



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Issue 29

Brief Notes on *Church History*

Part II

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

THE DATING GAME!

Let's look at an interesting side note at this point about the "End of the World," especially now that we are approaching the year 2000.

"No period in church history, or perhaps in any history, or in any country, presents a darker picture than Christian Europe at the close of the tenth century ... all mankind were panic-stricken ...

"But if ever man might be forgiven the dream of believing that the end of the world was come, it was then. The clergy preached it, and people believed it, and it rapidly spread over all Europe. It was boldly promulgated that the world would come to an end when a thousand years from the Savior's birth were expired. From about the year 960 the panic increased, but the year 999 was looked upon as the last which anyone would ever see ...

"The ordinary cares and employments of this life were given up. The land was left untilled; for why plough, why sow, when no one would be left to reap? Houses were allowed to fall into decay; for why build, why repair, why trouble about property, when a few months will put an end to all terrestrial things? ... Large sums of money were given to the churches and monasteries, as if to secure a more favorable sentence from the supreme Judge. Kings and emperors begged at monastery doors, to be admitted as brethren of

the holy order; crowds of the common people slept in the porches of the holy buildings, or at least under their shadow ...

"The day of doom drew nearer and nearer. The last evening of the thousand years arrived: a sleepless night for all Europe! Imagination must fill up the doleful picture. But in place of some extraordinary convulsion, which all were tremblingly waiting for, the night passed away as other nights had done, and in the morning the sun shed forth its beams as peacefully as ever ...

"The close of the first thousand years of the church's history; the darkest day ... in the annals of Christendom." *Short Papers on Church History* – Andrew Miller (p. 383385)

V. Identifying the Pattern in Church History

Identifying the Pauline pattern in history really poses a great difficulty!

A. The difficulty presented by the Religious System.

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Dear Family,

Our prayer is that we are ever mindful of what God the Father has made us "in Christ" -- "the righteousness of God" (II Corinthians 5:21).

A Word About the BSN

As our subscribers have undoubtedly noticed we have fallen somewhat behind on our BSN publishing schedule. This is due, primarily, to the fact that we have had to change the method in which we process material. When we moved to Elam last Fall, our already delicate monthly processing schedule of BSN material was completely altered. First, the move itself put us behind, and secondly, the distance between the rest of our co-laborers and me necessitated a new procedure for processing each issue. Then, Andy Sneidar, our Managing Editor, had the added responsibility of acquiring new employment and moving from Hampton to Norfolk. We are glad to report that things are settling down a bit and a concerted effort has been put forth to get us "back on track." But regardless of how punctual the monthly BSN schedule is, be assured that no BSN issue numbers will be skipped, and that you will always get the number of issues that your mailing label indicates.

June - Pennsylvania

June allowed our family the wonderful opportunity to once again be a part of the Eastern Grace Family Bible Conference in Loretto, PA. This is always a great time of Bible study, fellowship and mutual ministry! A special thanks to brothers Tracy Plessinger and Alex Kurz and the saints for their faithfulness, service and sacrifice to make this a possibility.

July - Illinois

Our family also attended the annual Bible Conference of the Grace School of the Bible in Elgin, IL. It is always a real family treat to attend the different conferences and meet new saints and fellowship with those that we have had a bond with for years. Brother Richard Jordan and the saints who labor with him afford a great service to the Body of Christ.

August - California

As I write this editorial our family is making last minute preparations to travel by van to the Berean Summer Bible Camp near Wrightwood, CA. This will be our family's second trip by van out to California. This should prove to be another real experience, to which we look forward! We are making plans to see a few saints on the way back, which will bring added joy to our adventure. More on this trip when we return.

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Bible Student's Notebook™

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This biweekly publication (24 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of *rich* Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "Movement," "Organization," "Mission," or separate body of believers, but is sent forth to and for all "saints."

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PATRIARCHS

Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

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We now know that our main subjects are going to be OUTSIDE of the Religious System. But this adds to the problem of finding them in “church history” because the Religious System has had the CONTROL of writing “church history,” and has ALWAYS attempted to discredit and destroy the testimony of Bible believers.

