



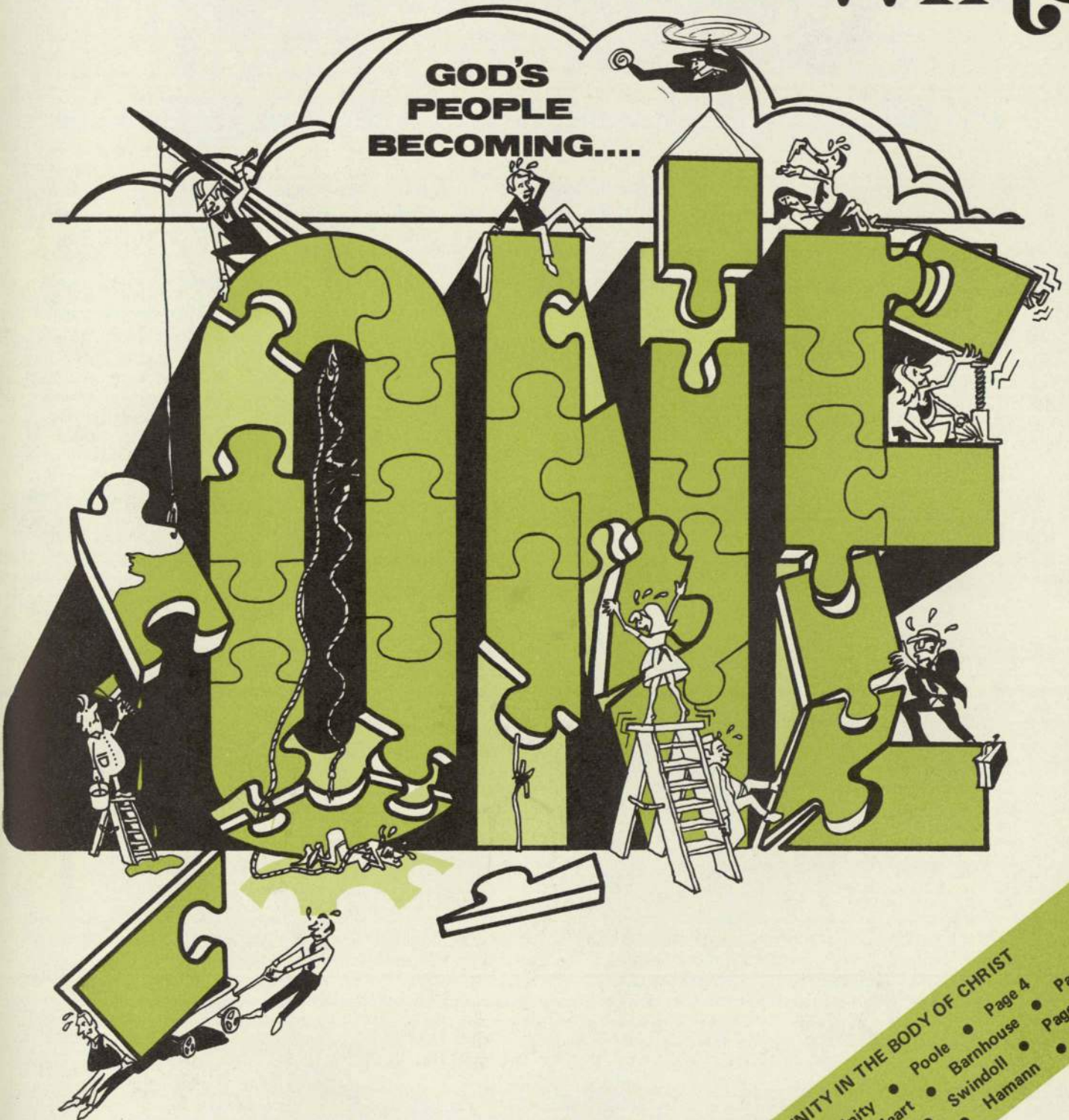
new wine

FEBRUARY 1974

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE

DEDICATED TO CHRISTIAN GROWTH

**GOD'S
PEOPLE
BECOMING....**



UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

Mandate of Unity	• Poole	• Page 4
The Sound of a Heart	• Barnhouse	• Page 9
We Stand Together	• Swindoll	• Page 16
City, One Church	• Hamann	• Page 2

A TIME TO UNITE

I read about the day of prayer on December 11, and was led to join into prayer and semi-fasting on that day. However, during that day, the Lord led me to understand something else.

After I had finished working at the hospital, a fellow nursing student and I went to the hospital chapel, prayed and joined in fellowship. She was not of my particular church, but nonetheless as much a child of God as I am.

Lately the Lord has been leading me into fellowship with Spirit-filled Christians of many different groups — Catholic, Methodists, and Baptists. What Jesus is saying to my heart is that He will have unity in His body that cuts across all lines, and I have the very clear impression that we will unite willingly in love, or be united under hardship.

Christians from many different groups are beginning to join together in prayer and fellowship over problems like Watergate. It is time for each of us to prayerfully find out what the Lord is doing in our lives individually, and as a nation.

R.B.T.
Plantation, Fla.

Although I was born and raised Roman Catholic, since my baptism in the Holy Spirit two years ago, I have learned that the body of Christ is not limited to or by any denominational sect. The Holy Spirit is uniting the Body of Christ and drawing us all into a unity and oneness that is truly marvelous. Here in Mobile — and I'm sure it is the same everywhere else — the Spirit is uniting all the children of God and we are discovering loving fellowship as we worship together and minister to one another in the name of Christ Jesus.

Mrs. W.J.C.
Mobile, Ala.

SWEET, SWEET SPIRIT

We enjoy your magazine very much and eagerly await each new issue. We do not personally believe the Scriptures teach that every Spirit-baptized believer speaks in tongues, but appreciate very much your spirit in dealing with some of the matters that caused conflict between the "charismatics" and "non-charismatics." For that reason we feel safer reading your material on the one hand and what Dr. John Stott, a non-charismatic, has to say from the other viewpoint. He also has a non-contentious spirit. And then in it all we search the Scriptures and look to God to work as He wills in us.

A.M.
Rhode Island

Letters to Editor

We wish to express our thanks for such a fine publication. Granted, it is not possible to agree with all doctrine taught in *New Wine* but we feel that the great majority of articles are scripturally proven and a great aid in Christian growth. Our prayers are with you that all may remain in peace and harmony in your work; also that the Lord Jesus may give you abundant grace and daily joy!

Rev. G.A.H.
Riverside, Calif.

COMMERCIALISM

I feel there is no need for such commercialism within the body. You don't need to sell us anything in the Madison Avenue sense of the word. A simple listing or catalog without the embellishments would be just as effective and less offensive. If these tapes and books are Spirit-annointed, they will sell themselves. Please stop resorting to this unnecessary advertising and keep the book lists informative only.

L.O.
Beaver Falls, Pa.

Thank you so much for your continued dedication to teaching and uplifting believers. We've received *New Wine* for the past two years while on the field here in Colombia. What a help it's been to us personally and our ministry. We particularly appreciate the lack of commercialism, but at the same time an effort to inform and make available selected, worthwhile literature and tapes.

Mr. & Mrs. R.
Colombia, S.A.

I would like to compliment you on your publication of *New Wine* Magazine. The first time I read your statement that *New Wine* was an international magazine dedicated to Christian growth, I didn't quite believe it. Now, after reading it for about a year, I am convinced. I can honestly say, I have not seen any evidence that you are trying to push any one denomination, and your publication shows no evidence of being a come-on to get people to buy books they don't need. The books you do offer are of good material and by authors who have something to say.

I sincerely hope you keep up the good work.

R.C.D.
Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

BLINDSPOTS

It was only natural that your editorial on blindspots [Sept. 1973] should give examples of *other* people's blindspots. We all tend to look at ourselves and consider anything outside our own experience to be strange, if not downright wrong. Let me suggest another blindspot that needs consideration and prayer.

Those who speak in tongues are able to feel very acutely the pain of rejection when people claim that this gift is improper and dangerous. Yet these same people sometimes practice the same thing in reverse by claiming or implying that absence of tongues indicates a spiritual deficit, or by using the terms "Spirit-filled" and "Spirit-baptized" to exclude many in whom the fruit of the Spirit is evident.

Because I have never spoken in tongues, many would consider me a "non-charismatic." Yet I am convinced that I have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, am the recipient of spiritual gifts and am filled with the Holy Spirit whenever I fully surrender to Jesus Christ.

I do ask that you prayerfully consider this matter — this "blindspot."

Dr. R.S.O.
Kowloon, Hong Kong

TOKENS OF APPRECIATION

We appreciate . . .

— *New Wine* for the real balance it gives to the charismatic teaching. —H.G. (Glendale, Calif.)

— Christian Growth Ministries' emphasis on the Word. —K.H.

— Forum with the straight forward answers to questions from readers. —O.P. (Houston, Texas)

— The new Bible Study format because it makes you search the Scriptures with specifics in mind. —D.G. (Jamaica, W.I.)

— Your printing of both the good and bad letters to the editor. —J.P. (Sydney, Australia).

Editorial

Unity in the body of Christ seems to be the word of the hour. God's vehicles for bringing us to unity (and our resistance to them), are not as difficult to see and as sophisticated to understand as we would like to make them. One of God's prime vehicles for getting us to flow together is our very real need for each other. On the other hand, the way in which we express our independence from each other is our primary way of resisting God's work among us.

Have you ever heard someone say, "You just can't understand, you're not -----." (Supply the word or phrase that fits: Single, divorced, old, in my ministry, married to my husband, carrying my burden, etc. They all add up to "my situation.")

There is a consistent tendency to avoid real contact with each other by claiming immunity from advice or criticism because our particular situation, problem, or ministry makes us unique from everyone else in the body of Christ. We fail to see that the principles of God's dealing with us are the same no matter *who* or *where* we are and that God may simply have placed our particular cross on us in order that we might go to a brother and receive his help. The humbling part of receiving help is the manner in which real relationships are built within the body.

The "I'm different" syndrome is symptomatic of a simple unwillingness to believe that anyone besides God, Himself, might be able to speak to us. He just could be trying to build my relationship with other members of the body of Christ by allowing my weakness to be the vehicle of bringing us together.

new wine MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 1974

CONTENTS

VOL. 6, NO. 2

THE MANDATE OF UNITY	4
<i>John M. Poole</i>	
THE SOUND OF A HEART	9
<i>Donald Gray Barnhouse</i>	
THOU SHALT NOT STEAL	12
<i>Derek Prince</i>	
WE STAND TOGETHER	16
<i>Orville Swindoll</i>	
THE WEALTH IN MY WORLD	18
<i>Robert Johnson</i>	
WINTER MEDITATION	20
<i>John Wright Follette</i>	
BIBLE STUDY	23
ONE CITY, ONE CHURCH	24
<i>James T. Hamann</i>	
NEW WINE FORUM	28
<i>Spiritual Unity</i>	

EDITOR: Dick Key; MANAGING EDITOR: Robert Sutton; EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Janet Baum; PRODUCTION MANAGER: Larry Rice; PRODUCTION: Sandra Houillet; Chester Ziemba, Jr.; Jerome Lukas

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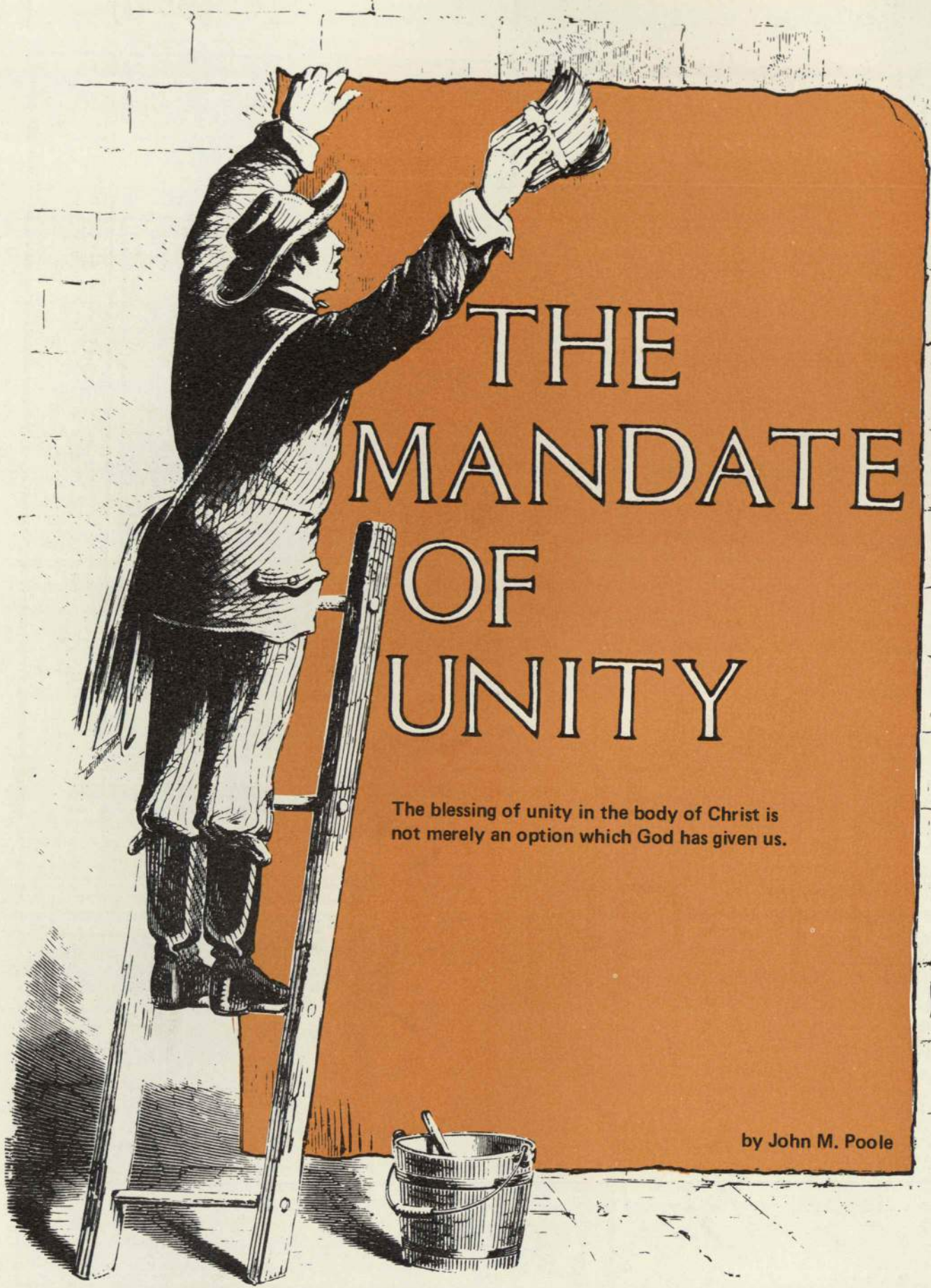
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THE MANDATE OF UNITY

The blessing of unity in the body of Christ is not merely an option which God has given us.

by John M. Poole

With a great deal of embarrassment, I admit that it is only within the last few years that I have taken the subject of the unity of the body of Christ seriously. During the early years of my Christian life it posed no problem to me. The Christians among whom I grew up conveyed to me the distinct impression that WE WERE the body of Christ. The unity that Christ prayed for so fervently would come about when those from the "other folds" would see the light and join our fellowship. The question of, "what will eventually happen to other apparent believers?" was usually answered by some vague reference to the "differences of rewards in heaven."

