Watch and Pray (1989–1993)

Kevin L. Engle

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A Larger Sphere of Service (Fall 1989)

From Watch and Pray, Fall 1989 (Vol. 1, No. 1). By Donald Norbie.

It was during the days of the Judges of Israel. A young man from Bethlehem, a Levite, had moved to the hill country of Ephraim, hoping to improve his fortune. As he journeyed he came to the house of Micah. Micah had a household shrine with his own idols. When he heard the young man was a Levite he was elated. Now he could have a legitimate priest over his shrine and surely the gods would bless him. The Levite agreed to serve him as priest. How could he refuse such a generous offer? Micah contracted with him for ten shekels of silver, clothing and food for each year. At last the Levite had financial security.

But the tribe of Dan was moving up north and came by Micah's house. Spies had told them that Micah had a shrine complete with idols and a genuine Levite for a priest. Six hundred armed men came to the house and demanded the shrine with its idols. The Levite objected, "What are you doing?" (Judges 18:18 NKJ) They responded, "Be quiet, put your hand over your mouth, and come with us; be a father and a priest to us. Is it better for you to be a priest to the household of one man, or that you be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?" (Judges 18:19)

It is logical, isn't it? Here is an opportunity for a greater sphere of spiritual ministry, a larger congregation. Surely God would want him to use his gifts to the full. He would bless these people with a sense of spiritual security and he himself would know greater material

security and prosperity. Would not God want him to take advantage of this opportunity?

To the Levite's mind, already dulled by disobedience to the Word of God, it was the chance of a lifetime. We read, "So the priest's heart was glad" (vs. 20). He joins his larger congregation and leaves the house of Micah.

An amazing story, isn't it? One wonders how a Levite, a custodian of God's Word, could stray so far from the truth. There are many lessons here. Certainly it shows the corrupting power of money and the folly of hiring men to serve God. But there is another lesson that is evident also.

There is the seductive lure of a larger congregation, a larger church. In the religious world ministers candidate for larger and better churches. It is a heady business, this speaking to a large crowd.

For some who have served the Lord in the simple pathway of faith without a salary, such an offer can be very attractive. Here is a large church, an evangelical church with many genuine Christians in it. They are delighted with your preaching and teaching. It is better than what they have heard before. You are approached: "Come and be our minister. We will give you a salary of $40,000 a year, a parsonage in which to live and a car allowance. We have eight hundred members here that need your teaching and preaching. Come with us. We need you, brother."

The preacher struggles in his thinking. This way of doing God's work is different from what he has taught and practiced for some years. But most of the assemblies where he has preached are comparatively small. If he has a congregation of one hundred people,

he does well. In this large church his gift could be used in a much greater way...eight hundred people! Maybe for the sake of reaching all of these dear people he should compromise his convictions and take the position. After all, maybe he has been a little narrow in some of his convictions. And so he agrees to be their minister, their pastor.

Did he do the right thing? Years ago Mr. Alfred Mace, a gifted preacher and teacher, was asked about a man who had left working with New Testament assemblies and had become the pastor of a large church. Mr. Mace thought a minute and then he said, "I don't believe any man's gift is too big for God's principles."

Alfred Mace was right. God prizes obedience to His Word. Even a cursory reading of the Bible will emphasize that truth. No man's gift is too big for God's principles. It is only pride and arrogance that will move us to believe that we must set aside truth so that our "gift" can bless a large congregation.

Whether the crowds are large or small, let preachers be God's servants, bound by His Word.

Editorial (Fall 1989)

From Watch and Pray, Fall 1989 (Vol. 1, No. 1). By Kevin Engle. The same editorial (with the Boyd Nicholson quote) is printed again on page 2 of the Spring 1990 (Vol. 2, No. 1) issue.

Welcome to the first issue of W&P. The organization and the publication have been in the planning and prayers of a number of dear saints for several years.

The aim of the organization and paper is to promote New Testament principles into the 21st century. We believe that those things taught in Scriptures are the principles we must follow, and that those truths found in Scripture are the litmus test for all things.

We desire to see unity between brethren, but not at the expense of Biblical truth. We desire to see evangelism carried out, but not trample other important truths in the process. There is no teaching of Scripture so significantly superior to another that the other may be undermined or discarded. II Timothy 3:16 says that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable..." Verse 17 continues, "That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." It is difficult to see how we can develop in the direction of perfection if the book is imperfect. We see debates regarding inerrancy, infallibility, applicability, and other areas.

It is clear that the present attack is against Scripture. If we believe some of what we are told, God stuttered, and if He did this leaves us free to rewrite Scriptures, to pick and choose what we prefer.

When you hear someone emphasize that we have freedom to do this or that with the passage in contrast to considering what is implicitly taught you can prepare yourself for the best of what neo-scholarship has to offer.

We thank God for those whose much learning has not affected their ability to understand the simplicity of Scriptures.

Our God knows us very well. He gave us all that was necessary for faith and Godliness, and an inerrant Scripture. Why then would we see some relying upon others for Godly counsel and wisdom who have abandoned inerrancy? The proper question is not what's wrong with this or that, but what's right about it. If it is questionable we have an obligation to move on those things of which we are sure. We can be confident in finding solutions to the questions around us in Scripture, be they personal, family, political, or regarding assembly life. We can be certain of this one thing: God has not, does not, nor will stutter. He has no need to compose his thoughts as we do. How thankful we should be that we do not serve an indecisive God. How thankful we should be for the foundation we have in Scriptures. We have so very much to be grateful for.

Kevin Engle

Quotable Quotes (Fall 1989)

From Watch and Pray, Fall 1989 (Vol. 1, No. 1). By Boyd Nicholson.

"Partyism has been the weakening wound of the assemblies from the earliest days, even Corinth. Legalism that demands conformity to a set of man-made rules as a basis of reception, apart from spirituality, keeps many beautiful saints in bondage, while a Liberalism that replaces the authority of the Word with man-made schemes, money-controlled men and organizations, vicariously cut and divide assemblies from coast to coast, and break many hearts."

—Boyd Nicholson

Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness (Fall 1989)

From Watch and Pray, Fall 1989 (Vol. 1, No. 1). By Zinzendorf (1700-1760). No title is printed; the first line is used as the title.

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness,

My beauty are, my glorious dress;

Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,

With joy shall I lift up my head.

This spotless robe the same appears,

When ruined nature sinks in years;

No age can change its glorious hue,

The robe of Christ is ever new.

When from the dust of death I rise

To claim my mansion in the skies,

E'en then shall this be all my plea—

Jesus hath lived, hath died for me!

Lord, I believe, were sinners more

Than sands upon the ocean shore,

Thou hast for all a ransom paid,

For all a full atonement made.

Ah! Give to all Thy servants, Lord,

With power to speak Thy gracious word,

That all who to Thy wounds will flee,

May find eternal life in Thee."

—Zinzendorf (1700-1760)

News you can use... Suggestions Which Have Been Made to Stewards Foundation (Fall 1989)

From Watch and Pray, Fall 1989 (Vol. 1, No. 1). The closing list of stocks is broken up in the scan; a few company names were rebuilt from fragments split across columns (Warner Communications, Ocean Drilling & Expl., R.R. Donnelly & Sons, Minnesota Mining & Mfg.), and "Affiliated Public" is given as it reads.

In September of 1988 the following suggestions were given at the annual Stewards/Interest members meeting in Chicago:

1. To have proper representation on Stewards' Board from the following areas of the country: northeastern, southeastern, northwestern, south central, and southwestern.

2. That the bylaws be amended to require that the Stewards Foundation annual meeting be held sequentially in the several regions of the country (listed in #1).

3. That the bylaws be amended to require that the Stewards Foundation annual meeting be held on weekends to enable delegates unable to leave work to attend rather than have to vote by proxy.

4. That the bylaws be amended to require that a copy of the Stewards Foundation charter and bylaws be mailed to each member assembly. Additionally when there are changes to the bylaws that the updated version be sent notating how it differs from the prior laws.

5. That the bylaws be amended to require a full disclosure financial statement to all Stewards Foundation funds and properties and those of subsidiaries or related organizations be mailed annually to each member assembly.

6. That the bylaws be amended to require that Board members may not serve more than two consecutive terms.

Of the six suggestions, numbers two and three have been followed up on. The September 1989 members meeting will be held in Littleton, Colorado during a weekend on September 30.

On the minutes distributed by Stewards/Interest three of the suggestions brought up at the 1988 meeting were omitted from the record: they were one, four, and five.

To be noted from the 1988 meeting was that 178 member assemblies neither attended nor returned their proxies.

The following suggestions will be presented at the September 30 Stewards/Interest meeting to be held in Littleton, Colorado.

1. Open Interest Ministries membership to those on its mailing list. Currently only Stewards Foundation Board members are members of Interest Ministries, Inc.

2. Develop an elected Board for Interest Ministries with nationwide representation.

3. Cease charging assemblies interest on loans. There are sufficient funds in Stewards' accounts to cover these. Additionally approximately 27 million dollars worth of stocks and bonds are held.

4. Forgive those loans made to small assemblies and/or those assemblies struggling financially.

5. Dissolve Stewards Ministries Inc. which is composed of monies from sale of hospitals ($27,788,763 as of 6-30-88). Its only membership is Stewards Foundation Board of Directors alone. Stewards Foundation's Executive Committee has control of this fund as well as monies lent to assemblies and invested. ($31,165,869.00 as of 6-30-89).

6. Require detailed analysis of employees and Executive Committee's salaries, annuities, and benefits be made available to the membership upon request.

7. Encourage the adoption of the four suggestions made last year which allow for increased accountability and representation by Stewards Foundation to its donors and member assemblies.

One Final Note:

The bylaws have recently been changed to limit input from individuals unless approved in writing 30 days prior to members meeting and approved by the Board or approved by 1/4 of the members and submitted 15 days in advance of the meeting.

These matters have caused a number of concerned brethren from around the country to request increased accountability and representation.

Some of the stocks held by Stewards Ministries, a subsidiary corporation of Stewards Foundation, are as follows:

- Armstrong World Ind. Inc.

- Brenco Inc.

- Schlumberger Ltd.
- Timken Co.
- Cellular Communications Inc.
- Prime Motor Inns Inc.
- Affiliated Public
- McGraw Hill Inc.
- Mead Co.
- Time Inc.
- ARCO Chemical
- American Cyanamid Co.
- Monsanto Co.
- Vista Chemical
- Colgate Palmolive
- IMC Fertilizer Group Co.
- Pfizer Inc.
- Schering Plough Corp.
- Warner Lambert Co.
- Amoco Corp.
- Ashland Oil Co.
- Atlantic Richfield Co.
- Halliburton Co.
- Helmerich & Payne Inc.
- Pennzoil Co.
- Phillips Pet. Co.

- Dresser Inds. Inc.
- Autodesk Inc.
- Computer Assoc. Int. Inc.
- Ecolab Inc.
- Egghead Inc.
- Mentor Graphics Corp.
- Microsoft Corp.
- Oracle Sys. Inc.
- Policy Mgmt. Sys. Corp.
- Sei Corp.
- Sun Inc.
- Boeing Co.
- Ford Motor Co. Del.
- Rohr Industries
- Trinity Inc.
- Bell Atlantic Corp.
- Contel Cellular
- Diversified Energies Inc.
- MCI Communications Corp.
- McCaw Cellular Communications Inc.
- Metro Mobile Class A
- Metro Mobile Class B
- Nynex Corp.
- Pacific Telesis Group

- Tenneco Inc-USA
- US West Newvector Group Inc.
- Vanguard Cellular Sys. Inc.
- Gap Inc.
- Hasbro Inc.
- Home Depot Inc.
- Wal Mart Stores Inc.
- Lin Broadcasting Corp.
- MCA Inc.
- Western Telecommunications Inc.
- Indiana National Corp.
- Danaher Corp.
- Warner Communications Inc.
- Toys R Us Inc.
- Ocean Drilling & Expl. Co.
- Boise Cascade Corp.
- R.R. Donnelly & Sons
- International Paper
- Minnesota Mining & Mfg. Co.
- Tribune Co.
- Air Prods. & Chems. Inc.
- PPG Inds. Inc.
- Bristol Myers Co.
- Johnson & Johnson

- St. Jude Medical Inc.
- Syntex Corp.
- Royal Dutch Pet. Co.
- International Business Machines
- Unisys Corp.
- AMP Inc.
- Cooper Inds. Inc.
- General Electric
- Motorola Inc.
- United Technologies Corp.
- Burlington Northern Inc.
- FPL Group Inc.
- Northern Sts. Pwr. Co., Minn.
- Southern Co.
- USX
- McDonalds Corp.
- Rite Aid Corp.
- Norwest Corp.
- Student Ln. Marketing Assn.

S.P.I. Purpose: Statement of Purpose of Scriptural Perspectives, Inc. (Fall 1989)

From Watch and Pray, Fall 1989 (Vol. 1, No. 1).

The following topics and others recommended from time to time will be addressed in this periodical:

1. The centrality of Christ in the gatherings and lives of believers

2. The inerrancy of the Scriptures

3. The practice of using organizations who have abandoned the inerrancy position

4. The organization of the New Testament Church with particular attention to the concept of the priesthood of all believers and plural oversight versus clergy-laity distinction

5. The autonomy of the local church

6. The conduct of worship in the local church with particular attention to charismatic activity, men's and women's role, and prearranged or directed, non-spontaneous worship at the Lord's Supper

7. The solicitation of funds by workers and organizations of believers

8. "Evangelism" in its Scriptural sense

9. The examination and identification of departures from New Testament principles by para-church organizations

10. The use of consultants and those trained in conflict management or resolution to give advice to assemblies

We will seek Biblically sound contributors of articles to the periodical "Watch & Pray," determine which articles will be accepted for publication by decision of a board of Scriptural Perspectives, Inc., to be called the "Editorial Board."

To summarize: Watch & Pray will seek to cover topics of concern to Christians who desire to follow New Testament principles of gathering, many of which are being undermined and discarded altogether in the interests of following after that "which works" with insufficient regard for Biblical treatment of the matter. As we have seen in past years "it" does not work, God does.

Thy Sorrows, LORD (Fall 1989)

From Watch and Pray, Fall 1989 (Vol. 1, No. 1). By J. M. Jones. No title is printed; the first line is used as the title. The tune line is printed above the hymn.

Tune — 'Tis Past the Dark and Gloomy Night. 8.6.8.6

Thy sorrows, LORD, those toils and tears,

Thy griefs and pains are past,

The crowning glory of those years

We shall behold at last.

Upon the hidden manna then

With wonder we shall feed,

The tale of sovereign grace again

And yet again shall read.

Those words and deeds of love Divine,

The path Thy feet have trod

With radiant glory ever shine

Before the Throne of God.

And to our waiting vision then

That path Thou wilt reveal,

The secrets of Thy love explain

Which love would here conceal.

O hasten that eternal spring

When we shall see Thy face,

And through unending ages sing,

'Tis all of sovereign grace.

—J. M. Jones

Scripture Texts Printed in This Issue (Fall 1989)

From Watch and Pray, Fall 1989 (Vol. 1, No. 1). No title is printed; these are the Scripture texts and the short notice set in boxes around the pages of the issue (page 1, page 2 and the back page), gathered here so nothing is lost.

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." —Philippians 1:6

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places." —Ephesians 6:11,12

"But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand." —Ezekiel 33:6,7

"Praise the name of the Lord your God that hath dealt wondrously with you..." —Joel 2:26

PLEASE PASS THIS PAPER ON WHEN YOU HAVE READ IT. YOU CAN HELP PROMOTE NEW TESTAMENT PRINCIPLES.

Don't Take any Wooden Nickels (Spring 1990)

From Watch and Pray, Spring 1990 (Vol. 2, No. 1). By Carl T. Knott.

That's the way they used to say it in the old days, when some people did actually make wooden imitations of nickels to pass as counterfeit money, thus the saying, which today if used at all, simply means: "don't get fooled." We each need to remember this in the spiritual realm as well, because it has ever been the strategy of Satan to produce counterfeits of the true faith and counterfeits of the true servants of the Lord. Our Lord Jesus said that he is "a liar and the father of lies," and a counterfeit is just that, be it money or people or doctrines; it is a lie, pretending to be the real thing. Today we need the exhortation to "prove all things, hold fast that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21), as Satan, in his determination to corrupt, becomes even more subtle, and as most who profess to be Christians become less discerning and more susceptible due to increased emphasis on pleasure and a loss of interest and ability in personal Bible study. Beware! You could be deceived! Yes, simple people like us in simple Christ-honoring New Testament assemblies, we can be deceived if we are not careful.

Just think of the way the Bible speaks of false things:

- False gods: Isaiah 44:9-20

- False Christs: Matt. 24:23-24; 1 John 2:18

- False Apostles: 2 Cor. 11:13; Rev. 2:2

- False Prophets: Deut. 13:1-5; Is. 8:19-20, 30:10; Jer. 23:9-40; Ezek. 13:16-23; Matt. 7:15; 24:11,24; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1, Rev. 2:20

- False Evangelists: Acts 15:1; 2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:6-9

- False Workers: Matt. 7:21-23; 2 Cor. 11:13-15;

- False Teachers: 1 Tim. 4:1-5; 6:3-5; 2 Peter 2:1; Jude 4; Rev. 2:14-15

- False Pastors: Ezek. 34:1-10

- False Elders: Acts 20:30

- False Brethren: 2 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 2:4

- False Doctrine: Rom. 16:17; Eph. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 2 Jn. 9-10

- False Professions: Matt. 7:21-23; Titus 1:16; 1 Jn. 2:3-6; 4:20

As we reach the end of the age and lawlessness abounds more and more, we also see the prophetic word of the Apostle Paul coming to us with freshness and power, for he warned us as he wrote to Timothy: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1), and again, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers...having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Tim. 3:1-5) and again, "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears

from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). These are serious warnings.

But the trouble is, most of us don't seem to think that any such thing could happen in OUR assembly, and for that very reason it CAN happen, because (1) we are not like the Bereans who searched the Scriptures daily to see if those things were so (Acts 17:11), and (2) we have fallen for the idea of "being accepting" instead of obeying the apostolic exhortation to "PROVE all things," and to "hold fast that which is GOOD." That's God's criteria. What's yours? Do you study your Bible daily? Do you prove all things? Do you know WHY you believe that things are true? Can you give Scriptural explanations, or are you one of those who says, "In my church we do this," or "The preacher says so-and-so," or do you follow attentively along, take notes, come and ask questions, go home and search out the references in the Bible and study them and KNOW what is good and therefore KNOW what to hold fast to? Ours is an age full of deceit and of shallow reasoning that uses orthodox words without going any deeper than the words themselves.