Because “church history” is, by and large, a chronology of the Organized Religious System, it is in reality ANTI-CHURCH HISTORY.

Take our day for example. Those who follow the Pauline pattern are usually “unrecognized” or viewed as “heretics.”

They are overlooked in current accounts of “church.”

Where will the believer following the Pauline doctrine and pattern be in the “church history” of the twentieth century?

B. The Innate Difficulty of Human History.

All history is clouded by inaccuracy and poor or false interpretation of the facts. The reason? It is the work of men!

C. The Difficulty of the Manipulation of History (Even Among Believers)

A contemporary example of historical manipulation among believers is the *50th Anniversary Memorial* of the Berean Bible Society. This publication gives a pictorial history of the society from 1940 through 1990. An interesting thing occurs in the presentation of its history: one of its only three presidents is omitted. The founding president of the society and its current president are the only ones presented. The unknowing reader would assume that there had been no president for the society between the founder and current president. Why the omission of the second president and his years of service from the historical presentation? Well, there

had been a controversy over some areas of doctrine between the second president and the founder which led to his resignation from the society, and when it came time to doing the publication, history was simply altered.

What is even more interesting about this omission is the minute details that are presented in this book. There are pictures of mottos, window displays, tape recorders, packages, displays, even a dog, but not the second president.

And just what is our point? Do you question the fact that good godly men will manipulate history to their advantage? Now if we as believers (even grace believers), will rewrite history among ourselves to our own advantage, then to what extent would our enemies go? What would *they* do with history?

VI. Some Preserved Examples from Church History

To repeat some well-penned words from Gene Edwards that appeared in the *Bible Student's Notebook* issue #24:

“Flip through a Church history book, and you are struck by one thing: from 325 A.D. to about 1500 A.D. all you read about is Roman Catholicism. Beginning about 1500 A.D. there is a second stream, Protestantism. But is that all there is to Church history? Is there no more? Are we so bad off that the entire history of the Christian faith has nothing to speak of but Roman Catholicism and Protestantism? (I don't need to tell you that Protestantism today does not look much like the church did during the first century.)

“There is a third line, a third group of people. Go back and pick up that Church history book again, and this time read the footnotes. There it is you will find the third line. It is made up of Christians who stood outside organized religion.”

It is in scanning the footnotes of church history that we will find:

A. The PAULICIANS – One of the Greatest Preserved Testimonies: The Paulicians

(A Testimony that Spanned Six Centuries of Human History)

“There was not lacking a spiritual resistance to these evils ... There were groups of believers who ... stood out strongly against the idolatry, sacramentalism, and other prevailing errors of the Catholic Church. They appear on the historical scene in the middle of the seventh century as ‘Paulicians’ in the region of Mesopotamia. Why they were named ‘Paulicians’ is not exactly known, but it may simply have been because of their respect for the apostle Paul and his writings. The Catholic Church ascribed to them all sorts of erroneous doctrines, if we can believe those whose lives denied the truths they professed ...

“Whatever opinions may be held about the Paulicians, it is generally conceded that they had a particular respect for the authority of the Bible ... for the apostle Paul and his writings ... advocated a life of simplicity, were a devout and earnest people, and bore a strong witness against the unsavory practices of the Catholic Church. Their enemies testified against them, but their lives testified of Christ ...

“In assessing the character of the Paulicians and other groups which have appeared down through the centuries, historians have tended too readily to accept uncritically what has been said and written against them by their enemies. The history of the Roman Church in its dealings with those who refused to bow to its dominion is a sordid tale of pillage and persecution. Not only did it seek to destroy the persons of those who opposed it, but also to bring the very memory of their names into ignominy by the most gross accusations, and to obliterate what they themselves wrote or anything written about them in their favor. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that much more literature survives which condemns than commends them. The great struggle of later centuries to produce the Scriptures in the languages of the ordinary people illustrates most aptly the methods which Rome employed to maintain her authority over

the souls of men. Copies of the Scripture were hunted out and consigned to the flames, and along with them those who were responsible for their publication and dissemination, if they refused to recant from the ‘sin’ of having sought to spread the Word of God. These same methods were generously employed in the days of the Paulicians.

