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## New Testament Assemblies. .

### A PLEA FOR SCRIPTURAL SIMPLICITY

Robert McClurkin, (contributed by Jim Beattie)

The great commission of our Lord, the four parts of which are seen in the last chapters of the four gospels, was threefold: the disciples were commissioned to preach the Gospel and by the truth of the Gospel, to make disciples out of all nations; they were to mark disciples in the waters of baptism; and they were to mold disciples by the teaching of the whole Word of God.

The Book of Acts reveals how this was carried out. When souls were saved through the preaching of the Gospel, they were baptized and gathered in congregations unto the precious Name of our Lord. The apostles never became pastors over each congregation, but put the burden of responsibility on the shoulders of the converts. Then, as soon as possible, they moved on and allowed the faith of the saints to work.

### There are three reasons for the planting of New Testament assemblies:

**Worldward**, they consolidated the gains of the Gospel and became outposts for the further advancement of the Gospel of Christ.

**Churchward**, they were to be places of holy concord where the saints could share their joys and sorrows. They were to be for mutual edification and care and the training ground for the development of spiritual gift and leadership.

**Godward**, they were to be little sanctuaries from which the incense of worship and praise would ascend continually.

### By what names are they to be known?

There is one Divine principle that guides us in this. Any name or names that do not embrace the whole is sectarian. Paul rebukes the Corinthians for factionalism when they said, "I am of Paul; and I am of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." Each name only embraced each party, to the exclusion of all others.

The Spirit of God points to three serious sins that are committed in assuming unscriptural names: it is a sin against the Person of Christ, "Is Christ divided?" It is a sin against the Work of Christ, "Was Paul crucified for you?" It is a sin against the Name of Christ, "Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Cor. 1:12-13). The one Name of our glorious Lord is set over against all other names, as the only Name that can unite the saints in a practical way (v. 10). The truth of gathering in His Name alone means to gather in subjection to the authority of Christ which is enshrined in that Name. There only can true unity be realized.

### By what features are New Testament churches to be distinguished?

Let me point out a few:

**1. By the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper.** The Lord's Supper was the center of the church life of the early saints. It was the hub from which all their activities radiated. Paul, by the Spirit, taught the Corinthians that in the Lord's Supper they expressed a fellowship (10: 16, 17); they proclaimed a fact (11: 26); they remembered a Person (11:24); and they cherished the hope of the Lord's return (11:26).

It is this weekly feast that has preserved the assemblies from the apostasy of the religious world, for in it the Spirit of God interprets the meaning of the Cross every Lord's day.

In the early days of assembly testimony, godly saints recognized that a physical circle was a beautiful symbol of our gathering around our Lord Himself, and of His presence in the midst of His own. The seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 formed a physical circle to give

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Editor and Publisher: Joel Portman  
1200 Forest Glen Ct. SE,  
Cedar Rapids, IA, 52403  
Write to: [mail@truthsforourday.com](mailto:mail@truthsforourday.com)

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us the picture of our Lord in the midst of His own. Moreover, the physical circle loans itself to the type of meeting that we seek to conduct in the fear of God. We do not go to listen to a lecture where the seats are arranged for the audience to see a man on the platform or in a pulpit. We go to meet around Himself, and where the Spirit of God has liberty to use the variety of priestly functions and spiritual gift for the unfolding of the glories of Christ to every saint.

But the Devil could not leave these little companies alone. He hates Divine simplicity and Scriptural order. Today some have an obsession to change everything. They seek to push the Lord's Supper into a corner and make it secondary to other things. As other things crowd in, the worship of the saints is disturbed. When the emblems are passed around there is no time for the word of ministry, when the hearts of the saints, melted by the felt presence of the Lord, are ready to receive it. Some assemblies are getting used to going through the procedure without the Word of God being opened at all. This new emphasis has created a restlessness among the Lord's people so that, not infrequently, two or three hymns are given out, one after the other, with no exercise on the part of the brethren to rise up and worship.