No one can ever convince me of the fact that spiritual barrenness is not used of God to accomplish His purposes. It was during such a time of dryness that my parents began to pray earnestly that God would reveal Himself to them in a new way. As is so often the case, the answer came in a manner that was totally unexpected. The Lord had begun to move "outside the camp." People with whom we had previously had no fellowship were experiencing a refreshing from the Lord, and the cry of thirsty hearts was being answered. During a time of deep heart-searching, the Holy Spirit began to deal with my father regarding the differences between the position that he held regarding the body of Christ, and the truth of the Bible. The matter of the unity of the Spirit had been up until that time a doctrine to defend — now it started to become a blessing to experience.

The blessing brought with it accompanying problems. I have since learned that this is always the case. We had to face such questions (very weighty ones for us) as:

Is it possible for people who go to movies to be truly born again?

Can God fill with the Holy Spirit women who wear make-up?

Is it true that there are charismatic Episcopalians who drink? All of these things boggled our pentecostal minds, but we continued firmly on. We had a

deep conviction that if we exercised tolerance with these people, we could bring them around and help them see the light.

In the fall of 1963 my father died and full pastoral responsibility became mine. With great zeal and high hopes I endeavored to make new contacts with ministers in our area and enjoy a fuller fellowship with them. My attempts failed miserably. Everyone was busy with the programs of their own denominations; the needs of their churches demanding so much of their time that it seemed impossible to get together. Disappointed and very insecure I retreated more deeply into our own local fellowship, certain that we were the only real hope that Philadelphia had for renewal.

FELLOWSHIP OF THE DOCTRINES

I became convinced that the only true path to revival led from the foundation of pure doctrine; and so, we began to lay again the foundation, insisting that unless you had been obedient to the gospel as interpreted by us, your position in the body of Christ was suspect. I was still open to outside groups, and accepted freely speaking invitations, always looking for an opportunity to impart to them the way of God more perfectly. If it had not been for His intervention, I should soon have found myself back where we had begun, stating again like Elijah, "Only we are left . . . We are God's true remnant."

But oh, how faithful God is! The voice of the Lord began to come to me with great clarity. He declared to me that the most important thing to do was to find out what He was doing, and to start to flow with it. I was to stop trying to get Him to bless my ideas, and learn to co-operate with Him. By the inner voice of the Spirit, by the preaching of the Word, through contacts with other of God's people, I gradually came to see — *the most important thing that God is doing in the church today is the bringing together of His people.*

He made it clear to me that the day

of division was going to come to an end. No longer was I to speak in a disparaging manner about other Christians. No longer would He tolerate my pride and feelings of spiritual superiority. My jokes and stories about other groups did not amuse Him. He called for repentance and public apology. I was brought face to face with the fact that the highest truth revealed to us in the Word of God regarding the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is that IT IS ONE! Everything else must be subservient to that fact.

What a difference in life and ministry my response to God in that area has made! I could not, nor would I, go back to my former attitudes. The freedom that is now mine, the openness that I have to all of God's people, the enrichment that I have received from people of differing backgrounds and traditions, have all contributed toward the growth and development of my life as an individual and the ministry that the Lord has given to me. Out of the things that I learned since that time, let me share what I believe God is saying regarding the unity of the Spirit.

REAL UNITY

In John 17:20–23 Jesus is praying for the disciples that were with Him and for those that would believe on Him through their witness. Jesus' prayer is: "that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, are in me, and I in Thee, they also may be in Us . . . that they may be one, just as We are one . . ." It was at this crucial point that I used to lapse into thoughts about the mystical unity of the body of Christ. Recognizing that, one day when we all get to heaven, this would be true, I was relieved of any burden to see it fulfilled here in time. It all seemed very unreal — all believers were somehow one, but that unity seemed to have little bearing on our present relationship to one another.

Slowly, my eyes began to be opened. What kind of unity exists in the Godhead? It is not unreal,

John Poole is the pastor of Philadelphia Gospel Temple in Philadelphia, Pa.

mystical. It is authentic, genuine, and powerful. It is a unity based on *life, light, and love*.

LIFE

The Scripture reveals that God is Life. All life that ever has been, now is, or ever will be; has found, is now finding, and will yet find its source in Him. He is the creator and sustainer of all things. Those of us who are believers are now called to share this life and manifest it to the world.

"He that hath the Son hath life" (I John 5:12).

"We know that we have passed out of death into life" (I John 3:14).

"God has given unto us eternal life (I John 5:11).

Praise the Lord, we share a common life. All who are in Christ, regardless of other points of difference share this testimony, "I have found Him who is the resurrection and the life, and through faith in His Name, I too now live."

The unity that we possess in Christ is not organizational, I was comfortable with that; it is not creedal, although creeds are important; it is not based on similarity of modes of worship; it is based on sharing a common life. We are those who present ourselves to Him as alive from the dead. We have laid aside the grave clothes and come out of the tomb in response to the call of Him who said, "Come forth!"

LIGHT AND LOVE

Secondly, God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all. This speaks to us of the new kingdom in which we now live. We have come out of the kingdom of darkness with its tyranny and fear, and have been placed into the kingdom of light. We are those who are endeavoring to learn to walk in the light. We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty and have

responded to the call to bring to the light all the things that we formerly would not expose to anyone. All who have come to the light are our fellow-citizens in this kingdom.

God is Love. The unity that there is between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is indissoluble because of love, self-giving, self-sacrificing love. Are we not commanded by Jesus to live with all fellow Christians in that environment? I used to read the scripture this way: "This is my *suggestion* that you love one another." At least, my style of living bore witness to that kind of interpretation. But, we have no choice in the matter. It is the clear declaration of the Head, "*Love one another.*"

"The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (I John 4:8).

"And everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (I John 4:7).

"If someone says I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar . . . and this is the commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also" (I John 4:20). God is not appealing to my emotions but to my will. The love of God is shed abroad in hearts of those who are His; now let that love flow, unreservedly, fully, without hindrance.

Love must be manifested. Love means action. The body of Christ in the area where I live must be reached out to with open arms. I must make contact with them, pray with them, rejoice with them, weep with them.

This unity then is not just heavenly, mystical, other-worldly; but real, authentic, genuine, powerful, and strong. I must face the question of a divided church. I cannot ignore Christ's commands. The cry of the heart of Jesus must become mine.

In Ephesians 4:3 we are called by Paul "to preserve the unity of the Spirit." Several things become evident by studying this imperative. First of all, we become aware of the fact that the unity of the Spirit is not something that we are called upon to *produce*. It is already in existence. We must *recognize* it!

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit (I Cor. 12:13).

There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and *in all* (Eph. 4:4-6).

Just as truly as it was impossible for any man to produce the physical body of Jesus, the body in which He first manifested Himself, so it is impossible for any man, or group of men, to produce the spiritual body of Christ. The Holy Spirit alone was sufficient in both cases. He has brought the church into existence. The unity of the Spirit *exists*; there is only one body; this great fact we are called upon to *recognize*. Recognition, not production is the question we must face.

PRESERVE THE UNITY

There is however, something that we *are* called upon to do. The Apostle tells us that we must *keep* or *preserve* this unity. Look at some other scriptures where this same word is used.

"I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7).

"Keep yourself free from sin" (1 Tim. 5:22).

"Keep yourself unstained by the world" (James 1:27).

The Holy Spirit charges us that we are to be as concerned about the unity of the Spirit as we are in regard to keeping the faith, and our personal sanctification. Paul adds that we are to be diligent in this matter. This is not something that is to provoke our interest now and again. It is something that we must be doing continually. We are to make every effort, do our utmost, to see to it that the unity of the Spirit is maintained.

The enemy knows the power of a united church and has sought from the beginning to bring division. As long as we allow our present attitude to exist, we will never see in this generation the glory that God has promised. A quick review of some of the events recorded

in the Book of Acts will bring to light some of the areas where Satan makes war.

It is interesting to note that one of the first problems that the infant church faced arose over a dispute regarding *material things*. Certain widows felt that they were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. Nationalistic overtones soon became apparent as the neglected ones were Hellenistic as opposed to the native Hebrews who were being cared for. This carnal situation could very easily have developed into a spiritual problem had not the Lord given to the leadership the wisdom to know how to deal with it. We would do well to take note of the care that the leading brethren took to see that this issue did not become a point of needless division, but rather was handled immediately with prayer and corporate counsel.

Over and over again, the body of Christ has seen division come over the color of the choir robes, the type of carpet to be used in the sanctuary, the plans for the new building, and countless other similar things. We cannot allow this to continue. Paul teaches through the Holy Spirit that it is better to be wronged than to insist on having one's own way. The Spirit-filled life must lead to something more than the ability to speak in tongues or prophesy. It must lead us to the cross of Christ, where we lay down our lives, and our insistence on having things done our way.

Later we are brought face to face with the possibility of division that existed in the church over the matter of *tradition*. After Peter's visit to the house of Cornelius he returned to Jerusalem to find that certain of the brethren wanted to have a word with him. They began to take issue with him, finding fault with what had happened in Caesarea. The fact that the needs of the Gentiles had been met; the fact that God had sovereignly moved in a way that had never before been experienced; the fact that the prophecies of the Old Testament were now being fulfilled, seemed for a while

to mean nothing. Tradition had been broken.

It has not been until recently that I have taken notice of the action of impetuous Peter during this time. Note his wisdom as he patiently begins to give them a detailed, first-hand report of what God had done. Rehearsing for them the way in which the Holy Spirit had moved, he put to flight their doubts, and quieted their fears. He did not react to their agitated spirits. He did not, as I surely would have done, denounce them for their blindness and hardheartedness, but lovingly shared with them until understanding came. It is evident that in the moving of the Spirit today we are being faced with this issue again. Men and women of differing traditions are being brought together by the Holy Spirit. Our resolve is being put to the test. Can we continue in patience to share with one another until He brings us to the unity of the Faith? Will we make the mistake of past generations and begin to separate ourselves from those who do not agree with our position?

The question of *doctrine* also threatened the harmony of God's people. The issue of the necessity of circumcision as essential to salvation had to be faced. The possibility of a Jewish-Gentile split was in the offing. The lines were drawn, the outcome crucial. But note again the fact that with prayer and the word of wisdom the problem is resolved. Doctrinal issues were not allowed to separate the saints of God. The unity of the church was preserved. Note too that the leadership of the church carries tremendous responsibility in settling these matters. This cannot be overlooked. As in the case of tradition, so in the area of doctrine the move of the Holy Spirit is being tested. We have to deal with the fact that many of us disagree in major areas such as water baptism, the Lord's table, the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Can we wait on the Lord, speaking the truth in love, committed to one another, and fellowship around Jesus, until He brings to pass that which He has promised? Will we repeat the mis-

takes of those who have gone before and go our separate ways, because we lack the patience of the Holy Spirit? We may have the gifts of the Spirit; do we have the endurance of the Spirit?

We could not speak of these things without recognizing the difficulties that were brought to the church as the result of gathering around personalities. Human nature being what it is, this problem has never left us, and is something that must be faced if the unity of the Spirit is to be maintained. Some were saying that they were of Peter, Paul, or Apollos. Only the names have changed, the issue is still the same. The truth is this. All ministries are yours, and no one man is able to meet all the needs that you have. Your soul will *never* be fully fed by one man's ministry. The Lord has placed in the body a variety of gifts and we are in danger of great imbalance when we center our lives around one man, or on men who all have the same emphasis. A richer life is waiting for those who will open their hearts to the eloquence of Apollos, the practicality of Peter, and the revelation of Paul.

The early church faced these attacks upon her unity. Through the ability of the Holy Spirit she dealt with each one of them. May we, in this new day of the Spirit's working, follow this example.

In Psalm 133 a glorious promise is given to us. If we learn to dwell together in unity (and oh how good and pleasant this is) God promises a fresh anointing of His Spirit, and a commanded blessing. It is foolish for us to go on speaking about a new anointing, and days of the greatest revival that the world has ever known, as long as the question of "dwelling together in unity" is ignored. The price for full blessing has not changed. God does not have discount days. If we are to experience all that the first-century believers did, we must travel the same road — "and they were all of one heart and one mind."

PRACTICALS

Let me conclude with some very practical suggestions. First of all, if the

unity of the Spirit is going to have any relevance on this earth it must have a local manifestation. The believers in a local area must be brought into some visible display of love and fellowship. Francis Schaeffer speaks of "The Church Before the Watching World." According to Jesus' own words, the world will never truly deal with the issue of His being the Sent One of God until it sees the church united. The question is how can this unity be obtained?

It is at this point that I believe God has given great responsibility to His shepherds. Perhaps more than we care to admit, division on a local level is of our making. Our petty jealousies, our fear of losing members, our deep-seated prejudices, have created walls that keep our sheep in and theirs out. This situation can be changed in the following way:

One: If there is in your area a fellowship of concerned pastors who are willing to give top priority to the matter of praying together for the expression in the locality of the body of Christ, then join yourself to them. Let other things go. Change your schedule around, but get involved in that meeting. God is at work, this has top priority with Him. You will be amazed at what He will do. (If no such fellowship exists, contact one or two others and begin to pray together.)

Two: In the beginning set no goals other than prayer for the unity of the body of Christ in your area. Let the Spirit do the rest. Learn to wait upon Him, be sensitive to Him, follow His leading. To set up long-range goals too far in advance will scare away pastors before the Spirit has a chance to deal with them.

Three: Keep the group open. We will make a big mistake if we limit our prayer fellowship to those who are charismatic. This openness must be not only in word but in deed. There are many men who see the need for renewal within the church who differ with us in regard to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Invite them, welcome them, most important, listen to them. These men cannot be ignored. They

must not be rejected, but rather entreated to come to the place of prevailing prayer.

Four: Do not attempt to follow the pattern of other cities or groups. Again, I emphasize, let the Spirit lead. He is building the church.