“The Paulicians accepted no central authority to rule over the scattered assemblies. The local churches looked to God as their Head, and they were built up and strengthened spiritually by teachers who moved from place to place to minister in their midst in a manner similar to Paul ... They did not draw up any code of doctrine to which they had commonly to subscribe as a basis of unity, and since different groups came into being through the ministry of different people, they no doubt differed somewhat one from another, both in form and in emphasis. Their spiritual unity lay in the life which they had in Christ, a life which manifested itself in their daily walk and witness. They owned a professed respect for the Word of God, which they accepted as their guide.” – John W. Kennedy, *Torch of the Testimony* (p. 109, 110).

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“Most of what has reached us has come down from their [the Paulicians] critics.” – Kenneth Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (p. 318).

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“[To the Paulicians] Baptism means only the baptism of the Spirit; the communion with the body and blood of Christ is only a communion with His word and doctrine.” – Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* Vol. 4 (p. 577).

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“The [Paulicians] had no order of clergymen, distinguished from laymen by their mode of living, their dress, and other things; nor had they councils, or any other institutions ... Their teachers ... were all equals in rank; and were distinguished from laymen by no rights, or prerogatives, or

insignia ...” – John L. Von Mosheim, *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern*, Vol. 2 (1869) (p. 103).

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“Paulicians, named probably from a high regard for the Apostle Paul ... opposed the formalism of the Greek Church and the prelatic [cleric] system: rejected images, crosses, relics, fasts, monasticism, priesthood, outward observance of the two sacraments and saint worship; ... [they] were severely persecuted; many scattered through all Southern Europe, and received various new names.” Blackburn’s *History of the Christian Church* (1879) footnote 1. (Various Sects) (p. 332).

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“They [the Paulicians] rejected all outward means of grace, such as baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and especially the later developments of sacramentarianism.” – John Moncrief, *A Short History of the Christian Church* (p. 183).

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“[The Paulicians were] greatly interested by the Pauline Epistles and resolved ... to secure a restoration of Christianity to its primitive Pauline form ...

“The Paulician body had a remarkable growth and spread over Armenia and into many other parts of Asia Minor.” – A.H. Newman (1899), *A Manual of Church History* (p. 379, 384).

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“... They came to be called Paulicians because of the emphasis they laid on the Pauline Epistles instead of the ‘Hebrew Christian’ Epistles. After 325 A.D., they viewed the Roman Catholic church and the Greek Orthodox church as Satanic, and they refused to tolerate images of any kind in connection with their services. However, the most significant thing about them was their wholesale rejection of the educated scholars at Alexandria and the theological teachings that came from that

‘most unusual university.’

“... The Paulicians rejected the Catholic priesthood, the Catholic sacraments, the worship of relics and crosses, and they thought the ‘one baptism’ of Ephesians four was the Holy Spirit putting the believer into Christ: they were the Stamites and Bullingerites of their day ... Under severe persecution they moved into Bulgaria and the Balkan mountains and from thence to north Italy and Yugoslavia to produce Christians called Waldenses and Albigenses ...

“The Paulicians in Italy were called Paterini or Cathari; in France they were called Bulgarians, Publicans and Albigenses.” – Peter S. Ruckman, *The History of the New Testament Church* (Vol. I, p. 61, 234, 235).

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“All through the ages God has had His people, who cherished His truth and witnessed for Him. Known by different names at different times and in different places: scattered abroad singly, in small companies, or in communities, they kept the faith.

“One of the most noted examples of those who struggled against the advancing heathen darkness as it gradually overspread the Church is found in the people known as the ‘Paulicians.’ ...

“By whatever name we may be called or known, we are, in witnessing for the teaching of God in the Pauline Epistles, the true successors of the Ancient Paulicians: holding aloft the banner; holding forth the same Word; and holding fast the same truth.” – E.W. Bullinger, *The Paulicians: A Lesson From the Past (Things to Come*, October 1901).