In many places the physical circle is destroyed. It is too much trouble to have to fix the seats for a more important meeting to follow. Thus the emphasis on the Lord's Supper is only superficial, compared to those early days when it was so precious to the hearts of God's people. A new generation has risen up, with its emphasis on youth and religious entertainment. Yet with all the unbounded activities among the young, there are few that come out with deeper convictions on the things of God and a deeper knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**2. The New Testament church was distinguished as the repository of Divine truth** (1 Tim. 3:14-16). Truth is embodied in Christ, "the truth as it in Jesus." It is enshrined in the Scriptures, "Thy word is truth," and entrusted to the church, "the pillar and ground of the truth." A casual acquaintance with the religious world will reveal that in all, many truths are ignored or denied. Interdenomina-

tionalism exposes God's people to the errors of all. The safety of the assemblies lies in their separation. The role of the assemblies is to maintain a simple testimony to the whole truth of God. Only then will they become a haven of rest for weary saints who, when tired of the whole sham and mixture, seek a resting place for their confused spirits.

**3. Another mark is the freedom of the Holy Spirit to work.** In His sovereignty He imparts gifts (1 Cor. 12:11), and in His freedom He uses it as He pleases (1 Cor. 14). In all ecclesiastical systems this important feature of the New Testament pattern is ignored. One only, is recognized with the right to teach and to preach, and that by human ordination. We must insist on the Spirit's unfettered activity in the assembly, if we are to keep to the New Testament order. Here again we must sound the alarm among the people of God. Any professed assembly that appoints one man to be a pastor over them, runs contrary to the Word of God and challenges the sovereignty of the Spirit of God in His own house. Pastors are shepherds and shepherds are overseers. These are appointed by the Holy Spirit and are in the plural in every New Testament church.

**4. Another feature of early Christianity was government.** Bishops, overseers, pastors, shepherds, elders, are names given to the men who take the oversight in God's assembly. These godly men give leadership to the Lord's people and carry out discipline whenever called for. Christendom is a far cry from this Divine pattern. Some, who never bought the truth, are prepared to sell it for an easy religious life. They speak now of appointing a pastor for each assembly, meaning of course, that he will become preacher and teacher as well. They are willing to pay a good salary to a man who will do all their work for them. This is not just a change of method; it is an infringement of Divine principles and departure from the truth of God.

Today we have acquired great organizational ability until many godly saints wonder if the Spirit of God will be organized out of business. We are convinced that the Devil is setting up machinery in many companies of the Lord's people that will make it easy for their return to Babylon and be swallowed up in the ecumenical

spirit of our age.

**5. Another distinguishing mark of the early saints was a faithful presentation of the Gospel.** In their preaching sin was exposed, sinners were convicted and God's remedy for sin and the sinner was clearly presented. Assemblies are compared to lamp stands to shed the light of truth upon the darkened souls of men. Conversions were accompanied with repentance. Are we producing conversions today without repentance? Are we not too often satisfied with a wishy-washy, sentimental believism? In some places, with a program of chorus singing and a "hurrah-boy" display, the whole thing is geared to attract only children and imbeciles. Let us "quit ourselves like men and be strong." The dignity of the assembly can only be maintained by an intelligence in the truth of God. The Bible anticipates every age, and if rightly interpreted, is more than a match for its opponents today. Let us establish ourselves in its blessed truths, and with humility and courage, carry the battle to the gate of the enemy. Let us equip our young people with the truth so that they will not be ashamed in the college, the university or in the field of their profession. There is enough religious entertainment in the sects. Let the assemblies become in reality "the pillar and the ground of the truth."

**6. Another mark of Divine simplicity was the autonomy of each assembly.** Centralization, either of funds, government or teaching, is contrary to what is written. There is a fellowship of assemblies because we are sharers of the whole truth of God. We should refuse to adopt any silly methods in the work of God that would grieve and offend godly saints that are seeking to maintain Divine simplicity. But in government, every assembly stands upon its own base, responsible to the Lord alone. Therefore we must, in faithfulness to truth, set our faces against any attempt to centralize, whether in teaching, as in a Bible school; or government, as in central oversight; or in funds, as in a missionary society.

Our path then is to walk apart from the religious world. Our aim should be to please our Lord alone and seek to reclaim a knowledge of the truth of God. Then when weary souls, tired of the sham and confusion of Babylon, seek rest, they will find in the assemblies of the

Lord's people little "Bethlehems" where there is "bread enough and to spare" without mixture of the notions of men.

## Spiritual Growth, pt 4

Robert Surgenor

### Judaism's Six Beginnings

Having brought them to this point, he enumerates in Hebrews 6:1-2, the six "beginnings" of Judaism.