Five: Face differences of opinion honestly, but always with love and patience. Do not pretend that differences do not exist. But always remember, the truth must be spoken in love. Men may not always agree with what you say, but they can sense a loving spirit.

Six: Don't be concerned about numbers. It is better to see a small group of men knit together in the Lord, forming the core of a larger group that will surely come, than to try and complete the job in one month. Don't forget that Jesus started with twelve.

RESULTS!

Here are some things that you can expect to see happen:

One: A new love for the brethren. When you begin to move in obedience to Christ's command, you will find the love that he has placed within your heart flowing in a richer way. He will honor the obedience that you have demonstrated.

Two: A growing appreciation for men of different traditions. Meeting with men face to face will change many of your attitudes. Men that you have mistrusted because of hearsay evidence will turn out to be very different from what you have been led to believe. It will soon become apparent that each tradition has a heritage from which the whole Body can draw strength and wisdom.

Three: A recognition of other ministries as gifts to the body of Christ. Instead of seeing other pastors as competitors, you will soon begin to view them as complementary ministers, given by the Ascended Lord to His church. You will view a living demonstration of the variety of gifts He has given.

Four: A new power in prayer. When men of God come together in prayer,

there is an influence exerted that goes far beyond what any one of them can effect individually.

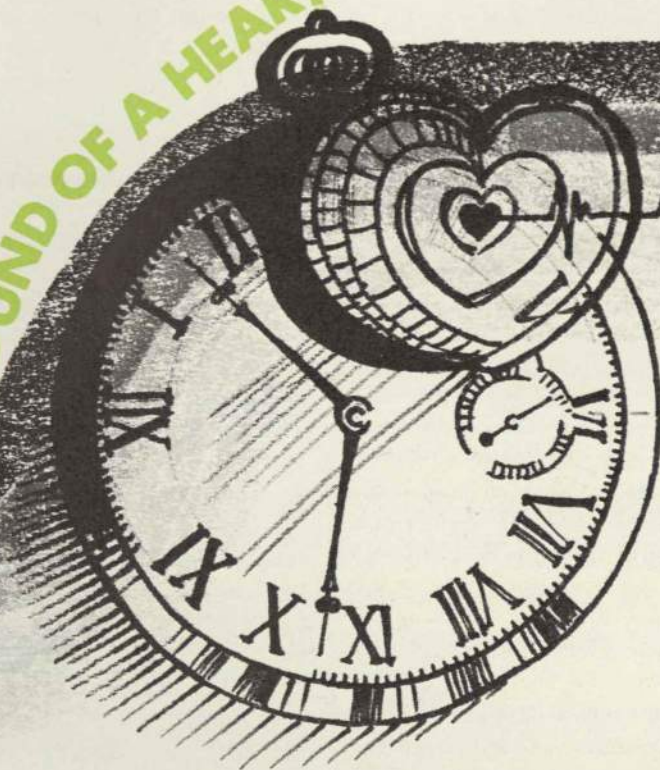
Five: A resultant effect on the sheep under your charge. As God works in your heart, it will mark your ministry. The openness that God will produce in you, the desire for unity will begin to be felt in your local congregation. They will begin to come out of their ghetto mentality and begin to see the body of Christ.

Six: A greater and more effective work of the Spirit in the whole area. God will honor the steps that have been taken and the Spirit will move in the whole area in a new way. Cities that have been strongholds of the powers of darkness must break under the power of united prayer. The moving of the Spirit will be diverse, in keeping with the revelation of the Word. Do not try to regiment Him, but rather enjoy the variety of His gifts.

Seven: Times of testing and sifting. It is impossible to mature and grow in any relationship without this. The enemy will attack. He will try to open old wounds and hurts. Personality conflicts, denominational differences, new ideas versus old, will be used by him to try and frustrate what God is doing. Resist Him! He is defeated! Christ is Lord and King! He must reign until His enemies be made His footstool! He has promised that He will build His church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul as he writes to the Philippians concerning this subject:

If then our common life in Christ yields anything to stir the heart, any loving consolation, any sharing of the Spirit, any warmth of affection or compassion, fill up my cup of happiness by thinking and feeling alike, with the same love for one another, the same turn of mind, and a *common care for unity*. Rivalry and personal vanity should have no place among you, but you should humbly reckon others better than yourselves. You must look to each other's interest and not merely to your own (Philippians 2:1-4, NEB).☞

THE SOUND OF A HEART



The Life within us is our basis for unity.

by Donald Gray Barnhouse

As we scan the stage of the history of God's dealings with man, we find the dominant theme of God calling out a people for Himself.

In the Gospel of John, for instance, the word, *world*, is used seventy-nine times as it means the opposite of *believers*; and approximately one hundred times John used the term, *they*, as opposed to the terms that refer to the believer. Jesus Christ puts the world on one side and the believers on the other. This is extremely important if we are to understand anything about the true church of Jesus Christ.

The Greek word for church is *ekklesia*, which is a combination of two Greek words. The first is *ek*, which means "out of." If you have ever had a tooth pulled then you understand the meaning of that little word. It is to be rooted out of one place and put in another. The second word is *kaleo*, which means "to call."

The *ekklesia*, then, are those who are "called out of" the world.

Nowhere does Scripture teach universalism. Jesus Christ has flatly divided the destinies of men. As much as we may weep and wish it otherwise, the Scripture tells us that multitudes will go to the Lake of Fire without hope and without God. I could never pray, "God, save everybody in America . . . or, save everybody in Chicago." This cannot happen, for the Scripture tells us that God is *taking out a people for Himself* from the world.

The best definition of the Church given in the Bible that I know of is in Acts 15:14, where the Apostle James speaks to the brethren at the first council in Jerusalem. He says, "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to *take out a people for his name*." This is the

one true Church! A people taken out for God's name.

ORGANISM OR ORGANIZATION

There are two aspects of what we call the "Church" which are illustrated with this little story:

Some years back I was listening to a radio program. It happened to be sponsored by a watch company which advertised its product as "The World's Most Honored Watch." The announcer told us that they were going to magnify the sound of their watch over a hundred times. He said, "If you held it next to your ears you could hardly hear it — but here it is magnified one hundred times." The sound came over the air *ca-lick, ca-lick, ca-lick, ca-lick*. "That," he said, "is the smooth running sound of the world's most honored watch."

I would have thought little else

The late Dr. Barnhouse was for many years pastor of the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. He was world-renowned as a conference speaker, author and editor of *Eternity Magazine*.

about it if an incident in the office of a famous Philadelphia physician had not called it to mind. As I was sitting in his office, I noticed hundreds of boxes of tape recordings on a shelf on the wall.

"Tom, what are these?" I asked.

"Tape recordings," he answered.

"Of what?"

"Heartbeats."

Growing more interested, I probed further, "Tell me more."

"Well," he continued, "whenever a patient was on the ward with a heart condition, we used to have all the medical students and interns coming to listen to his heart. Of course, with someone coming in every fifteen minutes to listen to his heart, the poor patient had it hard. Now, to make it easier on the patients, we simply tape their heartbeats and anyone can listen at their convenience without bothering the patient.

"How would you like to hear a perfect heartbeat? This is the heartbeat of Bob Mathias who won the decathlon at the previous Olympics."

An announcer told the date of the recording and who the heartbeat belonged to, and then I heard *lob-dub, lob-dub, lob-dub, lob-dub* . . .

"Thank you, doctor," I said, "that gives me a great sermon illustration!"

You see, when Jesus was here He founded a *lob-dub, lob-dub, lob-dub* — that perfect heartbeat of a living organism. Man, however, founded a *ca-lick, ca-lick, ca-lick* — the mechanism of an organization.

About three hundred years after it started, the Constantinople headquarters of the *ca-lick, ca-lick, ca-lick* got into a squabble with the Rome headquarters of the *ca-lick, ca-lick, ca-lick* over who was going to run things. Rome said that the doctrine should be, "*ca-lick, ca-lick, ca-lick*";

while Constantinople said it should be "*lick, alick, alick*." It sounds the same once you get started, but they split up over it anyway.

A few hundred years later Luther came along and then you had a *click-clack, click-clack, click-clack*; then came Calvin with *clack-click, clack-click, clack-click*. Then you had the Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish *click-clack* . . . and the Swiss Reformed *clackety-click* . . . and the Scotch Presbyterians started the *clackity-click-clack* . . . and the Methodists began the *clickity-clack*. Next along came the Civil War and everything split between North and South and now the church is a *click-clack-clack-click-clackity-clack-clackity-clack-chuck-chuck*. So much for denominations! Can you see how important the phrase — "one Church" is?

The true Church is *lob-dub, lob-dub, lob-dub* — a heart — not a recording of a mechanical contraption.

It doesn't make any difference what *clackity-click* or *clickity-clack* you belong to — the important thing is whether or not you belong to the *lob-dub, lob-dub, lob-dub*! Are you alive in Christ? A Christian is one who has the life of Christ within him!

It is on this basis that there must be unity in the body of Christ. I say to you in the name of God Almighty, that the life of Christ is in you — that you have no right to be separated from *any other* person in whom is the life of Christ.

FELLOWSHIP IS A MUST

Personally, within the last half-dozen years I have come to the conclusion that if any man truly believes that Jesus Christ is Lord and the Savior of the world, then I must have fellowship with him. I have no grounds for being separated from him because I do not like him personally, or because I think he has some queer doctrines. As a matter of fact, some of my most beautiful and loved doctrines may be considered queer by some other people. We can each think that the other is all fouled up — but that is

neither here nor there. It is most important, however, that we agree to disagree in the things that are *not* essential.

If you believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord God Almighty, and if you believe that He died on the cross, being wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, then you are my brother and sister in Christ. We have the same life within us. We have the same *lob-dub, lob-dub, lob-dub*. The Church is a living heart! This is what is important.

Some years ago I decided that I was going to try to find fellowship with everybody who was truly a believer in Jesus Christ. This revolutionized my life! I found myself on television for the National Council of Churches on one side, and I got mixed up with Seventh Day Adventists and Pentecostals on the other side. But I discovered that everywhere there are beautiful children of God whose hearts beat with mine. Getting down on our knees and praying together, we found that we were one in Christ — it does away with a particular *clickity-clack* or *chuck-chuck* or *click-clack*. Within the great body of Christ, and in the Living Word, there is a vast room for differences of expression on secondary matters.

Jesus told us that we were to love one another. I can promise you that if you try to love everybody who is born again, unfortunately, you are going to find some Christians who are going to give you a hard time about it. They say you have no right to associate with anybody who associates with anybody who associates with those with whom I *do not* associate! That is second-degree separation, and it is as wrong as direct separation.

I have heard the phrase thrown around, "Come out from among them and be separate," applying it to different groups of Christians. If you are honest with that scripture, you will find that it was written to the Corinthian church and Paul was telling the believers to come out from among the temples of Jupiter and Venus, with their demon gods and thousands of

prostitutes and sodomites. We have no right to take that phrase and say, "Well, my denomination has been raised up by God as a testimony to a particular truth, and we must keep it pure." That is a lie. God Almighty never called anybody to witness to one tiny little doctrine! I hear it all the time, "We Presbyterians believe . . . Now the Baptist doctrine . . . Pentecostal truth . . ." It is all right to believe those things, but they never justify founding a new *clickity-clack* about. Nowhere in the Bible does God authorize us to be separated from any other member of the body of Christ because of doctrine.

I was raised in California within fifty miles of the headquarters of the Seventh Day Adventists. I was taught as a boy that they had horns and hoofs and were outside God's people.

A few years back, however, a set of supernatural circumstances put me in touch with some of the leaders of the Seventh Day Adventists and when they came to my home we spent many hours in prayer together. Through that fellowship I found that beyond any question they are as orthodox on the great fundamentals of the person and work of Christ as anybody in the world could be. Yet, because I have accepted these people as my brothers, some people have written little tracts about me because I said they were saved.

A man told me once, "Dr. Barnhouse, you don't hate enough." I replied, "I would rather be convicted by God for loving too much than for hating too much!"

A few months ago some of my associates and I went out to Springfield, Missouri, and spent two and a half days praying and talking with the leaders of the Assemblies of God — the Pentecostals. As a result of that time, I am going back to hold a week of meetings and preach in some of the greatest of their churches. Do you know what I found out about the Pentecostals? Total disagreement on about 2% of our doctrine — absolute agreement on 95% to 98% — about 3% you could call "shaded." I am certainly willing to

grant *anyone* 5% disagreement with me, and I can go a bit higher than that when they can grant me the same thing. I think we need to understand that God did not call a people who thought exactly alike.

As a matter of fact, the Bible tells us that Christians can believe things that are diametrically opposed. Romans 14:5, "One man esteemeth one day above another, another man esteemeth every day alike." The Seventh Day Adventists believe that Saturday is the Sabbath and must be kept. I believe Sunday is the Lord's day . . . Monday is the Lord's day . . . Tuesday is the Lord's day. I esteem every day alike. The Scripture makes allowances for different views and different interpretations. It behooves us, therefore, to be very humble before God and to realize the fact that we are answerable to Him, and not to each other. Sometimes I tremble when I read how people attack and criticize each other as believers. When we judge one another, we are taking the place of the Holy Spirit.

God has warned us that He will judge us if we separate the body of Christ. To separate one member of the body from another, we say, "God, move over — let me sit in judgment here. I have decided that this man does not meet all the forty-seven points of complete orthodoxy." Can you see that any man who criticizes another Christian is usurping the function of the throne of God?

THE DEADLY SALT

While we open our arms to our brothers, we must place a guard around our fellowship. Scripture tells us that we are the salt of the earth. Salt, as any high school chemistry student can tell you, is a compound — *sodium chloride*. If you were to separate sodium chloride into its two chemical components, sodium and chloride, you would find that they are two deadly poisons. A small amount of either one would bring a quick death. Yet, these two poisons combine

to form the common commodity — salt — which is essential for life. Without salt, we would eventually die.

Like salt, Christianity is composed of two deadly poisons — *theology* and *ethics*. Together they give life, separate they kill. There are men who have theology, theology, theology and no ethics. They are faithful to the virgin birth, the diety of Christ and the atonement; but you could not trust them as far as you could throw a church. I have known orthodox Christians who sued each other at law for lying and cheating and stealing — all theology and no ethics.

On the other hand, it is possible to have ethics without theology. Without theology men stand up and preach, "God is the Father of all men; we are all brothers. Do good and be kind, for God is Love." A man can say and believe all that and still be a lost soul. Young girls quickly learn that the words, "I love you," can be spoken by a man in a parked car who wants them only for the moment — or by someone who is willing to bring home the pay check for the next forty years. The language and vocabulary of the seducer and the honorable man in love are the same. The meaning of "God is Love . . . God is Love" depends a great deal on who says it. From the lips of a Unitarian, it is Satan speaking; from the lips of Dwight L. Moody, it is the Holy Spirit. One is damnable and the other spiritual. We must learn to know the difference.