Don't be so easily satisfied, dear believer. Don't take any wooden nickels!

No Uniformity? (Spring 1990)

From Watch and Pray, Spring 1990 (Vol. 2, No. 1). By Donald L. Norbie.

A popular view today would insist that there was great diversity among New Testament assemblies as to how they functioned. A recent statement in "INTEREST" states: "That worries those of us who want all assemblies to be the same. However, if uniformity didn't exist in the time of the apostles, it would be unrealistic to expect it today." (INTEREST, January, 1990, p.2)

Granted, there would be some differences in the time of meetings and in minor details, but was there the wide diversity we find in Christendom today? The implication seems to be that there is no pattern to follow, no guidelines for direction. Are churches then to function in a pragmatic way, each going its own way? On this basis there is no right or wrong way to function as a church. Whatever seems to work for you is right.

Today, churches have a wide variety of structure for leadership. Do we find this variety in the Scriptures? The answer is "No." Leadership was always by a plurality of elders. Elders are mentioned as leading the work in Jerusalem (Acts 11:30). When churches were established Paul and Barnabas were diligent in appointing elders in every church (Acts 14:23). Paul later sent Titus to appoint elders in every city in Crete (Titus 1:5). He was concerned to spell out the qualifications for this office (1 Tim. 3:1-7). Deacons are also mentioned to assist elders in their work. These were appointed as needed (Acts 6:1-6; Phil. 1:1).

Never do we discover the apostles appointing one man to be the bishop or pastor of an assembly. This practice which is so prevalent in Christendom is utterly foreign to the Scriptures. New Testament churches were uniform in their kind of organization. In those churches, spiritual gift was given freedom to develop and function (I Cor. 14:26). Paul does not view this as an option, but a command of God (I Cor. 14:37). A rigid, clerical system which reserves preaching and teaching of the Word for an elite class, the clergy, is a restraint of the Holy Spirit.

Is the breaking of bread an option, to be celebrated once a quarter or once a year? It was a vital part of the weekly function of the early church from Pentecost on (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11). Assemblies seeking to follow the example of the apostle's teaching have had a weekly breaking of bread that is open for spontaneous worship. Ritual is deadening to spiritual worship.

Was the role of women viewed as negotiable? Paul emphasizes that male leadership is necessary, while the role of women in the meetings of the whole church was to be one of quiet learning (1 Cor. 14:34,35; 1 Tim. 2:11,12). This teaching, which is so unpopular today, Paul asserts is a command of the Lord. And he states that this is the universal practice of the churches "as in all the churches of the saints" (I Cor. 14:33). Paul did not seem to allow for diversity in this area.

"One particular instance of confusion growing out of the neglect of order in the control of the gifts was the speaking of women in the assemblies. This custom, like that of appearing unveiled (1 Cor. 11: 3-16), he condemns on the ground that he forbade it in all the

assemblies of Christians." (The Epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians by Arthur P. Stanley, p. 275)

Is the role of the full-time worker in the New Testament a model for today? Theirs was a pathway of faith without begging or solicitation. Christians that were concerned gave gifts to support them and if necessary they would work with their hands to support themselves (Acts 20:33-35). Paul said, "Mimic me" (I Cor. 11:1). Is there a better model for the preacher today?

In New Testament days you could go from one end of the Roman Empire to the other and feel quite at home in the churches. Time of meetings, instruments used, and other minor matters would vary but the basic structure was the same. Today, one can still visit assemblies around the world and feel very much at home. The structure of the fellowships is similar. These principles work effectively in every culture.

For true fellowship there must be some similarity of structure. A Christian from a conservative Protestant church simply does not feel at home in the ritual and pageantry of a Roman Catholic church. A noncharismatic feels uneasy in a church where "tongues" speaking is common and they are "slain in the spirit."

The New Testament does give guidelines for the churches to follow. The apostles claimed divine authority for their teaching "the Lord's commandment." Rather than being swayed by the world's pressure, the Church needs to be the Church, the place where God is sovereign, and His Word is authoritative. The apostle's teaching needs to be heard today even as it was in that

first century. May God raise up preachers and teachers to proclaim that Word faithfully.

You Have Carefully Followed My Doctrine (Spring 1990)

From Watch and Pray, Spring 1990 (Vol. 2, No. 1). By Donald L. Norbie.

Paul in his last letters to Timothy is deeply concerned that the doctrine which he and the other apostles had taught should be preserved and passed on faithfully. The verse above (II Tim. 3:10) emphasizes the importance of this. Paul had taught Timothy faithfully. Timothy had listened carefully, watched Paul's life and understood the message. His life had been molded by that doctrine and characterized by obedience. Paul's last plea to Timothy is to maintain the purity of that doctrine: "Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine..." (II Tim. 4:2,3 NKJ)

There are many lessons to learn from Church history. It is interesting to note how so many movements begin with a strong emphasis on the purity of the Gospel and obedience to the Word of God. The Word of God is emphasized in all of its authority and power. The call is a call to submission and obedience to the King. His Word is the supreme authority. Therefore there is a great stress on preaching and teaching the Word. It is revered as authoritative.

The devil is quick to seek to undermine such a movement. To do this he must undermine the authority of God's Word. False teaching begins to infiltrate the churches and even true Christians begin to compromise.

There are still "false apostles, deceitful workers" (II Cor. 11:13). Satan will corrupt the Gospel if possible or else have it minimized. The inspiration and authority of God's Word begin to crumble, little by little.

An emphasis is placed on education and leaders begin to study in certain seminaries and under certain men who erode their confidence in God's Word. Maybe Moses did not write the Pentateuch. Perhaps Genesis 1-11 is not historical, simply mythological. Perhaps Paul was wrong in some of his teaching: for example, his strong stand on the role of women. Maybe there is no definite structure for the church; each generation must explore its own way.

The list could go on indefinitely. But you say, "This would never happen to our churches!" Don't be too sure. The Methodist Church in this country was once known for being strong on evangelism and fundamental in its Bible teaching. Liberal men gained control of their publications and seminaries and led the denomination into liberalism. True, there are still a few conservatives left in the Methodist Church, but they struggle to survive. The Northern Baptist Churches had the same experience in their history. And one could cite other denominations as well.

Would you believe that some of these same currents are flowing today among brethren assemblies? Some of our brightest young men have come back from certain seminaries with their ideas quite changed. And they are quietly and effectively disseminating these ideas. What are some of these ideas?

The concept of inspiration and authority is under attack. A prominent teacher questions the historicity of Genesis.

Certain commended workers who are teaching in seminaries explain away Paul's teaching on the role of women. In a debate between one of them and a denominational man it is the denominational Christian who defends Paul's position. In a recent book a commended worker attack's Paul's position on women while denominational believers defend it. A professional clergy is also being encouraged, with a salary and a contract.

This influence is now being felt through a prominent assembly magazine in this country. There is a refusal to print any conservative teaching on the role of women in the assembly. But a man who has taken a public position that women should be elders and leaders in an assembly writes a regular column.

There is a refusal to take a stand against the hiring and firing of workers and a positive encouragement to assemblies to hire a preacher to be their resident worker. To live by faith and to depend on the Lord to supply through His people is an antiquated concept. How different it all is from a few years ago!

There is a great lack of doctrinal discernment. Men are now commended to the Lord's work to serve with various missions, even the charismatic, and to teach in various seminaries. Why commend men to a work when it is a salaried position in a seminary? One may as well commend men to teach in a Christian college. Should we commend a man to train clergymen for the various churches? Do we have any convictions about New Testament principles for the churches?

Doctrinal truth used to unite assemblies. All shared certain beliefs in common about how the church should

function. There were minor differences but a large degree of unity. Today the movement is being fragmented by teachers who simply do not have convictions about truth for the church.

Our association as assemblies is a very tenuous bond. It is spiritual and linked to truth. It is not an organizational loyalty. Do not say, "Love will overlook these matters." John, who wrote so much about love also said, "This is love, if we walk according to His commandments." (II John 6) It is time to get back to the Word, to serious exegesis of it, and to a proclamation of its truth. To treat God's Word carelessly is to treat God carelessly. We honor Him as we honor His Word.

Editorial (Spring 1990)

From Watch and Pray, Spring 1990 (Vol. 2, No. 1). By Phil Guikema. Printed on page 2 under the "Vol. 2:1, 1990" masthead. The same page also reprints Kevin Engle's "Welcome to the first issue" editorial and the Boyd Nicholson "Quotable Quotes" from Fall 1989; those are kept with the Fall 1989 issue and not repeated here. The sign-off is cut off in the scan ("Phil Guikem").

Certain New Testament truths concerning the gathering of believers are being ignored in these last days. The Word of God is not man's opinion, but God's revelation. Paul thanked "... God without ceasing because when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God..." (Thess. 2:13)

Though many admit that the early church practiced what Paul taught, they reject that teaching for our day and culture. For example, Paul's teaching concerning the role of women was not meant to apply in only one city or region. Similar instructions given to Corinth were also given to Timothy who was living in Ephesus. Paul did not give cultural reasons for his instructions; rather he taught these truths from a Biblical framework using the Scriptures as the basis for the guidelines given.

What, then, should be our attitude toward those who reject New Testament truths concerning how we should gather? Paul addressed this situation in I Corinthians 11:16: "But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God." Paul would not be contentious about these truths he would only teach them. II Timothy 2:24 states, "And a servant

of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient." The hearer is ultimately responsible for the truths of God's Word which he has been taught.

The question then might be asked, "Why attend Stewards Foundation's annual meeting?" First, because each member assembly is asked to attend or to send a proxy. Second, to voice dismay with the lack of balanced teaching of New Testament principles for gathering of believers in "Interest" magazine. Third, to hold Stewards Foundation financially accountable. Ultimately, they are accountable to the Lord, as this is the Lord's money, not theirs. But they are also accountable to the assemblies of believers they are seeking to serve. Stewards Foundation is the financial enabler of Interest Ministries, and, therefore, responsible for what is being practiced and taught in that organization. We do not desire to debate the truths of Scripture; we only desire to see these truths taught and proclaimed by a magazine that should reflect these truths, and therefore, reflect the assemblies of the Lord's people.

The truth of God's Word may not be popular or "fit the trend." The truth of God's Word may even be a detriment to drawing crowds of people (John 6:60, 66). One might be accused of being "exclusive" or a "traditionalist" for not being open to accept changes which deviate from Scriptures. This, however, does not deter the believer who desires to "walk in the truth" (1 John 3).

—Phil Guikema

Small Group Fellowships: Shall We Replace the Prayer Meeting with Them? (Spring 1990)

From Watch and Pray, Spring 1990 (Vol. 2, No. 1). By Carl Knott.

There is a great deal to be said in favor of small gatherings of believers. They are more manageable, aren't they? Perhaps it is for this reason that when the Lord fed the multitudes he commanded them to sit down in groups of fifty and one hundred. It is certainly easier to get to know everyone and feel a part of things in a small group. The atmosphere is more personal, due to the above, and one is much more likely to receive personal attention. The study of the Word of God can be directed in a much more personal way and prayer can be more intimate at times in smaller groups of Christians. Then, from the pastoral standpoint, it is harder for problems and errors to "hide in the crowd" in a smaller gathering than in a larger one. In this sense we might also understand a bit more about the parable of the mustard seed that grew abnormally into a great tree in whose branches all the birds of the heavens were able to lodge. The bigger the congregation, the easier it is for "birds" to find lodging there. Another advantage to small groups is that they can meet in almost any home and relatively inexpensively, thus being able to channel their funds more directly into gospel work and less into buildings and equipment. On the other hand, the larger congregations usually require special and costly facilities with high maintenance costs. We should therefore recognize that the desire to meet in small

groups is a good one, and with all likelihood those who "preach" small group fellowships have the best of intentions.

So there is a lot to be said for small groups, but when I speak of small groups, I am thinking of small assemblies as opposed to large ones: little assemblies of around fifty to one hundred people. The thought here is that there are advantages to having a small assembly and NOT letting it get too big without "hiving off" or sending out a group to plant a new assembly. As one who has spent quite a fair amount of time in and around some of the advocates of the "small group fellowship" idea, I must say that one of the problems with the idea of "small group fellowships" is that quite often its advocates are not thinking of small assemblies, but of an administrational trick to help keep big churches big, and in particular the "small group fellowship" idea has been presented as a way to do away with the assembly prayer meeting. For that reason, we must object, not to the principle of small gatherings (assemblies) of believers, but to the idea that to renew an assembly, that old fashioned and boring mid-week prayer meeting has got to go! Small assemblies are great, but small group fellowships...shall we replace the prayer meeting with them?

FIRST of all, consider that in early Christianity we see all the assembly meeting together in one place for all four of the activities mentioned in Acts 2:42. Apparently they did not favor one above the other, but considered all four equally important and practiced them with the same regularity. All were meetings of the church, an idea that some seem to have forgotten today in their fetish over deciding "What is a meeting of the church?"

There is no Scriptural example of the meeting of the church being reduced to the Lord's Supper. Therefore, prayer meetings are equally meetings of the assembly, as are worship and teaching meetings. Remember that on the same reasoning that you do away with one as a meeting of the church you could also do away with others!

SECOND, consider that it has been stated that these small groups are primarily for fellowship, "koinonia," to be increased in the church. In one sense this amounts to an admission that large assemblies are not healthy environments for fellowship. So, instead of making small group fellowships, how about making smaller assemblies, not letting them grow above around one hundred people, or dividing big assemblies up into smaller assemblies in various neighborhoods instead of into "small group fellowships"? If you can have a small group fellowship, you could probably also have a small assembly, that is, if anyone is willing to leave the big one and be a sort of pioneer. The idea of staying together in one group and making a name for yourself dates back to the tower of Babel. Those who like to be big might not welcome such ideas, but those who are looking for healthy assembly life will likely find that they are certainly worth exploring! Then, the Bible does tell us that fellowship is important, but it also teaches that every saint should be given to hospitality, which is another answer to the "how to have fellowship" problem.

THIRD, it has been stated that small group fellowships are a good way to have a friendly informal atmosphere into which you may bring unsaved people. If that is really the goal, then why do we see small group fellowships replacing the prayer meeting? Those are two

very different functions. Now then, if evangelism is really the goal, why not keep the prayer meeting (in which we can pray together for the unsaved!) and let individuals with unsaved friends have them into their own homes at other times. That would be a real informal and friendly atmosphere! Remember that a small assembly meeting in a home also provides a similar atmosphere, one that a bigger assembly cannot.

FOURTH, remember that one thing is theory and another is practice, and the practice in many small group fellowships is to minimize prayer, tack it on at the end when there isn't much time left, or even just have one person close in prayer. If this is what is replacing the assembly prayer meeting it is a lamentable and weak substitute. One is tempted to wonder how many people would come to the small group fellowship if it were only for prayer?

FIFTH, it is a fact that a number of these groups disband for the summer and holidays, which of course an assembly doesn't do. Therefore, such meetings must not be meetings of the assembly, or else they would have to admit that their assembly has no prayer meeting for about 1/4 of the year. It would be pretty difficult to name a time of the year when it isn't important to have collective prayer. But then, the apostles weren't familiar with the vacation-oriented western culture. Hedonism was not so far advanced back then.

SIXTH, most of these groups will tell you that they are NOT a meeting of the church. This is an interesting testimony that they give of themselves. In some cases it has been well thought out with the objective of providing a meeting in which women can vocally

participate: leading men by speaking -- teaching, sharing insights, questioning (even arguing sometimes!), and leading the group in prayer, too. You see, since some assemblies have become so preoccupied with what is a meeting of the church, they have found a loophole - declare it NOT a meeting of the church, not because it isn't in principle, but because they don't want it to be. Well, this is an interesting development, because if it isn't a meeting of the church, then you shouldn't try to replace a meeting of the church like prayer meeting with it!

SEVENTH, in some cases it is known that not all of the elders of the assembly even attend these small group fellowships, and not all of the rest of those in fellowship either. While people are encouraged to go, attendance/ participation is not insisted upon as it would be in a meeting of the church. So then, how can a small group fellowship profess to replace the collective prayer that we see in Acts 2:42 was something the Christians devoted themselves to continually?

EIGHTH, if we stop and think about it, what is it that most assemblies need more, another teaching meeting and Bible study or more prayer? How many Bible studies in the assembly are really necessary beyond what is provided by the elders and other teachers on Sunday, and how much more prayer could we use? The spiritual power lost by discontinuing collective prayers will never be regained by adding another Bible study or fellowship time.

NINTH, it is true that much criticism is given to the prayer meeting, and many case histories are cited of dull, dead, unmoving meetings that are, according to

those who tell it, "a waste of time." For this reason they propose small group fellowships as a way of getting a little more "body life" into the assembly. The problem of dull prayer meetings is a real one that all elders should be concerned about and get before the Lord seeking to change the situation. But the solution in this case is wrong, because it does not address the problem. The problem is not the prayer meeting itself, that is, it is not a problem of collective prayer being a faulty idea or a merely changeable method. The problem in most cases is the way that meeting is handled. Without desiring to be unduly critical of brethren with sincere motives, using the prayer meeting for a 1/2 hour Bible study or sermon, followed by ten minutes of explaining prayer requests that go into unnecessary details, followed by fifteen minutes of prayer in which the same brethren pray at great length for the same things in the same order each week, does not stimulate much interest in prayer, nor much prayer. Prayer meeting, it is to be supposed, is convened in order to PRAY. The brethren overseeing each assembly will have to decide how to best avail themselves of the opportunity for collective prayer, but one workable solution to the problem is, instead of disbanding the prayer meeting, take the Bible study or sermon out of it, and devote it as much as possible to prayer, perhaps interspersed with hymns and choruses. Let the whole assembly be gathered together to pray, just as it gathers on other occasions just for teaching and just for worship. Encourage all the men to participate vocally, and the older brethren could be especially mindful to wait on the younger ones a bit and encourage them to pray. Remind the sisters to pray along with the brethren who lead out, and to enter into the spirit of prayer, not just listen to others. Let different

brothers be responsible for organizing the prayer meeting and presenting requests and topics for prayer in an ever-changing and interesting way so that no one can anticipate a "routine." If I may once again speak from experience, I have been in several assemblies where we have practiced this and the prayer meeting has always been one of the best attended meetings of the church with about 90% or more of the assembly present. We have found no need for small group fellowships. Try it before you knock it!

