadequate when pressed into concepts and usages foreign to God's intentions.

The church of the Lord was not designed to be a union of disunity. Denominationalism conceives it to be such. The idea that it makes no difference what one believes, or what branch (denomination) of the church one is a member of, is justification in the eyes of many for the existence of conflicting and diverse churches. The idea seems to be that if a movement is called a church and is "Christian," then God will just have to accept it. "The church is big enough to accommodate our little differences," we are told, while our "little differences" embrace everything from the inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Jesus and what a man must do to be saved. God never intended "the church" as a collection of dissimilar organizations with unbridled beliefs and philosophies. And the fact that these various denominations refuse fellowship to one another, have different headquarters, names, creeds etc., attests that in reality they do not occupy common ground and are ridiculous to occasionally claim to be mysteriously united somehow, somewhere.

The Bible plainly affirms that there is but one church (Eph. 4:4; 1:22, 23). Its members hold to a common faith, walking by the same rule (Eph. 4:5; Phil. 3:16). They all became members of it the same way, all being baptized into the one body as penitent believers (1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:38, 41, 47; Eph. 4:5). The kind of church the world envisions is inadequate to please God or save man; the kind of church God established is inadequate to accommodate denomination-ism.

REFLECTIONS

Wayne Moore

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, established His church over nineteen hundred years ago. (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47.) Elders were placed in every church in every city. (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.) These elders had the responsibility of "overseeing the flock of God among them" and "feeding the church that the Lord bought with His blood." (1 Peter 5:1-3; Acts 20:28.) These were the men placed over the Lord's church to oversee its affairs. Whatever the church as a body had the responsibility of doing, the elders of the church could oversee it.

As one reads the New Testament, he is impressed with the fact that the church did its own work without turning over its funds and oversight to a human institution, a human organization. The American Christian Missionary Society started in 1849. It was organized so that all the churches of Christ could send their funds to it; and it would select, send, supervise, and support a man to preach the gospel to the heathen in order that they would be saved from their sins. Churches had no scriptural authority to support this human organization. The churches divided. The Tennessee Orphan Home started in 1909, sixty years after the missionary society. Five men were created a "BODY POLITIC AND CORPORATE BY THE NAME AND STYLE OF THE TENNESSEE ORPHAN HOME." Note that these men were the incorporators; these men were the body politic; these men were The Tennessee Orphan Home. This was a human institution; this was a human organization. They admit that they are an institution: they admit they are a corporation. In their charter, these words are found: "THE CORPORATION MAY ESTABLISH BRANCHES IN ANY OTHER COUNTY IN THE STATE." This means that not only could this corporation oversee the work at Spring Hill, Tennessee, but it could also establish a branch in Fayetteville, Tennessee. It could establish a branch in Moore County, Coffee County, or any other county in the state. Sounds very powerful to you? It is a human institution. Some churches of Christ are supporting it.

Sixty years after the American Christian Missionary Society came into existence, the Tennessee Orphan Home was founded. One hundred years after the Missionary Society began, Childhaven, Inc. began.

Preachers generally who preach in churches of Christ agree that the church should not support a missionary society, but they do not agree that it is wrong for the church to support a human benevolent institution. Some have hung to the coat tail of one who would be considered wise; but is this a wise idea? Men sometime err in their judgment and understanding. If you have taken the same position a certain preacher has who would preach for a large congregation, you may have taken the wrong position. Some who used to teach the truth about the work of the church do not teach it any more. Some have taught the same truth I teach about church support of human institutions. Now, they have changed. Which time were they right?

You can study, for you are commanded to "grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18.) "Study to show thyself approved unto God." (2 Timothy 2:15.) No one can do this for you. You cannot hire some one to do your studying, praying, singing, giving, or teaching for you any more than you can hire some one to "visit the fatherless and widows" for you. (James 1:27.)