We are one Church. It is composed of multitudinous fractions or organizations, but it is the organism — the Life — that counts. Jesus stated it very simply, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples . . . if you divide into 378 denominations . . ." Can you see what we have done to Christianity? It is the One Church that the world must see as witness to our Resurrected Lord. ♡

This article was taken from the message. "One Church," by Dr. Barnhouse.

The second in a series
of articles on the
moral and ethical crisis
in our society.



THOU SHALT NOT STEAL

by Derek Prince

This commandment comes closer to home than most of us realize.



Most people in our Western world are familiar, in some measure at least, with the Ten Commandments, which were given by God, through Moses. These Ten Commandments are recorded in the Book of Exodus, Chapter 20, verses 1 through 17.

Of these ten commandments, the first four deal with man's relationship to God; and the last six deal with man's relationship to his fellow. Basically, we may say that the requirement stated by these commandments, in man's relationship to God, can be summed up in three words: reverence, worship, and obedience.

The last six commandments all deal with man's relationship to his fellows; and they are, briefly, as follows:

First: Honor thy father and thy mother.

Second: Thou shalt not kill [Or, in more modern English, murder].

Third: Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Fourth: Thou shalt not steal.

Fifth: Thou shalt not bear false

witness [Or, in modern English, perjure thyself].

Sixth: Thou shalt not covet . . . anything that belongs to thy neighbor: his house, his wife, his servant, his beast, or any such thing.

It is important to remember that all of these commandments are given to man for his own well being. They are not unreasonable or arbitrary requirements of God imposed upon man to test his willingness to do things that are without reason or purpose. Every one of these commandments has its root purpose in the well being of man.

The six commandments that have to do with man's relationship to his fellow demand certain things which are basic to human life. They demand respect for life itself . . . for marriage, for the home, for property, for justice, and truth. Common sense and experience alike confirm that where these requirements of God are set aside, the result is a breakdown of society. Ultimately, the end of setting

aside these reasonable requirements of God can only be one thing, and that is anarchy, which, in turn, frequently leads to tyranny . . . the dominion of one man, or a small group, over the rest of their fellowmen, arbitrarily and without due justice.

In this list it is important to notice the place given to stealing. Stealing is placed in direct association with murder, adultery, and perjury. Any sensible person with any kind of moral values will acknowledge that murder, adultery, and perjury are extremely serious and evil things. Stealing is placed side by side with them. In other words, God evaluates stealing as an act as evil, as injurious, and as wrong as such things as murder, adultery, and perjury.

WHAT IS STEALING?

It is interesting to consider the definition given by the dictionary of the word, *to steal*: "To steal is to take

Derek Prince, writer, teacher and Bible scholar, lives and ministers in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

something that does not belong to one."

There are two important things to notice in this definition:

First of all, there is no precise indication of what means are used to take the thing. It may be taken by force. It may be taken by deception. It may be taken surreptitiously. The taking of it may be covered up by various different pretexts or arguments; but the fact remains that taking is taking, whatever means are used, and all forms of taking something that does not belong to one are forms of stealing.

Secondly, it is not important to whom the thing taken does belong. Providing it does not belong to the person who took it, that person, in taking it, is stealing.

It is important to see this because many people are somewhat morally blind about certain aspects of stealing. This is particularly true in today's society. For instance, many people would not directly steal from another person. They would not walk into a neighbor's home and deliberately take money, or jewelry, or some other item of value. Or, working beside another man or another woman, in an office or a factory, they would not steal his purse, or even his cigarettes, or anything like that. They would feel that this would be absolutely wrong and below their moral standards to do such a thing.

But the strange thing is that such people as this often feel no compunction, or sense of guilt, about stealing from a nameless group, or from a group that they do not know personally, such as a corporation, an institution, the army, or the government. This applies even to people who profess religion and claim to live by moral standards.

I served in the British Army, in World War II, for over five years and I had ample opportunity to observe that many people who claimed to be

churchgoers and had quite high moral and religious standards, would never steal from a comrade in the Army, but would happily steal from the Army, itself.

They would take rations, or equipment, or clothing, or items of value that they knew belonged to the Army, and not to themselves; yet they felt no sense of compunction or guilt about taking them, simply because it was not a person, or an individual, but it was a group . . . something large, and nameless, and unspecified, that did not seem to have much value or significance.

I heard of man who worked for General Motors in a large factory in a certain city in North America. He was a good moral man, by most standards. He attended church. But he felt no sense of guilt about purloining from the place where he worked. He would regularly take items of equipment or other things which he would either sell at a low price, use for unofficial repairs, or in some way appropriate for his own purposes.

This man was a churchgoer. He professed to be a good man. He claimed to set a good standard. He probably gave respect to the Ten Commandments and acknowledged their moral value. Nevertheless, he was guilty, frequently, of stealing. Stealing not from a friend, or a neighbor, but from a large corporation, which happened in this case to be General Motors.

Such a man would go to church and would certainly express horror if any friend or neighbor came into his own home and deliberately stole something that belonged to him. He would classify that man as a thief. He would rate him on a very low social and moral level and might even take legal action against such a man.

Is it not remarkable that this man could see that the person who came into his house and took something was stealing; yet he could not see that when he took things — unofficially, without permission, dishonestly, surreptitiously, by underhand means — from General Motors, that he was just

as much stealing as that man who would walk into his home and take an item of his own property.

BLINDING RELIGION

It is remarkable, sometimes, how religion actually blinds people to the true nature of their own actions. In Romans, Chapter 2, the Apostle Paul is writing to people who claim to be religious, who claim to set the highest standard; and yet he says . . . and this is a verse that applies very, very, very directly to many people, today . . . in Romans, the 2nd chapter, the 21st verse: "Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?"

You see, here is a religious person who preaches to others, claims to set a high standard, claims to know what is right and wrong, and yet he is caught himself stealing. There is no question that there are many such people in our society today, claiming to be moral, religious, respectable, employees of large corporations, or other institutions, or employees of the government, who regularly and habitually steal, and yet would be horrified to be called thieves, because their stealing is not from another individual, or person, or a neighbor, but is from some large group which does not seem to have personal identity.

Yet the fact remains that stealing is stealing, no matter from whom we may take the object stolen.

AS GOD SEES IT

In this connection, I want to point out certain important, simple facts which relate to stealing and all activities of this kind.

The *first* fact is that God sees us. We may be able to cover our actions from man, from our employer, from the corporation, from the law enforcement agencies, but there is one person who always sees everything that we do. That person is God.

In Proverbs, Chapter 15, and verse 3,

the Scripture says this: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

Remember that when you go to work, in the office, the factory, or some other place, the eyes of the Lord are there, watching what you do, whether it be evil, or whether it be good. You can cover up from man but you cannot cover up from God. And in the last resort, it is God that you will have to answer to, and not man.

THE JUDGMENT

Remember *secondly* that God judges both the bad and the good. In two epistles, Ephesians and Colossians, Paul writes specifically to employees, whom he calls servants.

In Ephesians, Chapter 6, and verse 8, he says this: "Know that whatsoever good thing that any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord."

In Colossians 3:24, speaking likewise to employees, he says this: "He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he has done and there is no respect of persons."

When Paul says that there is no "respect of persons," he means that no one has a special privilege or favor with God that permits him to do things that God has prohibited.

The fact that you are a relied and trusted employee, a churchgoer, or a Sunday School teacher, or that you hold a place in the Rotary Club, or some similar position, does not mean that God evaluates your actions any differently from those people around about you who may not go to church, or may not make a profession of religion, or whom you may consider to live on a much lower standard or moral scale. God judges that person and you just alike. If that person steals, he is a thief, and God will judge him as a thief; and if you steal, you are a thief, and God will judge you as a thief.

THE CURSE

The *third* fact is that God has placed a special curse upon those who

practice two things: theft and perjury.

This is stated in the Old Testament, in Zechariah 5:1-4. God gave Zechariah a vision of a great scroll which was flying out across the face of the earth, and entering into certain homes. When Zechariah sought the meaning of this scroll, which he observed had writing on both sides, this is the answer which he received from God:

This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth. For every one that stealeth shall be cut off, as on this side, according to it; and every one that sweareth falsely, [or, in modern English, *perjures* himself], shall be cut off, as on that side, according to it.

Notice how accurate the scripture is, because almost everybody who steals sooner or later will also be obliged to perjure himself.

For instance, if you are an employee of a firm that handles goods in transit, and you have to sign forms or consignment orders, or receipts of some kind, and you set aside some goods for your own purpose (You are in fact stealing them, as I have already said), the time will come when in order to cover up your theft, you will either have to perjure yourself in writing, or perjure yourself by word of mouth. Therefore, God has joined together these two crimes of theft and perjury, and united them under a single curse.

Speaking about this curse, which Zechariah saw in his vision, entering into one home after another, across the face of the earth, God told Zechariah this:

I will bring it forth [This is the curse — the scroll], saith the Lord of Hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely [Or perjures himself] and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and it shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

A curse may not be visible to the natural eye, but nevertheless it is very

real. This may explain why things are not going right in your home.

You are earning a good salary. You are married and you have children. And yet, somehow, there is no real peace, no rest, no harmony. Maybe your children are disobedient, resentful, rebellious. Maybe your finances just do not seem to cover your needs, although you are earning plenty.

Has it ever occurred to you that your home could be under the curse of God because you have been practicing theft, and then perjury to cover up your theft?

A dark shadow rests across many homes in modern America. It is the shadow of a curse — a divine curse that man cannot revoke or cancel by any act of his will. It is a curse upon everyone that steals and everyone that perjures himself.

Remember that the next time the temptation comes to you!

CLOSED GATES

The *fourth* thing I want to tell you is this: Heaven's gate is closed to thieves. The Bible says this very clearly. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that no thieves will ever enter heaven (Matthew 6:20).

Again in the first epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter 6, verses 9 and 10, the Apostle Paul tells us the same thing. Remember, too, that he is speaking to professing Christians. This is somewhat remarkable. Some people might imagine that it would not be necessary to tell churchgoers and religious people things such as this; but experience shows that many times it is religion that blinds people to the reality of their own actions.

Paul says to these people — professing Christians in the Church at Corinth:

Knew ye not [He has to remind them!] that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor abusers of themselves with mankind [And, in modern English, that is *homosexuals*], nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.

Notice again the company in which thieves are placed — side by side with adulterers, homosexuals, and drunkards. Not very good company for a person who claims to live on a good moral standard, to pay his bills and to do his duty by society!

In spite of your claims, God says, very clearly, that if you continue to practice thievery, you will have Heaven's gate closed against you, just as surely as you would if you were an adulterer, a homosexual, or a drunkard.

Remember that the next time the temptation comes your way!

THE HARVEST

Finally, I want to point out that the end result of stealing is destructive to all concerned. God says in Galatians 6:7: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." You cannot sow one thing and reap another. You cannot sow dishonesty and stealing, and reap benefit and blessing.

Furthermore, what we sow comes back to us multiplied many times over, when we reap. We are familiar with this law in the natural realm. Yet it is equally true in the moral and the spiritual realm. It is vividly expressed by the Prophet Hosea, in Chapter 8 and verse 7. Speaking of God's people at that time, he says: "They have sown the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind."

A wind may be strong and powerful, but a whirlwind, as we know, is many times stronger and more powerful and more destructive. If we sow evil, we shall reap destruction, abundantly.

This law of multiplied returns applies in the matter of stealing. You may practice stealing, individually, in private, and think that it has no real evil effect; but multiply that kind of action, across this nation, many thousands of times, and you have a result that affects the lives of all the people in this nation.

Persistent stealing brings certain obvious results. It sends up the price of living in various different ways.

For instance, it increases insurance costs . . . inevitably.

It increases law enforcement costs.

It increases general lawlessness. Have you ever stopped to consider why we are confronted with such a measure of lawlessness in this country, today? Has it ever occurred to you that if you, on the quiet, in your own little corner, are practicing dishonesty and stealing, you bear a great share of blame for the total condition of lawlessness that exists in this country?

Lawlessness in turn inevitably leads to other things. In the end it endangers individual life and property, creating a situation where a man's property and even his life are no longer fully secure.

That is why, in those ten commandments, God puts stealing so close to murder and covetousness. Because when we give way to one of these things, the others begin to appear . . . if not in our individual lives, then in the society all around us, and the total effect is felt by every member of society.

If we sow the wind, be very sure, in

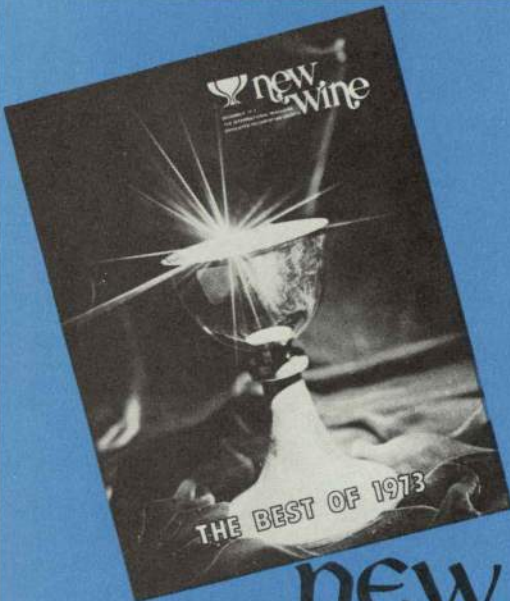
due course, we shall reap the whirlwind.

If some of these truths concerning stealing come close to your own life, I would like to suggest that you stop and consider what you have been doing. Evaluate your own actions. Try to be objective for a moment. Stand back and view yourself and the things you do, as if you were another person.

If it really were another person, not yourself, would you approve? Would you endorse? Would you give consent? Or, would you condemn? And be angry? Remember that you would be condemning your own self.

It is time for many people in this nation to change their way of doing things. To change their sense of responsibility, to themselves, their families, their employers, and the community at large.

If things go on the way they have been going, the end result will be a breakdown of society, and a state of anarchy . . . and few, if any, will derive any benefit from this conclusion. ☹



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We Stand Together

What happened in the lives of a group of leaders in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

by Orville Swindoll

Some years ago in an article in *Christianity Today* Quaker philosopher Dr. Elton Trueblood referred to our age as the "post-denominational era." My own feeling is that he properly assessed in concise form one of the most vital things that the Spirit of God is bearing witness to in our time: the essential spiritual unity of God's people. We are one, not because we hold the same doctrinal views, but simply because we have a common experience of Christ.