TENTH, and last of all, we should be realistic and recognize that those who promote small group fellowships in magazine articles and seminars on "church growth" frequently report only their successes and not their failures. Let it be mentioned that such groups take up another evening of the week and in doing so make it virtually impossible to have a prayer meeting. Experience has not proven them to be producers of committed disciples, soul-winners, or effective, fervent prayer warriors. They have often operated without any goals more specific than attendance or providing some interesting activity to help keep people in the church. There is a sense in which they make it harder to have time for personal work, one-on-one discipling, or visitation, all of which are certainly needed. It is questionable how much such groups accomplish in terms of tangible, measurable, spiritual progress in peoples' lives. In fact, a more effective way to improve "body life" would be to have a lively assembly prayer meeting, and beyond this to concentrate the attention in hospitality, pastoral visitation, and personal discipleship. Some small group fellowships have actually died out due to lack of interest, and it is doubtful that

many could survive without a lot of high-powered promotion from the leaders, which is something they could do for the prayer meeting instead!

This is certainly not an attempt to argue in favor of a useless tradition, but rather an exhortation not to consider the collective prayer of the assembly less valuable than her collective learning or worship. They are all meetings of the church and all equally important for the life of the assembly. So, if the prayer meeting "isn't working," we should accept the blame ourselves instead of labeling the concept of the prayer meeting "outdated." Let's revive the prayer meeting with all the enthusiasm that others want to put into small group fellowships, rather than replace it, which would be giving it a premature funeral. And what about small groups? Well, if there is really such interest in them, why not opt for small and lively assemblies, because in them no one will be left lonely or unattended, and in such small groups there can be a lot of fellowship!

Editorial: The Ideal Assembly or The Latest Model? (Spring 1990)

From Watch and Pray, Spring 1990 (Vol. 2, No. 1). By Kevin Engle.

Oakdale Community Church (OCC) in Carol Stream, Illinois is viewed by some as a future model assembly. It is patterned after Willow Creek Community Church (WCC) in South Barrington, Illinois, which many regard as the model church and is currently being duplicated by congregations around the nation. There is considerable pressure in some groups to move toward this model.

We do not want to be perceived as attacking the honest convictions of fellow believers, but would like you, the reader, to be aware of the direction some would like to see the assemblies go.

Let us look at the background of WCC and try to understand why so many denominational congregations around the country are seeking to copy it. We will also consider OCC, which was founded by the editor of INTEREST magazine.

A statement in INTEREST magazine last year by the director of their consulting program reads: "The fastest growing evangelical church in the country (and the second largest) is Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois (See TIME magazine, March 6, 1989, p. 60). They use a short drama every Sunday to provoke questions, provide identification with the morning's theme, and prepare the seeker for the

preacher's message from God's Word" (INTEREST, July/ August 1989, p. 19).

A writer for a local Chicago area newspaper describes his observations of one of the meetings: "Each service includes a dramatic sketch that illustrates the sermon theme. When Hybels' [Pastor of WCC] message was on 'The Mystery of Unanswered Prayer,' the sketch involved a husband telling his wife that the adoption they had arranged had fallen through because the mother had decided to keep the baby. 'I hate God,' the woman screamed, words seldom heard in a church. 'Who have I been praying to? I don't have any faith left.'

"And when the message was about sexual passion, the skit featured a young married couple who get caught in an argument between Dr. Ruth and Saturday Night Live's 'Church Lady,' played by a man wearing a dress and a prim hat.

"The music and the drama, as sophisticated and entertaining as they are, merely prepare the audience for the message, which Hybels considers the most important means of reaching the Unchurched Harry."

The writer goes on: "During a recent sermon, he took the congregation on a 'stroll down a street named Desire': 'Think how boring life would be without sexuality,' he said. 'There'd be no country-western music, no swimsuit edition of SPORTS ILLUSTRATED, and Madonna would be unemployed.'"

The reporter continued regarding WCC: "Another striking feature about Willow Creek is that women are in positions of power. Three of the eight church elders are women.

"'My daughter is 11 years old, and it's great for her to see women role models in the church,' said Hybels. 'It's important to me that she knows there can be a place for her in church leadership some day, somewhere'" (by permission of the DAILY HERALD, Arlington Heights, IL, May 18, 1988).

Pastor Hybels has recently signed a document entitled, "Men, Women & Biblical Equality," along with F. F. Bruce, Gordon Fee (whose wife is an elder in their Vancouver, BC assembly), Naomi Cole (wife of Donald Cole, former editor of INTEREST magazine), Peter Davids (who is both a "commended brethren worker" as well as an ordained Anglican priest), Stuart Briscoe, Walter Liefeld (writer of the column "Viewpoint" in INTEREST magazine), Ruth Tucker (who co-authored a book with Liefeld entitled "Daughters of the Church") and many other prominent evangelical leaders. This document portrays men and women as having practically identical roles in society, the church, and the family (see CHRISTIANITY TODAY, April 9, 1990). It seeks to point out that men and women can participate in every area of the local church. One statement regarding the family reads: "In the Christian home, husband and wife are to defer to each other in seeking to fulfill each other's preferences, desires, and aspirations. Neither spouse is to seek to dominate the other, but each is to act as servant of the other, in humility considering the other as better than oneself. In case of decisional deadlock, they should seek resolution through biblical methods of conflict resolution rather than by one spouse imposing a decision on the other."

The document further reads: "In the church, spiritual gifts of women and men are to be recognized, developed

and used in serving and teaching ministries at all levels of involvement: as small group leaders, counselors, facilitators, administrators, ushers, communion servers, and board members; and in pastoral care, teaching, preaching, and worship. In doing so the church will honor God as the source of spiritual gifts. The church will also fulfill God's mandate of stewardship without the appalling loss to God's Kingdom that results when half of the church's members are excluded from positions of responsibility."

The "pastor-teacher" of OCC is listed in WCC literature as one of the participants in a seminar held in June by pastors who have successfully duplicated WCC. Bill Conard, the editor of INTEREST magazine, founded OCC in his home, and Bruce McNicol, the president of Interest Ministries, is one of the five elders there (and came to the 1989 Stewards membership meeting as a delegate representing OCC). Therefore, it is important to understand the pattern being established. INTEREST magazine has a wide readership, and Interest Ministries' funding arm, Stewards Foundation, has substantial financial resources.

A local journalist from a Carol Stream paper describes his visit to OCC: "When we entered the auditorium at Glenbard North High School on a recent Sunday, we were reminded of the stage set-up for the Prairie Home Companion. Several loudspeakers had been placed on the stage. Their wires snaked across the stage to electronic instruments. The entire service had a nightclub or theater feel to it. The special music was a MTV hit song and was accompanied by three backup singers.

"The setting was secular but the message was spiritual. The pastor, Ron Clarkson, spoke on 'The Communication Connection.' This sermon was part of a series titled, 'Recharging Your Marriage.'

"Clarkson gave an energized and practical message filled with suggestions for wives and husbands on improving their interaction. He used illustrations from his own marriage and from television families as he strode back and forth across the stage. Bill [Conard] says about 200 hours of preparation go into each Sunday morning service. Thirty to 40 hours are devoted to practicing the music. Excellence is a key word at OCC. Visitors to OCC receive a phone call from a staff member the same Sunday afternoon. Those interested in joining the church are invited to attend a membership workshop to learn more about OCC and to be interviewed by the church leaders."

The writer continued: "Oakdale Community Church is Plymouth Brethren. According to Bill [Conard] each church is required to have elders, a weekly communion service, a non-stated clergy, and a doctrinal statement. Plymouth Brethren churches are not permitted to have an official association with any other group of churches" (by permission of The DAILY JOURNAL, Carol Stream, IL, May 12, 1990).

According to the OCC bulletin, communion is actually held twice a month on the first and third Wednesday, and there appear to be several designations of clergy: a "Pastor/Teacher," a "Pastor of Creative Communications," a "Pastoral Ministries Director," and a "Youth Pastor." Like most fellowships there is a doctrinal statement as well as elders.

I personally visited OCC and agree with the DAILY JOURNAL reporter's statement that "the leaders of the OCC decided everything possible would be done to keep the nonbeliever in mind." The bulletin read, "our morning service is designed to present the Christian faith at an introductory level..." There was the drama, just like WCC. This particular Sunday it was entitled, "The Return of Sam Spud, Private Eye." Sam was searching for someone who honored father and mother, which fit in with the topic of the morning's sermon. Open Bibles were not necessary, even for the pastor/teacher, as the verses were printed on a handout. The message was part of a series entitled, "Living a G-Rated Life in an X-Rated World," where the pastor continually referred the audience back to the outline. At the end of the service another special number was sung, accompanied by guitars, electric pianos, and drums, and the offering bag was passed among believers and unbelievers.

The concept of WCC as the church standard, or OCC as the assembly standard (since it is the choice of the top men at Interest Ministries) has been met with mixed reviews. Although some eagerly embrace the OCC pattern, others have expressed grave concerns.

For example, Dan Smith, the president of Emmaus Bible College, responded during a question and answer session on April 7 of this year in Duncanville, Texas: "There are a lot of things in current theories (of church growth) that we as an institution and our faculty do not subscribe to." He went on to point out that "the association we have with Interest is in the supervision of one part of one of our degree programs," and stated that at this time there was only one student enrolled in the

program. (This distancing of Emmaus from Interest Ministries is articulated in more detail in a recent issue of EMMAUS TODAY.) Smith continued: "All of these questions relate to the assumption that we are tied in with their (Interest Ministries') financial program, and their planning, and their choice of the Willowcreek thing as a model and all of that... No, we are not in that at all. We have no organizational tie, we have no financial tie in the church planting program and we do not have anyone who is enthused about the church model that the folks at Interest seem to like in the Willowcreek thing."

This is presented for your information as well as consideration. Each local church is independent as well as autonomous and may do as it sees fit before the Lord.

Clearly this model is being promoted in the present day, and it is important to understand a little about it.

KEVIN ENGLE

Interest Ministries (Spring 1990)

From Watch and Pray, Spring 1990 (Vol. 2, No. 1). By Stephen Hulshizer (excerpt); introduction signed "—Ed." (Kevin Engle). A boxed excerpt, marked FROM "MILK & HONEY". The numbered recommendations are split across columns in the scan and have been put back in order (1) to (9). The full article it is taken from follows as the next item.

The following is an excerpt from an article entitled "Conditions and Trends in the Assemblies" by Stephen Hulshizer and available on request along with the monthly paper "Milk & Honey" from:

SPREAD THE WORD

2721 Oberlin Drive

York, PA 17404

Spread the Word, Inc. will also forward funds to workers and issue receipts. Please avail yourself of this ministry.

The article covers trends, terminology, clergy roles, intellectual gymnastics, church planting programs, the women's headcovering, the Lord's Supper and a number of other topics of interest about which the Scriptures are not silent but practices in many places show how far we have gone from the guidance found there.

—Ed.

CONSULTING TEAM. Having read the report of an IM (Interest Ministries) consultant to one assembly, I am deeply concerned about this activity. The assembly spent over $1,500 to have the IM consultant do a survey and make recommendations. The greater part of the

recommendations were either common sense, or those which would turn the assembly away from N. T. principles and towards becoming a "Community or Bible Church."

The following are a few of the recommendations that were made in the report and most likely would be made to any assembly utilizing an IM consultant. Due to space limitations they are made with little or no comment. (The writer's comments are in parentheses.)

- (1) All of the assembly principles in the N.T. come under the umbrella of the principle of "growth." (In the consultant's opinion, numerical growth is thus the ruling principle of the N.T. assembly.)

- (2) Consider changing the name of the assembly from "Chapel" to "Church."

- (3) Clarify the position regarding the women's role in the assembly.

- (4) Leave things like "headcovering" up to the individual.

- (5) Revise the budget to allow the support of a full-time worker.

- (6) Take an offering at the Family Bible Hour, but explain there is no obligation to give.

- (7) Pre-announce the topic for the Lord's Supper a week in advance.

- (8) Have quarterly Congregational meetings. Use "upbeat" music. Keep the meeting "upbeat." Use a strong, but "smiling" chairman.

- (9) Form small group fellowships. "There is no biblical precedent for a Wednesday night prayer meeting in the

Church building. Based on first century practice, prayer and fellowship was from house to house." (Note: The assembly did meet together in homes, but it was not divided up into several homes. [I Cor. 11:18])

In the consultant's 18-page report, only one page contained Scriptural references, and all of those were related to one topic.

GUARANTEED SUPPORT. IM has instituted a program whereby a commended "church planter" will be paid a fixed sum each month by IM when his commending assembly agrees to match it. ($500 per month in the first year, $400 per month in the second year, and $300 per month in the third year.) Being a "commended worker," my concern is not only that this arrangement is not biblical, and will rob the worker of the joy of seeing the Lord provide in His way (I Kings 17: 4,9), but that it will no doubt cause many of the workers in this program to feel obligated to IM. This may also result in IM having strong influence on any new assembly that is planted.

CLERGY AND TITLES. Assemblies are hiring "Pastors." This is a denial of New Testament assembly principles and a turning back to the very clerical system the early brethren left. It is exactly what took place in Israel when God gave them a King. It gives the people what they want, but it is not God's Plan. (Acts 20:17)

Men in fellowships identified with the assemblies are taking titles associated with clergy. This is not only unscriptural (Ps. 111:9), but it is just another step towards the ecclesiastical structure of the denominations.

Conditions and Trends in the Assemblies (Spring 1990)

From Watch and Pray, Spring 1990 (Vol. 2, No. 1). By Steve Hulshizer. Reprinted from "Milk & Honey" (Spread the Word, York, PA), dated 12/89 at the end. It carries its own page numbers in the scan, so it may have been a reprint sent with this issue rather than pages of the newsletter itself. Two pull-quotes that repeat sentences from the body (and one paragraph printed twice) are given only once.

They shall not know, neither see, till we come amongst them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. — Neh. 4:11

Many are concerned about the conditions and the trends in the "assemblies" today. Many assemblies are in poor spiritual condition, while others are departing from New Testament principles in an attempt to grow larger. In both cases the enemy has slipped in unawares. The spiritual condition of some assemblies has slowly deteriorated to where they are about to close their doors. Other assemblies in their desire to grow are slipping away from Biblical principles, perhaps only to wonder at a later date how they departed so far from the Scriptural principles of gathering. (Matt. 13:31-32)

Today, as in Nehemiah's day, there is a need for both workers and watchers. (Neh. 4:16) There is a great need for workers; not only full-time workers, but saints who are willing to work in their local assembly. There is also a great need for watchers; those saints who are alert, and who have spiritual discernment. Those who want to

see growth, but who are also sensitive to any departure from the principles of Scripture. (Phil. 1:9)

Let's look briefly at some of the conditions and trends in the assemblies and related ministries today.

Conditions

1. Oversight. The work of oversight is not being done. Without a working oversight the local assembly will drift, and eventually die, or be taken over by those of a different persuasion. Now is the time for those men who are qualified to step forward and graciously lead the assembly by serving it. (1 Pet. 5:3) It is a hard work, but a necessary and rewarding one. (1 Pet. 5:4) This is not a call for the overthrow of existing oversight, but for men who are qualified and are led of the Holy Spirit to do the work. A prayerful study of Acts 20:17-38, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1: 5-9, and 1 Pet. 5:1-4 should be made by an assembly in this condition.

2. Ministry. "Everyman ministry" of the Word of God has led to malnutrition in many assemblies. This does not justify going to a "one man ministry," but it does mean we should utilize those who are gifted to feed the Lord's people. (Rom. 12:6-8) Those gifted in teaching the Word should be given opportunity to use their gift. Allowing a gifted brother to have several weeks to develop a topic or to teach a book is not unscriptural. If necessary, invite able brethren from other surrounding assemblies to help. Give gifted young men the opportunity to develop their gift by sharing a Sunday evening, or by opening the mid-week Bible study.

3. Personal Witness. There needs to be a renewed interest in witnessing to those the Lord brings across

our path. Instruction and encouragement needs to be given to the saints regarding ways of sharing the Gospel. Mid-week prayer meeting should be a time of praying for boldness to sow the seed, and for that which was sown during the past week. (Acts 4:29, 9:29)

4. Reception and Hospitality. Visitors are often left to fend for themselves. Hospitality is a lost ministry. (Rom. 12:13) We need to stop being so self-centered that we do not even notice others who come in. Our homes need to be open to strangers and the saints. A good study guide on the subject is Using Your Home For Christ by Alex Strauch, available from Lewis & Roth Publishers, P.O. Box 569, Littleton, CO 80160.

5. Singing. The use of everyone to lead singing has led to poor singing in many assemblies. Those able to lead the singing should do so, and do so heartily. Singing should be with the joy of the Lord in our hearts. (Eph. 5:19) Too often singing is merely done to fill in the time before the speaker. We need to understand that good singing prepares both the preacher to preach and the listeners to listen.

6. Apathy. All the problems are not the fault of the leadership or of the ministry; many of the problems are related to the apathy of the saints. Often anything, and everything takes priority over the assembly. To many, attendance at the assembly is just one of several options. To the faithful individual or family it is the only option, excluding emergencies of course. (Heb. 10:25) It really isn't hard to do if we give it the right priority. Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. Shouldn't we as well?

7. Worship. In some assemblies only a few men are able to lead the assembly in worship. The others are unprepared due to the fact that they have not spent time during the week with the Lord and in His Word. Worship can not be "turned on" come Sunday morning. The apathy mentioned above is manifested in the lack of worship offered at the Lord's Supper. (John 4:23) Some have no idea of what worship is and break the flow of worship by interjecting teaching or exhortation which does not direct the mind of the assembly to Christ and His work. Too many feel that they are not gifted to lead the assembly in worship. Gift is not needed to lead the assembly in worship; a heart that is overflowing with Christ is. There is a need for teaching on worship in the local assembly, and for men and women to get back to occupation with Christ and His Word during the week. Women are to be worshiping too, and can have a great impact on the tone of the worship meeting. However, while they are to be worshiping, they are not to lead the assembly in public, audibly worship. (1 Cor. 14:34)

Having expressed these concerns, I am fully aware that an assembly can have good leadership, gifted speakers, faithful witnessing, good singing, committed saints, Christ honoring worship, and still not grow. There are many factors involved in the growth of an assembly, and there is no one formula for success. The work can often be discouraging and difficult. However, the bottom line is not how large an assembly is, but whether it is faithful to both His Word and to His work. (Prov. 20:6) The work must be done in accordance with Scripture (1 Sam. 15:22), realizing that growth is of the Lord. (Ps. 127:1; 1 Cor. 3:6)

The problems are known to most; however, the remedy is not the action that is being taken in many assemblies today. The problem lies not with the Scriptural principles of gathering, but with our Laodicean attitude toward spiritual things in general. This calls for repentance, not a revamping of the principles and practices of Scripture. (1 Sam. 15:22)

Trends

While the problems are known to most, the remedies being promoted today are unknown to many. I receive letters from around the country and I also have the opportunity to minister in a number of assemblies, and quite frankly I am amazed that many of the saints have absolutely no idea of what is happening in the assemblies today under the banners of "Growth and Renewal," the "Progressive Movement," "S.E.E.D." etc. (Is. 56:10) In some cases folks only became aware of the trends after it was too late. Just as there is a need for workers, there is a need for watchers. (Ez. 33:6)

In hopes of being informative, and at the risk of being labeled as "negative," or accused of drilling holes in the bottom of the boat, I would like to briefly state my concerns about the methods and practices being promoted by some assembly related ministries, and adopted in many assemblies. Saints and elders should know these things so they have the opportunity to consider them, and to make "informed decisions" regarding them. This is true regardless of which direction they ultimately take.