(1) *"Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works."* – Notice, not repentance from sins, but from dead works. "Dead works" is only found again in Hebrews 9:14 where is drawn a contrast with O.T. sacrifices and the blood of Christ. Sin is spoken of as wicked works in Titus 1:16, and abominable works in Col. 1:21, but we are not dealing with sin here, but dead works, which were the works of the Levitical service, as Hebrews 10 reveals. Repentance was constantly spoken of in the O.T. Israel was constantly wandering from God, and He was constantly calling them back to repentance.

(2) *"And of faith toward God."* -- Faith toward God, not the Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham was distinguished by his faith in God. Whenever there was true worship of God in Israel, it was done on the basis of faith. God was not known to the Gentiles, but not so with Israel. God had revealed Himself to the nation and given to them a written revelation of His will. Their "faith toward God," was a national thing. Their faith was a tradition received from their fathers, rather than a vital and personal acquaintance with Him. Their lack of faith is exposed in chapter 3, where we see that they failed to enter in to the land because of unbelief. They lacked faith in God's promise to give them the land. The Lord lamented; *"This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me"* (Matt. 15:8). Under Christ, this mere abstract faith had given way to faith in Christ, their Lord.

(3) *"Of the doctrine of baptisms."* – This is NOT Christian baptism. The word is correctly

translated "washings" in Hebrews 9:10. It refers to the various washings of the priests at the laver, the washing of sacrifices, holy vessels, and other ceremonial ordinances connected with approaching God. These washings were designed to impress upon the Jewish mind that one must be undefiled if they are to come into God's presence. See for yourself in Ex. 30:18,19; Lev. 16:4; and Num. 19:19. These washings had no intrinsic efficacy, but were figures of a far better cleansing that was to come through the offering of the body of Christ. Those washings were external and ceremonial and could not make that person perfect as pertaining to the conscience (Heb. 9:9).

(4) *"And of laying on of hands."* – This leads us to the great day of atonement for Israel. *"And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness."* (Lev. 16:21-22). This ritual was an ordinance of God, not man. These ordinances had served their purpose, and were no longer recognized as His ordinances. This can be compared to the serpent of brass (Num. 21). After it served its purpose, it was called just a piece of brass (2 Ki. 18:4). Thus when God displaces His ordinances with something superior, which is the fulfillment of those O.T. ordinances; to go back to those types and shadows is not going back to what He has provided, but going back to "the weak and beggarly elements of the world." That's what the Hebrews were doing.

A number of times in the N.T. we read of the laying on of hands. But that was never an ordinance of God, it was merely a practice indicating approval of another. It has no connection with the portion we are considering.

(5, 6) *"And of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."* -- These were general truths embraced by Judaism. In John 11:24, Martha said to the Lord; *"I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."* Solomon said; *"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether*

*it be good, or whether it be evil*" (Eccl. 12:14). However, under Judaism, there was a vagueness regarding the resurrection and the judgment. That veil of vagueness has been lifted in Christianity.

*"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame"* (Heb. 6:4-6). – We now come to a class of people who have put themselves in a hopeless position. This portion is a "happy hunting ground" for those who teach that a saved person can lose their salvation. However the people now coming under consideration are not saved Hebrews, they are people that falsely professed salvation, but as time went on, turned their backs blatantly against Christ, and returned to Judaism. They were apostates.

### **A Misleading Article**

Recently there appeared in a Christian magazine an article written by a brother giving his interpretation of Hebrews 6:1-9. He taught that these people now under consideration were actual believers, saved by God's grace! The late William Warke once quoted a poem to me. "Wonderful things in the Bible I see. Things that are put there by you and by me." I felt the brother's interpretation to be erroneous, and will show you why. The following paragraphs in italics are those contributed by this young brother.

*"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened." In verse 4, there is no hint that the writer is now describing an unregenerate group of people. First, they are referred to as "once enlightened." The only other use of "enlightened" in Hebrews (10:32) points to those who have had a definite conversion experience. The word for "once" (hapax) often means "once for all."*

The word "enlightened" simply means "to give light, to inform someone of things not previously known." It is unwise to confine the use of this word solely to Hebrews in order to arrive at a conclusion. Christ came into the

world as a light unto all men (Jn. 1:9). Samuel Ridout remarks; "When the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven, at Pentecost, and the full light of divine truth was preached, there was an illumination shed all around." Paul writes; *"Our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel"* (2 Tim. 1:10). Unsaved persons raised under the gospel are enlightened persons. They have received the knowledge of the truth (Heb. 10:26). Peter speaks of those who had a knowledge of the Lord (they had been enlightened), and then turned away, entangled and overcome (2 Pet. 2:20-21). Balaam was enlightened, yet a false prophet. Simon the sorcerer was enlightened and made a profession, yet remained in *"the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity"* (Acts 8:23). The "once enlightened" ones in Hebrews 6:4, were definitely NOT saved.