It is inconceivable that God — who is One — should have any divine purpose in the gathering of His people into various *different* churches, except on the basis of geographical separation alone. My own observation is that, in spite of the greatly increased proliferation of Christian literature in our time, fewer and fewer authors even bother themselves to build up a defense for particular denominational positions or for the division of the saints for any other reason than that just mentioned.

I am not contending herewith for

the destruction of the existing denominations, nor am I denying that Christians are divided in fact over many minor issues. I am simply stating that I see that the Spirit of God is dissolving these differences and working into vast multitudes of God's people a deep longing and desire to be together: to bear witness in actual practice to our oneness in Christ. The scope of the present article is simply to illustrate how this is happening in a small but significant way in Argentina.

In May, 1973, more than four hundred Christian pastors and leaders gathered in the province of Cordoba in the interior of Argentina for a spiritual retreat. More than forty came from Chile and an equal number from Paraguay, with around fifty from Brazil and several from Uruguay. The remainder — perhaps some 250 — were from various parts of Argentina. For five glorious days we enjoyed fellowship, worshipped God and heard timely ministry from the Word by anointed servants of the Lord from all these countries.

Among those present were Baptists, Episcopalians, Plymouth Brethren, Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, Mennonites, Methodists, Calvinists, Arminians, Premillennialists, Amillennialists, Fundamentalists, Ecumenists and what-have-you! Such love and grace, prayer and worship, flowed like a river that we were all made aware that we were part of the same family — the family of God.

Perhaps the most encouraging note about the retreat was that it was not an isolated event in the midst of a sea of contemporary independence or indifference. Rather, it was the natural and on-going expression of a spiritually and theologically dynamic movement in Latin America, based on the essential unity of the Church, whose goal is a visible and viable realization *on the earth* of this fact. Those of us in Argentina who have been involved in this developing awareness and close fellowship among the believers (and especially among ministers) are conscious of a progression of events in recent years

which has been gaining momentum and causes us to be conservatively optimistic about the future.

Early in 1967 a score of believers (mostly of Plymouth Brethren background) started meeting together every Monday night in the home of business executive and lay preacher, Alberto Darling, to pray for spiritual awakening in the churches. Soon his large and lovely old home in the Belgrano district of Buenos Aires was bulging at the seams. By the end of that year an average of 120 to 150 people were coming to the meeting every week, crowding into every room and even standing on the front porch.

Several well-known and appreciated ministers were in regular attendance, which encouraged other pastors and church leaders to come. About the middle of the same year ten or twelve of these began meeting together on Saturday mornings to pray together and discuss developments, the principal goal being to learn to move together in line with the work and witness of the Holy Spirit so evident in the Monday night gatherings.

Essentially, from the very beginning there has been a plural leadership, with no recognition of one man over another, but all working together with varied and individual gifts and abilities for the common good. Nor has there been any pressure among us that would oblige a man to break his relationship with other groups before he would be received into fellowship (the only exception would be if willful sin were involved or some other disciplinary action).

In October of that year (1967) we had our first ministers' retreat with about thirty-five leaders present. Since then we have had one or two large pastors' retreats each year, which are attended by men (and occasionally their wives) from many parts of Argentina and from other Latin nations as well. For instance, in March, 1972, groups of Christian leaders came from Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil, Paraguay, etc. In June of the same year our national ministers'

retreat was attended by some two hundred.

For the ministers in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires our times together are more frequent. Besides the weekly meetings for prayer and fellowship, we try to get together every two or three months for at least a couple of days and nights. We have found that these gatherings are vital to our spiritual growth as well as necessary for our various cooperative activities.

Normally, we will meet together without any fixed schedule or agenda. In fact, we never lack for subject matter or problems that can best be worked out together. But we seek to flow freely as we consider any matter at hand. And we have been amazed to see how stubborn problems are resolved as we get our hearts and our heads together before the Lord.

Our close and warm fellowship over the years has yielded another rich benefit which I think we hardly expected when we began meeting in 1967. It would seem that the Spirit of God has set His seal upon this unity and "commanded His blessing" — much as in Psalm 133 — for we have experienced real light and inspiration as the Lord has quickened His truth to us. Likewise, this forum of ministers from a broad spectrum of backgrounds and theological training has provided a security and a check on fanatical or extreme ideas or tendencies.

We have come to have great confidence in God's working and in His revelation of truth in this context. This in turn has provided us with a ground for real conviction and faith when we declare to others those things that have come to have significance among us. It is as though we can say: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us . . ."

However, all is not sugar and honey; we've not been without our problems. On occasion, strong-willed persons have sought to dominate the fellowship. Others have disdained its usefulness altogether, or have implied that such a broad base of fellowship which permits discrepancies and differences

of opinion or practice among us, must be without spiritual vitality. Quite to the contrary, we have found that by recognizing what the Holy Spirit is doing in each other, instead of focusing on our points of disagreement, we are provided with a continuing ground of fellowship whereby the Lord is able to work out these differences in a context of love and mutual respect. By "sticking it out" together, our extreme individualism and selfishness is also being dealt with by the Lord, and this is certainly for the common good.

The intimacy of this relationship among the pastors has enabled us to learn of each other's needs also, in time to help morally, spiritually and materially. Thus we helped one brother buy a car which he sorely needed in an expanding ministry. Several others have been helped through real financial crises, and we are presently helping one pastor buy a home. Apart from this fellowship and mutual interdependence, such things might have been impossible.

Even in the matter of opportunities and invitations for itinerant ministries, we customarily "check it out" before accepting or travelling. Sometimes the counsel is "NO"; more often it is "YES," with a real confirmation and the sense that one is going forth with the backing of the Church and God's servants in Buenos Aires. All of this is especially significant when we are reminded that our backgrounds (and even present ecclesiastical affiliations) are so varied: Baptist, Pentecostal, Methodist, Plymouth Brethren, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Episcopalian, Mennonite, etc.

Two or three years ago this unity among us became so meaningful that we seriously considered merging several of the congregations in the capital city of Buenos Aires into one large congregation with plural leadership and a single meeting place. Although we are still open to such a possibility, after months of prayer and discussion we simply did not feel free in our spirits to proceed. Obviously, there are areas of understanding and practice that are yet changing and

(continued on page 19)

The Wealth in My World

A prison world
made beautiful through the eyes of Christ.

by Robert Johnson



Two years ago I committed a terrible sin, was convicted, and I feel that I belong in prison. In my heart I also believe that God through Christ has forgiven me of this sin. In trying to live a Christian life within the boundaries of prison walls I have found that many inmates use Christianity as another means of gaining personal attention.

Living in the moving thicket of a prisoner's life, I guess I had been searching for a mighty plan to mow down the seemingly unchristian complexity of the jungle for Christ's sake. I never found such a plan.

Finally, I set out one morning to see if I could learn to live, and to simply be myself as God had made me. I wanted to operate within my emotional income. This meant that I would have to learn to live as an average inmate walking along the insignificant paths on which my life in prison took me. I wanted to see this life of mine as Christ saw His, walking along the paths He took in Nazareth. If He had not been bored with the commonplace things of life, who was I to demand more exciting companions, challenges, and experiences in order to be happy as a Christian. I decided to go through a whole day trying consciously to see what I was doing to love the people with whom God had put me.

On my way to work as a physiotherapist in the prison hospital that morning, the officer on duty at the door greeted me with, "Good morn-

ing, Robert." I was rather shocked as I realized that I had seen this man dozens of times and yet had never really noticed him *as a person*. He knew my name, but I didn't have the vaguest idea what his was — and I was the Christian witness! I saw that this man was a person to whom God had introduced me to love for Him. Glancing quickly at the name tag on his uniform, I replied, "Good morning, Mr. ———." I tried to think of something to say to let him know that I was interested in him as a person. I finally blurted out, "Say, do you have a family?"

He looked at me for a second and when he saw that I was really interested a smile spread across his face, "Do I have a family!!" He pulled out his wallet with pictures of about nine children. This was the beginning of a new relationship which soon became a first name friendship.

As I left him and walked on to the clinic I ran into one of the nurses and the same thing happened, "Good morning, Robert."

Only this time I was ready. I found out that he had a family, too. I was discovering that if someone is really interested in another person, they can discover a great deal about that person in a few minutes. As I attended my patients I found that just a question, an interested ear, created a "thirty second island" of caring in a person's otherwise impersonal day. In the months to come I saw these sketchy

outlines develop into real relationships for Christ and me.

For two years I had been trying to witness to those I considered to be important, and the people along my daily life might as well have been trees. It was as if I were opening my eyes for the first time and seeing the people for the present moment. I was finding a life-sized life at last — a life not so far beyond my ability that it left me continually frustrated, exhausted, or guilty. I began to realize, emotionally as well as intellectually, that I was discovering a way to live out my days in the isolated world in a new relationship with God's people; a way which was making it possible for me to find reality in simple day by day contacts.

I had thought before that I had to be really active in church service to do big things for God. Consequently, most of my Christian work was frustrating and left me miserable, because its success depended on my manipulating other people into Christian programs. But as I looked around me and found the people and work in my world to be real, I began to feel more the sense of being on a secret mission of faith for Christ. I was creatively trying to

Robert Johnson found Christ in prison. He now writes for the prison newspaper, preaches, teaches a monthly Bible study and works in the prison hospital as a physiotherapist.

(continued on page 19)

Orville Swindoll is a pastor in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

(continued from page 17)

developing, but basically, we view ourselves presently as God's elders (though not the only ones) in His church in Buenos Aires. As such, we seek to move together and our fellowship is warmly open to all the pastors of this vast metropolis.

We see the church as a dynamic, growing body, able to integrate and edify all who are washed in the blood of Jesus and joined to the risen Christ. Thus we seek to avoid the frustrations of an apparently unattainable idealistic unity on the one hand, and the hopelessness of being shackled to a traditional ecclesiastical system satisfied with itself on the other. We believe in and are committed to the mighty moving of the Spirit of God to awaken God's people out of lethargy and build them together as a mighty army, beautiful and invincible as Mount Zion. After all, He is the Spirit of renewal!

(continued from page 18)

learn how to love and pray for people on their terms. Occasionally, there are some disappointments and rejections. Some have forgotten how to respond to another person. My motives are occasionally misunderstood. I have a sense of having time for people and the exciting feeling of being on new ground — not just imitating the most outstanding Christians I know.

Each day, each relationship in my life has taken on a new importance, because God may have something to do in each relationship. I see in the Scriptures that the days on which Christ was born, crucified, and rose from the dead did not seem important even to most of the people present; but to those who saw the events of those days from God's perspective, they were important.

What a new freedom I found. I had never realized that it was the results of my own actions that had made me

As to the fellowship of the believers in general, we are moving in two directions, apart from the customary weekly gatherings in the various congregations scattered out over Greater Buenos Aires. First, we gather all together from time to time in a large hall — or even in a large park in the open air — for worship, fellowship and ministry. Over the years we have changed the format and frequency of this gathering in various ways: weekly meetings, nightly meetings for the summer months in a central park, monthly or occasional (holiday) gatherings, three-day conferences, etc. The principal motivation has been to provide an opportunity for the saints to come together from all over the city in one place.

The other — complementary and simultaneous — direction has been toward small gatherings in the homes. The purpose here is face-to-face exposure and fellowship, mutual sharing and responsibility, in a practical context where each individual is important and is actively involved. Experience has shown us that it is here that the most effective

afraid. I had held myself under pressure to succeed as a Christian because of the semi-conscious fear that the results of my actions would not be enough. Now in prayer God was telling me, "I'll look after the effectiveness of your life, you just learn to go through each day." By agreeing not to take my spiritual temperature each day, I quit thinking in terms of doing religious things and began to relax. And in consciously opening my inner stream of awareness and allowing Christ to travel with me the importance of living in the present moment became more significant.

It is difficult to describe the intimate sense of discovery I felt in beginning to notice people around me. The prison was filled with surprising sights I had already seen, yet never really noticed before. If the little ordinary relationships in life could provide the raw materials for meaning,

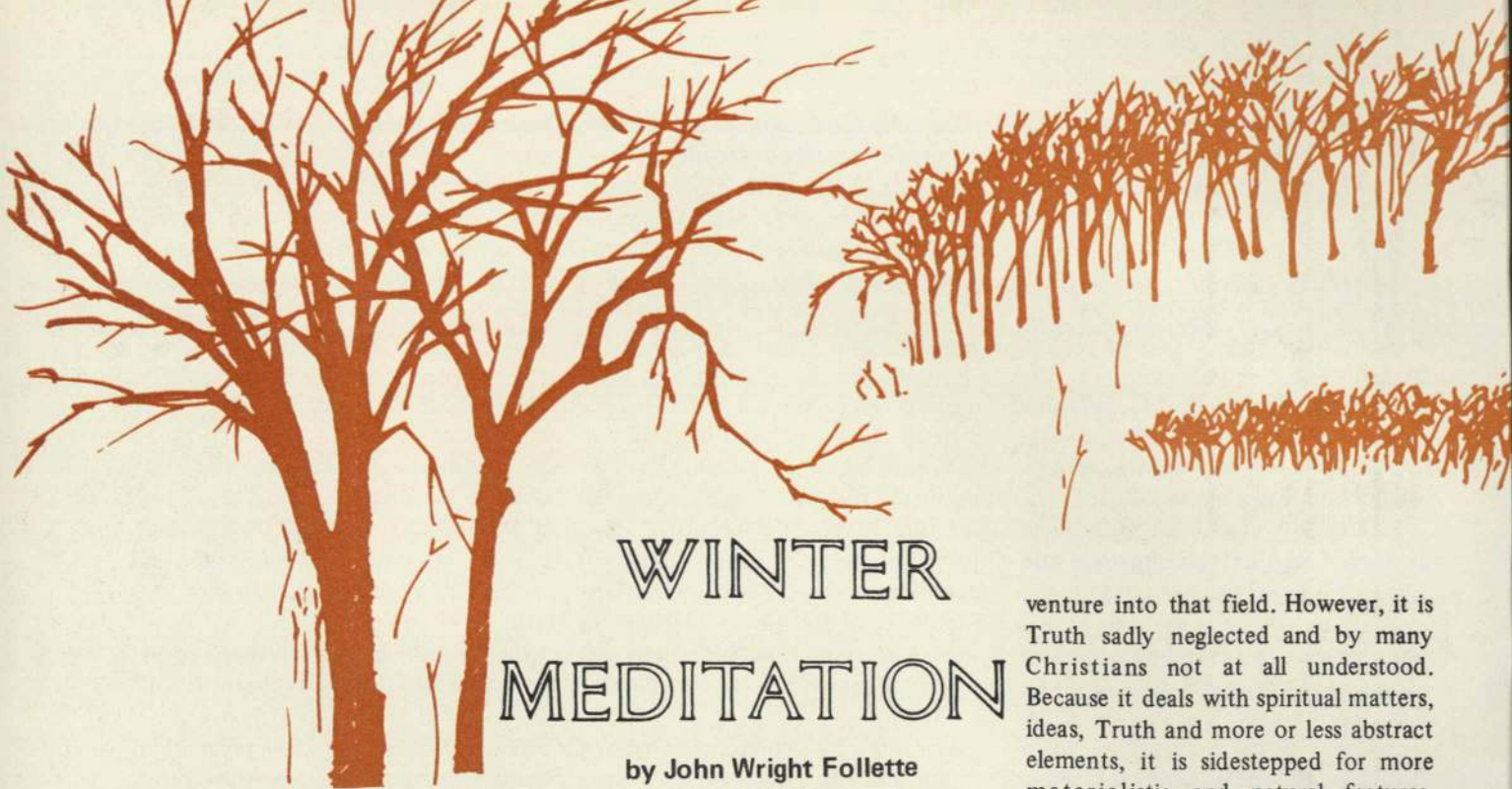
teaching is done, since feedback, interchange of ideas and more intimate knowledge of each other's life style and application of the truth to real and personal situations are all feasible in small groups that maintain a continuing relationship between all those involved. Here discipleship is the way of life. Normally, these gatherings are also evangelistic, being able to present the gospel in simple, conversational terms and easily integrate the new converts to Christ.

