



"Consistency, Where Art Thou?"

In the 1950s brother Emerson J. Estes, the preacher at the Getwell congregation in Memphis, had a thirty minute radio program on Sunday. The program was heard by a great many people in the area and created much interest. Bro. Estes had lively discussions with a number of denominational preachers. In the discussions he would often point out their weakness by showing what God's word taught on the subject, comparing it with the caller's position. To call attention to error an oft asked question was: **"Consistency, Where Art Thou?"**

Though the word "consistency" is not found in our English translation of the Bible, the principle is found quite often. *Webster's College Dictionary* defines the word: "steadfast adherence to the same principles, course, form, etc." The same source defines "consistent" as "agreeing or accordant; compatible; not self contradictory." Where there is inconsistency there can be deceit and hypocrisy.

The New Testament calls attention to a great many inconsistencies or lack of consistency. Our Lord asks, "*And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*" (Matt. 7:3). In Matthew 6:24, Christ says, "*No man can serve two masters . . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*" The apostle Paul asks a number of questions which point out a lack of consistency. "*Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?*" (Rom. 2:21-22). Again Paul speaks, "*ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils*" (I Cor. 10:21).

The seriousness of being inconsistent when it comes to keeping God's law is clearly pointed out by James, in 2:10-11:

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

The lesson we learn from James is especially pertinent to those who may be consistent in keeping much of God's law, yet who are inconsistent in breaking God's law, even in one or a few areas. I've heard people say with regard to someone's teaching or belief: "But he is sound in

everything but that one thing." This raises the question of how many errors does one have to teach before he is a "false teacher"? The same question could be addressed to those who are inconsistent in obeying God's will. In how many areas does one have to lack consistency before it counts?

The passage from James makes an important point crystal clear. James is not saying that the person who commits adultery is also guilty of murder. What he is saying, and this is important, is that one need only break one of God's laws to become a "transgressor," or a law-breaker. It is quite evident that a great many brethren are not consistent in this matter. That is, a person may clearly break God's law in one area and yet be accepted as sound in the faith. One does not have to break all of God's laws to be guilty of sin, or even a few of them. It is only necessary to break one (1 John 3:4)

Not only does it put the soul of one who is inconsistent in keeping God's law in jeopardy, it does great hurt to the precious, blood-bought church of our Lord. When people are not consistent their influence for good is severely damaged. It is difficult for me to understand why those who claim to love God and His word will do things which they know will hurt the cause of Christ. Yet, this is happening more often now than ever since I've been around.

When one lacks consistency even in secular matters, that one's influence in spiritual things suffers. The person who lacks consistency is not likely to be "the salt of the earth" or "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:13-16).

In the following we shall discuss some areas where there is often a lack of consistency. Not only is this found in the man-made religions, it is found all too often among our own brethren. Our list of areas will by no means be exhaustive, but there are some important ones to which we shall give attention. We begin by considering:

I. THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF OUR LORD'S CHURCH

A most important fact which must be recognized is that Christ's church is "one of a kind." There are no others like it, nor will there ever be. It was in the mind of God eternally (Eph. 3:10-11). The prophets predicted it (Isa. 2:2-3; Dan. 2:44). Christ said He would build it (Matt. 16:18). The purchase price was the blood of the only begotten Son of God (Acts 20:28). "The church," in the spiritual sense, is the only one mentioned in the New Testament. There is only "one body" (Eph. 4:4), and that is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Salvation is found only in this one distinctive body for which died (Eph. 5:23). Apart from it there is no hope.

When people hope, believe and/or teach that man-made churches are acceptable to God and that salvation may be found therein, we ask, "**Consistency, where art thou?**" It is so different now as compared with what it used to be. People are being led to believe that which is not true. Most will only discover that sad fact when it is too late! We now hear less preaching and teaching relative to the oneness of the church. Sadly, too many of our own brethren don't want to hear this essential information. It reminds me of what Paul said with reference to some. He said, "*For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ*" (Phil. 3:18). When the essentiality of the one true church is denied, so is the essentiality of the cross. By the cross only one church was purchased.

II. GOD'S LAW ON FELLOWSHIP

God's law on fellowship covers His approved fellowship, just as it covers His law on: baptism, repentance, giving, the judgment, heaven and hell. At the present there is perhaps the

greatest lack of consistency with regard to God's law on fellowship on the part of members of the church. It is more common than ever in our time for our schools to bring in denominational people to teach and have fellowship with our own people. Some congregations are bringing in denominational people and having fellowship with them. More congregations are in some ways fellowshiping man-made churches. One case right here in Murray (the Bible belt) was that of a congregation, its elders, preacher and some members participating in the *Jubilee 2000 Revival* of the Catholic Church. Fellowshiping denominations is by no means limited to this area. Such is happening all across our country.

Another example of inconsistency relative to God's law on fellowship is seen when a congregation engages in serious error and never shows any signs of repentance. Though some brethren will cry out strongly in opposition to the error, they will go ahead and fellowship them as though they had repented. This only encourages error

God's law on fellowship covers people both within and without the church. Christians are to have "*no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*" (Eph. 5:11). This would include the Catholic Church and all other denominations. When we bid such people "God speed" we have become "*partakers of their evil deeds*" (2 John 9-11). We are to "mark" and "avoid" those within the church who teach false doctrine (Rom. 16:17). In spite of the above and other teachings on fellowship, some will simply go ahead and disobey God in this area. This shows a serious lack of consistency, and it will encourage others to engage in the same inconsistency.