*"And have tasted of the heavenly gift." Perhaps this gift refers to regeneration itself. Some contend they only "tasted" ("sampled") this gift. However, the same verb (geuomai) is used in 2:9 about Christ "tasting" death for every man. Christ did not "sample" death but experienced it to the fullest extent.*

Why not include Matthew 27:34? *"They gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink."* Christ sampled the vinegar, but did not experience it to the fullest extent.

Limiting one's self to only one verse to prove a point can be disastrous, as we see here. Tasting is not eating and ingesting food, and making it part of yourself. These apostates understood to a certain degree the gospel message, and like the stony ground hearers of Luke 8, received it with joy, but never ate and digested it, making it their own.

The "heavenly gift" does not refer to regeneration, but seems to refer to the Holy Spirit, who is spoken of as a gift in Acts 2:38; 8:19-20; 10:45; 11:16-17. Salvation is also referred to as a gift.

These apostates had an acquaintance with the gospel and even experienced some of its blessedness, which made their sin of apostasy even worse. These are illustrated in Matthew 13:20-21. *"He that received the seed into stony*

*places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."*

And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost." *These individuals "were made partakers of the Holy Spirit." The word "partakers" means "partners" (A. T. Robertson). It is hard to see how someone who is in partnership (or in spiritual fellowship) with the Holy Spirit is not a true believer.*

There is no thought here of "spiritual fellowship." Christians are made "partakers" (a portion) of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12). They are "partakers" of the divine nature (2 Pet. 2:4). However, the word translated "partakers" used in Col.1:12, and 2 Pet.2:4 is a different word in the verse we are considering, and means "companions," something not internal, but external. They had shared in the benefits of the Holy Spirit's workings. They had partaken in the outward privileges of the Spirit's blessings. Consider those even before Pentecost; *"Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you"* (Matt. 7:22-23). Apostates experienced the partaking of the Holy Ghost. This is simple to see.

I remember a professing Christian, with God's help, securing a tent lot from the American Legion. They were hard men, but he moved them to favor me. He had the ability to bring numerous unsaved to my tent meetings, and during those meetings, gave up his false profession, and was saved! This man had shared in the Spirit's workings. He had been a partaker, though unconverted.

"And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." *Taking the word "tasting" to mean what it did in verse 4, we conclude that these individuals fully took in (i.e., received) the Word of God and made it part of their diet.* The writer's conclusion on the word "tasting" is incorrect, and disagrees with all the teachers I am acquainted with among the brethren. Even the Newberry Bible has a reference on this verse to the apostates

in 2 Peter 2:20-22. To "taste" the word of God is certainly not making it part of your diet. John Owen states; "There is a goodness and excellency in the word of God, able to attract and affect the minds of men, who yet never arrive at sincere obedience unto it." The Hebrews, were familiar with all the O.T. Messianic promises of the Scriptures. Under Christianity these promises were exposed more accurately, revealing that Jesus was the Messiah. The apostates had been privileged to "taste" all of this. The only other reference to the expression "good word" is in Jeremiah 29:10; *"For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place."* In tasting this promise, unconverted Jews experienced the fulfillment of it when they returned from Babylon to their own land.

Years ago, I was served a seal flipper for breakfast in Labrador. I tasted it, but certainly didn't eat it. Unbelievers can taste the word of God, but they certainly cannot say like Jeremiah; *"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart"* (Jer. 15:16). Jews had been made familiar with divine truths. They also had experienced the miraculous powers of Christ, which also shall be seen in a coming age.

*"If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame."* Believers can "fall" (1Cor 10:12; Heb 4:11), but in what sense have they fallen? . . . The writer is not talking about falling away from salvation, but about wandering from the path that leads to spiritual maturity and entrance into rest (4:11) by going back to Judaism. However, just as the Hebrews' wilderness failure to persevere did not result in the loss of salvation of millions of Jews, neither would the failure of these Hebrews result in the loss of their salvation. What is in danger is their own spiritual growth as well as loss of reward in the coming kingdom of Christ.