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“Theirs [the Paulicians] was that of wandering

1. “The Cathari made great use of Scripture, which they translated and in which they claimed to find their teachings ... The sacraments, with their material elements, were [rejected as] evil ... [They held that] God is dishonored by the erection of churches built [i.e., buildings] and ornamented with material creations ... The services of the Cathari were simple.” – Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, p. 250.

preachers and ‘copyists.’” – Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (p. 235).

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Constantine’s Edict Against the Paulicians:

“Understand now, by this present statute, you Novatians, Valentinians, Marcionites, Paulicians, and Montanists, and all the rest of you who devise and support heresies by means of your private assemblies ... that your offenses are so hateful and altogether atrocious that a single day would be insufficient to tolerate your deadly errors, we hereby give you warning that none of you are to meet together hereafter. We have therefore ordered that your meeting places be taken from you. And you are expressly forbidden to hold your superstitions and senseless meetings, not only in public, but also in private homes, or any other place.” [Eusebius’ *Constantine* bk. 3 chapters 64, 65] – David Bercot, *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up* (p. 137).

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“Not less than one hundred thousand of them [Paulicians] were put to death in Grecian Armenia ... Of the tenents of this sect we have no knowledge except from their enemies ...” Fisher’s *History of the Christian Church* (1887) (p. 162).

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“The doctrines, character, and history of the Paulicians have been subjects of great controversy; but they have not been allowed to speak for themselves to posterity. Their writings were carefully destroyed by the Catholics, and they are known to us only through the reports of bitter enemies who brand them as heretics ...

“It is generally agreed that the word Paulician is formed from the name of the great apostle of the Gentiles ...

“They had preached against images, relics, and the rotten wood of the cross. They were not fit to live. The Catholics gained their object! An edict was issued under the regency of Theodora [A.D.

842], which decreed that the Paulicians should be exterminated by fire and sword ... Her inquisitors explored the cities and mountains of the lesser Asia, and executed their commission in the most cruel manner ... It is affirmed by both civil and ecclesiastical historians, that, in a short reign, one hundred thousand Paulicians were put to death.” – Andrew Miller, *Short Papers on Church History* (p. 253-256).

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“Paul had spent his strength in planting and watching over the churches in Asia Minor. His toil was neither fruitless nor forgotten. Paul-like men, who were hailed as such by their contemporaries, and named *Paulikoi*, were stirred amid the growing need to imitate the Apostle to the Gentiles in his zeal and self-sacrifice for threatened truth and endangered souls. They wrote out and multiplied copies of the Scriptures, especially of the Pauline Epistles. They spoke to loiterers in the market place, to travelers by the way, to all men wherever and whenever they had the opportunity. The people listened, were converted, and swept back the invading darkness ...

“The movement swept over the cities and over the provinces, and alarmed the ecclesiastics and the statesmen even of distant Constantinople. It speedily received a name. The followers of these *Paulikoi* were called *Paulikianoi*, and the Paulicians have taken their place in history, written by their ecclesiastical enemies and traducers [slanderers]. Armies were sent against them; and where the arguments of a heathenised Christianity were powerless to convince, the sword tried to terrify. But the fleshly arm could not stay the truth. The harassed believers were refreshed by tokens that God was with them. One general, for instance, who knew nothing of the people or their beliefs till he was charged by the Emperors with their suppression, found, when he returned to Constantinople, that he had no rest till he laid down his appointment, forsook everything, and joined the people whom he had been sent to persecute ...

“They were banished from Asia Minor, and leaving their fatherland forever, passed over into

Europe. They traveled along valleys and rivers of their new world, and settled in quietness here and there, taking with them, as their choicest treasure, the Word of God and the simplicity of worship for which their fathers died. The historian meets them again in communities and peoples that lived apart, and which Rome stamps out one by one. But the truth they preserved lived on, and burst forth at last in the splendor of the Reformation.” – John Urquhart, *The Inspiration and Accuracy of the Holy Scriptures* (book II, chapter 1, pages 101-103, cited in *Things to Come*, October 1901).