Brethren, study your Bible. Do not accept what any man says unless it is found in the word of God. The word of the Lord will judge you one day (John 12:48); you should make sure that you "speak as the oracles of God" and not "think

GOD, OUR SECURITY

W. C. Hinton, Jr.

After conquering the land of Canaan and the settling in the area, the Israelites found themselves in the unenviable position of being the small nation located between larger and more powerful neighbors, and thus caught in their political crossfire. Egypt on the South for many years remained a world power. To the North and East, various nations had their contest with Egypt for dominance—the Hittites, Syria, Assyria, the Chaldeans, Persia, and finally Greece. In the midst of this, for a time, under David and Solomon, even Israel had her day as a world power.

In this position of tension, Israel was pressured on all sides for alliance. Almost continually the Egyptian party sought to promote closer ties to the giant of the South. This is seen from an early part of Solomon's reign by his "Affinity with Pharaoh" sealed by his marriage to Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kgs. 3:1). As the powers to the North and East rose and fell, champions of alliance with each rose among God's people.

In the midst of these contrary winds of political pressure, the spokesman of God advocated a course of neutrality and freedom from entangling alliances with foreign powers. He tried to adopt a policy of reliance on God and faithful obedience to His will. This attitude is expressed quite well by the Psalmist in 46:1. "God is our strength, a very present help in trouble." With such a policy, that nation, ANY nation, could set a straight course without fears or misgivings.

Verse one of Psalm 46 serves as the theme of the song. Note some of the ideas presented.

God a refuge of His people. Refuge means shelter, a place to "flee to," and thus, a place of protection and safety.

God the strength of His people. Strength denotes firmness or strength thru fortification. Here a description of God's care. Examples in the O. T. abound with instances of the strength He afforded to man.

God, a very present help in trouble. God, the mighty helper, or as in the Hebrew—"A help in distresses He is exceedingly." He protects, defends and at the same time delivers.

Judah's experience with the Assyrian invaders, in Isa. 36, 37, during the reign of Hezekiah is a classic illustration of this principle. The northern kingdom of Israel had been conquered and carried away by this same nation. Now the armies of Assyria laid siege to Jerusalem itself. Alliances with Egypt or other nations were of no help now. Counseled by Isaiah, Hezekiah refused to surrender and committed Judah's predicament to Jehovah in prayer. Miraculously, God destroyed the host of Assyria with a plague.

Hezekiah and the children of Israel found, in truth, that their security was in God. And so can we! What a wonderful idea to build 1967 upon!! All we need do, is to trust in Him and obey His Will. He never deceives anyone. Let's let Him be our strength and refuge.

of men above that which is written." (1 Peter 4:11; 1 Corinthians 4:6).

TIME

SPENT IN BIBLE STUDY

*Stimulates Spiritual Growth

*Motivates Self-Expression

*Illuminates the Mind

THE GOSPEL ADVOCATE, DAVID LIPSCOMB COLLEGE, AND THE "CHURCH HOSPITAL"

Rufus R. Clifford

In The Gospel Advocate, Feb. 16, 1967, pp. 101, 102, L. M. Rogers gives a review of a talk by Athens Clay Pullias, President of David Lipscomb College, on the subject, "Thus Saith the Lord." The Advocate editor, B. C. Goodpasture, gave hearty consent, according to Rogers, for a review of the talk. Since the review was printed we conclude that the editor gave his endorsement. President Pullias is an eloquent and brilliant man, and as the writer reports, there were many excellent things said. But among the points presented in the review the writer gives the following.

"Another expression which betrays our disloyalty to the word of God is, 'I KNOW THAT'S RIGHT, BUT THE BROTHERHOOD WILL NOT ACCEPT IT.'" Brother Pullias underscored the fact that it makes no difference what the brotherhood (whoever they are) will or will not accept so far as right and wrong are concerned. Truth has never been determined by brotherhood reaction! He suggested that we take a strong dose of the medicine which we have handed out to our religious neighbors and get back to the Bible! He further emphasized the fact that we have fallen behind in many good works because of the lack of brotherhood acceptance. For example, in the city of Nashville, where there are more members of the church than any other place in the world, there is not one hospital operated by Christians. He stated that if he should have a heart attack, he would likely have to go to a hospital operated by denominational people. And while this makes no defense of denominationalism, it does point up a vital failure upon our part. Brother Pullias stated that it does not become us to sleep in the other fellow's bed, cover up with his covers, and then go about telling the world how bad a fellow he is! Amen!"