1. Concerned brethren. There is a good number of godly and gifted brethren in the assemblies who are deeply concerned about the condition of the assemblies today,

but who are also very concerned with the direction assemblies and related ministries are taking in order to correct the situation. These are not men who have been idle over the years, nor who are sitting idlely by now. They have poured out their lives in His service, and have been used greatly by the Lord. Some are experienced missionaries, others are commended workers and evangelists working at home. They have been, or are active in the oversight of their local assembly. Some have taught at Emmaus and others are graduates. Such godly men from all age groups have personally conveyed to me that they are deeply concerned about what is being promoted and adopted in the assemblies and related ministries today. If godly, gifted, and experienced brethren are concerned, then I'm concerned. (1 Tim. 3:14)

2. Interest Ministries (IM). IM has emerged as the headquarters of the "Brethren Movement." Although originally formed as an organization to serve the assemblies by publishing "Letters of Interest" from commended workers, it has now been adopted by many as the headquarters of the "Brethren Movement," and IM has done little to discourage this. The first concern is of course the fact that there is no earthly "headquarters" for the "assemblies." (Eph. 1:22) Secondly, the organization is using the printed page, seminars, consultants, and available financial resources to promote the "Growth and Renewal" program. Of great concern is the fact that most of the saints in the assemblies are not even aware of what the program promotes.

"Growth & Renewal." The brethren who initiated this movement are to be commended for their concern. But

while their initial concerns about the condition of the assemblies were valid, my concern is that this movement has now put "growth" ahead of Biblical principles. If the program continues in its present course it will do away with the New Testament principles and practices the assemblies have stood for over the last century, and the assemblies will simply be converted to "Bible Churches," in many cases complete with clergy and the other practices that characterize the denominations.

There are many not connected with IM who are using the movement as an opportunity to press their views upon assemblies. Many of these speak of "peace," "unity," and "compromise," when they themselves will stop at nothing short of the institution of their philosophies and principles. In many cases, even to the point of splitting the assembly.

IM "Consulting Team." Having read the report of an IM consultant to one assembly, I am deeply concerned about this activity. The assembly spent over $1,500 to have the IM consultant do a survey and make recommendations. The greater part of the recommendations were either common sense, or those which would turn the assembly away from N.T. principles, and towards becoming a "Community or Bible Church."

The following are a few of the recommendations that were made in the report, and most likely would be made to any assembly utilizing an IM consultant. Due to space limitations they are made with little or no comment. (The writer's comments are in parentheses.)

- (1) All of the assembly principles in the N.T. come under the umbrella of the principle of "growth." (In the

consultant's opinion numerical growth is thus the ruling principle of the N.T. assembly.)

- (2) Consider changing the name of the assembly from "Chapel" to "Church."

- (3) Clarify the position regarding the women's role in the assembly.

- (4) Leave things, like "headcovering," up to the individual.

- (5) Revise the budget to allow the support of a fulltime worker.

- (6) Take an offering at the Family Bible Hour, but explain that there is no obligation to give.

- (7) Pre-announce the topic for the Lord's supper a week in advance.

- (8) Have quarterly Congregational meetings. Use "upbeat" music. Keep the meeting "upbeat." Use a strong, but "smiling" chairman.

- (9) Form small group fellowships. "There is no biblical precedent for a Wednesday night prayer meeting in the church building. Based on first century practice prayer and fellowship was from house to house." (Note: The assembly did meet together in homes, but it was not divided up into several homes. [1 Cor. 11:18])

In the consultant's 18 page report, only one page contained Scriptural references, and all of those were related to one topic.

Guaranteed Support. IM has instituted a program whereby a commended "church planter" will be paid a fixed sum each month by IM when his commending assembly agrees to match it. ($500 per month in the first

year, $400/month in the second year, and $300/month in the third year.) Being a commended worker my concern is not only that this arrangement is not biblical, and will rob the worker of the joy of seeing the Lord provide in His way (1 Kings 17:4,9), but that it will no doubt cause many of the workers in this program to feel obligated to IM. This may also result in IM having strong influence on any new assembly that is planted.

Masters Degree Program. Emmaus Bible College (EBC) has joined with IM in creating a Masters Degree program in Church Planting. The emphasis on "degrees" is one concern. This produces the "haves" and the "have nots," which certainly contributes to the recognition of a clergy. Learning the Word is fine, but spiritual gifts do not carry letters. (Matt. 23:8) Another concern is the exposure of students at EBC to principles and practices promoted by the "Growth & Renewal" movement.

3. Discernment. There seems to be a lack of discernment by assembly related ministries as to who they expose assembly young people and workers to, and how they expose them. (Phil. 1:9) I am afraid the following examples are indicative of the trends in these and other assembly related ministries, and thus are another cause of concern.

IM sent church planters to a Church Growth seminar knowing that C. P. Wagner was one of the instructors. Wagner is well known for his leadership in the "Signs and Wonders" movement. He believes he has the gift of "lengthening legs." He taught The Miraculous and Church Growth at Fuller Seminary. His philosophy of church growth is, "Whatever works, do it!" Is this the philosophy of IM? If IM will expose workers from the

assemblies to an individual with these beliefs, who else might they expose them to? (Must reading concerning the Signs & Wonders Movement—Bibliotheca Sacra, Jan-Mar 1988, pg. 57-82.)

Terminology at Emmaus Bible College (EBC). A "Pastor" of a local Bible Church was invited to speak at the EBC student chapel. I personally met the brother who spoke, and I am sure his ministry was excellent, but for the faculty and student body to continue to refer to him days later as "Pastor" in their normal conversation and in classes, this is another matter. (Matt. 23:8) The concern is that many parents and assemblies send students to Emmaus with the feeling that assembly distinctives are taught, promoted, and practiced there. This action just undermines what is taught and practiced in the home assembly regarding ecclesiastical truth. It also gives the impression to the students that this terminology must be Scriptural since EBC faculty uses it freely. Once the terminology is accepted, acceptance of the doctrine associated with it will not be far behind. (Matt. 10:16)

4. Clergy and Titles. Assemblies are hiring "Pastors." This is a denial of New Testament assembly principles and a turning back to the very clerical system the early brethren left. It is exactly what took place in Israel when God gave them a king. It gives the people what they want, but it is not God's plan. (Acts 20:17)

Men in fellowships identified with the assemblies are taking titles associated with clergy. This is not only unscriptural (Ps. 111:9), but is just another step towards the ecclesiastical structure of the denominations.

5. The Woman's Role in the Assembly. There is no doubt that the "Women's Liberation" movement has made its

way into the Church, and now into the assemblies. The following are a few of the ways in which it has manifested itself.

Intellectual gymnastics. Intellectual gymnastics are being played with Scripture in order to justify the discarding of New Testament assembly practices. For example, one assembly has concluded that women are free to take part audibly in all meetings of the assembly. Part of their argument is that, based on probability and other theories of man, 1 Cor. 14:34-35 is not part of the original text. However, the fact is that all existing manuscripts contain these verses.

Another argument is that Gal. 3:28 eliminates all distinctions between men and women. If this is true, which it is not, then women elders are next. There is a failure to distinguish between the position of the individual in Christ, and the role of the individual in the collective body of Christ. For example, those who pray at the Lord's Supper are not doing so solely as an individual, they are leading and directing the assembly. Individual priesthood must not be confused with leading the collective assembly in public worship.

Public Participation by Women. In a few cases this may even involve speaking from the pulpit to the assembly. This is directly contrary to such Scriptures as 1 Tim. 2:11-14 and 1 Cor. 14:34-35. Some teach that the silence spoken of in the last reference is only conditional; a woman is not to question or judge the prophets, one of which may be her husband. They note that those who spoke in tongues and the prophets were both silenced conditionally (1 Cor. 14:28, 30), and therefore Paul's restriction of women must also be conditional, and not

complete silence. First, note that the passage speaks of women learning, not judging. Second, the fact that the other restrictions are conditional is not a basis for assuming the women's restriction is also conditional. Third, the directive of silence to those speaking in tongues and the prophets was given after the permission to speak had already been given to them (vs. 27, 29); however, no where in the text were the women ever given the permission to speak in the first place. Thus the structure of the text does not support this conclusion.

Headcovering. The headcovering is viewed as "cultural" and as a barrier to growth, and thus is simply set aside as unnecessary. Not only has it been abandoned, but it has been done with the attitude of being "free at last!" (Col. 3:23) Many want to call it "cultural," but at the same time they would get very upset if a brother prayed with a hat on. One could avoid all these intellectual games by simply asking a few questions. "Is it wrong for a sister to be covered when involved in spiritual activities?" The answer is "No." "Is it possible that a sister might be wrong if she does not wear a covering at such times?" The answer is "Yes." Given these two choices, which one would a sister who wants to please the Lord choose?

6. The Lord's Supper. In one assembly the Lord's Supper was moved to a weekday to make room for other activities. In other assemblies a very low percentage of the believers attending the Family Bible Hour attend the Lord's Supper. (1 Cor. 11:26; 16:2; Acts 2:42; 20:7) Many saints are more willing and able to attend the potluck dinners than they are the Lord's Supper.

7. Attractive and Professional Services. Assemblies are patterning themselves after large churches in order to obtain growth in numbers. The following is quoted from a promotional letter sent by one assembly to the neighborhood. "Our Sunday services are upbeat, enjoyable, and inspiring, packed with praise singing, musical presentations, drama, ..." This is Madison Avenue techniques applied to the assembly. The assembly and its program are marketed like cereal, or the local theater. There is certainly the adoption of the marketing philosophy, "sell the sizzle, not the steak." They would do well to remember "that what they win them with, is what they win them to." (1 Cor. 2:4-5) They might also be prepared to have a more attractive program next year, since by then the current program will become routine and folks may begin to leave for a more attractive program elsewhere.

Concluding Remarks

Brethren, we should be concerned about the conditions and the trends among the assemblies today. If you are concerned about the condition of your local assembly, pray for the Lord's working, and commit yourself to strengthening it in accordance with Scripture. (1 Tim. 4:15) Be a worker!

If you are concerned about the current trends, boldly, but graciously commit yourself to stand for Biblical principles, despite the cost. (Jer. 6:17; 1 Tim. 4:16) Pray for the discernment needed to distinguish between man's wisdom, and what is Scriptural. Be a watcher!

In closing this brief consideration of the conditions and trends in the assemblies today, please keep the following in mind. "Poor conditions do not justify the use of

unScriptural remedies, but neither does the absence of unScriptural remedies justify the existence of poor conditions." Do not just applaud the portion of this paper that you happen to like, but be sure to consider the portion that may address the actual condition of your assembly, or the trends it is following.

We can learn from the letters written to the churches in Ephesus and Thyatira. (Rev. 2) Ephesus had correct deeds and doctrine, but had lost its love of Christ. (2:4) Thyatira had love and correct deeds, but had allowed their doctrine to be corrupted. (2:20) Balance is the key. Our assemblies should have the love of Christ and a labor of love, while also holding correct doctrine.

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Steve Hulshizer

(12/89)

"Wishy-Washy" (Spring 1990)

From Watch and Pray, Spring 1990 (Vol. 2, No. 1). By Donald L. Norbie. Placed with Spring 1990 because it sits among this issue's pages in both scans and uses the same page style; no date is printed with it. Scripture references are given as printed (I Cor. 15:8, II Tim. 2:2 twice, I Peter 4:1), though some look like printing slips (perhaps I Cor. 14:8, II Tim. 4:2, I Peter 4:11).

A deacon, commenting on the elders in his church, said, "They are united in giving wishy-washy leadership. They are afraid to take a stand on any issue for fear that they may lose a family from the assembly."

Wishy-washy leadership—is that what God wants? Does that provide true leadership? Should elders, like many politicians, lead by taking a poll to discover what the majority desires? Should not the shepherd set the pace for the flock and give it direction?

"For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?" (I Cor. 15:8) There are too many elders with a vacillating stance. The result is a flock milling about in confusion.

Let those who preach and teach, "Preach the Word" (II Tim. 2:2). Let them "convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (II Tim. 2:2). Having studied the Word and discovered its teaching let them proclaim it fearlessly and with authority. "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God" (I Peter 4:1). Away with wishy-washy preaching!

Let elders become convinced of the truths of God's Word for the local church and let them enunciate and practice

these principles faithfully. Let them give the flock a vision of what a church should be and lead them towards it.

Reject the constantly changing ideas of men that divert you from your vision. Refuse to succumb to the pressures of a pragmatic world. Church growth theories come and go.

Lead the flock in a vision of outreach, a longing to see souls saved and new churches begun. Give them a world vision of God's work. Keep them informed of foreign missions. "The field is the world."

Elders must spend much time in the Word and in prayer. It is the Word that will fire the soul and give conviction, putting iron in the spine. Away then with wishy-washy leadership! May God raise up strong men with convictions to lead His people, men who speak the truth in love.

Let's Hear it for the Assemblies (Spring/Summer 1991)

From Watch and Pray, Spring/Summer 1991 (Vol. 3, No. 1). By William MacDonald. The columns are scrambled in the scan; the paragraph order here follows the sense of the article (Hesselgrave, then Ironside, then Darby). A pull quote repeating the first paragraph has been left out.

There is a reasonable doubt whether any Christian fellowship suffers so much self-criticism as the assemblies. They are not unlike the soldier who shoots himself in the leg, quite oblivious of the enemy who lurks outside. We are living on a "range" where, unlike the song, "seldom is heard an encouraging word." And even more seldom, a word of appreciation. Why is it that critics who have had a rich heritage in assemblies now turn and bite the hand that fed them? Why don't they balance their faultfinding with gratitude?

David J. Hesselgrave, a missionary-author, had his roots in the Pentecostal movement. He subsequently changed his church affiliation but had enough class to express public thanks for what the Pentecostal fellowship had meant to him. He wrote:

"Although my present identification is not with that denomination, I have through the years counted some of my most committed family members and friends within that same communion of the Pentecostal movement. And I am happy to do so. For even though my affiliation has changed I still owe a debt to my Pentecostal upbringing that will never be fully repaid."

In his early Christian life, Dr. Ironside was with the Salvation Army. Subsequently he left to fellowship in the assemblies. I have been told that throughout his ministry, he carried a Bible bound with red leather—red first and foremost for the blood of Christ, but also red for the Salvation Army.

Then, of course, he went on to become pastor of Moody Church, but in all my contacts with him, I never heard him say a disloyal word about the assemblies. He consistently encouraged me to continue to fellowship with them.

It is not that our fellowships are above criticism. It is not that we are in no great need of revival. Of course, we are. But can't we hear a word of appreciation for the monumental contribution that the assemblies have made to the evangelical movement, especially in the area of literature?

Someone described the early Christians as a huddled flock whose only crime was Christ. When I think of the internal pummeling that many assembly Christians are taking today, I think of them as a huddled flock whose only crime is trying to stay as close to the Scriptures as possible.

It is not only the assemblies as they are today. The attacks go back to the early assembly leaders. The sharpest criticism is levelled against John Nelson Darby. Many of those who launch the attacks have, at the same time, glowing words of appreciation for a more modern assembly scholar who denied the inerrancy of the Scriptures. No one ever accused Darby of that! He knew that if the Bible contains error, it is not divinely inspired.

Sure, we do not agree with everthing Darby taught. But doesn't he deserve a salute for his accomplishments? He tramped for months on end over the Wicklow mountains of Ireland and saw hundreds of Roman Catholics won to Christ. Then he moved to the Continent and ministered for twenty-six years without unpacking his suitcase. He often subsisted for days at a time on acorns and milk. New Testament assemblies were established wherever he went; he was an authentic church planter. One day he sat in a cheap Italian boarding house, cupped his chin in his hands, and sang, "Jesus, I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow Thee." It was true.

Darby translated the Bible into English, French, and German. One such translation would normally be considered a life-time work. His collected writings fill thirty-four volumes. His Synopsis of the Books of the Bible has been used far beyond the confines of the assemblies. And even some of his most ardent critics have been known to sing his hymns—songs of spiritual depth and worship. The entire evangelical world is indebted to him for his monumental contribution to the restoration of dispensational truth, the truth of the New Testament church, the pre-tribulation rapture, and the pre-millennial return of Christ.

Does a man like that not deserve an occasional kind word along with the vilification that is heaped on him?

It is time to fire the wrecking crew and call in the builders. It is time to balance criticism with appreciation and gratitude. It is time to avoid the stigma of the saying, "If you can't do, critique." We should all remember Spurgeon's words: "Blame comes best on the back of praise."

An Open Letter to Stewards Foundation (Spring/Summer 1991)

From Watch and Pray, Spring/Summer 1991 (Vol. 3, No. 1). By Ted Dippy (Dr. Theodore Dippy). Placed in this issue because in both scans it is on page 2 directly above the Vol. 3:1 (1991) masthead, and it was written after the 1990 members meeting, so it cannot be in the Spring 1990 issue. A few letters lost at line starts are restored in square brackets. A pull quote repeating a sentence of the letter has been left out. The exhibits "A" to "D" mentioned in the letter are not in the scan.

The following letter was sent by Dr. Theodore Dippy on August 30, 1990. Many of the issues discussed at the 1990 meeting were not listed among these concerns, as there was no access to the financial records for the period ending June 30, 1990. The letter is printed in its entirety.

To the brethren of Steward's Foundation Board of Trustees:

Greetings in our Lord's blessed Name. Again we come with certain suggestions which we believe would improve the relationship between the assemblies nationwide and Steward's Foundation.

Uppermost among these is the need to dissassociate yourselves from Interest Ministries, Inc. That organization with its "church planter" training and support program and its "consultant" activity has served (either directly or indirectly) to divide over ten assemblies that we know about and to endanger numbers of others.

In as much as you are their chief source of funds and their only membership and in as much as some of your executive committee members act in some kind of official capacity for Interest Ministries (see exhibit "A") you also then bear responsibility for, as Elijah put it, "troubling Israel."