B. The BOGOMILS

“Some Paulicians had emigrated to Constantinople and Thrace in the middle of the eighth century. There they preached the Gospel, and numerous churches were established in the area of the Balkan peninsula. These people came generally to be known as ‘Bogomils’ which means simply ‘friends of God.’ It may be remarked here again how clearly the principle of life is manifested. Life reproduces itself. The church is the embodiment of the life of Christ, and is not dependent upon particular leaders or institutions for maintaining existence ... No power of earth or hell can overcome them. If they are stamped out in one place, it will only be to reappear in another, and the Scriptures alone will be proved sufficient to lead and establish God’s people in the way of truth.

“The ... Bogomils were, in consonance with the spirit and tenor of the age, the subject of wild accusations by the adherents of the Roman Church. They were accused, naturally, of being heretics, and quite justifiably of denying much that was peculiar to Roman dogma, including the uselessness of the Church’s sacraments and orders ... It is little wonder that they were accorded such malicious treatment ...

“Amidst trial and persecution, the work of God continued to expand for many years, to reach the peak of its development at the end of the twelfth century in Bosnia where the ruler and his family, along with some ten thousand others, joined the Bogomils. Catholicism lost its hold upon the

country. Instead of ornate church buildings with all their attendant trappings, meeting places were plain and void of bells, images and altars, or the believers could meet equally well within their own homes ... The congregations were governed by a plurality of elders and edified through the teaching of ministering brethren. Those teachers, whose lives were devoted to an extralocal ministry of the Word, were supported by the ... believers ...

“The spread of these Friends of God constituted an increasing threat to the Roman Church, and Rome was not inactive in seeking to stem the tide of this meek and powerful opposition ... They [the Bogomils] refused to submit. This was the signal for recurring and violent persecution ... Finally, in desperation, he [Pope Innocent III] ordered the king of Hungary to invade Bosnia, and the country was ravaged by a war which went on for years. The devastation of war reduced the land to shambles, but the churches continued to exist. In 1291 a new terror was added, the Inquisition ... Throughout the fourteenth and into the fifteenth century this iniquitous persecution continued. Finally, the Turks, who had been harassing the bastions of Europe and had already been beaten back, took possession of Bosnia in 1463 and the country settled down to four hundred years of Muslim rule ... [under which] the bright witness of the Friends of God in Bosnia seemed to die out.” *Torch of the Testimony* – John W. Kennedy (p. 115-117).

C. The CATHARS

“These believers [Cathars] in 1167 were able to hold a widely attended conference ... near Toulouse. Elders came from as far east as Constantinople, a remarkable indication of the strengths and benefits of fellowship in the Spirit which is based upon something much more binding than organizational association.” – John W. Kennedy, *Torch of the Testimony* (p. 118).

D. The WALDENSES

“‘Waldenses’ was the name given originally to congregations of believers who lived in the valleys of the southern Alps ...

“The Waldenses were characterised by their marked reverence for the Scriptures in which they found their rule of daily living and church order. Their congregations were, therefore, simple, void of the highly developed rituals and ordinances which marked the Roman Church ...

“The knowledge of Christ’s dwelling within by the Spirit was to them a truth of paramount importance, but in matters of Scripture interpretation which did not deny the basic necessity of this experience of Christ they allowed a generous liberty. Salvation was through faith, and the Roman Church had authority neither to open nor to close the door to God’s grace ... Elders ruled the local churches, and they were edified also through the teaching ministry of those who were set apart for an itinerant ministry in their midst.” *Torch of the Testimony* – John W. Kennedy (p. 118, 119)

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“Chief of all [the characteristics of the Waldenses] was the principle that the Bible, and especially the New Testament, is the sole rule of belief and life.” *A History of the Christian Church*, – Williston Walker p. 252

Conclusion:

Daily our lives are the material for tomorrow’s church history. We may never be recorded in a human history of the church, especially that of the religious system. But we must remember that there is a divine record of history that is correct and without pretense of ulterior motive. May we ever be faithful to the Pauline message and methods so that we can say with Paul:

“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing” (II Timothy 4:6-8).