"A vital failure upon our part," according to President Pullias, is not having a hospital operated by Christians. The context shows that he had in mind a "Church of Christ Hospital" like the "Baptist Hospital," "Catholic Hospital," and "The 7th Day-Adventist Hospital." The head of the Bible

department at David Lipscomb College, Batsell Barrett Baxter, is already on record that the church can build a hospital. The head of the school and the head of the Bible department are both on record now that a hospital can be provided by the church. They subscribe to the idea that what a Christian can do the church can also do. The Gospel Advocate editor printed the above without any correction, so the "old reliable" and the college head and the Bible department head favor a "CHURCH HOSPITAL."

It is not out of order to plead for a "Thus Saith the Lord" from these well known brethren. Where does Christ authorize a "CHURCH HOSPITAL?"

Another thing we need to notice from the above statements is that we must build a "Church of Christ Hospital" before we go about telling the Catholics that the Pope is the "man of sin" and that traditions are not on par with God's word; before telling the Baptists that baptism is in order to be saved; and before telling the Adventists that the Scriptures do not teach Sabbath observance today! "IT DOES NOT BECOME US TO SLEEP IN THE OTHER FELLOW'S BED. COVER UP WITH HIS COVERS, AND THEN GO ABOUT TELLING THE WORLD HOW BAD A FELLOW HE IS!"

We must not only build a hospital, but agencies and companies of all kinds and types, for how can we go about "TELLING THE WORLD HOW BAD IT IS" when we are using the facilities the world has provided!

What a pity that Jesus Christ, who created all things, did not give the Apostles a "Thus Saith the Lord" to build a "Church of Christ Hospital" before they began telling the world that it was lost!

The "social gospel" is now being proclaimed by brethren in high and influential places! "Brethren, we are drifting!" We need to be on guard everywhere lest we be influenced by our environment to leave the Word, The Lord, His word, and His church have not changed! We do not need a new gospel and a new church today!

THE MAN AND THE WHEELBARROW

John D. Swatzell

It happened during the war years of the early 40's I am told.

A certain defense plant, with maximum security, checked each employee by badge number and photo as they entered or left the plant. Also, the employees were searched each time. This was a precaution against bringing sabotage items into the plant and against theft of property.

The plant did grant the employees the right to carry free sand or gravel home from the large areas of land constantly being cleared and leveled for expansion.

Each afternoon, Tom always pushed a wheelbarrow of sand or gravel through the gate as he was leaving. He was the only man who took advantage of the company's free offer every day. Plant officials decided that Tom was stealing something and was hiding it in the sand or gravel he took home.

They had the plant guards to carefully sift through the sand or sort through the gravel each afternoon in an at-

tempt to catch him. They never found anything. This continued for two years and became a greater mystery as the time passed.

Finally, Tom was old enough to retire. The last day on the job, true to form, Tom pushed a wheelbarrow of sand through the gate as he was checked out for the last time. Searching through the sand again revealed nothing.

After Tom was safely outside the gate, one of the guards approached old Tom and said: "Tom, we know that you have been stealing something everyday, but we never were able to find it. Now that you are retired, please do me a favor and tell me what you have been stealing from the company?"

Tom answered in one word: "Wheelbarrows."

I wonder if brethren will ever catch on to the "Toms" of the brotherhood before it is too late? These "Toms" have a surface load of "acceptable orphans" for inspection . . . but the wheelbarrow is the colleges, hospitals, etc. to be supported by the churches!

AN AGE OF CONFLICT

John D. Swartzell

It has been said by many: "I am not a prophet, nor a son of a prophet," paraphrasing the statement of Amos 7:14. One need not be a prophet, a son of a prophet, nor gaze into a crystal ball to comment on present trends, and trends of the future.

We are living in an age of conflict whether we like it or not. If you haven't already met it face to face, then controversy is just around the corner. You can bump into it any time, any place. We will be better prepared to deal with controversy as it comes, if we understand the areas and causes of potential controversy.

Paramount among the perils of today (and continuing into the future) are intellectual prejudice and moral rebellion. Both are expressions of fear, and fear is the greatest enemy of Truth.