Naturally, all this is a living, dynamic and on-going expression of our common life in Christ. As such, we are not so conscious of fixed structures which are to be followed, as we are of life flowing between us and ever seeking more effective and meaningful forms of outworking. We are deeply committed to each other in Christ, not so much to formats, schedules and programs, which when they cease to be useful are dispensed with. The reality which remains is Christ our Lord revealed in this intimate fellowship between brothers and sisters that have learned to love and help each other. ♥

purpose, and creative fulfillment — then I was beginning to be infinitely wealthy. My life can be full and growing because Jesus is walking with me. ♥

BIBLE STUDY ANSWERS:

(1) Christ. (2) Upon being saved. (3) Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers; they are appointed by Christ. (4) Other members of the church. (5) a. Make their living from the preaching of the gospel, b. from those who receive ministry, c. from God's people. (6) a. Master builders, b. Be the foundation of the church. (7) Perfecting of the saints. (8) The Holy Spirit. (9) a. Fruit of the Spirit. b. Gifts of the Spirit. (10) a. Wolves will come, b. Must have right doctrine, c. Know them that labor among you. (11) a,b,c. One (12) No (13) That the world may know Jesus because God's people are one. (14) Anyone who is saved. (15) Christ. (16) a. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, b. elders. (17) Daily. (18) a. together and from house to house, b. from house to house, c. in the home. (19) The elders. (20) a. Offer up spiritual sacrifices, b. be witnesses, c. edify itself in love.



WINTER MEDITATION

by John Wright Follette

The phase of Truth I wish to bring to you at this time is beautifully presented to us by way of a glimpse at nature's ever-interesting picture book. The open pages of this book of God's outdoors are always before us, continually presenting suggestive lessons and illustrations of Truth. The whole realm of nature, the great field of natural phenomena is the earliest and most primitive revelation of God to man. Since nature is inarticulate and in many ways so different in method of communication, many people never catch the music of her singing and fail to interpret her messages given in such commonplace fashion. To those who have understanding hearts and are more attuned to her moods and mystical overshadowing she becomes a holy sacrament of revelation and a subtle means of discerning God and His imminent touch upon us. Paul is so right in Romans 1:20, "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."

I wish to bring to you a couple of illustrations from close-by nature. These things I see from my window as with open heart I look at some of her

handiwork. But first let me suggest a few scripture verses which may serve as a background and thought atmosphere for us to more easily hear and understand the rich and very needed Truth we too often forget or ignore. One may do so because the external presentation or illustration may not be too appealing or may even be painful. If that be the reaction in a heart, he has failed to look *past* the present or natural, and loses the beauty and deep spiritual richness of Truth at which a more consecrated and receptive spirit marvels in awe and is fed and illuminated.

Let us remember that the whole structure of the spiritual life we are building, this new creation God is developing, this "conforming to the Image of the Son," rests upon and is under the power of very real, fixed laws and principles. They are laws and principles of the realm of spiritual Reality, into which we are born at spiritual birth, and are just as real, exacting and needed as those present in the natural world. If one is untaught or unfamiliar with this elementary Truth and its profound effect upon our spirit and growth, one has a difficult time trying to live a life of any spiritual meaning or value. An article of this type is too limited to

venture into that field. However, it is Truth sadly neglected and by many Christians not at all understood. Because it deals with spiritual matters, ideas, Truth and more or less abstract elements, it is sidestepped for more materialistic and natural features. Christians forget that the material side of the whole manifestation is but a reflection of the inner, invisible Reality. "Keep thy heart," the Psalmist says — not so much all the *things* you are doing — but the heart and seat of motivation, for out of *that*, the hidden invisible centre are all the acts, conduct and manifestations of the seen life born.

Here then, are a few good verses to keep in mind. John 3:6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." That sounds so very familiar and as a rule is restricted to the Truth that a man is by nature born of the flesh and in order to enter into spiritual fellowship with God, must be born again or born of the Spirit. That is very true but limited. Notice Jesus does not say "*he* that is born of the flesh is flesh," for that would restrict the Truth to personality. It *is* true concerning a person, but He is saying *more*. He does not say "*he*" but "*that*" or whatsoever. He is telling us about the two great known *realms*. A more correct word in the preceeding verses would be "realm" not "kingdom." We are creatures of two worlds or realms, and have by the law of creation faculties to be adapted to both. They are both necessary and both a part of God's

Affiliated with the Assemblies of God until his death in 1966, John Wright Follette taught the Word of God with a simple profoundness that left a lasting impression in the Body of Christ.

creation and purpose for us. So He says anything material, mental or otherwise, which has its inception and birth on the lower level of the natural is, and ever will be, natural, and that which is born of the Spirit retains its identity as such. They are two distinct realms and whatever springs from either source or field retains the nature, marks and features of the same. They cannot be substituted, neither can anything born in one field produce the results of the other. They both are good and necessary and are God-given, to work in the great scheme of creation and all historical development. But they are to be understood and interpreted in their respective fields and functions.

So when nature, good, perfect and wholesome in her own right, tries to produce or effect a spiritual manifestation and fruitage it is simply out of divine order and contrary to the basic principle of the fact and difference between the natural, human or soulish and that which is spiritual and an outflow of God and Spirit. This is a very hard lesson for Christians to learn. The fact that something is good, honest, true and even religious does not mean it is spiritual or of God. There is a vast difference between a thing being religious and being spiritual. I mean spiritual in the sense of being of God.

Here is another Truth falling into the same line of teaching. Paul discovered this spiritual fact. We trace it from Genesis to the end of the Bible. I Corinthians 15:46, "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual." Nature usually leaps to the front even in matters of spiritual concern. It is so often the agitated, restless, ambitious spirit of zeal, without a deeper spiritual knowl-

edge and understanding, which tries to produce the desired spiritual effects. Listen! If the matter or question is really born of the Spirit and is a thought or purpose of God, *it must* be carried out, executed, performed and manifested by the *same spirit* and power that gave it birth. How often we have seen this principle and sound spiritual Truth ignored and been deeply pained to see the results. Untaught, good, religious flesh undertakes to bring to pass or show to the world something that in God's way of thinking only *His Spirit* and *His method* of execution can ever produce, and we have a religious phenomena but NOT a spiritual work.

We have all found God so very, very patient and long-suffering, knowing how weak and untaught we are. Christians, preachers and good people may be well-versed in the Bible readings and teaching about service, programs, all the gifts and doctrine and yet come so short and be bleak and barren and not illuminated in the teaching concerning the realm of spiritual Reality. I mean spiritual illumination, understanding and insight in the matters and life of that vast realm of spirit, and the laws, principles, methods and technique God uses in that field. It all reflects and moves in all His doings and ways with the children of men. He is ever presenting bits of His thoughts and ways to us and tells us so clearly that they are *not* our thoughts and ways and ideas, but we forget this.

Here is another bit of Truth we should consider. ALL is of Grace. Man in the natural state has nothing to offer God but a sinful, broken life and heart. He has nothing, neither can he produce anything of spiritual value to bring to God. God must seek him, save him and fill him and pour His love into his poor, starved life — God's love shed abroad in his heart. So when it comes to offering service or worship, it has to be Spirit-born, a "Spiritual service," if it reaches God in any spiritual, acceptable form.

In the two illustrations I am giving that of the trees and that of the

goldenrod, we are not condemning them because they produce what they do naturally — the lovely leaf coverings and the delicate fronds of gold. These are right in their place and quite natural and really arresting in their beauty. So do not mistake me. God is back of all the beauty they present. We are not blaming them for the fact that they produce their beautiful, *natural* offerings, and could not produce "snow-offerings." As we shall see, "snow-offerings" were not the *natural* outcome of trees or of goldenrod, but were "born from above," as we might say. They were *given* to them to offer. The trees and the goldenrod were only recipients of His grace and so had to receive *from* Him that which in turn will be acceptable *to* Him. They first offer all *nature* can *give*, then stand still and must be *prepared* and receptive to *take from* Him that which will be well pleasing in His sight.

How slow we are to learn these very necessary lessons. In the whole scheme of spiritual living how much of the natural, *good, religious* flesh is mixed up with what so many Christians call service and living. Still more difficult is the lesson and Truth we must learn — that one must not only die to sin and to the world, but to self, and still more difficult, to one's service and ministry. So when God comes to brush away the leaves on the tree and to shrivel up the lovely golden tufts on the goldenrod, to *make room* and to prepare the heart for His heavenly, spiritual visitation, Christians, being untaught, are bewildered and frightened. When God deals with some concerning that which is still *natural*, even though religious, or still deeper, when weaning a soul from ministry and service, so often they cannot interpret God's methods and think that they are "backslidden." Some think they have failed God and I hear them say they fear they have "lost the anointing." One must learn not to be governed by emotional reactions and moods. As long as there is no sin between you and God and you are, as far as you honestly know, surrendered and desire to do His will

you need not fear. One may be fully surrendered and desire with the whole heart and soul to do God's will and yet emotionally feel dead or even heavy, as the poor stripped trees shorn of past beauty and manifestation. Do not fear, and please do not try to gather up the gold God has so beautifully *removed* from your crown. Let God work. You need just love Him, trust Him and wait for Him.

Sometimes the past or present glory and satisfaction become great hindrances to the fuller moving of God in the heart and life of a Christian. Some are so frightened to "let go" of what they have for fear God may play a trick on them (a lack of faith) and they fear they will never have the glory, honor and life they used to have. No, no, God loves you, dear soul. He only takes away in order to give you something better. He never deceives a trusting heart. Some trees have stood so very long holding on to their leafy coverings, not really knowing the essential character and nature of the tree itself. The stripping, I know, is painful and one may indulge in much weeping and prayer. I would like to analyze those tears for you but not now! One must learn to let God move. He is more concerned about YOU — the hidden, spiritual ego, the YOU inside, than all the leaves and gold you have or ever will offer. YOU are of more value than anything you will ever *do* for Him. Let Him get at YOU and bring you into a deeper, fuller and richer experience of spiritual being. If perchance He is dealing with you or is trying to do so, remember the snow offerings — so pure and white and heaven-made. Remember the swaying, naked stalk holding before Him a crown, a glorious offering the stalk could never make, but it can *receive* it and hold it before the Lord in deep love, silent adoration and triumphant self-giving and surrender.

With this Truth as an atmosphere in heart, let us now look at the illustrations. I woke up this morning in a new world. The snow had come so silently and gently through the night, and behold! the whole countryside was

fresh and new. The magic of the snow had wrought the miracle. My wondering heart is flooded and I am all alive to God's handiwork. He has just turned a fresh leaf in the old picture book of His revelation by way of the outdoors. What a delightful and wonderful picture it is! He is telling us the same eternal and lovely Truth given in His Word. He likes to reach us by any and every means and here the morning sermon is spread before us. A still, small voice is telling *so much*.

The grand old trees are majestic and impress me with a sense of awe and wonder. They are silent except when a wind sings through their branches. They hold up their thin, naked arms full of snow offerings. *At last* they have something to offer! So long they have stood all stripped of their *own* beauty and grace. Long ago they gave way to sun, rain and wind — all the forces of nature, backed by God, until all externally effected good and beauty were swept away. Only the *essential* tree was left. All the other offerings of leaves and even fruit were born of the tree and still deeper down — of the earth. Of course it was all that the poor dear trees *had* to offer and God did not blame them — only He wanted them to know it was born of the earth, and not what He had furnished.

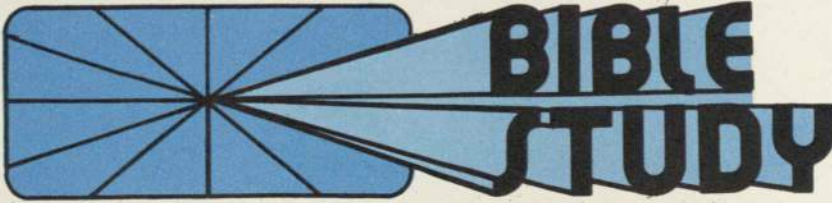
So they yielded to His working and "let go." It was hard to stand stripped and have nothing left — just a dry, seemingly *dead* tree. But God's hour came and it came in the night. Isn't that suggestive? There *must* be a Calvary and the deep darkness of night. But there is always an Easter morning of miracle and divine illumination.

Now the tree is happy, and a deep, deep contentment fills all the inner life. No leaves flutter and move and shake to tell it — no, a thousand times no! The offering is *from God*. It came from heaven. It is the gift of His own loving heart — it is born of the Spirit. He created the gift, the offering. No earth, no tree could do this. Upon some heavenly anvil He hammered out the millions of snowstars — plain

miracles — Calvary! He knows the mystery and the magic of the frost and *gives* us the snow offering and He is pleased. We can give only that which we have received! Look with me and enjoy this sermon.

Also, I am looking at the dry, forlorn goldenrod stalks. Not so long ago they were quite erect and proud, holding up their crowns of gold, real and honest gold as far as the goldenrod is concerned. All summer they had worked so hard getting it together and shaping and forming it until they stood, a *perfect show* of wealth, "for they had great possessions," not sin, but *gold* — so coveted and sought. But they too had to learn. Why can't we learn and move on in God as simply as a flower? Stupid man and lovely flower!