III. BOLDLY PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL

We used to hear the expression, "Without fear or favor of man," with reference to the preaching of the gospel. In some circles this would seldom, if ever, be heard in our day. Furthermore, it certainly wouldn't be practiced. Why is this so? A number of factors could be involved, but it is evident that in some cases the following may be involved:

- ◆ **1. The fear of criticism.**
- ◆ **2. Some want to court the favors of the hearers by saying what they want to hear.**
- ◆ **3. No doubt but that some have their eye on a good setup, and don't want to face opposition. In some cases when the preacher will not "soften up" he needs to start looking for a place to go.**
- ◆ **4. It is evident that in a great many cases today there is a lack of conviction. It is more difficult to boldly proclaim that which one only believes halfheartedly.**

The kind of preaching being heard in many instances today is certainly not the kind of preaching that was often heard in the early days of the church. There are several instances in the New Testament where the preaching and teaching are described by the word "bold," or "boldly." Paul "*preached boldly at Damascus*" (Acts 9:27). "*And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians...*" (v. 29). Apollos "*began to speak boldly in the synagogue*" (Acts 18:26). In a synagogue, Paul "*spake boldly for the space of three months...*" (Acts 19:8). Peter and John prayed that "*with all boldness*" they might speak the word (Acts 4:29). They were "*filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness*" (v. 31). Paul asked for the prayers of the Ephesian Christians, "*that utterance may be given unto me,*

that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19). These are not all the references to the bold proclamation of the gospel, but these should suffice to show that the kind of preaching often heard today is far from the kind that was done in the first century, even in the face of great danger at various times. Paul, speaking by inspiration, gave the young preacher, Timothy, some valuable instructions relative to preaching. Paul wrote:

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And shall turn away their ears from the truth . . ." (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

We have seen the sad condition of which Paul speaks come to pass in the present generation. So many are not going to "endure sound doctrine." Just as sad is the fact that many of our preaching brethren are accommodating those "itching ears," which are increasing at a rapid rate.

Those who profess to be preaching the true gospel but only preach a watered-down version, or a "perverted" gospel should think about **consistency** and realize that it is not with them. Those who are unwilling to Boldly Proclaim the gospel should not be proclaiming anything at all.

IV. A LACK OF FAITH IN THE ALL SUFFICIENCY OF THE GOSPEL

The apostle Paul declared, without reservation, that the gospel is God's power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). This being true, there is no need for man to look for any means of salvation, other than the gospel. And, this gospel must not be "perverted" (Gal. 1:7-9). The gospel is all sufficient as a source of instruction as to how to live and please God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The gospel also serves as God's drawing power to bring people into Christ, where salvation is found (2 Tim. 2:10).

When I obeyed the gospel nearly fifty years ago, one of the things which soon made a lasting impression on me was the "all sufficiency" of the gospel. I could see in the religions round about how that various things had been added to the true gospel and some essential things left out. Nearly all the preaching I heard back then emphasized the necessity of obeying the true gospel and living by it as faithful servants of the Lord. Preachers didn't hesitate to preach on the one true church and the terms of entrance into it. The necessity of abiding in "the doctrine of Christ" (2 John 9), was declared in no uncertain terms.

In the past few decades we have seen a great change with respect to the All Sufficiency of the Gospel. Whereas the gospel used to be the acknowledged drawing power of God with respect to gospel obedience, that is no longer the case in so many instances. The building of Family Life Centers stands as evidence to me that some brethren did not believe the gospel would accomplish its God-given purpose. Therefore, these places of play began to spring up with large congregations. Millions of dollars have been spent on gymnasiums and facilities for food, fun and frolic, yet true spiritual and numerical growth have eluded the providers. In fact, true spiritual growth has diminished as people have been fed with that which is not "*the sincere milk of the word*" (I Pet. 2:2).

People are now being given false hopes of salvation without true gospel obedience. Those in man-made religions are being led to believe that they are accepted by God, regardless of the fact that this is an outright affront to our Lord. The fellowshiping of these people implies that they are acceptable to God. This is false doctrine to the core.

The lack of consistency is being seen by those who profess to be preaching the gospel, when in reality they demonstrate that they don't believe in its all sufficiency. The very fact that they set about to embellish the true gospel with man-made additions which are without authorization is the height of inconsistency. This lack of consistency is having a devastating effect upon the cause of Christ.

V. GOD-APPROVED WORSHIP

God has made clear the worship He wants from man. Our Lord sets forth the conditions of acceptable worship in John 4:24: "*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*" To worship "in spirit" is to engage in the acts of reverence paid to God by man, from the heart, or the inner man. To worship "in truth" is to engage in those acts of reverence paid to God by man in accordance with God's truth as revealed in His word. This is a divine measuring stick by which worship must be measured if it is to be accepted by God. I can well remember the time when there were few problems within the church as to what constituted true worship. However, times have changed!

Christians used to engage in praying, singing, contribution, the Lord's supper, and the hearing of God's word, as worship. One may encounter a wide variety of things in a growing number of congregations today which will not fit into any of the five items. With some "worship" has become virtually an entertainment extravaganza. There are solos, duets, quartets and choirs where congregational singing used to be. There are several-piece bands which give out their beats to the enjoyment of the listeners, rather than to God.

A common billing by many congregations today is various skits and drama presentations. There is one thing which stands out so clearly about this type of activity, and that is, it is designed to entertain the listeners. The principle of giving people what they want to hear has contributed to the beginning and growth of religious denominations. There is no end to the digressions from truth when this principle is followed. We are seeing the same thing happening within the Lord's church.

A more recent innovation from the religious people around us is what is being termed by some as "Progressive worship." I am told that in this so-called worship people raise their hands, wave their arms, and twist their bodies. Some have been described as dancing. The increase of subjectivism is very apparent. Just recently, from a reliable source, I was told that the Madison congregation, where the late Iran North preached, is now engaging in "Progressive worship." From what has happened in the past, this is no surprise. The so-called worship described above is something which plays a big part in pagan worship. I've seen different pagan people engaging in what they called worship. Emotions ran high and subjectivism ruled, in the absence of the truth which God has given us.