(This is the final part of a two part series)

Religion

“What a heartbreak Christ would be today to some well-meaning ‘promotional committee’ or to some ‘business manager!’ It seemed that He always DID the wrong thing or SAID the wrong thing, just as He was on the crest of the wave and at the height of His popularity! He never seemed to understand what was in His own best interests! Amid all this popular acclaim, the Lord Jesus Christ went straight to the temple and found ‘those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise’ (John 2:14-16).

“Had He been prepared to accept ‘religion’ as He found it and to recognize the ‘status quo,’ no doubt the Lord Jesus Christ might well have found acceptance, even among the Pharisees; but He was a troublemaker! He dared to cleanse the temple!

“Christ did not come to be ‘accepted,’ nor was He looking for a job in contemporary religion!” – Major W. Ian Thomas, *The Saving Life of Christ and the Mystery of Godliness* (p. 154).

Busyness

“It is amazing how busy you can become doing nothing! Did you ever find that out? ‘The flesh [everything that you do apart from Him] profiteth nothing’ (John 6:63b), and there is always the awful possibility, if you do not discover this principle, then you may spend a lifetime in the service of Jesus Christ DOING NOTHING! You would not be the first, and you would not be the last – but that, above everything else, we must seek to avoid.” – Major W. Ian Thomas, *The Saving Life of Christ* (p. 142).

Do It My Way!

“... There should be no **schism** in the body ...”

(I Corinthians 12:25a)

by – Gene Edwards

Preventing a Church Split (edited)

Splits come in all shapes and sizes, so trying to picture a “typical” division is impossible. But I would like to talk about one of the major root causes behind many splits.

Churches have problems because of people’s dispositional differences. By dispositional difference I mean their likes, their dislikes, their inclinations. Out here where I live, in the unstructured world of “church life,” most of those who come together with believers are sincerely seeking after a true, practical expression of the body of Christ. Nonetheless each person “sees” the body of Christ, the church, through his own unique disposition.

Every Christian worker will immediately recognize what I am referring to. As a Christian worker deals with a myriad of different people, he begins to see that each has a slightly different pattern of living, thinking, and seeing.

(Woe to that poor, ignorant minister who tries to conform all these people out there in his congregation to his disposition!)

Right over there sits a Christian who wants a church that emphasizes evangelism. But over here is a Christian who wants the church to place great emphasis on prayer. That fellow back there wants the church to address current issues (abortion, minority discrimination, etc.). See that Christian sitting about midway? Well, he wants home life, family life, and child-rearing to be the central focus of the church. The fellow on the second row? He wants everyone to have a closer involvement in one another’s lives, to build relationships.

The list of the different interests which come out in a congregation is too long, perhaps even endless ...

Not one item on this list is really there because it is “what the Bible teaches.” It is, rather, an “I want the church to be like this” list. And the list grows longer every time someone joins the fellowship!...

Each one of these people sees the thing he is asking for as absolutely central. Or awfully close to it! Each sees his interest as one of the greatest themes of the Bible. One way or the other, about half the people in the church want more (or less) emphasis on something!

No wonder we have splits!

There are the needs, the likes, the dislikes, the preferences of: the marrieds, the singles, the brothers, the sisters, the strict, the loose, the mindy, the emotional, the doer, the feeler, the objective, the subjective, the “let’s move,” the “let’s stay put,” the leader, the rebel, the follower, the critical, the professionally disgruntled, the old, the young, the children, the fellow forever asking questions, the sweet, the bold, the scared, the fearless, those needing more home life, those with financial needs, the rich, the poor. Those with a burning vision. Those who just cannot see such a vision. And on it goes.

And in the midst of all these demands, requests and counter-requests stands one befuddled, bemused and sometimes quite awed Christian worker, trying to figure out how to say grace over all this.

It is a wonder the church of God doesn’t split any more!