Incidentally, another proof that these are genuine believers is found in the phrase "renew them again" (v 6). If these are unbelievers, how is it possible for them to be "renewed" to repentance when they have yet to repent in the

first place? Also, implicit in the word "renew" is the fact of previous repentance. Notice, too, that it is "repentance" to which they cannot be restored, not salvation.

Believers may "fall" as in 1 Cor 10:12, but in falling, they don't "fall away." To "fall away," is apostasy. When one falls, they go down, but when one falls away, they depart. Our erring writer also mentioned Hebrews 4:11, but seemingly doesn't realize that they were not believers being addressed, but unbelievers. He seems to be confused as to the persons involved in Hebrews chapters 3 and 4. They failed to inherit the land because of unbelief. A picture of failing today to enter into God's rest (salvation) because of unbelief. Thus the following exhortation to the unsaved Jew; "Let us labour therefore (give diligence) to enter into that rest" (salvation) (Heb. 4:11).

We have already considered all the blessings and privileges of these apostates, and in spite of all their blessings, they deliberately turned their back on Christ. The language is strong; They crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. They had trodden under foot the Son of God, and esteemed the blood of the covenant, whereby He has been sanctified, common, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:29). Peter describes them; *"The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire"* (2 Pet. 2:22). Notice, it's not the sheep that turns, but the dog, an unclean animal. The dog represents ones unsaved, and apostates.

This writer cannot see how a person can repent and yet remain unsaved. Consider Matt. 27:3; *"Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself"*. . . Repentance in the unregenerate is simply the workings of nature. In the saved it is wrought by the Holy Spirit. "Renew" means to "restore." The apostates had experienced a change of opinions, character, and service. All for the better. They had experienced all mentioned in 6:4-5. No longer bigoted Jews, they saw Christian truths more clearly. They had become different people, but not new creatures in Christ. But now, having totally abandoned the Christian revelation, it was "impossible to renew them again to repentance." Their doom

was sealed. As another has said; "They had totally repudiated the gospel. It was therefore 'impossible' for the servants of God to renew them again unto repentance, for the all-sufficient reason that they had no other message to proclaim to them – Christ crucified had been set before them. Him they now denounced as an Impostor. There was 'none other name' whereby they could be saved." They had made a curious trial of Christianity, and then rejected it. No Christian could ever join forces with Christ's murderers and thus "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh," and by their apostasy, "put Him to an open (public) shame." Considering the apostate, I am reminded of a city. *"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell"* (Matt.11:23).

Brethren, may the Lord give us grace to feast daily on the good word of God and grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; *"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"* (Eph.4:13). -- AMEN!

It is always the case that those who think much of Christ think little of themselves, while those who think little of Christ think much of themselves.

F. B. Hole

## God's Principles of Unity.

By late John R. Caldwell

The tendency of all sects has always been to consolidate themselves on the principle of confederation. Each sect as it extended sought the amalgamation with it of all who adopted the same views or principles. Then arose the necessity for a constitution and rules, and a definite membership. These might be largely, or not at all Scriptural; but compliance with such rules became the bond of union, and thus, practically the way is barred in each community or sect against further knowledge of many truths.

Outside of all such we have been led, in order to be where one authority only is owned, that of the Lord Jesus Christ; where one final standard is appealed to—viz., the Word of God; and where there is liberty for the Spirit of God to minister by those whom He has qualified and set in the body for the edification of the whole . . . Whatever be our relationships as individuals with the children of God in the various denominations or sects of Christendom (and these must never be ignored), relationships with the sects as such we can have none. The truth that demanded separation at first, demands that the separation be maintained; otherwise the sacrifice of the truth must follow . . . The results of all attempts

### **Forming a Unity of Assemblies**

Such attempts have been so sad and dishonoring to the Lord, that many have naturally recoiled to the other extreme, and the consequence is that attempts at united action and fellowship among Assemblies, which are perfectly right and Scriptural, are opposed and suspected of being a beginning to drift back into organised sectarianism.