For people who claim to believe God's word to engage in such far-out activities as those noted above, the absence of **consistency** couldn't be clearer. Potential recipients of the gospel can see such inconsistencies and be hindered in obedience.

It is such a crying shame that those sincere individuals who in years gone by were drawn to Christ and His church by the Bible centered worship in which brethren engaged, would in so many instances today be turned away by what they see going on among our brethren. A lack of consistency is a tool of the devil to hurt the cause of Christ.

VI. THE SUPPORT OF "OUR SCHOOLS"

The time was that "our schools" were for the most part an asset to the cause of Christ. For young people to attend a school for their secular education and a measure of spiritual education was very valuable. This was because the teachers were Christians who stood for the truth, and some study of God's word was required. The moral standards which prevailed were well above those in state schools. Many young people found a mate who was also a Christian. The divorce rate among those marriages was very low when compared to the average in society.

Several decades ago I spent some three years at Freed-Hardeman. I will always appreciate the benefits received, and many years ago I raised some thousands of dollars for support of the school.

Now, FHU is far different to what F-HC was when I attended and supported it. It is not now radiating the good influence that it once did. Over time the school has strayed from the course it used to follow. Various false teachers have been brought on campus, and a number of false teachers have appeared in the annual lectures in recent years. The most recent thing about FHU, which has caused concern on the part of a great many brethren, was the appointment of John Dale to the FHU Board. It was only last September that John Dale and members and elders from the Glendale Road congregation engaged in outright fellowship with the Catholic Church here in Murray, KY. Shortly after that shameful event, Jay Lockhart was at Glendale for a meeting. For one to claim to love God's truth and fellowship the Catholic Church is about as inconsistent as anyone can be. This is true of elders and members as well.

I've mentioned FHU under the heading of "Our Schools," because I'm better acquainted with it than with others. I've seen much information about other of "our schools." Some them have compromised the Truth even more than FHU. David Lipscomb and Abilene have become a disgrace to the cause of Christ. To concerned brethren, the outlook for the future is rather bleak, as those coming out of "our schools" radiate their liberal influence in the areas where they live.

One of the greatest inconsistencies relative to our schools is the loyalty some brethren have for them. A preacher wrote me with reference to FHU. He said he was going to stand by FHU regardless of what happens. He said by doing this no one could blame him if FHU should go bad. That was somewhat puzzling to me. It is by "standing by" schools in their error that a further compromise of the truth is encouraged! The supporters of our schools could bring about great changes virtually overnight, if only they would. It is money that talks with our schools. Criticism will amount to little as long as the money flows.

It is my sincere conviction that the loyalty of some of our brethren to our schools outweighs that of loyalty to God's word. The basis of my conviction is that those who claim to uphold truth will go along with our schools regardless of how far off they go. If brethren would search out the history of our schools in the distant past, it might open some eyes. But then again, it would not open the eyes of those whose loyalty to a school is stronger than their loyalty to the true gospel of Christ.

VII. THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

Remember when virtually all members of the church accepted the New Testament teaching on the God-approved **Work Of The Church**? It was acknowledged that the work of the church comprised three areas: Evangelism, Edification, and Benevolence. Presently just a brief survey will reveal a great many things which are now being engaged in as works of the church.

It is a fair question to ask: "On what basis has the change taken place?" If we will be honest about it, all will agree that God's word has not changed one whit. This means that the change has come about at the hands of men. Some might contend that the "New Hermeneutic" justifies the change. However, this would in no sense of the term justify transgressing "the doctrine of Christ" (2 John 9). This so-called "New Hermeneutic" is nothing more than just ignoring what God's word actually teaches, thereby justifying whatever one wants to do.

Just a few examples of what some congregations are now doing should serve as an eye-opener to those who are seriously concerned about doing God's will.

Recreation is a work of a growing number of congregations. The innovation of church-provided recreation had a major part to play in the providing of Family Life Centers, which included gymnasiums and other recreational items. A congregation in Paducah, KY has "A Recreation Ministry." A facility for accommodating this and other activities was expected to cost more than \$3,000,000.00.

Entertainment is a going activity in some congregations. As mentioned earlier, there is a variety of singing groups, from solos to choirs. There are groups who imitate musical instruments with their voices, the best known is perhaps the "Acappella" group. Though some claims of worshipping God are made by these groups, honesty would agree that the primary purpose is entertainment. Appearance of the above groups is seen at various congregations.

"Drama Teams" is another activity of entertainment which hardly would have been seen in congregations forty years ago or less. Now, a number of congregations have their very own. Some of "our schools" have Drama Teams.

At some amusement parks one may see vehicles from the church of Christ. The reason they are there is church-provided entertainment trips.

It is not out of the question to hear of some who claim to be the church of Christ, having bands perform in congregational activities. More people are now saying that the use of mechanical instruments of music is just a matter of opinion.

Free Food is now being offered to the community or whoever by some congregations. This is not benevolence, which is an authorized work of the church, but no claims are made that it is. Just recently the Benton congregation in our area announced in their bulletin that the winner in some sort of youth contest would be rewarded with a free meal for two at Caracker Barrel. Several years ago a congregation in North Alabama gave "funny money" to the bus riders, and periodically the "Country Store" would be open for the purchase of "goodies" with the "funny money."

The above activities are not authorized as "works of the church" by the New Testament. This leaves only one other source of authorization – that of man. It is quite obvious that these brethren, when they claim to follow God's word as their guide have thrown **consistency** by the wayside!