Requiring them to develop their own corporate membership from among the assemblies and not having Steward's board members as part of that membership would tidy up the relationship with them a great deal. [It w]ould also relieve a lot of criticism directed toward Steward's board because as of now you all are the only access to or agency through which Interest Ministries board can be approached.

Secondly, there is a need on your part for more attention to Steward's Ministries' investment practices. It seems inconsistent with the doctrinal position and objectives of Steward's Foundation, Inc. and borders on irresponsibility before the Lord as stewards of His money to hold (as of June 1989) 2000 shares valued $120,750.00 of Time-Warner Communications stock—a corporation which controlled MTV, Madonna, 2 Live Crew, HBO and Cinemax (see exhibits "B" & "C").

Thirdly, we are continuing to ask for salary and other compensation information from Steward's and Interest Ministries particularly for managers and officers of the corporation. Although we were promised access to that information at last year's corporate meeting in Denver, John McCallum has refused to mail us that information or to allow it to be seen in Wheaton, at Steward's headquarters. We would like to know if he or any other employees of Steward's are also being compensated by

Interest Ministries or Steward's Ministries; and if so, what are the salaries and compensations or benefits involved?

Finally, we would like to see more definitive and perhaps restrictive guidelines developed by the Steward's board as to the executive committee's license to loan or give away the Lord's money to workers and churches which, respectively, barely subscribe to principles of or merely resemble New Testament church organization.

It looks to us that the new by-laws of Steward's entrust far too much authority to the executive committee for distributing funds, i.e., transactions from $10,000.00–$50,000.00 for operating or capital expenditures and loans to assemblies from $50,000.00–$500,000.00 (exhibit "D"). Who makes decisions for expenditures of capital or operating expenditures of less than $10,000.00 and loans less than $50,000.00?

Thank you in advance for your consideration and the opportunity of discussing these matters during or after our membership meeting.

Yours in our Blessed Lord,

Ted Dippy

What is a Darbyite? (1990–1991)

From Watch and Pray, Uncertain — late 1990 or Spring/Summer 1991 (Vol. 3, No. 1). By Donald L. Norbie. Issue not certain. In both scans this page comes after the Spring 1990 pages and just before the Open Letter of August 30, 1990 and the Vol. 3:1, 1991 masthead. It carries the "WP" logo used from 1991 on, and fits beside William MacDonald's defence of Darby in the Spring/Summer 1991 issue. The Open Letter that follows it has been placed in 1991-spring-summer-v3n1. Kevin should confirm which issue this one belongs to (most likely Spring/Summer 1991).

James exhorted long ago, "So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:12). The lives of believers will be judged by the Lord and this includes their words. Be careful, dear Christian, of your words and how you speak of other Christians.

Today some seem to love to accuse others of being Darbyites. This has become a pejorative term, a way to slander another.

So what is a Darbyite? John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) was a well-educated man who became a prominent Bible teacher in England. He traveled widely, spoke often and wrote voluminously. He knew Greek and Hebrew and translated the Scriptures into English, German and French. He also wrote some beautiful hymns. He had a massive intellect and a very real love for the Lord.

Darby was one of several prominent brethren in England and Ireland who was interested in a revival of New Testament simplicity for the churches. Sadly a division

erupted and Darby became a founding father of an exclusive branch of the assemblies. Through his labors these spread to Europe and North America.

What were some of this interesting and controversial man's ideas? First of all, he believed the church was in ruins and could not be recovered to function as it did in New Testament days. Only Apostles could appoint elders. Therefore, no church today should have elders. The men in such groups function as a body, with perhaps one man dominating the work. Those who believe churches should have elders are not Darbyites. Muller, Chapman and Groves were among early brethren who opposed Darby in this.

Darby also believed in a confederation of assemblies. Only those who were part of that association could break bread (the Lord's Supper) in their churches. Those who welcome all true believers at the Lord's table are not following the tradition of Darby.

Mr. Darby also systematized and propagated a strongly dispensational view of Scripture. Along with this he was an avid student of prophecy and taught a pre-tribulation rapture of the Church. This teaching was encapsulated and popularized in the Scofield Bible. Again many of the early brethren disagreed with Darby on his views.

John Nelson Darby has been with the Lord for over 100 years. By now we can be sure that all of his theology is perfectly orthodox, as ours will be one day!

Christians of various persuasions hold all, some or few of his views. Very few of the men called Darbyites today would accept all of his ideas. Darby was a Christian who loved the Lord, a godly man. Why villify his name today

even though one may disagree with some of his theology?

And let us guard against slandering believers. It is better to spell out specific doctrinal differences than to cast guilt by association. One's tongue can destroy a brother's reputation. "Beloved, let us love one another" (1 John 4:7).

A New Name Written Down (Spring/ Summer 1992)

From Watch and Pray, Spring/Summer 1992 (Vol. 4, No. 1). By R.E. Harlow. Reprinted by permission from "A Call To Simplicity," Everyday Publications Inc. The columns on page 1 are scrambled in the scan; the paragraph order here follows the sense of the article. Two words lost at line starts in one sentence are restored in square brackets. A pull quote repeating a sentence of the article has been left out.

It is a great joy when a soul gets saved and a new name is "written down in heaven." Is the same thing true if a new name is given to a denomination here on earth?

Antidenominationalizationalism

This paper is not so much against denominations as such, as against the attempt to force a fellowship of New Testament assemblies into a common mold.

To denominate means to name or give a name to. Denominationalism is the tendency to separate into religious denominations. So we can use the word denominationalize as the verb, and call this trend denominationalization. Anyway, we are against it.

Of course it would be "more convenient" to have a name. People demand to know what church you belong to. This pressure often comes from Christians who accept the truth of the one Body, yet feel they must continue to use divisive names. It is easy to succumb to this and say, I belong to the Peebees or the C.B.'s.

Sometimes it is necessary to use some name for government purposes, but the unwary may go far beyond what is required. Apparently [they] do not realize the inevitable trend [of] such a practice.

Many in assembly fellowship shrink from the name Plymouth Brethren and at first it might seem that Christian Brethren is more palatable. Are not both of these names in the New Testament? True, Christian and brethren are two of the four most common names used in Scripture for members of the Body of Christ. The other two are believers and saints. These four words each have a different connotation but all four in the New Testament apply equally to all who trust in Christ in this dispensation.

But now, at the end, just before Christ comes, a small and insignificant group of churches begin to use two of these names exclusively for themselves! Of course they say any true believer can join at any time. Until then they are Christians and brethren, but not Christian Brethren! What egotism!

Perhaps I should not say that this has never been done before. Actually an order of Roman Catholic laymen has been called Christian Brothers since 1680. Recently the order has been facing litigation in California for non-payment of taxes by the Christian Brothers Winery. The prior use of this name can hardly bring comfort to those who wish to use it for themselves today.

On the other hand, others are using this combination of two names as referring (properly) to all believers. For example, the coordinator of an evangelical conference in Peru requested "the fervent prayer of Christian brethren around the world" for the Congress. The same phrase

was used by a worker in Eastern Europe asking prayer for the Lord's people there. Perhaps we too should use this name as applying to all believers?

Of course the phrase is really redundant because all Christians are brethren and all brethren in the New Testament sense are true Christians. The term "brethren" is far from an official title as may be seen in the frequent misspelling of the word (brethern). Surely if official everybody would at least know how to spell it correctly!

Besides being unscriptural there are great practical difficulties. Who can use this name? Any company that breaks bread weekly and has elders? Some such company may hold evil doctrine or tolerate immorality. Can other assemblies keep them from using the name Christian Brethren? Not unless you set up a control group with legal authority to say who can use the name and who cannot.

So with an official name and a control group you have at once the two essential features of a denomination.

You say it would be easy to set up a doctrinal standard and a practical code to which all groups must subscribe. But a little practical experience quickly shows how easy it is to evade any such standards, and groups disciplined could go to court on grounds of discrimination, defamation of character, etc.

It should be said that we have a tradition to be proud of and we should be loyal to the brethren movement. We can well be thankful to God for the early writers, but we must insist on loyalty only to Christ and the Scripture. All human leaders are bound to fail.

Christian Brethren sounds like the name of a denomination (perhaps that is why it is desired by some). But people come expecting to find what is not there. They are told that this congregation is just an independent assembly, no headquarters, president or governing board. They would properly feel that they had been deceived.

Each believer should worship and serve in fellowship with an undenominated New Testament assembly. Such assemblies may cooperate in projects without inter-control.

There are plenty of denominations already, 250 or more, according to Dr. Frank S. Mead (Handbook of Denominations in U.S., Abingdon Press, 1975). Here is a sampling:

Church of the Brethren, Social Brethren, Brethren Church, River Brethren, Brethren in Christ, United Brethren, Churches of Christ, Christian Church of North America, Christian Nation Church, Christ's Sanctified Holy Church, Church of Christ (Holiness), The (Original) Church of God, Christian Congregation, Christian Union Church of God (Apostolic), Church of God by Faith, Church of Jesus Christ etc.

For most of these Dr. Mead gives the address of denominational headquarters or chief official.

At this time what the Christian Church does NOT need is another denomination. Some in Corinth said, I am of Christ. Some today, We are the CHRISTian Brethren. Is Christ divided? Let us keep His Word and not deny His name, nor usurp it for ourselves in contradistinction from millions of others equally beloved by the Lord.

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CHANGES—Is There a Right Way? (Spring/Summer 1992)

From Watch and Pray, Spring/Summer 1992 (Vol. 4, No. 1). By Phil Guikema. Words lost at line starts in two places are restored in square brackets. A pull quote repeating a sentence of the article has been left out.

There are many reasons being given today to change the way the assemblies meet and function. Some would suggest that the assemblies will one day die out and become extinct if they do not change. Others imply we cannot be effective in today's society with "old methods," or that the assemblies will not grow numerically without changing our ways.

There are many different ways believers in Christ meet and function. Which is the right way? Should our decision be based on how one is raised, his upbringing? Should our way of meeting be based on whether visitors attending the meeting are comfortable and at ease with the proceedings? Should this decision be based on what will be most effective in reaching people?

A distinctive among the assemblies has been the desire to follow as closely as possible the manner in which the New Testament church met. To fol[low] this pattern, though, is not commanded in Scripture. Those who choose not to follow the New Testament pattern of meeting are nowhere condemned by God in the Scriptures. The early church met to break bread in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7) on a regular basis. Yet nowhere in

Scripture do we find a command to break bread every first day of the week.

Sometimes the pattern of breaking bread weekly is offensive to people. Having the Lord's Supper every Lord's day does not "fit" peoples' agenda or "mode" of worship. Some visitors may be uncomfortable with the women wearing a covering (I Cor. 11). Having men with the gift of teaching on the platform rather than a "Pastor" makes some people nervous. The role of women specifically in the areas of biblical submission and non-leadership when the assembly meets does not fit the agenda of some today. These issues have always [been] unpopular.

A letter from Lawrence Chambers, written in 1943 to a family in South Carolina adequately conveys this unpopularity.

Dear Brother,

So glad to hear from you and so thankful to learn that you and others are standing true and firm for the truth and God-given principles of assembly order. This, however, has always meant but one thing—unpopularity and isolation. All down through the centuries this separation from man's systems brought reproach and puts those of us who want to go according to Scripture into a pilgrim place. But God is honored by such faithfulness and though it is very difficult and testing yet His grace and blessing will ever be with you.

I realize how much you need help and so does the Head of the Church—the Lord Himself. I am praying constantly that He will sustain you all in His path of testimony and if it be His will, to increase your numbers and so strengthen your hands. I am in Kentucky now

holding gospel meetings in a tent. Shall be busy for some time but whenever I can do so, I will try to get over to see you and hold some meetings. I cannot promise much these days with difficult traveling conditions but will seek the will of the Lord about it further. Meanwhile keep your eyes up to Him who knows all about your heart's desire and He will meet your need as a group even though you are no more than Matt. 18:20 speaks of. There are many such small groups all over the country.

Love to you all in Him,

Lawrence Chambers

We do not hold to the New Testament pattern of meeting because it is the most accepted way of meeting in our society; it clearly is not. We follow this pattern because it is in Scripture. We cannot change Scripture to comply with the manner in which we desire to meet. The standard must remain the Word of God. Are man's ways superior to God's ways?

Statement of Purpose of Scriptural Perspectives, Inc. (Spring/Summer 1992)

From Watch and Pray, Spring/Summer 1992 (Vol. 4, No. 1). The numbers of the list are scattered in the scan; the order here follows the printed numbering. Item 11 already appears in this issue.

The following topics and others recommended from time to time will be addressed in this periodical:

1. The centrality of Christ in the gatherings and lives of believers

2. The inerrancy of the Scriptures

3. The practice of using organizations who have abandoned the inerrancy position

4. The organization of the New Testament Church with particular attention to the concept of the priesthood of all believers and plural oversight versus clergy-laity distinction

5. The autonomy of the local church

6. The conduct of worship in the local church with particular attention to charismatic activity, men's and women's roles, and prearranged or directed, non-spontaneous worship at the Lord's Supper

7. The solicitation of funds by workers and organizations

8. "Evangelism" in its Scriptural sense

9. The examination and identification of departures from New Testament principles by para-church organizations

10. The use of consultants and those trained in conflict management or resolution to give advice to assemblies

11. Concern over current trends expressed in the article "The Neo-Brethren"

We will seek Biblically sound contributors of articles to the periodical "Watch and Pray," and determine which articles will be accepted for publication in keeping with S.P.I.'s stated purpose.

To summarize: "Watch and Pray" will seek to cover topics of concern to Christians who desire to follow New Testament principles of gathering, many of which are being undermined and discarded altogether in the interests of following after that "which works" with insufficient regard for Biblical treatment of the matter. God's principles do not change with the times.

Spiritual Revival and the Lord's Supper (Fall/Winter 1992)

From Watch and Pray, Fall/Winter 1992 (Vol. 4, No. 2). By David Dunlap. The endnote numbers in the text did not survive the scan. The endnotes are "Continued on Page 8," and page 8 of this issue is not in either scan, so only the first two endnotes are given. The columns on page 1 are scrambled; the paragraph order follows the sense of the article. A pull quote repeating a sentence of the article has been left out.

Today, as never before, the practice of the Lord's Supper stands in jeopardy. There are many who are questioning its significance. Others are minimizing its importance. Some, who tell us that new wineskins are needed, are now celebrating the Lord's Supper on Wednesday evenings, or at birthday parties and wedding anniversaries. Others allege that the regular celebration of the Lord's Supper is an obstacle to church growth. They state that Scripture never commanded us to celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly. Long accepted principles of biblical worship are now being replaced by modern marketing techniques. Clever numerical growth strategies using sociological and demographic studies are competing with the standards and the patterns of the Word of God. Saddest of all, in many assemblies the Word of God is losing this all-important battle.

If the pages of Christian history could speak, they would raise their uncompromising disapproval. Was there ever a true revival where there was not a return to true worship? Was there ever a time that the practice of the Lord's Supper was not a mark of genuine revival? Would

we dare neglect to examine our own spiritual condition when worship of Christ at the Lord's Supper no longer attracts our hearts? Can our hearts remain unmoved and indifferent when churchgoers crowd in to hear a 10-piece rock band and drama presentation at the 11:00 service, while there are so few true worshippers found at the Lord's table? Has the church exchanged holiness and reverence in worship for the atmosphere and glitter of late night television? Where are the true worshippers? Can it be that the neglect and planned de-emphasis of the Lord's Supper is simply a sign of our own spiritual poverty?

In every great spiritual revival, the renewed emphasis and interest in the Lord's Supper was God's stamp of approval upon that movement. Interest in the Lord's Supper was never a detriment to spiritual growth. The most powerful spiritual awakenings in history have often been characterized by a two-fold renewal in worship: firstly a renewal of simplicity in the practice of the Lord's Supper, then a renewal of spiritual appreciation for the Lord's Supper.

Simplicity of worship has often been a great characteristic of true revival down through the centuries. Elaborate ceremony and arranged worship will almost without exception lead to dead ritual, which neither pleases God nor satisfies the heart of man. A true mark of spiritual revival time and again has been a return to worship in simplicity and the rejection of forms and ceremony of the established churches. The Wesleyan revival in England is a striking example of this practice. The Spirit of God began to work in the hearts of a small company of believers. As they studied God's Word, they were convinced that these principles should

be put into practice. In simplicity they attempted to put into practice what they found in the Scriptures to be true. Soon the power of God began to change the hearts and lives of these men. As their lives changed, their hearts were burdened. Soon, to celebrate the Lord's Supper simply as the New Testament instructs them became their passion. One researcher writes of how the Lord led in their lives. In November, 1729, four young gentlemen of Oxford, Mr. John Wesley, Mr. Charles Wesley, Mr. Morgan, and Mr. Kirkham of Merton College, spent some evenings together in reading chiefly the Greek New Testament. To the original four, others were added to the Club, one of whom, John Clayton, son of a Manchester bookseller, led the members in a new direction. In his father's shop he had read many of the early Christian writers and was constantly illuminating discussions with references from the same. Soon the group eagerly embraced the early church practice of the weekly Lord's Supper. The evangelical revival quickly became a revival of worship as well. Hundreds of eager converts crowded into their once near-empty parish churches to receive communion often, to the consternation of the religious leaders who were unused to such enthusiasm. The evangelical leadership were quick to restore, first monthly, and then weekly communion services.

The simple way of worship also found its way into the life of believers in the north of Great Britain. Fifty-eight years later in Scotland, James and Robert Haldane, ministers of the gospel, traveled in a carriage and were well supplied with tracts which they themselves wrote, printed, and distributed. They spoke in churches and schools, but chiefly in the open air. Hundreds, and

sometimes thousands, gathered to hear them; there was much power in their testimony and many were converted. At the fair at Kirkwall, three to four thousand listened daily, and on the Lord's day some 6,000 gathered to hear. Following the principle of the New Testament, they began to take the Lord's Supper each first day of the week. Robert Haldane recalled, "I began practicing the Lord's Supper monthly. Afterwards I became convinced that on the principles I held, that I ought to observe it weekly. I met with a few individuals who erected themselves into a church; and I am convinced that any group of Christians may act as we did."

An accompanying hallmark to the simplicity in worship has been a great heartfelt appreciation of the Lord's Supper. A leading feature of spiritual revival has been the tenderhearted affection present in remembering the Lord Jesus Christ in His death. In America the gospel went forth to the Indians in New Jersey through the missionary David Brainerd. Here, as in other places, as the Spirit of God mightily moved in the hearts of men, the spiritual revival was accompanied by a sincere appreciation of the Lord's Supper. David Brainerd wrote in his journal on July 13, 1746, "There appeared tender affection in the assembly under divine truth; my soul was also somewhat refreshed. I administered the Lord's Supper to 31 of the Indians. God seemed to be real and present among us. The worshippers were sweetly melted and refreshed. O, how they melted when the elements were first uncovered. There was scarcely a dry eye among them when I took off the linen, and showed them the symbols of Christ's body."