If unity be made an object instead of CHRIST, then the end must be disaster. Some have made it the object, and have taken the exclusive position, and God has blown upon it. Others have made it an object, and have in their zeal for union of all Christians consented to sacrifice their testimony as to distinctive truth, thus purchasing the wider fellowship at the expense of unfaithfulness to that which God has taught them. Thus, whether it be the rallying cry of the "unity of the body" or "fellowship with all saints" (both truths of the highest importance if rightly understood) it is equally making unity an object, and the result is disaster to the truth. Properly, unity is a result, not an object.

In building the wall of Jerusalem, each man with his family built opposite his own house, and built upon the old foundation (Neh. 3). Thus acting, there was no need to be concerned about, unity. When the building advanced far enough, each portion would meet with and join on to the next. Thus in time, unity was the result.

That saints are all redeemed by the same precious blood, and all indwelt by one Spirit, and all members of one body, are precious truths. But these do not suffice to secure practical unity or practical fellowship.

### **The Object must be Christ Alone!**

This involves the exaltation of His Name, as the Name that claims the allegiance of every heart, the subjection of every will; the exaltation of His Word as the only statute book whereby His will is made known; the unhindered liberty for His Spirit to unfold its treasures and put each individual in possession of the mind of Christ. Those who were of one heart to make David king were able to keep rank (1 Chron. 12:38). There was no wavering purpose, no double heart, therefore, unity was the result.

It mattered not that few at first identified themselves with the cause of the rejected king; the host increased in numbers and in fervor, and in effectual unity, for David was its center and its object. Let Christ be our Centre and our Object, and subjection to Him in all things our rule, and unity will surely be the manifest result.

Let each Assembly exalt Him and build upon the old foundation, and according to the Divine pattern and plan, and then, like the walls of Jerusalem, there will come in time to be a joining together of all that are so acting out the will of God. Fellowship between Assemblies will be the natural outcome of individual and united subjection to the will and Word of the Lord.

The Word that separates from one Assembly will separate from all, not because all are confederate, but because all acknowledge the one authority. The Word that introduces to one, will introduce to all, not because one is bound by the action of another, but because each is acting in obedience to the same Word and will.

*The gospel is this: I am more wicked than I ever cared to admit, and I am more loved than I ever dared to dream.*

## Soul Winning.

It has been said that "Much modern evangelism is effervescent and superficial and has the wrong aim." Is this true, and if so, what is the remedy? If the aim is wrong the message is sure to go wrong. Therefore, it is imperative that the preacher have the right object before him. God's Word, as in all else, is our guide in this, and 1 Cor. 10:31 supplies the answer: "*Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*" The aim should never be lower than this; it is impossible to over-exalt Christ, but if the aim is solely to win souls then it is too low. It will tend to lower the standard, whereby the Holy Spirit will be grieved and the work hindered.

In order to glorify God, the whole counsel of God should be proclaimed, not just a selection of a few favorite texts. God's holiness and righteousness should be proclaimed just as much as His love. The depravity of man and the law of God must be brought to bear on the conscience, otherwise there will be no conviction of sin and, therefore, no repentance or true faith. People may be rushed through the enquiry room only to become self-deceived professors. The work must be of God, else it will be spurious and Assemblies will be troubled with mere professors instead of being blessed with quickened souls. The late Mr. Ephraim Venn used to say: "The Devil will send people into the enquiry room in order to deceive both them and the preacher."

It is waste of time to draw crowds together to entertain them by worldly methods, relying upon anecdotes and jokes to move the emotions. The Sword of the Spirit must be used in the power of God, as did the Apostles. Peter said: "*Him ... ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.*" It was not because they had been entertained that they cried: "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" It is significant that the word "gladly" is omitted from Acts 2:41 in the R.V. when 'they received the word.' It was a day of repentance for them, not entertainment. John cried: "*Flee from the wrath to come.*" Paul told his hearers that God had "*appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness.*" Such statements were far from effervescent or superficial, but they reached the conscience.

There is no shortcut to soul winning; a price must be paid. It is needful to fall on one's face before God, confessing past failures, seeking His glory and miracle-working power to be shown in the lives of men; also to exercise faith, believing that God will answer prayer in the quickening of souls, so that one can go forward with the knowledge that God is blessing the Word, and having no doubts as to the results.