CONCLUSION

Back in the 1950s the church experienced the greatest numerical growth in many, many years. Much of that growth can be attributed to the preaching and teaching of the true gospel of Christ. In addition to this, there was a good measure of "Practicing what was preached." People could see the consistency which was so often not seen at all among the people in the denominations.

In the 1960s a new philosophy began to emerge among many brethren, especially preaching brethren. They began to "learn from their religious neighbors." It didn't happen overnight, but on a more gradual basis, that the things "learned from religious neighbors" began

to turn up in congregations of our brethren. With the passing of time these innovations became more common. Now, at the present, these things are spreading as if carried by a whirlwind. It is so evident that many of our brethren have simply lost their sense of direction. Why, I cannot say, but that it's a fact, I can say!

It is so regrettable that many of our young people have grown up in surroundings in which real **consistency** has not been known by them. The consistency which used to prevail generally has too often been forgotten or considered of little importance. The lack of consistency has become so common that with many it is not really a matter of concern. With more than a few, our present time is very much like that which existed with the Israelites in the time of the Judges. "*In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes*" (Judg. 17:6). It would be of great value to our young people to read from the writings of our brethren from many years ago.

The lack of consistency by so many of our brethren is having a very harmful effect upon the Lord's church and its numerical and spiritual growth. People who are truly honest can see a lack of consistency in the area of spiritual things. Even truth, when it is presented by one who is not consistent, often does not have the same power that it would if presented by one who is consistent.

A thing which concerns me greatly is the spirit of indifference which prevails among countless members of the Lord's church. The time was that people would be disturbed by teaching and preaching which was not according to the Book. A spirit of indifference is responsible, to a great degree, for the moving away from the unadulterated truth of the gospel. Admittedly, indifference is a most difficult thing to deal with. If people simply "don't care," what is there to do to make them care?

The apostle Paul is a most splendid example for us to follow when it comes to respect for God's truth and concern when people treat it with disrespect. In writing to the brethren at Philippi, from the prison in Rome, he shows just how much he is affected by those who show such little respect for the cross of Christ and what it stands for. Paul said: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18).

When one shows disrespect for our Lord's church, which was made possible by "the cross of Christ," that one has become an enemy of the cross. When people are inconsistent in standing for the whole truth of God, they are against Christ (Matt. 12:30). If ever there was a time when we should be "weeping" over those who no longer respect "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), it is NOW.

Brother Emerson J. Estes' question of more than forty years ago, **Consistency Where Art Thou?**, is just as timely as it was then. In fact, it is even more timely now than it was then. Why? The lack of **consistency** among our own brethren then is dwarfed by the lack of consistency which prevails in so many circles today! Brethren, let us pray and work with all our might that **consistency** prevail.

- - Walter W. Pigg

Banner of Truth

Lectures

Murray, Kentucky, June 4 – 7

Theme: **Christ and His Church in the 21st Century**

Sponsored by: Dexter and Hickory Grove Churches of Christ

Location: **Curriss Center, Murray State University, Chestnut St.
Banquet Room 2, Third Floor**

Monday, June 4	11:00 a.m.	God's Role for Women in the Church	Joe Ruiz
Monday, June 4	12:00	Lunch Break	
Monday, June 4	1:30 p.m.	The Militancy of God's People	Garland Robinson
Monday, June 4	2:30 p.m.	God's Law on Marriage and Divorce	Gilbert Gough
Monday, June 4	3:30 p.m.	The Moral Obligation to Obey the "Laws of Thought"	Alan Adams
Monday, June 4	4:30 p.m.	Break for Supper	
Monday, June 4	7:00 p.m.	The Great Commission	Joe Ruiz
Monday, June 4	8:00 p.m.	God's Law on Fellowship	Gilbert Gough
Tuesday, June 5	11:00 a.m.	Preach the Word	Ken Burleson
Tuesday, June 5	1:30 p.m.	The Preacher and His Work	Lindon Ferguson
Tuesday, June 5	2:30 p.m.	Abortion--Legal Murder	Freddie Clayton
Tuesday, June 5	3:30 p.m.	Preaching the Truth in Love	Joe Spangler
Tuesday, June 5	7:00 p.m.	The Danger of Denominationalism	Ken Burleson

Tuesday, June 5	8:00 p.m.	The Sin of Sexual Perversion	Freddie Clayton
Wednesday, June 6	11:00 a.m.	The Sin of Worldliness	Tim Hester
Wednesday, June 6	1:30 p.m.	Changes in the Lord's Church	Walter W. Pigg
Wednesday, June 6	2:30 p.m.	The Holy Spirit--How He Operates	Virgil Hale
Wednesday, June 6	3:30 p.m.	Should the Church be Supplanted by Para-church Organizations?	Richard Guill
Wednesday, June 6	7:00 p.m.	The Dangers and Destructiveness of Subjectiveness	Alan Adams
Wednesday, June 6	8:00 p.m.	Worship in Spirit and in Truth	Virgil Hale
Thursday, June 7	11:00 a.m.	The Home as God Would Have It	Lenard Hogan
Thursday, June 7	1:30 p.m.	God-Approved Work of the Church	David Lemmons
Thursday, June 7	2:30 p.m.	The Crisis of Qualified Leadership	Jim Boyd
Thursday, June 7	3:30 p.m.	The Community Church	Gary McDade
Thursday, June 7	7:00 p.m.	The Schools: Source of Digression and Apostasy	Jim Boyd
Thursday, June 7	8:00 p.m.	The Glorious Church	Gary McDade

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Phone: (270) 767-0625. E-mail: thester@yahoo.com Walter Pigg can also furnish
information about the lectures. Phone (270) 753-3675. E-mail:

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Video and Audio tapes will be made of all the lectures by brother Jim Green. Tapes
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RV Park, 102 Parks Dr., Murray. The Holly Green Park is located very near the Curris
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We have asked the speakers to submit outlines of their lessons. At this time we don't know if we will be able to print them before the lectures. If not, we will most likely try to print them and make them available later. - - - *Walter W. Pigg,*

wpiggbot@apex.net

Restoration—Quantifiable?