A renewed appreciation of the Lord's Supper was not unique to North America or Great Britain but was also present in the mission fields of South America. After a number of months of preaching the gospel to Indians in the Ecuadorian jungle, missionary Jim Elliot had seen a small band of believers gather together as a New Testament church. Their desire to remember the Lord in His death began to burn in their hearts. Jim Elliot wrote in his journal on January 16, 1955, "With a small nucleus of baptized believers they began having a simple meeting for the breaking of bread, when Christ was exalted and worshipped. No one taught; the words of men were few. Hymns of adoration were sung, prayer was offered, and gradually the new believers began to understand the meaning of worship, offering to the Lord the love of their hearts, with simplicity and sincerity. Others began to observe this gathering from the outside. There was not much to watch. The room where we met was the schoolroom: bamboo walls and floors, thatched roof, backless benches. A small table stood in the center of the circle with a loaf of bread and a cup of wine. The Indians gathered quietly, and sat barefooted and reverent around the symbols which spoke to them of the death of their Lord Jesus, whom they had so recently come to know and love. One by one the young men would take part, suggesting a hymn, or praying, while all joined in lifting their hearts to Christ. Reminded of His death, they also thought of His coming again, and frequently ended the meeting singing 'Be happy, believers, Christ is coming.'"

Throughout the centuries the weekly practice and the genuine appreciation of the Lord's Supper was an indication of the spiritual strength of the Christian

church. The past is the great interpreter of the present and a safeguard of the future. A worshipping assembly is a spiritually robust assembly. Biblical orthodoxy leads to worshipful doxology. The pattern is plain throughout history; when the church began to forget the Lord in worship, very soon thereafter she also forgot her calling in the world. When we ignore the voice and testimony of history we do so at our peril. May the church of the 1990s soon realize that the sincere appreciation and the regular practice of the Lord's Supper is a measure of her spiritual strength.

Endnotes

1. Bruce McNicol, "Too Often", Interest Magazine, (November 1991): 3

2. Donald Bridge and David Phypers, Communion: Meal That Unites (Wheaton, IL. Harold Shaw Publishers, 1981), 124

[A passage here could not be read in the scan.]

Progressively Worse (Fall/Winter 1992)

From Watch and Pray, Fall/Winter 1992 (Vol. 4, No. 2). By S. Hulshizer. Placed in this issue because both scans put it after the Vol. 4:2 pages. The article speaks of the Stewards Foundation board election as "upcoming" and of legal action as only "considered," which may mean it was written in early or mid 1992.

But David remained at Jerusalem. 2 Sam. 11:1

While the battle was being fought elsewhere, David was relaxing in Jerusalem. David had taken his armor off! Now he was vulnerable to the devil, who walks about "seeking whom he may devour."

After enjoying his afternoon rest, David strolled upon the roof top at evening. Little did David know that in a few short moments the course of his life, and the life of his family would be drastically changed.

David's downfall had started some time earlier when he took "more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem." (2 Sam. 5:13) David had lowered his standards to those of the surrounding world. This practice may have become "legal" in Israel's society, but it was not God's standard for the king. (Deut. 17:14-20) David had drifted to the norm of society. His standard was no longer the Word of God, but that of the pagan world around him. (Rom. 12:2)

David unintentionally comes into temptation. As he walks on the roof top he sees a beautiful woman bathing. Unlike Joseph, David fails to flee. (Gen. 39:12; 1

Tim. 6:11) He learns of her, only to be informed that she was another man's wife. However, his mind was made up and, despite the warnings of others, David presses on.

While David's sin of adultery was great, perhaps the sin which followed was greater. What was done in secret threatens to become public knowledge—the woman with whom David had committed adultery is "with child." Now David is faced with two choices. Confess it, or cover it up. Like Pilate, David chose the position of honor and the favor of the people over that which pleases God. (Matt. 27:24; Gal. 1:10) Having chosen to cover up his sin, David goes deeper and deeper into sin, and things got "progressively worse."

David is desperate and turns to deception, but when it fails he is left with one last option, that of destruction. Uriah must be killed! All sensitivity to sin seems to have left David. All this is a result of David's attempt to cover his sin and protect his position and reputation.

Some time later, the Lord sends Nathan to David to reveal his sin to him. In a very dramatic way Nathan leads David to see the awfulness of his sin. Knowing now that the Lord had full knowledge of all of his actions, without hesitation, David confesses. "I have sinned against the Lord." (2 Sam. 12:13) While the Lord graciously spares David's life, there would be the natural consequences of sin. The child would die, and David's kingdom and family would never be the same. (2 Sam. 13)

The downward steps of sin are often slow at first, and thus not so easily detected. However, the further down

ones goes, the more rapid the fall. The lessons for us are numerous.

- Beware of the beginnings of sin.

- The refusal to acknowledge our sin leads to more sin.

- The length to which the human heart will go to maintain a position of honor and power before men. (1 Cor. 10:12)

A Similar Downward Spiral

In recent years the assemblies have witnessed a similar downward spiral. While not involving sexual immorality, it is nevertheless similar in its downward progression.

In 1946 Stewards Foundation (SF) was established to assist assemblies in the erection of new buildings by providing loans to those who may not have been able to obtain one through normal business channels.

Over the years many assemblies fell victim to spiritual apathy, and the size of many local fellowships began to decline and a number even closed their doors. This was of great concern to many, and some men, with all good intentions, came together to discuss "growth and renewal" in the assemblies. Subsequently, "A Call To Renewal" was published in INTEREST magazine, but some, seeing the direction in which the movement was headed, refused to sign the document and left the group. Giving no heed to the early warnings given by these brethren, the remaining members of the group pressed on.

A young man was hired in 1985 to be President of Interest Ministries (IM), which would be the headquarters for the movement. A new editor for

INTEREST magazine was also hired, and it too would be utilized to promote the movement. Later, International Teams (IT) and IM would work together on the SCOPE (Spring Consultation On Pastoral Enrichment) conference at which the movement would also be promoted. (It is no mere coincidence that many who are in the "progressive movement" today have attended SCOPE in the past.)

The influence of the movement began to be noticed, but unfortunately for the wrong reasons. Many began to notice that New Testament principles were being set aside in order to encourage growth. As the Growth & Renewal Movement gained momentum, so did its opposition. There were those who began to express concern directly to the assemblies, rather than to leaders of the movement. Some questioned the sending of "church planters" to the "How To Plant a Church" seminar at the Charles Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth, which is headed by the leader of the Signs & Wonders Movement, Dr. C. Peter Wagner. (The President of International Crusades (IC—later IT), and the Executive Director of Stewards Foundation had previously attended the seminar with "church planting trainees" from IC in November of 1983.) The reduced emphasis on the Lord's Supper and the emphasis on numbers were also of great concern to many. The verbal participation of women in public gatherings and the deliberate abandonment of the headcovering characterized a good number of churches in this movement.

Not only did the movement press its unscriptural methods upon the assemblies, but in a number of cases, assemblies were actually "taken over." In other

assemblies a split occurred and a number of saints were taken off to start a "new work."

The President of IM and the Editor of INTEREST magazine became leaders in a new church in which worldly methods were utilized to present a shallow Gospel. Since these men were also the leaders of IM and the Growth & Renewal Movement, the use of these practices was of great concern to many.

The movement, with all of its financial backing, began to run the extravagant Decade Of Promise conference. The conference scheduled in December of this year is estimated to cost nearly $1,000,000.

In September of 1988 some concerned individuals began to attend the Board meetings of SF, and to ask some questions concerning the funding of this movement and other ministries. In September of 1991, through the use of proxies, the Board of SF was changed. Finally the funding of this movement could be stopped—wrong!

The new board members and the member assemblies of SF were unaware that in February of 1989 the Boards of SF and SM (the same individuals were on both boards at that time) met to secretly separate SM, and $30,000,000, from the control of SF and thus the control of the member assemblies. In their determination to instill this "aggressive" program in the assemblies, these men, led by a few of their leaders, had deliberately, unethically, and perhaps illegally, secretly voted to maintain control of $30,000,000 in assets which they needed to fund this movement, and in particular IM, which receives 60% of it operating income by way of gifts from SM.

Despite their efforts to cover it up for almost three years, what was done in secret was about to become public knowledge. Would they admit to it, or like David, would they pull out all the stops in an effort to protect their reputation and $30,000,000? They chose to conceal the matter.

IM, which until this time, simply ignored any opposition to its program, now began to strike back. A 69-page apology was published and sent to selected assemblies and individuals. This apology openly attacked a number of brethren, one of whom was Bill MacDonald, a faithful servant of the Lord for many years who had expressed concern over the movement.

Later, a memo was sent to all those on the INTEREST mailing list informing them that the mailing list had been stolen, when no such thing had ever happened! On the other hand, IM's mailing list was apparently made available to the Grace Bible Chapel, St. Louis, MO. This mailing list was used by the Chapel (Jim Frankel) to send out information to the assemblies in an apparent attempt to draw attention away from the central issue, that of the secret vote to separate SM and $30,000,000 from SF and the subsequent cover up. Not mentioned in this letter was the connection between the group and at least two SM board members who were soliciting funds for a $50,000 fund which was to be used to support the group's attempt to influence the upcoming election of SF Board members. Strange behavior for a group which claims "neutrality" in this issue!

When the new Board of SF heard of the secret vote to separate SM from SF, they requested that all assets be returned to SF and the member assemblies. This was

refused, and several legal opinions were sought by SM in an effort to justify their unethical, and perhaps illegal act. SF also sought legal advice which clearly indicated that the vote was illegal and violated Illinois law. Being convinced that the law of the State of Illinois requires them, as trustees of a non-profit organization, to seek to regain the control of these funds, the SF Board considered legal action. This legal action would be in the form of a "declaratory judgment." In simple terms, this is a request for a judge to determine if the secret vote was legal. (There would be no jury involved, and no witnesses, simply two lawyers presenting written arguments to the judge for his consideration and ruling.) It would not be a lawsuit against the individual Board members of SM.

However, as an alternative to legal action, the SF Board proposed that the two organizations present the case to a retired Christian judge, with the agreement that his ruling would be final. This too was rejected by the SM Board.

Now the real issue is the Growth & Renewal Movement. Like David, the leaders and financiers of the movement failed to heed the early warnings of others, and pressed on despite the carnage the movement left in its path. When challenged, they took secret, unethical, and apparently illegal action to protect their domain. When the public became aware of the secret vote, the leaders and financiers of the movement used the advantage of the palace in their attempt to divert attention away from the movement and themselves, to others. They have even gone to the point of attempting to destroy the reputation of some.

What will bring this terrible episode to an end. Hopefully, it will be the broken and repented hearts of those men who have determined to instill this divisive and unscriptural movement in the assemblies at all cost. It is time for those men who are financing the movement to admit that in their zeal they have made a mistake. Rather than letting things continue to get "progressively worse," may these men have the willingness, which David ultimately had when confronted of the Lord concerning his sin, to confess their failures. All of the carnage which this movement has brought about in the assemblies far out weighs the good that it reports to have done, and their willingness to admit their mistake is the only thing which will save the assemblies from further damage. If they will not acknowledge their mistake and cease funding the movement through IM and IT, things will no doubt continue to get "progressively worse."

Decade of Pragmatism or Decade of Principle — Interest Ministries Decade of Promise 1992: What Would God Say??? (February 1993 Special Report)

From Watch and Pray, February 1993 Special Report "Decade of Promise" (Vol. 5, No. 1). By Stan Engle. Signed at the end "SGE". The pull quote on page 1 ("We have no license to change the principles prescribed for us in the New Testament. They cannot, they must not be changed.") repeats a sentence from the closing paragraph and is not repeated here.

Stan Engle was raised in a home that practiced and taught New Testament principles. When he left home to go into the Air Force he no longer fellowshipped in an assembly. For 10 years he was involved with various churches, including a community mega-church with charismatic leanings. Four years ago through study of the Scripture he "rediscovered" New Testament principles for the church, and returned to assembly fellowship. Stan is the President of "Life Issues", a pro-life organization in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma committed to saving unborn children. "Life Issues" also distributes books on New Testament principles at conferences and fairs. Stan is also involved in real estate restoration.

This is a first hand report of what one person saw and experienced at the Interest Ministries "Decade of Promise 1992" (DOP).

It is a limited, yet hopefully insightful observation of a gathering of over 1600 people, of which a majority would claim to be part of a local brethren assembly. I am saddened with the continued direction that is being taken, and regret that such a report needs to be written.

There is no denying that the organization and attention to detail was superb at the Interest Ministries DOP. The music was professional and the multimedia presentations were clear and graphic. It was evident that a great amount of effort had gone into this conference. Over $1.2 million was spent by Interest Ministries (and participants) in just four days. Was the time, money and effort worth the dividends we can expect? What will the Christians going back to their newly pioneered "assemblies" report?

Will it be that Benny Hinn's (a well known charismatic television faith healer) new book, "The Anointing" was offered at the DOP bookstore? That in a comedy routine during the main session it was announced (in a way meant to be humorous) that Madonna would be signing her new book at the Author's Autograph Table? That "Heritage USA", the Christian playground founded by Jim and Tammy Bakker, had a booth in the ministry expo? That there was dancing in the aisles to the music of Ken Medema, entertainer extraordinaire? That books by MacArthur, Swindoll, Burkett and Dobson were in abundance at the DOP bookstore, yet books on solid Biblical New Testament church principles were as scarce as icicles on the Sahara? One could find a sumptuous meal at the Hyatt Regency restaurant, but expositional teaching and Biblical ministry were few and far between. One had to wade between the jokes, entertainment and sarcastic innuendoes about the

"brethren of the past." Countless awards and recognition were showered at DOP. Jesus said, "How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?" (Jn. 5:44). We have become award-crazed with the Oscars, Grammys, Tonys, Addys, and Pulitzers. Recognition from our peers makes us feel good about ourselves and what we have done. We have become more concerned about what others think of us than what the Lord thinks. Honor should be shown to those in the Lord's work. Honor is seen in respect for the teaching received, by our godly heritage, faithful elders, those who discipled us and missionaries who have served the Lord, doing the Lord's work, looking to Him alone for their support and rewards.

The honor shown at DOP is honor the world seeks and appreciates: our name in lights, spotlights, loud music and trophies. These accolades bolster the flesh and say to the rest, "See, our methods work!!" Bill Conard [editor of Interest Magazine and co-founder with Bruce McNicol of Oakdale Community Church-Ed.], told me at the end of the conference that, "Our assemblies should be places that honor people - people places." Is honor recognition of those who have served faithfully and seen success, or is it thankfulness to the Lord for the things HE has done, waiting for His words, "Well done thou good and faithful servant" (Mt. 25:21)? We don't want to be sounding trumpets announcing our good works, lest we hear the words, "They have their reward" (Mt. 6:2). Is our goal to satisfy the Lord or is it the recognition of people that we seek? John the Baptist aptly stated, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30). In his letter to the Colossians Paul says, "And He is the head of

the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in ALL things HE may have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18). We certainly cannot fault those who received the awards, who in most cases were probably embarrassed to be unexpectedly applauded by 1600 people. What sort of trophies did the early Christians expect for their faithfulness? Reproach, stones, fire, scorn, death. Some day our work shall be made manifest and tried with fire. Then we will know if the building is made of gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or stubble (I Cor. 3:12).

One hundred and twenty seminars were offered at DOP to train people in subjects concerning leadership, evangelism, finances, youth work and many other topics. The tapes will be offered as a resource library for Interest Ministries. A common thread of the training seminars that I attended (whether in missions, the local church, or leadership) was that a worldly business type approach should be adopted. Instead of Biblical standards, we were constantly challenged with demographics, statistics, trends and projections. We were told to base our methods of evangelism on changes seen in society. In a seminar we were told [by Kevin Dyer-Ed.] to consider the fact that "charismatics" comprise 70% of all Christians in the world. We heard that we have the need for "power encounters" [Vinyard-Wimber faithhealing terminology-Ed.], which include healing and deliverance to demonstrate the Gospel to pagan cultures. A great emphasis on pragmatic ministry was evident. This approach says, "does it work?? Do it!!"

From start to finish DOP was a carefully planned, painstakingly orchestrated and executed production to impress the attendee with the resounding message of

bigger is better, open-minded is smarter, and entertainment is "ministry". Recently a missionary on furlough voiced his discouragement to me with the state of things in his home assembly: "The religious entertainment was such that the only thing lacking was for the elders' wives to come down the aisle selling popcorn." As we see such methods employed, the question that comes to us is this - what is it that truly makes God's kingdom advance? That is a very relevant issue in our days when the popular techniques of how to grow a church are increasingly reduced to the sociological dynamics of successful group activities. Psychological and sociological techniques may produce very entertaining results, but they are completely powerless against the realm of Satan, and they have nothing to do with a relationship with Christ. The same dynamics work equally well in any false cult, or in the meeting of a local bridge club. A true work of the Lord requires that we tap into the power of God (Zech 4:6), and according to Scripture, we make that vital connection primarily through prayer. Do we still believe this?

A mountain of literature was distributed at the conference, in the main sessions, seminars and at the EXPO. Literature was also given in the public areas by different individuals. On the last night of DOP I offered a small booklet to people passing in the hall entitled "What I Have Found," written by Mark Frees, which outlines his experience of seeing New Testament principles at work in a local assembly. He was a pastor of a denominational church for six years until 1990, when he became aware of the New Testament pattern for the assembly. I was soon challenged by Interest

Ministries [Bruce McNicol-Ed.] and told to stop immediately. This seemed to be a biased action that was due to the nature of this booklet.

In the final analysis we need to consider where we have come from and where we are going. Are changes made so that we may appeal to the world? Are we willing to sacrifice principles to increase our numbers and be "successful"? Today the fashion is to despise everything that is old. There is a morbid readiness to throw aside all things which show the least bit of antiquity, and to treat them with as little respect as last year's almanac or worn-out clothes. I am not speaking against change of any kind. Methods should change and, in fact over the years, there have been many changes in the methods and means employed by local assemblies and missionaries abroad. But we have no license to change the principles prescribed for us in the New Testament. They cannot, they must not be changed. We cannot deny the headship of Christ, the presidency of the Holy Spirit, and the priesthood of the believer. Many of the changes occurring today deny these principles. We must diligently study the Scriptures, seek His guidance and choose to honor Him. Will this be a Decade of Pragmatism or a Decade of Principle?