Take note, dear reader (for you may not be aware), every day a Christian worker feels the presence of these different currents pressing in on him, pulling him one way, then the other. This sense of conflicting

forces stays with a minister almost every moment of his life. Somehow, the man tries (valiantly, and usually in vain) to see that everyone's needs are addressed. He misses a few. Some needs get totally overlooked. A few are overemphasized. Some are emphasized and then forgotten.

Generally, the Lord's people are patient. Almost everyone in the church finds himself spending most of his time waiting in line to see his need, his vision, his wants addressed. But every once in a while someone does not see his "vision" as a dispositional need which is part of his personality. He sees his need as a need of all Christians. Right now!

"It should be our number one task. And furthermore, sir, this is what everyone in the church wants. We are all talking about it. All of us. And we want it now."

Maybe he doesn't quite say it that emphatically, but look in his eyes, watch his body language, the tone of his voice. That is what he is saying. With or without words.

And, dear Christian worker, when you hear the tom-tom beating out this message, you are in trouble. Perhaps it is only an individual who said this. Maybe it is not too late for something to be worked out. But the possibility of a firestorm is upon you.

What shall the Christian worker do at this moment?

When a crisis begins to build, I'll tell you exactly what the worker is thinking. "Why don't you go somewhere else and build a church your way!"

Unfortunately, very few men would heed such a word. Most know they cannot leave this church and go out and, singlehandedly, build a church from scratch. They probably never once thought in those terms. They just want to tell their Christian worker how to do it, according to their architectural plans.

Most Christians would be horrified at the idea of walking into another town and starting a meeting of Christians, raising up the church and molding it into the near-perfect reality of their own vision.

Could you pull off such a thing, dear reader?

Can you – right now – move to another town, alone, and raise up a church, lead it to experience some rich, new, higher church life? Can you, singlehandedly, bring your vision of what a church should be into reality?

If so, go. (And take no one with you!)

Oh, but you like it here? And there isn't a church anywhere living out your vision? And you can't see yourself starting one? Then have you ever thought about being just a little more quiet?

Dare you press a Christian worker...to do your bidding? ... A minister of the Gospel cannot turn over ... the fire which burns in his bones, to build a church according to your liking...

But more important – and please, dear reader, hear this – a Christian worker cannot use his ... heart to accomplish your dream. A worker cannot do that which is not his passion. Why, then, hold him responsible for not doing the thing you see needs to be done? Especially if you know good and well you yourself could not go start a church and accomplish this vision of yours.

Please use this as your measuring stick: Can I leave this church, taking no followers, go to another city, and raise up a church and lead an entire congregation in all it should be?

If the answer is no, then relent in pursuing your view. If you cannot relent, and the problem is eating a hole in you, then you might wish to consider leaving. (Quietly!)

You have three choices. 1) Split the church. 2) Go somewhere else, alone, and build a church that is after your desire. 3) You might choose to take yourself and your frustrations to the cross and there let them be crucified. If you cannot handle any of the above, the most beneficial thing you can do for all concerned is quietly leave.

Whatever you choose, don't dismember the body of Christ over your desire to have things your way.



True Confessions of a “Church” Architect

The following was taken from a book entitled *When Not to Build: An Architect’s Unconventional Wisdom for the Growing Church* by Ray Bowman, published by Baker Book House (1993). Mr. Bowman spent thirty years designing “church buildings.” His first chapter is interestingly entitled “Confessions of a Surprised Architect.”

During my architectural training, I had been taught, as most architects are, that the key to solving social problems was to create new and better environments in which to live, work, learn, and, in my case, to worship. Though I would not discover it for several years, there was a problem with that belief: It was wrong ...

First, I discovered that sanctuary is an Old Testament concept that was abolished in Christ. Sanctuary means ‘where God dwells,’ and in the Old Testament the Holy of Holies was indeed a special dwelling place for God ... All my life, I had heard that the church building, especially the sanctuary, was ‘God’s House’ ... But, my Bible study now convinced me that my thinking was two thousand years out of date ...