Alan Adams, Assistant Editor

Churches of Christ in the United States came to be and flourished on the premise that the religion of Christ, variously called: "the Way," "the faith," "the church," et al, is a singular, absolute and objectively identifiable entity; and that in any generation it can be imitated, repeated, and perpetuated by application of the pattern which has through the ages been passed down by way of the New Testament.

THE PREMISE IN ACTION: RESTORATION

The word *restoration* came to embody this premise in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Many Europeans and Americans were weary of Catholicism and Protestant Denominationalism which, though identifiable on their **own** terms, were\are clearly not the religion—the way, the faith, the church—Christ established. Not a few of such weary souls set out to "restore" – in the sense of "bring back into being" –the one and only religion of Christ. It is correct to note that the church of Christ has never gone "out of being" in that its "pattern" or "seed" has ever been with us (2 Tim. 1:13; Luke 8:11). It is also highly likely that from the First Century to the present there have always been people dedicated to following the New Testament pattern . Inasmuch, though, as the way of religion of Christ was not a widely observable institution in the Nineteenth Century the idea of restoration was a fitting one.

ALL PURSUE, BUT NONE ATTAIN, SOME SAY

There are those among us now who no longer view restoration as an attainable goal, and they particularly deny that churches of Christ are the realization of that goal. They speak of restoration in terms of an "ongoing process." They view the denominations, as well as the churches of Christ, as all involved in the same noble quest, the only difference being that of proximity: some are nearer, some are closer, but all are seeking the religion of Christ.

This is in absolute conflict with the objective perception of restoration which has for more than a century sustained churches of Christ in the United States. The objective perception of restoration is that of using the New Testament as a pattern and systematically checking actions and accomplishments against the criteria of that pattern. It is a closed-end process by which one can compare the pattern and the product and say, Done that, Got that, and finally say, Finished.

This perception of restoration sees "restoring" the original religion of Jesus in the same objective terms as those used of Moses in the building of the tabernacle where it is said, "Moses

was warned of God when he *was* about to make the tabernacle for, See., saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount" (Heb. 8:5). Just as there was some point at which Moses could compare what was being built against the "pattern that was *showed* him in the mount" and finally say, Done; so it is the case that we today may do the same. Why would one imagine that under Moses restoration as an attainable goal, whereas under one "worthy of more glory than Moses" (Heb.3:3), it is not.

QUANTIFICATION AND RESTORATION

What galls liberals within the church today is the idea of counting or ticking off things. You see, with them it's all about feeling good, not what you do. Since feelings can neither be measured or be quantified, nobody is in any position to point to another and say, You are not right with the Lord because you haven't yet done this, or you lack that, or, Here's something you're doing of which God has never spoken.

Take for example the salvation of a sinner. I recall a religious discussion with a gentleman years ago wherein I had set forth the terms or procedure at the end of which a sinner may know that his "iniquities are forgiven" (Rom. 7:4). The gentleman, so steeped in Calvinism, got exasperated with me and exclaimed, "You can't just boil things down to a few simple terms." He was particularly exercised over the idea of counting off five—no more, no less—things that a sinner must "do" in order to be saved. Our liberals have joined this gentleman. They speak snidely of five—steppers.

Yes, it is by "grace" that we are saved, and yes, it is "not of ourselves," just as surely as it was by "grace" and not of "Naaman" that his skin was made "clean" (Eph. 2:8; 2 Kings 5:14). Yet, it is equally clear that Naaman had to dip—now c-o-u-n-t— seven times in the Jordan.

I read the New Testament and I find several things which must occur before a sinner can "call upon the name of the Lord" and "be saved" (Rom. 10:13). He must "hear...the glad tidings" (vv. 14, 16). He must "believe" the gospel (Mk. 16:15-16). He must "repent" (Acts 2:38, 17:30-31). He must "confess Jesus as Lord" (Rom. 10:9-10). He must be "baptized for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). In fact, baptism is viewed as the comprehensive consummating act of a sinner "calling" on God to save him, which is why Ananias tells a believing penitent Paul, "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16).

It is not my fault that those things to be done by the one "calling" on God total: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,. Nor, is it my fault that one who does not fit the pattern has not yet "called" and is not "saved." Verily, it is a hard thing to "kick against the goad" of quantifiable restoration.

103 S. Willow St., Cowan, TN 37318

THE PROM

Jim E. Waldron

It is very appropriate at this time of year to warn against the sowing of fleshly oats. Too many young Christians have made the choice to take part in the dance known as "The Prom." While the young people get caught up in the glamour of such, parents pray that this bit of sowing to the

flesh will not sprout. Yet it is a physical and spiritual law that whatever a person sows that he or she will reap (Gal. 6:7).

Dancing is "bumping and grinding" or as folks used to say, "bucking and jiving" (See *World Book Dictionary* under "Jive"). The prom is the rubbing of warm bodies against each other. Boys use the dance as foreplay. Girls use it to tease. Fathers know what the physical contact "sport" does to the libido of the boys. Mamas wring their hands and pray. (Sadly, not all Mamas are concerned about the dangers their daughters face. Some want their daughters to learn "grace" and "poise" - Editor.)

Dancing is lasciviousness and the Holy Spirit said such is the work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19). Of the Greek word from which it is derived, *aselgeia*, H. J. Thayer says, among other things, "wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females" (p. 79). The Holy Spirit warned that those who practice such "*shall not inherit the kingdom of God*" (Gal. 5:21).