SGE

Do New Testament Principles Matter to God? (February 1993 Special Report)

From Watch and Pray, February 1993 Special Report "Decade of Promise" (Vol. 5, No. 1). Listed on the front-page contents box as "There is a time... Where is....This is the time" Partnership International, page 3. Unsigned; the text speaks for SPI ("write us at SPI").

A document "PARTNERSHIP INTERNATIONAL" was circulated in November 1992 to a select group of individuals seeking endorsement prior to its formal announcement. We sent copies to various assemblies and workers in the US and Canada in late November 1992 to alert them to this impending new para-church organization. As of mid-January there is no evidence of an announcement, which causes us to wonder why its announcement has been delayed, whether the name will be changed, or that it might have possibly returned underground. If you have not seen this document, write us at SPI, and we will forward one. A stamped self-addressed envelope will help us keep costs down. The following is an update of our article included in our November mailing.

For a number of years several organizations including "SEED" (Fellowship of Evangelical Churches, organized primarily by Stan Farmer & Brian McLaren) and NABRF (North American Brethren Research Fellowship organized by David Dunbar, Rex Koivisto, and others) have operated mainly behind the scenes in the United States and Canada. Their concepts and objectives to a

large extent have been embraced and supported by INTEREST MINISTRIES, and the "church planters" they have trained.

This movement is in the process of subtly surfacing in the form of an organization called "THE PARTNERSHIP INTERNATIONAL," a spin-off of the "leadership development, evangelism and church planting program," and church consultation functions formerly performed by INTEREST MINISTRIES.

Their initial announcement was recently mailed to a carefully selected group of potential endorsers together with a solicitation of an endorsement letter (the four initial core supporters whose signatures appear on the cover letter were Stan Farmer, Kevin Dyer, David Dunbar and Bill Thrall). According to the mailing, after obtaining initial endorsements, "THE PARTNERSHIP" was to have been introduced publicly in early December. At the DECADE OF PROMISE more details were to be given and a timeline shared for its start-up and program implementation. This was to have been its official launch. Its direction would be entirely from within, without any accountability as it had been determined that it would be a "self-perpetuating" (governed) ministry.

Of special note was wording in the endorsement such as "join together" and "a wide variety of churches and ministries."

The November 10 announcement (with signatures of Nelson Annan, Bruce McNicol, Bill Conard, Mike Hamel, Andy Holloman, and Paul Regan) said that its organization had been coordinated with "leaders from across the continent" and membership was open to "any

person, church or organization that believes in its vision."

Among its goals were such phrases as "Leadership conferences", "Leadership link bringing local leaders and top-level church and management leaders together regularly for encouragement and mentoring" (SCOPE), "Think Tanks - for interdisciplinary learning and developing resources for growing leaders" (NABRF nomenclature) and "mentoring with accountability and a farm system for developing new planters."

Of special interest on the signature page was the idea that those in membership would have "exposure to the resources of other service organizations." A substantial number of INTEREST's present church planters have attended courses directed by C. Peter Wagner of Fuller Seminary at the encouragement and recommendation of INTEREST MINISTRIES personnel who have also attended his seminars.

Although the initial announcement denies that the foregoing is "a movement or denomination", a written or verbal denial cannot change the essence of its activity.

Please prayerfully consider the entire situation and obtain all of the facts before unwittingly endorsing "THE PARTNERSHIP INTERNATIONAL." The article "The Neo-Brethren" is the clearest description and illustration of what is being "pushed" by the foregoing organizations. Does God really need the help of a "better idea"???

Where is "The Partnership International" for whom "Now Is The Time"?

It appears that this organization is intended to be the North American lynch-pin to its English counterpart ("The Partnership", organized a number of years ago, has done irreparable damage to New Testament assemblies in England) and its predecessor "Partnership" in New Zealand. Could it be that their initial intention was to get this North American organization in existence prior to the "International Brethren Conference on Missions" to be held in Singapore in June of 1993 (successor to the Pan-Brethren conference held in Manila, Philippines in 1989)? Calls to the organization's phone number in Illinois in early December were answered "Partnership". Subsequent calls to this number are now answered "Interest Ministries."

Statement of Purpose of Scriptural Perspectives, Inc. (February 1993 Special Report)

From Watch and Pray, February 1993 Special Report "Decade of Promise" (Vol. 5, No. 1). The numbers of the list are scattered in the scan; the order here follows the printed numbering and matches the Statement of Purpose in earlier issues, item 11 ("The Neo-Brethren") also appears in the Spring/Summer 1992 statement.

The following topics and others recommended from time to time will be addressed in this periodical:

1. The centrality of Christ in the gatherings and lives of believers

2. The inerrancy of the Scriptures

3. The practice of using organizations who have abandoned the inerrancy position

4. The organization of the New Testament Church with particular attention to the concept of the priesthood of all believers and plural oversight versus clergy-laity distinction

5. The autonomy of the local church

6. The conduct of worship in the local church with particular attention to charismatic activity, men's and women's roles, and prearranged or directed, non-spontaneous worship at the Lord's Supper

7. The solicitation of funds by workers and organizations

8. "Evangelism" in its Scriptural sense

9. The examination and identification of departures from New Testament principles by para-church organizations

10. The use of consultants and those trained in conflict management or resolution to give advice to assemblies

11. Concern over current trends expressed in the article "The Neo-Brethren"

We will seek Biblically sound contributors of articles to the periodical "Watch and Pray," and determine which articles will be accepted for publication in keeping with S.P.I.'s stated purpose.

To summarize: "Watch and Pray" will seek to cover topics of concern to Christians who desire to follow New Testament principles of gathering, many of which are being undermined and discarded altogether in the interests of following after that "which works" with insufficient regard for Biblical treatment of the matter. God's principles do not change with the times.

A Special Note (February 1993 Special Report)

From Watch and Pray, February 1993 Special Report "Decade of Promise" (Vol. 5, No. 1).

Watch and Pray is sent free of charge and is supported entirely by the free will offerings of Christians and assemblies interested in promoting the expressed aims of SPI as stated in its purpose. Watch and Pray is produced approximately twice each year as funds permit. Special reports and the mailings of the Committee of Members are also done from SPI on a funds available basis. We will continue to determine on an ongoing basis the role of SPI and Watch and Pray.

We serve the assemblies, and function with a private board of directors. Current directors are Kevin Engle, Ted Dippy, Phil Guikema and Grady Dollar. As we enter our fifth year of service in this unique ministry we would like to express a deep appreciation to those who have stood by us in prayer and financially. We have received hundreds of letters and cards, and due to time and budget restraints it is not possible for us to respond to all of them. The Lord has blessed this work in ways we could not have imagined, and we hope to continue as the Lord allows. Thanks again for your part.

A report on the Christian Brethren Course & Consultation — Regent College Summer School, Vancouver, BC, June, 1990 (February 1993 Special Report)

From Watch and Pray, February 1993 Special Report "Decade of Promise" (Vol. 5, No. 1). By Stan Engle. Dated July 20, 1990, and printed on a Watch & Pray page that follows the Special Report in both scanned copies (not in the separate Special Report file). It refers to "this issue of Milk & Honey", so it was probably first printed in Milk & Honey and reprinted here. Paragraphs are kept in the order they appear in the scan; "Rewriting Brethren Distinctives" (one of the papers) may originally have stood before the paragraph beginning "It was very alarming".

The following is a brief summary of the above course organized by Ward Gasque and Regent College, and which I personally attended.

Each of the five days was started by a hymn and a short devotional message. The short messages were given by James Houston, Patrick Sookhdeo, Inn-Sing Leung, and F. Roy Coad. Morning lectures were given by F. Roy Coad of England who authored the book, A History of the Brethren Movement, 1976. The lecture was followed by three respondents who would add comments or objections to what was said. Then there was an open microphone for anyone in the audience to comment also. The first four lectures were very thorough in outlining the historical aspect in the colors that favoured the

speaker's perspective. J. N. Darby was seen as a pioneer who, although brilliant, became inward looking and unforgiving and responsible for the problems we have today. Müller and Newton on the other hand were seen as open, forgiving and accepting of many viewpoints and, it was thought, would feel quite comfortable in one of our "progressive, upbeat assemblies" today. The last day was reserved for the fiery darts of condemnation for those who would dare to suggest there is a "pattern" in the New Testament to be followed. Surely those that suggest such a thing are convinced that we have "all the light we need."

In addition to the morning lectures fifteen other papers were presented, including the following which are very briefly summarized.

The Brethren from a Female Perspective. There was a very good overview of some of the chief women among the brethren of days gone by. The woman speaker also stated that although some assemblies have accepted women speaking and women elders, most have not yet fully engaged the gifts of its women.

Report on the Foreign Missionary Work. A report was given on the foreign missionary work of German assemblies and how their general assembly, brethren council and missions committees accept candidates and approve (or disapprove) of them. The French speaking Swiss assemblies also exercise this control. Twenty percent of the churches involved in their missions are not assemblies. Their efforts were applauded by Patrick Sookhdeo of London, who has been recently canonized by the Church of England. He said other countries should emulate this approach to candidates selection

and preparation and deployment approach. Graham Hayden, a publisher from Australia, commented that this Wiedenest model is tremendous and Australia has a similar setup with a Missionary Advisory Council. He asked, "Why don't we also screen home workers, itinerant workers, help local assemblies to examine commendations, see the validity of them, sort out those with gift, and using this mechanism to advise local assemblies?"

It was very alarming to see these men and women meet together in order to hear each other reaffirm the abandonment of New Testament principles. With very few exceptions, very little scripture was used in support of their arguments. The founders of Regent College, who were brethren leaders, certainly would have been shocked. The early Plymouth, Bristol and Dublin brethren would weep no doubt, and it is impossible to say what the apostle Paul would do or say if he were present. Lastly and most importantly, what would the Lord's reaction be?

One other seminar held by Regent this summer was Discovering the Wellspring of Your Creative Spirit taught by Madeline L'Engle a well known writer of books filled with New Age symbolism. (See book review on page 3 of this issue of Milk & Honey.) She denies the virgin birth and the literal interpretation of the Bible. She is librarian at St. John the Divine church in New York City. Many of her books were on sale in the Regent bookstore.

Rewriting Brethren Distinctives. In this presentation the distinctives of the Methodist movement were outlined and how we should adopt them: great leaders, great

preaching and teaching, great worship, great organization, creative new methods and a great purpose. He named the "eight prohibitions" of the brethren as: no pastor, no clergy, no salaries, no women, no name, no art, no liturgy or no creed. He added no membership or seminaries to this list. He then briefly identified each Old Distinctive and Old Value, and reworded them into a New Value and a New Quality. For example, the Old Distinctive of "No Pastor" and the Old Value of "Priesthood of all believers" were restated as a New Value of "Priesthood, giftedness, and ministry of all believers," and a New Quality of "All members are vitally involved in ministry." For the most part it was simply a rewording of the "eight prohibitions" in a "contemporary way," with the hopes that "by God's grace, we'll see a new movement rise from the tired remnants of the old."

Stan Engle

Oklahoma City, OK

July 20, 1990

The Neo-Brethren (February 1993 Special Report)

From Watch and Pray, February 1993 Special Report "Decade of Promise" (Vol. 5, No. 1). By O. Jean Gibson & William MacDonald. Printed under the heading "CURRENT CONCERNS" on an enclosed page after the Special Report (it is the article the Special Report and Statement of Purpose refer to). The left edge of the first column is cut off in the scan, so the opening and points 1–5 could not be read; only the readable end of point 5 and points 6–10 are given. A complete copy should be found to fill the gap.

[A passage here could not be read in the scan.]

5. [A passage here could not be read in the scan.] … Scripture's teaching that men and women have different God-given roles in the church and in the home. Any other position is condemned as traditional and oppressive, as robbing the church of women's gifts, and as a denial of the priesthood of believers. Because it may be a possible cause of offense to visitors, women are often actively discouraged from wearing a covering.

6. Public ministry is largely confined to one man, preferably one who is professionally trained. This would disqualify the Lord as well as the apostles. There is little opportunity for younger brothers to develop their gift.

7. Too often there is a scornful attitude toward assemblies and their distinctives. Church principles are reduced to a few simplistic qualifications that almost any evangelical church could meet. Both publicly and privately, early leaders of the so-called Brethren

movement (especially Darby) are held up for strident criticism.

8. Those described in the preceding paragraph still want to classify their churches as Brethren churches. In this way they retain financial and medical assistance yet demonstrate no real allegiance to the assemblies or their practices.

9. The tendency is to centralize all important ministries in the hands of a few paid staff members, with virtually no distinction from the clergy-laity system. It is not uncommon to relegate shepherding functions to paid psychologists.

10. All this results in dividing assemblies into two factions. This divisiveness is furthered by forming fellowships and holding conferences for research and review of Brethren history. Actually these seemingly innocuous gatherings are used to denigrate the movement and promote the tenets of Neo-Brethrenism listed above. This results in a polarization of the assemblies.

It would be far more honest and aboveboard for the Neo-Brethren to dissociate themselves from the assemblies and form whatever kind of local church they favor.

We certainly need revival and a fresh working of the Holy Spirit among us. There is a great deal for which we should repent. However, we don't need to abandon scriptural principles. We just need to practice them better.

'AD 2000 Evangelism' -- Shall We Join? What's Hiding Behind This Powerful Worldwide Ecumenical Movement? (August 1993)

From Watch and Pray, August 1993 (Vol. 5, No. 2). By Fundamental Evangelistic Association (excerpts), with an unsigned introductory note. The first paragraph is the newsletter's own introduction; the rest is excerpted from "AD 2000 Ecumenical Evangelism: A Warning" by the Fundamental Evangelistic Association, as credited at the end.

Shortly after the birth of 'AD2000 Evangelism' the following article was written in 1989 by a fundamental person not connected in any way with the assemblies. The impact of this movement has involved the assemblies in a number of ways, as evidenced by the recent Singapore IBCM Conference (report on page 2), and the release of Rex Koivisto's book One Lord, One Faith (review on page 4).

"ALL CHRISTIANS SHOULD FORGET THEIR DIFFERENCES AND JOIN FORCES TO EVANGELIZE THE WORLD BY THE YEAR 2000."

On the basis of this attractive proposal, we are now witnessing the greatest and most deceptive push toward ecumenical apostasy the world has ever seen. This proposal and movement has been given a name - AD2000 Evangelism.

In their efforts to forge an unscriptural unity through the years liberal ecumenical leaders have tried "peace", "love", "social action", etc., but all these have failed.

However, it now appears that this newest tactic of Satan to produce an unscriptural, ecumenical unity through the use of "Evangelism" has a great potential for success unless God's people wake up to what is really happening in the name of Evangelism.

Compromises are being made on the part of evangelical leaders which would have been unthinkable just a few years ago.

The very word, "Evangelism" is so much a part of every born again Christian's heart and life that the announcement of almost any program of world evangelization has an instantaneous appeal and is apt to receive a favorable response. The problem is that very few Christians are yet aware of the way in which united efforts in "Evangelism" today are being used to help build the one-world harlot church of the antichrist instead of winning lost souls to Jesus Christ.

There are several important facts God's people need to know about the dangers of AD 2000 evangelism:

FIRST--this new ecumenical evangelism requires the acceptance of Roman Catholics and liberal Protestants as partners in evangelism.

SECOND--the Roman Catholic Church, which has been and continues to be one of the Gospel's worst enemies, is especially deceptive today because it has a new "evangelical face" while continuing to preach a false gospel.

THIRD--Evangelicals have followed the path of compromise for so long that they have lost almost all spiritual discernment. Evangelical leaders have become "blind leaders of the blind" and those who follow their leadership are in danger of falling into the ecumenical ditch!

FOURTH--the Charismatic movement, with its false teachings concerning the Holy Spirit and its claim to new revelations from God, has become a catalyst to bring together liberal Protestants, Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Charismatics, and evangelicals into unscriptural fellowships and ministries, especially in "Evangelism."

FIFTH--the unscriptural Pentecostal-charismatic teachings are now being promoted within evangelical churches under the deceptive title of "Power Evangelism" or "The Third Wave Movement."

The two best-known proponents of the supposedly less-extreme, modified version of the dangerous, deceptive Pentecostal-charismatic teachings are Dr. Peter Wagner of Fuller Seminary and Dr. John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship.

Both are fully committed to the ecumenical, unscriptural AD 2000 Evangelism movement.

SIXTH--the silence of so many Fundamentalists with regard to compromise and apostasy has left most of God's people in ignorance as to how the devil is using "Evangelism" to produce an entirely new understanding of what "Evangelism" really is and how God says this important ministry should be accomplished.

So successful has been the devil's plan to use "Evangelism" to forge an unscriptural Ecumenism, that there has never been a time in history when a larger number of diverse groups are singing the same song, "We must get together to evangelize the world."

There has never been a time in history when more plans are being devised to accomplish this ostensibly scriptural talk.

What about it? Shall we cooperate? Shall we become silent neutrals? Or, shall we be faithful to the Word of God in rejecting and exposing the dangers of this new program of ecumenical Evangelism? The latter response is the only Scriptural one--the only one God can and will bless.

Joining hands with "all" who call themselves Christians to fulfill the great Commission under the banner of AD 2000 Evangelism has added appeal by the further suggestion that the world could be completely evangelized by such a united effort during the next decade, and that this would constitute a wonderful 2000th birthday present for Christ.

It is receiving unprecedented favorable responses from those who fail to recognize the unscriptural principles upon which any such movement could possibly function. Thus, an ecumenical-evangelical steamroller is being created of unparalleled proportions.

Who could possibly have imagined, even a few years ago, that "Evangelism" could ever become sort of a magic word which Satan could use to blind the minds of so many true believers!

The devil's unscriptural ecumenical movement has discovered that "Evangelism" is a new, and thus far, a very successful way to lure uninformed and unsuspecting Christians into its program of a false, unscriptural unity.

Excerpts taken from "AD 2000 Ecumenical Evangelism: A Warning" by Fundamental Evangelistic Association, P.O. Box 6278, Los Osos, CA 93412.

The International Brethren Conference on Missions -- Singapore June 1993: True Evangelism or Worldwide Ecumenical Unity? (August 1993)

From Watch and Pray, August 1993 (Vol. 5, No. 2). By Kevin Engle. Byline printed as "Kevin Engle-Texas". Pages 2-3, continued on pages 7 and 8.

The International Brethren Conference on Missions (IBCM) was held in Singapore from June 9-15, 1993. I attended this conference hoping to learn more about worldwide missions. I learned there was far more involved here than just missions, and present here a report from my own perspective, with my own conclusions. There were approximately 235 delegates, 120 of whom were from various countries with about 115 from Singapore.