**There is no testimony associated with the body of Christ; it is always in the individual assembly and individual believers.** S. Maxwell

## Not a Bigot

W. Harrison

A bigot, according to the Century Dictionary, is "a person who is obstinately and unreasonably wedded to a particular religious or other creed, opinion, practice or ritual." Few Christians would willingly be known as bigots. Fewer still there are who do not seem to be such to someone. He whose life is lived with careful regard for the teaching of Scripture must be prepared to be labeled a bigot in these days of "liberal" thought and action. The simple believer must not be surprised, therefore, if he finds the word used in ways that he never thought of. An interesting example came to our notice recently in a newspaper. A journalist, commenting on the religious activities of a prominent politician, remarks that though a member of a particular religious community he is no bigot. "His gifts are at the service of all the churches." By inference we are to understand that it is one of the marks of a bigot that he serves only in connection with the community to which he is definitely attached. In the assemblies of the saints (1 Corinthians 14:33) there are believers who would not come under the journalist's definition of a bigot. They feel free to serve wherever they are invited no matter what the order that obtains among those who invite them. There are others, however, who would not serve save in association with the assemblies with which they are connected. It may not be out of place to set forth briefly why they act thus. The

ascension of the Lord Jesus made gifts to men possible. *"When He ascended on high He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men"* (Eph. 4:8). Every man has his own proper gift from God (1 Cor. 7:7). Grace is given in which to exercise the gift given. *"Unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ"* (Eph. 4:7). We need to remember that a gift is truly a gift. The intelligent Christian wants to know where the Giver of the gift will have it to be exercised and to what end. Of the five gifts mentioned in Eph. 4 two have passed away. Of the three that remain one is to be exercised towards the world, the other two in relation to those who are the fruit of the evangelist's labor. In New Testament times the evangelist sought to bring the converted where shepherds and teachers could function. "An evangelist should seek to have those whom he has been used to lead to Christ, led on and taught in the truth" (W. Lincoln). Shepherds and teachers remind us of the need for corporate fellowship among the saved of the Lord. If we inquire what form this corporate fellowship is to take there can be only one answer. It must take the same form as that exhibited in the New Testament and designated "assembly of God" (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:1). An assembly of God is composed of saints together with overseers and ministers (cf. Phil. 1:1; 4:15). This is what the Apostle Paul set up in every place (see Acts 13 and 14). To such companies the New Testament epistles were written. In such companies the Spirit of God had liberty of administration and the ordinances of the Lord were carried out. In assemblies where there is an endeavor to follow the New Testament pattern there are those who would consider it a transgression to seek to add to or build up anything other than that of which they themselves form part. This is the only logical attitude. To enjoy the fellowship of such assemblies and yet to build up or add to something quite different is tantamount to saying that it is of little importance how the people of God gather or function. But it is of vital importance. Every truth that Paul taught was taught to believers who had a corporate fellowship according to God's will. Can it be right to set up something different? Can one who knows the mind of the Lord in this matter

justify himself in encouraging believers in a wrong course by his presence and help?

It is not a matter of forbidding those who "follow not us" (Mark 9:38). It is not even a matter of criticizing others who endeavor according to the light they have to serve the Lord. It is a matter of serving with a truly scriptural motive. There were some in Paul's day who preached Christ not out of love but in order to cause Paul greater suffering. To serve in view of brethren of merely with a wrong motive but with a wicked motive (Phil. 1:14-18). Nevertheless he rejoiced that Christ was preached. "Christ was preached, but with some He was not the object, or the center. Let us see that He gets His place, not only in our words but in our hearts, and as the One to a glorious whom we gather, and seek to bring others. We may not be able to rejoice in the ways things of some preachers, or to work with them, yet let us be glad that Christ is preached" (W. Lincoln).

In summing up, we remember that many of the Lord's servants, past and present, who have acted on these well defined lines had to "buy the truth," and we cannot do better than quote the words of the first editor of The Believer's Magazine. They were written many years ago and express his firm conviction formed through experience in handling the Scriptures and in moving among Christians of different ecclesiastical persuasions. He wrote, "Where the One Name alone is owned and the one with the Book honored in all its claims, there never will or can be affinity or amalgamation, between an assembly of born-again Christians gathered unto the Lord's Name, and the sects and systems of the world's religion as such. No more can a Christian who has been brought out from these systems, go back to them or help by his presence to perpetuate and increase them. The saints of God who are in them are our brethren and fellow-members of Christ, and as such to be loved and cared for, so far as they will allow and receive it. But the worldly affections and unholy systems that keep them in bondage, and in large measure hold them under their evil spell, we abhor." To those who appreciate the simple teaching of Scripture such an attitude is the only one possible.