Let me urge parents, teachers and other faithful Christians across the land to plan alternate programs and dinner to the "passion pits" known as "Proms."

Remind yourselves and your charge that you want them to be chaste (innocent, pure) when the time comes for them to marry. Aids, genital herpes and other STDs stalk the earth waiting for just a one night stand to destroy the whole life of your beloved daughter or son; and too many times "The Prom" night is that night. P. O. Box 123, Dunlap, TN 37327

A Personal Note:

Late Last year we lost \$350.00 of our monthly support. Of that amount \$250.00 was dropped because I would not compromise my convictions relative to a matter which I do not believe to be upheld by God's word. I preach on a regular basis but my support is not for full-time work. At the present we have a good balance on hand but our support at the present rate will decrease that balance. Our support is about thirty thousand dollars a year, and we receive no benefits such as housing, insurance, Social Security, utilities. Most preachers get more support than that, when benefits are included. As for what we deserve, I've never worked harder than I'm working now. It would encourage us if the support we have lost would be made up. It would save us valuable time also. - - - *Editor*

Fellowshipping A Denomination — An Opportunity???

There are two words in the above title which need to be clearly understood in order to arrive at a valid answer to the question relative to "An Opportunity." Those words are, Fellowship and De-nomination. We will be using them in the following sense in this discussion.

Denomination refers to the literally hundreds of so-called churches which profess to believe in Christ, and claim to believe the Bible to be God's word. These religious groups did not exist in the First Century when Christ built His church, and are nowhere authorized in the Bible. At least some of the doctrines, and often a great many, taught by these groups are not found to be in harmony with God's word. That is, they are not in accordance with "the doctrine of Christ" (2 John 9). A great variety of names are worn, such as: Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, Presbyterian, Nazarene, Holiness, Pentecostal, Lutheran, and others.

Fellowship. *Vine's* defines the Greek word KOINONOS: "denotes a partaker, or partner." *Thayer* defines this word as: "fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse." When an individual attends a denominational service and participates in their activities, such as singing, praying, reading scripture, that very clearly constitutes Fellowship. One may say such is not fellowship, but saying a thing does not make it true. To deny that the above is fellowship is simply to deny the facts, thereby indicating a lack of knowledge or a failure to speak factually.

The New Testament clearly teaches that to engage in fellowship with that which is not in harmony with God's will is a violation of God's law on fellowship. Consider the following passages: Eph. 5:11; Rom. 16:17; 2 John 9-11. Breaking God's law is sin, as is shown by 1 John 3:4.

Is it possible to attend a denominational service and not engage in fellowship with them? Yes. One may attend such a service and not engage in any of the activities, such as singing, praying, reading scripture, etc. I have personally preached in a Methodist Church and a Presbyterian Church, but I did not fellowship them. I was not a "joint participator" in their activities. When I preached I presented New Testament teaching on the one true church, pointed out its distinctiveness and its essentiality, and how that salvation is found only in Christ's church. In no sense did I contribute to their "Revival," or the furtherance of their cause of error, but to the contrary. I pointed out differences, not things on which nearly everyone agreed.

Does fellowshiping a denomination provide an opportunity? An "opportunity" which would come at the expense of fellowshiping a denomination would not have God's approval. The apostle Paul was "slandorously reported" as having said, "*Let us do evil that good may come*" (Rom. 3:8). To disobey God by fellowshiping a denomination to have an opportunity to teach, would be exactly what Paul was falsely accused of saying. Even some of our brethren contend that "The end justifies the means," when the "end" is a good one. For example: Family Life Centers, providing recreation and entertainment, fellowshiping denominations, food and fun, and other things which aren't God-approved works of the church. Some brethren used women translators, contending that without doing so they could not teach, which would have been a good "end." The Catholic Church has been known for using gambling to support various works, which they considered good. I have seen Catholics engaging in wide-open gambling, poker, etc. to support a school.

A serious mistake is being made by brethren when it is assumed that the "means" to an end need not be authorized by the "doctrine of Christ." Any opportunity to preach "all the counsel of God" should be appreciated, but it is simply a matter of fact that it is a sin to fellowship a denomination in the quest for such an opportunity.

It should also be understood that we cannot "get around" God's law on fellowship on the basis of : intent, motive, opportunity, context, aim, or other things proceeding from wisdom of men, not from God.

FELLOWHELPERS

January & February 2001

Anonymous	100.00	
Lou Nell Elkins	50.00	
Hornbeak church of Christ	200.00	
Pine Ridge church of Christ	50.00	
Berea church of Christ	100.00	
Green Plain church of Christ	100.00	
Maple Hill church of Christ	200.00	
M/M Herman Carter	100.00	
Billy J. Foster	100.00	
Billy N. Estes	50.00	
Elizabeth Sublett	20.00	
Alhambra church of Christ	50.00	
Mildred P. Bryant	30.00	
Crandull church of Christ	200.00	
Millard D. Shivers	50.00	
T. W. Meredith	20.00	
Vermarine Barnes	20.00	
Memorial Pkw. church of Christ	100.00	
M/M Robert Cunningham	20.00	
Fred & Bess Johnson, Bonnie Lemmon, Lyndal & Judith Jackson, in memory of Graham Cain	100.00	
Michael Heath, for Carolyn Vickery	100.00	
M/M John H. Brown	50.00	
Beckwith church of Christ	100.00	
Durham church of Christ	50.00	
Anonymous	50.00	
Deer church of Christ	200.00	
Mt. Zion church of Christ	500.00	
James Willett	20.00	
Earnest Leroy Clem	<u>10.00</u>	
Total Jan. & Feb. contribution		2,740.00