At last the gold was scattered. Thank God it was so completely spilled that there was no recovery, no gathering it again — never could the stalk stoop down and gather it up and redecorate itself. The gold returned to Mother Nature, the author and giver. It went back to the earth where it belonged. The lap of Mother Nature is the safe and only place to toss such gold and wealth. She sits upon the steps of her storehouse in autumn mood and all nature tosses into her lap the wealth of the summer's heat and toil. So with this gold — it came from the earth and must return again. Yes, it is ever so. But oh, this morning I see a peculiar bending and bowing of the stalk. It is not so *stiff* and *sure*. It so easily gives way to His breath — only a breath and it bows, moves and sways gracefully. It is no longer rigid and strong with the strength of its *own power*. No, not now — its burden has been lifted and with a light and joyous heart, emptied of the burden of self-confidence and strength, it responded to even the simple breath of God. And now it is crowned, but with His own gift, direct from heaven — the lovely, soft, gentle miracle of His doing. I am very certain the gift is accepted, for the poor, dry stalk had nothing to do with it — it only surrendered and received. ♡



BIBLE STUDY

The Universal Church
The City Church

February BIBLE STUDY follows the theme we are considering this month — "Unity Within the Body of Christ." This principle is presenting itself around the world, under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit.

Even though we see the church divided into many different denominations and many churches within each city, the biblical pattern is that (1) all true believers in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are part of the universal church; (2) the universal church expresses itself in local assemblies, which form the church in the particular geographical area in which these believers reside.

Answers to Bible Study are found on page 19.

1. Who is the head of the church? *Colossians 1:18* _____

2. How and when does one become a member of the church universal? *Acts 2:47* _____

3. What are the ministries of the universal church and how are they chosen? *Ephesians 4:11* _____

4. What human agent does God use to confirm His call and send forth ministers to the universal church? *Acts 13:1-4* _____

5. How are such missionaries supported?
I Corinthians 9:1-14 _____
Philippians 4:15-16 _____
III John 5-8 _____

6. What is the distinct function of apostles and prophets?
I Corinthians 3:10 _____
Ephesians 2:20 _____

7. In general, what is the collective task of these ministers in the church universal? *Ephesians 4:11-15* _____

8. Who equips these men for their work? *Acts 1:4-5,8* _____

9. What kind of equipment is needed?
Galatians 5:22-23 _____
I Corinthians 12:8-9 _____

10. What warnings are given to the local churches about accepting every minister who comes in the name of the Lord to minister to them?

Acts 20:29 _____

II John 9-11 _____

I Thessalonians 5:12-13 _____

11. How many churches were there in Jerusalem? *Acts 18:21-22* _____

Antioch Acts 13:1 _____

Ephesus Acts 20:16-17 _____

12. Is this because there were not enough Christians in these cities to warrant more than one church? *Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1-7* _____

13. Why didn't they organize more than one church in a city? *John 17:20-23* _____

14. Who should be members of the city church? *Acts 2:47* _____

15. Who is the Head of the city church? *Colossians 1:18* _____

16. Through whom does Jesus exercise effective leadership in the church?

Ephesians 4:11 _____

I Peter 5:1-2 _____

17. How often did the members of the city church fellowship together? *Acts 2:46* _____

18. How does the city church meet regularly for worship, etc.?

Acts 2:46 _____

Acts 20:20 _____

Colosians 4:15 _____

19. Who are the leaders of these local assemblies? *Acts 20:17, 28; Acts 14:23; I Timothy 3:1-7; Ephesians 4:11; I Peter 5:1-3* _____

20. What are the functions of the one city church?

I Peter 2:5 _____

Acts 1:8 _____

Ephesians 4:16 _____



ONE CITY ONE CHURCH

How some of the leaders in Seattle, Washington, began to experience the oneness of the body of Christ.

by Jim Hamann

In this thrilling hour of renewal in the church, it is vital and significant to understand that much more is happening than merely the renewal of the gifts of the Spirit. One of the exciting things to see and understand is how the Holy Spirit is at work uniting the church today under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It would be well to insert here that unity, or oneness, is by no means the ultimate in the purposes of God for His church, but only one of the many things that is happening during this outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Since this is our theme for consideration, let's view it in this perspective, as just one of the expressions of renewal going on today.

In the usage of such words as "exciting" and "thrilling," we are not just tossing around verbiage; for these past few years have been just that. The sovereign working of God in the city of Seattle has been a beautiful thing to behold.

A BEGINNING

In October, 1968, Dennis Bennett, rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church;

Jim Watt, then American Baptist, pastoring Broadway Tabernacle; and Marcus Gaston, pastor of Calvary Temple (Assemblies of God), initiated a Wednesday morning prayer meeting for pastors and priests — specifically to pray for the body of Christ in Seattle. It was only a matter of weeks until I heard about the group, and along with other brethren from various denominational backgrounds, joined this leadership prayer cell.

After meeting weekly for well over a year, it was decided we should get together at least once a month for a brown bag lunch and a time of worship and sharing. This practice was followed for almost two years, rotating the meeting place from church building to church building as represented by the brethren. These were times of inspiration and encouragement as we shared what was happening in our own lives and in our congregations.

Then, corporately, among the brethren it was felt that there needed

to be another adjustment in our coming together. They decided that our meetings should be more than inspirational. What we really needed was to come to grips with some of the issues about which the Holy Spirit was speaking to us. So, our monthly meetings were expanded from 9:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. All of this time our numbers continued to grow, and more brethren began to identify with the leadership group.

If you were to visit one of our gatherings, you would find forty to fifty men from all backgrounds — Catholic, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Nazarene, Disciples of Christ, Mission Covenant, Christian Reformed, classic Pentecostal, Jesus People, and others. The host for the day is the pastor or priest of the local congregation. We usually begin with singing and worship; then, there are brief introductions of guests or new brethren. Two or three then share on a given theme, followed by a very open and

Jim Hamann is pastor of the Faith Temple Community Church in Seattle, Washington.

honest discussion on the theme of the day. No punches are pulled, but all is done in the framework of love. Then we enjoy fellowship as we eat our lunch, after which, announcements of plans for outreach or corporate activities are made.

It was during these times of honesty and frankness that God really began to give us direction. One of the most explosive truths that burst corporately in our hearts was the understanding that, from God's viewpoint, there is only one church in a city or locale. We discovered that Paul wrote to the church, *singular* at Corinth and, likewise, at Thessalonica; but to the churches, *plural* at Galatia because this was a territory that encompassed many local communities. Then, in Revelation, we saw as well that pattern distinctly spelled out by John as he writes to the church, *singular*, at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, etc. We realized that the word "churches" was never used in reference to a local community or city. So, this led to the conclusion in Seattle that though we were leaders of different groups with various denominational names, we were all members of one church. Moreover, we saw the plurality of leadership regarding eldership of one church in the city. So often when we speak of one church, we think of one meeting place or one building; but, again we realized that though there was but one church, there are many meeting places or expressions of the united church.

EXPERIENCING A CHANGE

This truth became more than just theology to us, and in a very real way it began to change our attitudes and practices in our relatedness to each other. Instead of jealousy and competitiveness, love and cooperation began to be expressed. People from a given area of a particular denomination were not encouraged to come

and identify with our *denominational box*, but were told what God was doing in their own immediate area and encouraged to attend there. Also, we began to understand that though there were doctrinal differences, and still are, as we can genuinely and honestly relate to each other under the Lordship of Christ, adjustments would be brought about and love would produce a greater flowing together.

We must share that in the early days there was a great deal of fear and suspicion. All of us have heard stories and comments against various denominations or organizations. This, of course, has brought about prejudice which developed, consciously or unconsciously, in our lives. Through the years it became a very real factor in the framework of our life style. So, in this gathering of the brethren of different backgrounds, naturally the fears and uncertainties were there.

One day the Holy Spirit spoke to me from Acts 9:26,27. This is the story of Saul coming to Jerusalem after his Damascus road experience and wanting to identify with the church.

And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

Fear and suspicion kept the Jerusalem church from accepting Saul initially. Likewise, today these are the very real things which divide us from other brethren. Because of a certain type of cleric garb or a strange set of theological terms, so often we reject others as brethren. If we do accept them as brethren, we may refuse to have meaningful fellowship with them.

Thank God for the Barnabases who know of the way of the Spirit instead of that of the soul and are able to reach out in love and identify with other brethren. Barnabas took Saul in

— not knowing what the results might be. He had been such a terrible persecutor of the early church, but Barnabas was willing to become vulnerable. Isn't it something how love makes us vulnerable to each other and brings about an openness and honesty in our relatedness to each other? Further, it was very evident that for Barnabas to receive Saul, who later became Paul, he had to forgive him for all he had done to the church. This same principle is true today if fellowship, or real *koininia* is to be realized. We must know what it is to forgive each other for all we have done and said down through the years. Such forgiveness will result in the free flow of God's love.

A CITY UNITES

Early in 1971, our brethren felt strongly led of the Holy Spirit to invite some of the most significant Christian leaders engaged in mobile ministry in the nation for a time of sharing with us. The purpose was twofold: that we might have a greater understanding of what God is saying in regard to renewal today and that the mobile ministry might have a more unified expression of the will and purposes of God.

The conference, which was held in the early part of June, brought together about thirty men from various parts of the United States and Canada, plus our local brethren. The mobile ministers were housed in Seattle Pacific College where the day sessions were held. In the evenings, we had meetings in five different locales in the greater Seattle area. Now, for the first time, the people of our congregations were brought together.

The opening service in Seattle was indeed a historic occasion, for it was the first time in the city that a Catholic church had hosted a public charismatic meeting of that scope. Long before the service started, Blessed Sacrament overflowed with people from all denominations. (It was the first time some Protestants had ever been in a Catholic church.) Many

people were turned away. Young people sat on the floor, around the altar, and in the aisles. There was an air of expectancy and enthusiasm in the crowd. What an inspiration to see Protestants and Catholics lifting their hands, singing, and praising God together as Father Joseph Fulton, senior priest of the church, led them in worship! Then came a powerful message by Bob Mumford, and the altars were open for ministry.

Thousands were in attendance nightly with the various facilities being filled beyond capacity, and the Spirit of God working in a tremendous way. It was indeed the beginning of a new era for this city. It has brought about a beautiful fellowship between our congregations, and the whole city has been stirred by the present renewal taking place.

Two years ago, while ministering in Kenya on a Sunday morning, the Holy Spirit gently but firmly dealt with me from the seventeenth chapter of John concerning that great intercessory prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ just before His crucifixion: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

We had seen the great divided expression of the body of Christ in Kenya with its competitiveness and sectarianism. At that time, another major denomination was moving in for the first time with a gigantic missionary program, and it was evident that it would tend to fracture the body of Christ there still further.

From this passage in John we understand that the most powerful method for evangelism today is the church united in a given locale, working, moving, and sharing together as a community of love. It seems as if we have ignored this vital statement of Jesus concerning the world believing in Jesus when the church gets united. We have tried every gimmick and procedure imaginable to the ingenuity of man when God's method for reaching a city is a united church.

In Matthew 12:25,26, Jesus

answered the religious leaders of His day who had accused Him of doing His healing ministry through the enablement of demonic power by saying: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?"

The inference in this passage by our Lord is that the kingdom of darkness is such a powerful force because it is a *united kingdom*. He does not try to defend His own ministry but sets forth a principle from which they must make deductions. What I want to point out in reference to this passage is that if Satan's kingdom is a united kingdom, how can a divided church in a given locale do much in the way of denting or invading or literally overcoming this kingdom? In other words, we are brought back to the realization that evangelism will only become ultimate and expressive for the church as it is united under the Lordship of Christ.

STANDING TOGETHER

Ephesians 1:9,10 expresses very clearly the purpose of God in part for His Church:

Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; and even in Him."

We are seeing this gathering together today.

Through the years the brethren have had some significant retreats wherein we have really gotten to know one another and have been able to establish meaningful rapport and communication with each other. These have also been times of spiritual refreshing and blessing which have cemented us more closely.

There have been at least two occasions when, as a part of the eldership of the city, we have found it needful as faithful shepherds to take a positive, corporate stand against negative and divisive forces that could have rent the body of Christ in our locale. Again, this heightened our respect for each other and made our commitment more meaningful.

Our eldership group is not just open to charismatics, but to all brethren who sense a response to meet together under the Lordship of Christ. We have not wanted to give any idea of being exclusive, but all along have desired to see the *agape* circle enlarged, for our concept is one of inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness.

These eldership meetings have been a growing experience for us individually and corporately. The reason for this is that we have been able to feed on and eat of the Christ expressed through each of the brethren. As we come together sharing the Lord Jesus Christ — the ministry He has given us, the wisdom, the revelation, as it is expressed makes such a composite manifestation of His nature and life.

Also, this fellowship has been the means of producing wholeness and balance. One brother comes emphasizing the ministry of the Holy Spirit; another emphasizes the ministry of the Word; and still another the necessity of social action and good works. All of this has brought adjustment to each of us and development in weakened and impoverished areas of our lives. Praise God for the sense of establishment that is coming forth!

We realize that our coming together is just in the embryo stage, and God is saying much more to us as brethren regarding commitment and submission to each other. The words are coming to us loud and clear: "*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*" (1 Cor. 1:10). ♥

Forum

SPIRITUAL UNITY

Jamie Buckingham — Writer, Church Leader

Bob Mumford — Author, Bible Teacher

Charles Simpson — Bible Teacher, Conference Speaker

The topic under discussion this month is SPIRITUAL UNITY. From every corner of the globe comes this glorious news that God's people are awakening to the possibility and joy of "Oneness in Christ."



What form will unity take in the body of Christ? Is there a pattern toward which we can move?

BUCKINGHAM: Since I'm basically a story-teller, rather than an expositor, let me answer by telling a story. Last year I was on a flight from Atlanta to Louisville. Due to mechanical difficulties we were two hours late in boarding. Everyone was angry, and as we entered the plane, they were venting their hostility on the poor stewardess. She tried to be nice, but some were giving her a rough time. As I approached she looked up, saw the fish pin in my lapel, and exclaimed:

"Oh, you're one of us."

"That's right," I grinned.

She smiled, squeezed my arm and I went on to my seat. That's all. There were no more words, but every time

she passed my seat our eyes met and we knew. We were one.

Unity starts like that. Not because we belong to the same organization — or even claim the same doctrinal beliefs — but because we walk together in the light.

I expect to see a return to the Acts 2 concept of the family of God. The Body in Melbourne, for instance, is gradually coming together as the early church did. Some call it "community." I see it simply as a family who recognizes that all we have belongs to God, and therefore to our brothers and sisters in Christ also. As the Kingdom Church is established (to welcome back the King) we must be careful not to establish patterns. Instead, we need to be open to whatever form it is to take as the Holy Spirit leads. I do not find a pattern of unity in the New Testament church. Rather I see principles. One flock in each city, although there may be several folds and several shepherds. Some will speak in tongues, some won't. Some will be active in institutional churches, others will be submitted to prayer groups. But like the girl on the plane, we will be one.