Second, my Bible study showed me that the New Testament church owned no church buildings, though they held both large-group and small-group meetings ... It seems to have never crossed the apostles’ minds that they might need to build large auditoriums ... meeting space already existed ... [There was] a network of house churches in which the believers worshipped together and ministered to one another ...

For almost three centuries, the church built few if any buildings, and it continued to enjoy the most vigorous period of ministry and growth the church has ever known. Then disaster struck. Constantine declared Christianity the state religion. The church became less and less a community of believers, more and more a religious institution. The church built buildings and more buildings. Its focus shifted. The church’s most dynamic era had come to an end.

Now, I know the gospel is supposed to be good news, but for an architect, especially for an architect who had already invested most of a lifetime in designing church buildings, my biblical findings did not much feel like good news. I found it hard to admit my mistakes, to concede that much of my life’s work had been misguided ...

Personally, I loved Gothic architecture with its ornate grandeur, but it clearly did not reflect the values of Jesus. Rather, it was a monument to the pride and power of humanity ...

I came to see that unbiblical attitudes toward church buildings were among the greatest barriers to ministry and church growth in our time. In contrast to the first-century church that ministered powerfully and grew rapidly without owning buildings, most churches today think they cannot minister or grow without buildings. In contrast to that, first-century church worshiped ... in the same space that families lived ... many churches today worship in the single-use space that lies unused 160 hours or more a week. This setting apart of ‘sacred space’ for worship only, intended as an expression of reverence, actually hinders the work of God. It shifts the focus of the church as members divert time, money, and energy away from ministering to people so they can build and pay for unnecessary buildings ...

We can no longer afford to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on ‘sacred’ but unnecessary buildings that lie vacant 80 or 90 percent of the time.” (p. 36-41).



Dispensational Issues

We have come into a new Dispensation, where the old things have passed away; where all things are become new; where all things are of God. That which is perfect has come. ‘Signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and spiritual gifts’ have here no place. The gift of prophecy has failed, as foretold in I Corinthians 13:8. The gift of tongues has ceased ... That which was partial and incomplete has been done away ...

Instead of striving to reach perfection, we know that we are already perfect in Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:28), and can never have perfection by the flesh (Galatians 3:3). Instead of striving to make ourselves meet for the presence of God, we are continually giving Him thanks because He hath Himself already done it, and made us meet in all His own perfect workmanship – in Christ – for our entrance into the inheritance in the light (Colossians 1:12). We are not engaged in the interminable controversy about ordinances, because we are ‘complete in Him’ and know that nothing done by hands can add to what is complete (Colossians 2:10, 20).

–E.W. Bullinger, *Foundations of Dispensational Truth*

(continued from page 294)

Life at Elam

As of this writing we have been here at Elam going into our eleventh month (how time flies!) This has been a unique experience for us. We have especially valued the opportunity that this large old house has provided for us to offer extended hospitality. Many memories have been made here - with many saints.

I reflect on all of this because it looks as though this chapter in our lives is now approaching its end. We have been renting this house which is now in the process of being sold. We will, most likely, be moving at the end of the one year lease. And although this will bring this chapter to a close, it will allow a new one to begin! Please pay close attention to future BSNs so as to be aware of yet another change in our mailing address and phone number.

I would like to give special thanks to each of you who have taken seriously our invitation to come to Elam to rest and fellowship. This has meant so very much to my family and me.

Bob Welch

As I write this letter, Bob and Angie Welch and their two children Sarah and Jeremiah from Lenoir, NC are spending a week with us. We have never had the opportunity of meeting prior to this but we are enjoying sweet fellowship around our completeness in Christ and in the bond that has been given to us by our identification into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Brother and sister Welch are hosts to the House Church of Lenoir. We have been enjoying mutual ministry and fellowship. What a great thing it is to meet “strangers” who you feel you have “known forever.” What a wonderful family the Lord has!

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God”
(Ephesians 2:19)

“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”
(Galatians 6:10).

Giving thanks that I have died with Christ (“I am crucified with Christ...” Galatians 2:20), I remain

A part of the Grateful Dead*,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

* albeit alive in Christ (“...nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...” Galatians 2:20)