***"That we might be fellowhelpers
to the truth" (3rd John 8)***

We express our sincere thanks for the continued support of *Banner of Truth* by our caring brethren. This is a great encouragement to us. It makes us feel that our work is worthwhile and needed in these trying times. May the Lord richly bless our ***fellowhelpers*** ! - - *Editor*

***Banner of Truth* Financial Report**

January and February 2001

Balance on hand Jan. 1, 2001 13,427.01

Jan. and Feb. contribution 2,740.00

Total funds available 16,167.01

January and February expenses:

Mailing labels 51.45

Phone 16.76

Ink 144.75

Software 49.46

Mailing Dec. & Jan. BOT 1,226.56

Stamps and other postage 113.30

1,602.28

Total funds available 16,167.01

Less Jan. and Feb. expenses 1,602.28

Balance on hand Feb. 28th 14,564.73

It is most encouraging to have such a good balance on hand. However, since February we have bought \$1,600.00 worth of paper and have had about \$300.00 in other expense which is not a regular item of expense. It is good to know that the necessary finances to continue with BOT are available, thanks to our brethren.

- - - *Editor*

A Sad Sign Of The Times

The following is from *The News-Courier*, Friday, March 16, 2001. "Owens" preaches for the Central church in Athens, AL.

"Lenten services

Community Lenten services are held at noon each Wednesday through April 4 at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, 101 E. Washington St. The public is invited. On March 21, Pastor Ron Owens will speak and St. Paul Catholic Church will be in charge of lunch; on March 28, Pastor George Dudley will speak and Central Church of Christ will be in charge of lunch; and on April 4, Father Joseph Allen will speak and First Christian Church will be in charge of lunch." (Cf. I Tim. 4:1. Editor)

Response to a Reader

Under the date of April 16, 2001, the following letter was received by me:

"Dear Mr. Pigg,

I was pleased to read in the 15 April 2001 Seibles Road Church Bulletin that you use the New Testament as your guide. That's just wonderful!

In view of that, here are two verses from the New Testament that you might also want to use to guide you:

1. (James 4:11) Do not speak against, or judge a brother.
2. (Rom. 14:4) Do not judge the Lord's servant—the Lord will make him stand.

I apologize that those verses are a bit redundant, but in view of loving spirit displayed in your article, I thought that you would need at least two verses.

Signed, Ray Willcox" (From Shalimar, FL.)

My Response to the Above Letter Follows:

Dear Mr. Willcox,

I'm pleased to know that you have read something I wrote. I welcome response to what I write, and that includes the article: "Our Holy Hug Line." I don't claim perfection and could be wrong, though I would not be so intentionally.

Your mention of two verses is appreciated. Most letters of criticism received make no reference to any verses or what the Bible teaches. In that respect your criticism is somewhat different, even though it is clearly evident that you don't understand the verses and what the Bible teaches on those subjects.

With regard to James 4:11, you appear to believe that all "speaking against" and all "judging" is wrong. This would contradict outrightly the New Testament teaching on these subjects. Christ said we are to "*judge righteous judgment*" (John 7:24) Paul told Timothy to "*reprove, rebuke*" (2 Tim. 4:2). He also said to "*mark them which cause divisions and offences*" (Rom. 16:17). This shows that on some occasions we are to "speak against" and "judge" the wrongdoer.

In order to understand the teaching of God's word it is necessary to consider the meaning of words and statements and the context in which they are used. One must not just isolate a verse or statement and ignore other things said on the same thing. In your position as "Col." in the "AFA," you probably give orders or instructions to others. I trust that you would want those to whom they are given to fully understand the same, and not just take one thing said and ignore everything else said on that same subject.

With reference to Romans 14:4, the context must be considered. If you will note carefully, the matter under consideration here is an optional matter. In optional matters one has liberty. But in things which constitute a transgression of "*the doctrine of Christ*" (2 John 9), we don't have such liberty. In fact, the Christian has a responsibility to oppose error and those who teach and practice it. If you would, consider such passages as: Eph. 5:11; Jude 3, Rom. 16:17, and others relating to our responsibility toward error. Would you consider the above passages as being at variance with what Paul said in Rom. 14:4? Some times people pit one passage against another, or even several others.

Mr. Willcox, would you please read James 4:11 and Romans 14:4, and ask yourself the following question: "Do these verses apply to me in view of the judgmental things I said to Mr. Pigg? Some people apparently believe that they by some reason or another, have a right to

"judge" those whom they consider guilty of "judging." Paul deals forcefully with that matter in Romans 2:21-22. He poses some questions which point out inconsistencies. I'm not being facetious in the least when I ask you to please read and consider that passage. I think you need those verses.

Yes, I do use the New Testament as my guide. I would that all those who desire to serve the Lord "in sincerity and in truth" (Josh. 24:24), would do likewise. That is the only way it can be done!

Thanks for writing. May your quest for God's truth increase, and may the Lord bless you in coming to a good understating of His word. The greatest opportunity ever is preparing for eternity, and God has shown us the way. - - - *Walter W. Pigg*

READERS' RESPONSE

"I picked up a copy of Banner of Truth from the Deer church of Christ and enjoyed it very much. It is so sad to read in you Readers' Response of those who desire to have their names removed from your mailing list. We will all stand before God some day and be judged. I would like to be place on you mailing list and also please add.... A small contribution is enclosed - **Edward J. Campbell.**" - **AR.** (*We are thankful you picked up a copy of BOT and want to be on our mailing list. I'll agree that it is sad when people just don't want to face reality and what God says to man in His word. For everyone that asks to be removed, we have many who want to be added. Thank you for the contribution to help.* - - Editor).

"I have been receiving Banner of Truth for a few years. I really appreciate the work that you are doing please keep up the good work....I would appreciate it if you could send me about 12 copies - **Lyndon Broach.**" - **AR.** (*We're happy to send you the bundle* - - Editor).