MUMFORD: I agree that when we speak of unity, usually it creates a mental image of some super-church which is organizationally bound

together in order to have social and political influence. But nothing could be farther from the truth. By unity, we mean *spiritual unity*, i.e. that ability for other members of the same body of Jesus Christ to honor, recognize and fellowship with one another.

The goal of this unity is not primarily social, organizational or political. The goal is to please God the Father, who sees a spiritual family dwelling together in harmony. The results of God's pleasure are greater spiritual endowment, a sense of approval and a consequent quickening of the spiritual life of the church.

The practical outworking of spiritual unity is the cessation of gossip, criticism, and "we-are-the-people" attitudes. Never should there be an attitude that we will come to unity when the *other* "wises up" to our true, doctrinal position. How we need to understand and respect one another without attempting to change or manipulate the other.

SIMPSON: Unity is *not* conformity; it is *not* organizational; it is *not* theological. Unity is based on the Lordship and High Priesthood of Jesus. As the Holy Spirit is being poured out, the Lordship of Jesus will be magnified increasingly. Those who come under His Lordship will come under

appointed shepherds who will lead them into one fold with one Shepherd, Jesus Christ the Lord, and to one purpose — the establishment of His Kingdom. One in Lordship — one in purpose — hence, unity.

What is the difference between the move of God in unifying the body of Christ and the ecumenical movement?

MUMFORD: Often it helps to make certain distinctions that are not always obvious. Can you see a difference between unity of brothers and unity of churches? Is there a valid distinction between spiritual unity and organizational unity? What about the difference between spiritual recognition of a brother and an agreement on the myriad of doctrinal details?

These distinctions, I believe to be valid and necessary. When they are answered, it clarifies the confusion between unity in the body of Christ, which is spiritual, and the ecumenical movement, which is an outward attempt to ideologically and theologically come to some agreement.

The tendency of human beings is to "go their own way," and this is most evident in the realm of the spiritual or religious. Traditions, types of worship, subjective leadings, as well as an innumerable variety of biblical interpretations all militate against *doctrinal* unity. At the same time, however, there is a *spiritual* desire being wrought in the hearts of all born-again Christians to understand and love those who call on the same Lord. This hunger, I believe, will prevail until the fears and reservations are overcome.

SIMPSON: Unity is that for which Jesus prayed (John 17). It should be our prayer also. We must not forget how He prayed that we would be one in Him (21–23): by us getting into Him and Him getting into us, which will necessarily produce unity of Spirit and faith (Ephesians 4).

However, making unity the aim, ignoring His Lordship, and seeking to



Jamie Buckingham is a roving editor for *Guideposts* magazine, special projects editor for *Logos Journal*, prize-winning newspaper columnist and the author of fourteen books. A native of Florida, he is an elder in a charismatic body of believers in the area of the Kennedy Space Center.

organize conformity, will only produce more of that which we already have. I quickly acknowledge the sincerity and genuine vision of many in ecumenical dialogues, but we must first come to the Lordship of Jesus, then allow Him to direct the process of unification.

Merely being organized together will not produce unity. If a local church or denomination is not united under Jesus' leadership, uniting it to similar groups will not solve, but rather compound, the problem. Unity must begin with personal relationships.

BUCKINGHAM: For many years the institutional church has tried to manufacture ecumenicity. This has taken forms ranging from "union" services at Thanksgiving to something like COCU where the Council of Churches tries to blend major denominations into one super-church. Since such efforts are man-motivated, they invariably fail. Or if they succeed, it is on the same level as the merging of two business organizations.

The move of the Holy Spirit, however, is much different. A new thing is happening as artificial denominational

walls crumble and people flow together because they love one another.

The same principle either works, or does not work, *inside* the local church. We can all join the same organization and say we are "one," but we're not. We're like marbles in a jar, bumping together and calling it unity. But we're still individual egos and when the meeting is over we bounce apart to go our separate ways.

Unity is not marbles. It is grapes. Crushed together until all the skins of ego are broken and the juice forms a new wine. In this kind of unity we are all one. It was this process that took place in the upper room when they were all together in one accord in one place. No wonder the Holy Spirit fell with such power.

What steps or principles might be helpful in opening myself to fellowship with other believers or pastors in my city, especially if they are afraid of me and my beliefs?

BUCKINGHAM: Unity means that a grape must be willing to be dropped into a jar of marbles. The outcome, of course, is presupposed. The marbles will crush the grape (crucifixion). However, in the process all marbles get covered with grape juice. My greatest fear is not that I will be crushed; rather, it is that I might be a grain of wheat that falls into the ground and refuses to die.

When two forces meet — Spirit-baptized believer and the organization-Christian — one will have to give. Jesus taught by word and personal example, that God blesses the man who walks the second mile, turns the other cheek, refuses to demand "his rights," and is willing to give. The Spirit-filled believer never demands (nor does he have to defend the faith). Like Jesus, he is willing to be broken. Yet the love that is exuded from that kind of brokenness eventually draws all other believers together in unity.

SIMPSON: Such unity can only be accomplished, as I implied earlier, under the Lord's direction. Unity must be a by-product of the Spirit, not a goal that you accomplish. The Holy Spirit will lead you to be a peace-maker. He will cause you to try to understand those who serve Him differently. You must learn to value their values. Learn how to receive from them the truth that they have. Ask God to forgive you of any wrong judgments or attitudes that you have had in the past. Get *your* spirit open.

Once you have known it is the Lord's will for you to relate, and understand that what others believe is important to them and that much of what they believe is good and is from God, and once you have humbled yourself before God and them to receive from them, *then* they will begin to open to you.

Attend their functions; be genuinely interested in them, not to manipulate them, but to know them; and, finally, learn to listen to them with your heart.

MUMFORD: This is the most difficult question to answer because it comes to the "how to." Most of us have tried to write letters, have dinners and luncheons to "work toward unity." But, as I understand it, spiritual unity only comes out of *time* and *communication* with one another. The only way unity can come is by someone taking the burden and praying for some *one* Christian leader, by loving that *one*, by visiting him, and by beginning to build relationship.

One to one is the only viable route to unity among pastors and leaders. This is likewise true for members of various groups. Personal witnessing about Jesus Christ is most effective when it is one to one or in a small and controlled situation. Movement toward spiritual unity comes in a similar manner.

Religious fear and reservations are not easily broken down, but fear gradually dissipates as people get to know one another on a personal basis.

Within a city, whose responsibility is it to take the initiative in bringing unity in the body of Christ?

SIMPSON: The local shepherds are the key. It is not necessary that everybody get together. If the shepherds get together in reality, they bring a "togetherness" to the various bodies of believers. Coming together should be under their oversight.

BUCKINGHAM: Initiative is the obligation of the man of God — regardless of who he is. Our example is Jesus who took the gospel to the synagogue. True, He often withdrew with His disciples for believers' meetings, and he conducted public rallies. But even during the last week of his life he wept over the institution, desiring they might open to the flow of the Holy Spirit.

I still remember the sting of a rebuke by a kind Methodist pastor who listened to my tirade against the "dead" church. He finally said, "Brother, could it be that we're not dead, only lost — and seeking for the light." In that moment I saw myself as a candle-snuffer rather than a lamp-lighter.

For years I functioned as the pastor of a large Southern Baptist church. During that time I was president of the local ministerial association. Then I received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and *reacted*. For five years I never attended a ministerial meeting. My, how good it was to be free from reports, committees, and people who talked about "superficial" things.

Then last month a Spirit-baptized pastor, still struggling along in the synagogue syndrome, called. He was pleading with me to join the local ministerial association. Many of the other pastors in Melbourne, he said, were threatened by my ministry. As a result most of them were closed to all I represented. He didn't say it, but what I heard was I was a poor witness for the Lord.

That Thursday I showed up at the

ministerial meeting. I knew that whether they accepted me or not, I should accept them. I needed to be willing to be a grape among marbles. (Although when I arrived I found several other grapes had been attending for some time, praying I would join them.)

It is time for us to prove to the world that the Holy Spirit does not divide. He unites us in Christ.

MUMFORD: Initiative — oh how it is needed! Yet, at the same time whoever or whatever takes the initiative comes under suspicion, attack and misunderstanding. "Blessed is he who is called to spiritual leadership — for he shall be shot down." This is a beatitude of experience! "You are trying to build something!" "It's your church or group that will benefit." "How do we get new members from this fellowship?"

This type of confusion must be anticipated and the one (or ones) who see the unity of the body of Christ are the ones usually who should initiate some action. This is why I suggest one to one. No talk, no publicity, news releases, etc. Quietly, love, seek to be open to others, make time to fellowship and do *not* be dismayed or discouraged when questioned and challenged.

One who seeks to initiate some spiritual unity should consider this advice: Keep open to suggestions. Differences in opinion and even methods are often different than you would use. Embrace criticism as being helpful and necessary. On the other hand, beware of *detractors*. These are the kind of people who criticize, complain and manipulate, but do not have anything constructive in mind. The distinction is simple. Honest criticism always offers an alternate solution.

How far should I go in "compromising" my beliefs to maintain unity with my brother?



BOB MUMFORD

"The goal of unity is not primarily social, organizational or political. The goal is to please God the Father, who sees a spiritual family dwelling together in harmony."

CHARLES SIMPSON

"Unity must be a by-product of the Spirit, not a goal that you accomplish."



BUCKINGHAM: Last year a young Mormon school teacher asked me, "Now that I have received the Holy Spirit should I stay in my church?"

I answered, "Stay as long as you can, but never compromise your beliefs, deny your experience, or be less than bold in your testimony. Above all things hold that the Bible (alone) is God's recorded Word and that Jesus Christ is God's perfect revelation. If you are allowed to stay under those circumstances then God will use you mightily."

We do not have to defend our experience. Neither must we deny it nor fail to testify fully when given the opportunity. No man has the right to command us to remain silent. However, to be bold without love is to become a clanging gong.

Five years ago I thought the most important thing in life was to be right. Now I see it is far more important to be kind, than to be right. For it is through kindness, and gentleness, that people are brought to unity.

SIMPSON: It does help to remember that unity is not primarily a matter of being right or wrong, or a matter of doctrine, but rather of relationship. In other words, Jesus is a person. We are not joined to an idea of Christ Jesus, but to Himself. In turn He joins us to

people — His people — not doctrines. Doctrines, convictions and principles grow as we fellowship. You don't have to compromise, but keep your priorities straight: Jesus, brethren, then personal convictions. Jesus reminded the Pharisees that the Sabbath was made for man not vice versa. When our doctrines come first, we can easily wound and destroy people for our doctrine's sake. Then, we have forgotten that our doctrines were given to help people, not hurt them.

Yes, there is a time to stand for a principle. There is also a way to stand. We can stand for our convictions by proving in our own lives that our doctrines work in love, fruit and endurance.

MUMFORD: Some have — in their search for spiritual unity — said: "Doctrine is not important." It is obvious to most of us how dangerous such a statement *can* be. What this statement is trying to say is — "Don't begin to fellowship in areas of disagreement."

We should recognize that if we had to leave all our doctrines and teaching behind in order to come to unity, we would come believing *nothing*. The others come believing *nothing*, as well. So together, in unity, we believe *nothing*!

If we come together around basics, i.e. the love of God, Lordship of Jesus Christ, the blood of the slain Lamb, the place of the Holy Scriptures, we can learn to *fellowship*. When we can fellowship we move on to *relationship* — that is, discovering, to our amazement, that God really loves them too!

Once we are in relationship, love begins to flow. In the presence of love I have found we can discuss the most explosive issues without "spiritual blood pressures" rising. How many of my personal prejudices and pet doctrines were broken and modified as I fellowshipped, in love, those who believed differently than I.

A word to all my dear brothers and sisters who feel called to "defend the truth." This crusading spirit is not really born of the Spirit of Christ, but rather comes out of a self-willed opinion of what we believe to be of the utmost importance. As each of us grows and fellowships with others, we gradually learn a vital lesson — we don't defend truth, but rather truth defends us. Truth sometimes disturbs man-made theories and human traditions, but biblical truth never disturbs other biblical truth. That which is pure, biblical truth endures forever, for Jesus *is* that truth. ☞

Do you have questions which you feel need to be discussed through the FORUM? If they represent a need for enlightenment or encouragement to the body of Christ, we will be happy to consider them for possible future topics to be referred to our panel.

Please state questions clearly and mail them to FORUM PANEL: *New Wine Magazine*, P.O. Box 22888, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33315. We appreciate reader participation in this feature of *New Wine*.

In March, an equally timely and exciting topic will be placed before the Panel. The concept of *discipleship* in our day is emerging as a top priority consideration throughout the body of Christ. Rev. Ivan Martin Baker of Buenos Aires will serve as our guest panelist.

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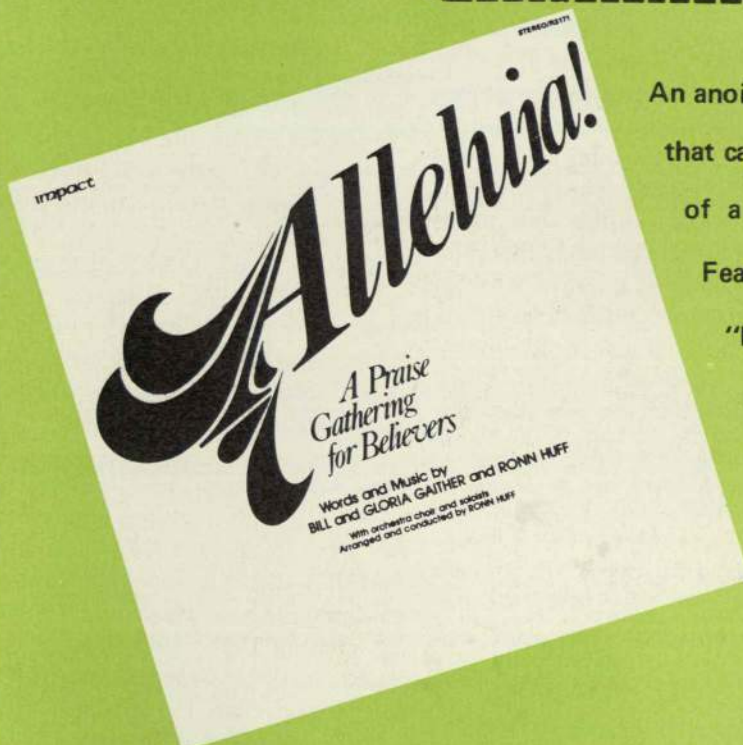
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