What is "intellectual prejudice"? It is simply a closed mind! Man approaches the Bible with preconceived notions, presuppositions; a mind already made up! Man is not prepared "to honestly consider and believe what the Bible teaches; his mind is impervious to the evidence. As time passes, such minds find it increasingly difficult to absorb any Truth. The mind is not pliable.

What do we mean by "moral rebellion"? Simply stated it is a life that is not prepared to revise and reform! The Bible is a practical book with a practical purpose . . . reforming man. The Bible does not merely reveal Truth, but is designed to bring men to God. It is not an amusing pastime to read the Bible, it is serious business affecting our present way of life and our future destiny.

A combination of these two, intellectual prejudice and moral rebellion are expressed by those refusing to honestly consider (study) the evidence of the Bible on a given subject and then comply with the teachings of the Bible.

Most of the conflict of our day takes place within the church, rather than between denominations and the church. Programs, agencies, publications, and institutions are the centers of controversies. In our age of conflict, the two main positions are usually labeled "liberal" and "conservative." There are varieties of liberals as well as conservatives, some more extreme than others. Of course, in the midst of controversy are the "middle-of-the-roaders" who are rather silent on issues and struggle to hold to all sides at the same time. They are, to me, like the three little monkeys "see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil." Such a position (which is really indifference) is a little far fetched, to say the least, in the present controversies of establishing institutions such as hospitals, schools, and children's homes(?) at the expense of the church.

These things are but the lightning before the storm. The storm is developing and moving in on the church. The crux of the whole matter (if you haven't already figured it out) is the relationship of the church to the world! Should the

church be concerned with evangelism and teaching and caring for its own, or should the church in addition to these things, try to change society as well? The total life: food, housing, clothing, employment, opportunity, justice, and human relations? The last course will involve such issues as race relations, sex, birth control, artificial insemination, sterilization, mercy killings, and "such like" things. The social trend will thus supply many thorny problems.

Churches today have lost their perspective! Churches refuse to believe that God is not out to convert the whole world, but to take out of the world a people for His name. Some are "willingly ignorant" (II Peter 3:5a) of the fact that the preaching of the Gospel and the work of the churches will not gradually win this world until evil is mastered by righteousness and the devil is put out of business. God has told us in His Word where we came from, where we are, and where we are going. He has told us the meanings of the time, and it is criminal to stand with an open Bible in one hand and the events of our times in the other and not know what Paul told Timothy (II Timothy 3:1-5). If you don't know what that Scripture says, take time to read it! Then read it again! And do you know what II Peter 3:1-14 teaches, or I Thessalonians 5:2-3, or II Thessalonians 2:1-4, or I Timothy 4:1-2, or II Peter 2:1-3, or Revelation 13, 17, 20:8, or Luke 12:45-46, and other such references? Read John 15:18 and I John 3:13, John 17:6, 9, 14, I Corinthians 4:9, James 1:27b, James 4:4, I John 2:15, 5:19, Revelation 12:9, John 3:19, 16:33, Eph. 2:12, John 18:36; Romans 12:2; II Corinthians 4:4, Galatians 1:4; Ephesians 2:2, 6:12? Now I know some of you are "too busy" to look up these scriptures. You've got a TV show to watch, or some other such thing . . . well, go ahead and get at it. I didn't list these Scriptures for you anyhow. I listed them for those who want to learn more about the condition of this world and its future course. As you study these Scriptures, note what they say about the world. It boils down to this my friend. The world is steadily growing worse while God calls out a people to Himself. I know I will be called a pessimist, or a "hoot owl preacher," but Micah was willing to be a "hoot owl" preacher (1:8). Better to be God's owl than the devil's "mockingbird!" The world is growing worse and evil men are waxing worse and worse. Evil will run its awful course and no church, "great society," nor "millennium" will change that! Churches out to change and save the "world" are setting their sails for a course never intended by God. It shall fail, but not before many sincere people have been led off into error.

In another issue, the Lord willing, we shall continue this discussion with you. We will then be talking about YOUR part. Are YOU working for or against the Lord as far as these matters are concerned? Are YOU indifferent to these matters?