"I'm interested in your gospel paper, and please send me the free papers (Banner of Truth) monthly to....Thank you and may God bless you - **Mr. Balamurugan.**" - **Malaysia.** (*Glad to send you BOT. I've known several brethren in Malaysia. I think I preached in four meetings in Melika, Malaysia. Wishing you the best.* - Editor).

"I'm enclosing my check for \$10 toward expenses of printing Banner of Truth.... I am shocked that congregations with elders would fellowship the Roman Catholic Church. Further, I am shocked that fellowship with women denominational "preachers" has occurred. Certainly some have left the one faith we hold - **Anonymous.**" (*I'm also shocked at what is happening within the church. Error seldom stands still. It almost always grows rather than diminishes. One reason error is growting so rapidly is that so many brethren just don't care about what is happening! If those who know the truth would stand boldly for it, things would change.* - Editor).

"I am a member of the _____ church of Christ. I am somewhat disappointed with some for the things that happened there a while ago. So I have withdrawn some of my support . . . (**Name withheld**). (*Problems are occurring all across the country. When it becomes clear that one cannot change things with respect to overcoming problems, one is faced with the choice of supporting error financially or not doing so. I hear from many people who speak of error where they worship, but some of those people would not dare get out of it, and in some instances continue with it until they become partakers of it. We must not bid "God speed" to error* - - Editor).

"I have been putting off writing to you for a good while. Your last issue of BOT concerning the terrible sins associated with sexual deviation was right on target and I felt the urge to write and commend you. I plan to go to Indonesia in Feb. the Lord willing, to help with further teaching of the congregations established while we were living there....As Judy and I are not growing any younger, it gets more and more difficult to make long journeys, which some brethren mistakenly believe are vacations. However, I feel a deep obligation to help develop the Christians in Indonesia who are still in many ways "babes in Christ."....I'm now an elder at the Stutt Road congregation....May God bless you both is our prayer and please keep on publishing **BOT - Don & Judy Waggoner."** - **AL.** (*Good to hear from you and to know that you, Don, are serving as an elder. You can contribute so much to the well-being of the congregation. We appreciate so much your concern about the church in Indonesia and other places. Those long trips are hard. I guess I've made my last one, though I feel well enough to go again. But after three times in a hospital in a foreign country I guess I'll spend the rest of my days in the U.S., where there is also such a great need for upholding God's truth. - Ed.*)

"My mother, Emma Gray passed away. She was receiving your paper. Would you please change her address to her grandson....We really enjoy your paper. We are members at Oak Ridge church of Christ - **Mr. & Mrs. Robert Cunningham."** - **TN.** (*Glad to make the change, and thank you for the check to help with BOT. - Editor.*)

"I certainly enjoy your articles. The issues related to Entertainment within the church have really helped me defend the truth in my congregation. Keep up the good work! Even if they won't listen, they can't say they didn't hear the truth. The article on VBS issues brings up some critical issues which also arise in our summer camps. Maintaining worship to God rather than for man is not an easy battle today. May God bless your efforts - **Darren Mays."** - **S.C.** (*There is a powerful move within the church to provide what men want, regardless of what God wants. More and more young people are being led to believe that true worship is "fun, fun, fun, and entertainment. Some adults are going for that also - Editor.*)

"Greetings in the name of Christ. I've been receiving Banner of Truth for several years. I enjoy it very much. I love the truth and the whole counsel of God. I want to commend you, for I believe you have done that over the years....Brother, I'm worried about the direction the church is going. We need a lot more preachers like you. Keep up the good work....- **Leroy Clem."** - **AR.**

"Please discontinue sending the Banner of Truth. Thank you - **Allene Bailey."** - **VA.** (*Thanks for letting us know - Editor.*)

"Look forward to every copy of Banner of Truth. Seems every article you print is or has already come to pass in _____. This is just the latest in our area. May the Lord allow you to continue the BOT for many years to come - **Troy G. Ray."** - **TX.** (*From what I hear, the joining of hands with denominations by our brethren is happening all across the land! How sad! - Editor.*)

"I want to commend you for standing for the Truth of God's Holy Writ. We need more publications like yours in the brotherhood. The service you are rendering is very valuable to many, keep up the good work, and may God the Eternal Father continue to bless you and your work. Enclosed in the name of my Mother....- **Tommie Muirhead."** - **MS.** (*Thanks for your encouragement. Ed.*)

"Please remove my name from your mailing list - **Mary Caton."** - **WA.** (*Thanks for letting us know you do not want to receive BOT. We realize the paper is not wanted by some, and we do not intentionally send it against the will of those. - Editor.*)

"Thank you for the wonderful work you are doing for the Lord. Hoping and praying all is well with you and family - **Vernon & Bernice Key.**" - **AL.** (*Thank you for your concern, and the support you have given us is so greatly appreciated. People like you make our work possible and encourage us in our efforts - Editor.*)

"Thank you so much for B.O.T. and your firm commitment to the spread of the precious work of God. Keep up the good work and don't allow the weak brothers to discourage you. We hope Sister Naomi is doing much better....we love you both and pray you will have many more years in our Lord's service! God bless you! - **Rhett & Velmarine Barnes.**" - **FL.** (*Thank you, and we thank you for the contribution also - Editor.*)

Editor's E-mail: < wpiggbot@apex.net >

View BOT on bro. David Lemmons' web, at:

<http://www.hcis.net/users/dlemmons/BOTlist.htm>

Readers may get on David's **LemmonsAid e-mail**

by sending an e-mail to the address below:

< LemmonsAid-Subscribe@ListBot.com >

Welcome New Readers! We have new readers for every issue of ***Banner of Truth.***

We appreciate hearing from you - *Editor*