Relevant Background

The conference was organized by a steering committee formed at the International Christian Brethren Seminar organized by Ward Gasque, and held at Regent College, Vancouver, BC, Canada on July 2-7, 1990. That seminar was partially underwritten by a grant from The Ecumenical Foundation of Canada, as well as co-sponsored by NABRF (North American Brethren Research Fellowship). Roy Coad, a noted Brethren historian from Britain, was one of the keynote speakers at the 1990 conference. Also participating was Dr. Robert Shinn, author of The Plymouth Brethren and

Ecumenical Protestantism, of Eastern College in Pennsylvania. Another delegate was Brian McLaren, co-founder (with Stan Farmer, director of His Mansion) of the SEED fellowship and a current trustee on the board of International Teams. Just prior to the 1990 conference McLaren wrote: "I believe that the gifts of tongues, interpretation, prophecy, and healing (among others), as described in the New Testament, are good gifts, and though they are subject to misuse, ought to be earnestly desired and, whenever given, aught (sic) to be properly used in love for the upbuilding of the church and the extension of her witness.... I believe that signs and wonders of some sort should be expected to accompany the gospel as it is proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit.... I believe that Christian pastors and leaders must learn ways of guiding new or frustrated Christians into the fullness of the Holy Sprirt...." McLaren also submitted a paper at the 1990 Regents conference entitled "Rewriting Brethren Distinctives." In a report on the Regents conference in Christian Week magazine one of the participants, Peter H. Davids (listed in the material as "an ordained Anglican priest and a commended Brethren worker"), wrote: "Several things arose out of the course. First, there was a network of Brethren historians which formed, linking researchers on three continents. Second, a newsletter (see p. 3) linking younger Brethren workers was put into motion. Finally, at the end of the course there was a gathering to discuss the proposal that another similar gathering be held, perhaps in 1993." IBCM in Singapore was this gathering.

Shortly following this 1990 conference an article entitled "C.B.R.F. International" appeared in the British

publication PARTNERSHIP (edited by Harold Rowdon), stating that "a number of the secretaries and organizers of research fellowships present were able to discuss their plans to establish an international network [emphasis theirs] for sharing information and documents amongst the worldwide bodies now working separately in Brethren history and growth today." The article continues: "One immediate action is to agree to the interchange of publication materials with other CBRF's [NABRF in the US-Ed] with proper ascription but without conferring copyright. Another plan is to develop the data base of materials (books, articles and research interests) already begun by Dr. Robert Baylis in California, as a means of exchanging information on computer records. Further plans to organize international courses and conferences to promote CBRF objectives under whatever auspices are proposed, together with projects to develop resources, training materials and sponsorship of Brethren researchers. A small international co-ordinating committee was set up for the exchange of minutes and reports from the national bodies and to develop these planned proposals. It is hoped that the UK Christian Brethren Research Fellowship will play its full and historical part in all these new ventures." Indeed CBRF and Harold Rowdon played a key role in this Singapore conference, as historians do in the larger movement.

Walter Liefeld, the pastor of Christ Church in Lake Forest, Illinois (and former regular writer for INTEREST magazine), traveled to Singapore and met with local elders on August 27, 1990 to suggest that an "international study conference/consultation" be held in Singapore in 1993. Lee Kam Hing, a historian from

Malaysia, and a member of the International Steering Committee, played a central role. Ernest Chew, a historian and an elder at the Bethesda (Frankel Estate) Church, chaired the Singapore organizing committee.

One of the most significant aspects of these conferences is the behind the scenes planning that takes place. NABRF was formed at a special meeting by invitation only held December 30, 1989 during the Decade of Promise conference in Michigan. There were 20 present. The Singapore conference was planned, and a steering committee put into place at a private meeting in 1990 at the Regent College conference. Rex Koivisto writes that NABRF meetings are held in conjunction with the ETS (Evangelical Theological Society) meetings.

Conference Participants and Activities

Participants from North America totalled 14. Nearly half were with International Teams. Kevin Dyer and Geoff Tunnicliffe spoke at plenary sessions. The others from IT were Clifford Ice, Richard Becker, Craig Glass and Greg Reader. INTEREST Ministries head Bruce McNicol (who held a workshop), Claude Loney of MSC (Missionary Service Committee) in Canada, and NABRF steering committee members Ward (and wife Laurel) Gasque and David Dunbar also participated. Additionally Ted Grant of Minnesota and Arnold John M. Reynolds of Canada were participants. Although instrumental in setting up the conference, Walter Liefeld was not at the conference, nor was Rex Koivisto, one of the founders of the NABRF.

The organization by the brethren in Singapore was flawless, and I cannot overemphasize how hospitable the local brethren were to the worldwide visitors. After

discussions with some, I believe many of the local and visiting men were unwittingly used without their fully realizing what the conference conveners' primary long-term agenda is.

I observed that the book table had books primarily by denominational authors, but that two brethren books were prominently displayed, and in large quantity. They were Roots, Renewal and the Brethren by Nate Smith, and Must Brethren Churches Die (formerly Unity, Leadership, Change and Vision) by Kevin Dyer. Smith sent his book (his doctoral thesis for Fuller Seminary) to most or all of his former CCBS students. A major portion of the book amounts to outright ridicule of the assemblies. The Dyer book, among other things, encourages people to circumvent their elders (true biblical leadership) and seek to build consensus in the assembly before notifying the oversight or elders of proposed changes or ideas in a local church or assembly. According to the forward by John Allen, the latest edition is aimed at a charismatic audience (you must read it to believe it). The first edition of this book was distributed to all of the young people attending the INTEREST Ministries 1989 Decade of Promise in Detroit, Michigan.

In the opening plenary session Ken Newton of Australia (Chairman of the IBCM International Steering Committee) made an incredible statement which set the tone for the entire conference: "Each renewal movement selects parts of Scripture which may have been overlooked or interpreted differently by an earlier generation and uses these rediscovered ideas to call its members to a new charter."

There was a large number of workshops, some of which were conducted by those not affiliated with an assembly or assembly-related organization.

Prior to the conference I received IBCM material which referred to a workshop entitled "Brethren Secretariat." When I arrived, I noticed the name of the workshop had changed to "Networking in Mission Among the Brethren." I found this to be one of the most significant parts of the conference in view of its potential impact on assemblies worldwide. Harold Rowdon in his keynote conference message said, "It is my belief that one of the reasons why God has brought us together in Singapore is to attend to this matter [International Brethren Secretariat] as one of very high priority." I saw many evidences that this had been well prearranged and thought out, rather than spontaneous, as it seemed to appear in the workshop.

In this workshop renamed "Networking," Richard Chia of Singapore discussed the need for unity, using John 17, Ephesians 4, and Philippians 1 & 5. He later suggested breaking the world into 5 regions for networking purposes. They were: 1) Singapore and Southeast Asia; 2) the Indian subcontinent; 3) Australia/New Zealand; 4) London/Europe; and 5) US/North America. Then he opened the group to discussion following the formal presentation. During the discussion the recommendation was made to set up this network officially. It was announced that Singapore would be the site of "information exchange" and "networking of brethren missionaries." Ward Gasque recommended newly retired Harold Rowdon (CBRF) as a logical choice to come to Singapore to coordinate the effort. I got the impression that he and Richard Chia would be the key men in

setting up what is being represented as merely an "information exchange." The "Brethren Secretariat" would also coordinate "periodic international conferences". It was made clear that Echoes of Service in England, and CMML in the United States had been invited to the conference, but had declined. The implication seemed to be that they should not be overly concerned that this was being set up without consulting or notifying them. At no session at which I was present was an announcement ever made to the delegates regarding the decisions reached in the "Networking" seminar. I knew that I was watching historians make history, and the birth of what appears to be the beginning of a new "Super Brethren Denomination". The significant aspect of this is that those at the core level in planning this (the International Steering Committee), have demonstrated in their talks and their writings that they are in fact hostile and opposed to most of the principles and distinctives assemblies hold to be scriptural, and practice.

IBCM Organizer Harold Rowdon seemed to be arguing for setting up a brethren denomination when he said: "Brethren...have done little or nothing to provide international links between churches that share a common and somewhat distinctive background." He personally publishes an international newsletter with his prescriptions for "renewal" to key individuals in 40 countries. Many of the Singapore IBCM participants had been personally invited to the conference by Rowdon.

In one workshop entitled "Urban Missions", Don Fleming of Australia warned us against teaching new converts to refer to Jesus Christ as "Lord." He said they understand Jesus and God, but not "Lord." I could not

believe what I was hearing. How could we not refer to our Lord (a biblical term) by His true and full title. If we would modify our language for the new believer, might we not later alter our practices, principles, and perhaps our doctrine to be more palatable, popular, and acceptable to those who are yet unregenerate and without Christ? Where would we stop?

Kevin Dyer, founder and head of International Teams, Missionary Enterprises, and affiliated organizations, brought one of the most significant and revealing messages of the conference entitled "Navigating Troubled Waters." In it he referred to the brethren as a "rowboat" which is "ruptured in many places," and spoke of other vessels such as "dinghies, canoes, ocean liners, yachts, and speed boats." It was eye-opening to hear him refer to the New Testament principles held by assemblies as "rowboat" principles, and those things the large denominations hold to as "ocean liner" or "speedboat" principles. He promoted the need for worldwide ecumenical unity, and accommodation to the major denominations. He said, "What we need to do is get our little boat in line with the thousands of other boats all around us." Then he said "we need a new plank of unity." He continued that we must "join this great armada of ships." Then he asked: "Should we get a new boat?....should we discard it [the rowboat] and get a new boat?"

Continuing, Dyer cited the following as "rules and regulations, dead orthodoxy, and secondary issues": whether to break bread weekly, men's and women's roles, whether to have rock music, charismatic sign gifts, prophetical utterings, discussions of future events, and having a salaried pastor in an assembly.

I listened in disbelief as he advocated adapting the assembly practice to the preferences of "baby-boomers" and to popular culture. No scripture was used at any time during the message. Regarding the Breaking of Bread he said, "Solemnity, seriousness, silence and sitting were all a part of mid 19th century church life in Britain." He continued: "Today the boomer and buster generations are looking for action, movement, participation, music, drama and emotion." He said we need to "adapt...to be more appealing to the culture around us." At another point he said, "I believe God will bring out of our movement a remnant that will change and adjust to the cultures we serve in...." In proposing solutions to the problems of "our rowboat," rather than use scripture, he referred to a well-known college professor as the source of his recommendation, and displayed a chart, a "spiritual decision continuum." He also appeared to be promoting the "Willow Creek Community Church" model in Illinois, and churches for unbelievers when he said, "Seeker services are an essential element in most growing churches today." This message, and points-of-view such as conforming our fellowships to our culture, and worldwide ecumenism were some of the most revealing statements for me at the Singapore conference. I would not have believed some of these things, had I not heard them for myself.

It was eye-opening to hear Kevin Dyer articulate these positions before an international audience, while heading up several organizations which purport to be "assembly-related," receive benefits from assembly organizations such as healthcare coverage from Stewards Foundation, substantial subsidies from Stewards Ministries, and funding from scores of

assemblies. It was very disappointing, and seemed deceptive, to hear the head of an organization that depends so heavily upon the assemblies, distance himself from the principles they hold and practice. International Teams is aggressively building unrestricted funds which in 1992 ballooned by almost $600,000. The balances of such unrestricted funds at December 1992 was $6,787,848 without considering an additional amount of over $500,000 in unrealized appreciation of its investments. This entire amount is composed of cash and investments. Even in view of this, extensive amounts solicited by IT continue to go to fund raising. Dyer sent a letter to supporters on September 25, 1992 stating "finances have been extremely difficult at International Teams, Missionary Enterprises and also on a personal level." Other public relations materials seek to give the appearance (as has been the case for many years) that financially IT is struggling. Is this really the case???

In a workshop by Dr. Bobby Sng entitled "Church Growth in Singapore", he was asked a question about assemblies in Singapore. He responded, "I tried to get around this question." He was not in any way prepared to discuss the assembly situation in Singapore, but rather spent most of the time discussing how the charismatic and pentecostal renewal movement had impacted all of the church growth movement in Singapore for the better. The workshop should have been entitled "What mainline denominations can learn from the Charismatic Movement", as this was its primary focus. He had authored a book dealing with many of the denominations, and was enamored and impressed with the charismatics. He said "in the context

of a denominational church the ordained ministry is crucial."

Ward Gasque made it very clear in his workshop that Premillennial Dispensationalism was only one of many options in eschatology, and one of the less popular ones at that. I was reminded of Ken Newton's earlier statement of the need for a "new charter," and Kevin Dyer recommending a "new boat," and a "new plank of unity." I frequently heard of "new positions", and the words "new" and "renewal" popped up at every turn. There was far more emphasis on statistics, trends, and projections than there was on the scriptures. We heard of church growth specialists, missiologists, scholars, theologians, psychologists, communications professors, and others.

A handful of men are subtly demanding uniformity among the assemblies to accept their prescription of unity through diversity, and worldwide ecumenism which includes everyone who professes the word Christian. Harold Rowdon spoke of how we need to "become part of a worldwide fellowship." Rex Koivisto recommends "ecumenical cooperation" with the World Council of Churches, and the National Council of Churches (One Lord, One Faith, page 283-284, 395). Do we need a worldwide fellowship, or do we need fellowship with God who created the whole universe, and gave us His word to distinguish the true and the false. We read, "prove all things, hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21); "hold fast the form of sound words" (2 Tim 1:13); "hold fast our profession" (Heb 4:14); "hold fast till I come" (Rev 2:25) and many other similar exhortations. May God grant us discernment by

His word and His power in these days of changing opinions, intellectual wisdom and shifting sand.

A Review of Rex Koivisto's Book One Lord, One Faith (August 1993)

From Watch and Pray, August 1993 (Vol. 5, No. 2). By O. Jean Gibson & Fred Colvin. Bylines printed as "O. Jean Gibson-California" and "Fred Colvin-Austria". Pages 4-6, continued on page 8.

Rex Koivisto's recently published book, One Lord, One Faith is an attention getter! The author is a Bible teacher at Multnomah in Portland, Oregon and a former elder at the Laurel Park assembly. Book discussions have a way of encouraging readers to rush out and buy the book critiqued. That is not our wish in this instance. We are among the many interested in promoting genuine spiritual revival in assemblies around the world who, recognizing their needs, are seeking to address them through the preaching of the Word and personal contact. We do however deem it important that care be taken as to how we call for beneficial change, without in any way muting the biblical message.

Koivisto's main theme is "Catholicity". He advocates greater "cooperation with Christ's church". This church includes all local churches that have "core orthodoxy". Almost all local churches regardless of size are, in his view, analogous to the "house churches" mentioned in the New Testament. The sum of these house churches (not merely the sum of the true believers) comprise the "city church" in a given locality. The churches, not just the believers, are all one in God's sight. What local churches are included appears uncertain. They simply must possess nominal "core orthodoxy".

In a somewhat ambiguous manner, he seems to regard the church of Rome as part of the body of Christ, as did Hus, whom he quotes (page 62). The local Roman Catholic churches are among the house churches in a city, since "core orthodoxy" is still maintained in the Church of Rome. Therefore they should be considered part of the "holy Catholic Church", despite any failure to clearly preach the gospel and their history of persecuting believers.

Koivisto thinks churches generally, and Brethren assemblies in particular, need a "theology for cross denominational renewal" which necessitates a fresh vision of tradition, core orthodoxy and catholicity. This would lead us to renewal and cooperation within Christ's church. Seeking to aid members of different denominations in the quest for this catholicity, the author prescribes the examination of their various denominational beliefs. Denominational distinctives which are often held to be "New Testament truths" are said to be in fact nothing more than traditions. Such "traditions", in his opinion, are the major barrier on the way to Christian unity.

The writer purports to arrive at unity according to his "principle of hermeneutics" the rule by which the Bible is to be interpreted. His major and novel principle has to do with differentiating between "tradition" and biblical teaching. We say novel because major works on this subject fail to list this as a major hermeneutic principle.

According to his "principle of hermeneutics", any practice of the early church recorded in Acts or the epistles (even confirmed by early church writings as a practice) is only a tradition, unless it is explicitly

commanded by God for believers or churches today. The early church's practice is not obligatory upon us in any way. Those who would argue for their church practice on the basis of apostolic or New Testament church practice are labeled by Koivisto as "Patternists".

Few thoughtful Christians would accept the author's premise, that only things explicitly mandated by God are to be followed by believers. To reduce this principle to its ultimate absurdity, one would need to say that we need not observe the sacrificial lifestyle of Paul, because God did not tell us "You ought to do that." The same holds true of imitating the zealous witness of the early believers. It is not mandated. To remember the Lord in the communion elements on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7) is not essential because this weekly practice is not commanded for us. This "principle of hermeneutics" necessarily includes baptism of believers by immersion (not explicitly commanded). Koivisto relegates these practices to the realm of the traditional.

A healthy sense of proportion in interpreting and applying the scriptures will certainly enhance mutual respect and cooperation of various secondary persuasions. The Lord did differentiate between weightier and secondary provisions of the law, while making it quite clear that all are binding (Matt. 5:19; 23:23-24). Our mandate includes the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27; Matt 28:20). All scripture is inspired and profitable (2 Tim 3:16). If the writer of the Hebrew epistle would argue that even the description of the structure of the Old Covenant tent speaks volumes about our salvation (Heb. 8), what of the new dwelling described in the New Testament?

If we are guilty of "patternism" by adhering to church polity patterned on apostolic and first century Christian practice, it is not without biblical mandate. Paul reminded the unruly Corinthian church not only of his own pattern of living but also of the practice of all other contemporary churches (I Cor. 11:1, 16; 14:33, 36). The Corinthians were living as though they were the sole recipients if not the fountainhead of truth, in total disregard of the practice of the other assemblies. If the general practice of the apostolic churches was binding for the Corinthians, how much more for us! It is ironic that the practice of women's head-coverings and silence in the church meeting are termed "Brethren tradition" today. In the first century only a Corinthian would argue that!

Furthermore the writer's definition of tradition is a far cry from what the Lord Jesus meant when rebuking Pharisaic tradition, which having no mention in scripture nullified the Word of God (Matt. 15:3-9). Paul's use of the word, on the other hand, further nullifies Koivisto's definition by describing the apostolic instructions as to the Christian symbols and the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:2, 23), apostolic doctrine in general (II Thess. 2:15) and the gospel itself (I Cor. 15:1-4) as traditions that are indeed binding upon the Christians and their churches. These precepts did not originate with apostles themselves, but were received from the Lord and delivered over to the churches with divine authority.

It should not surprise the reader that Koivisto, having cast off his ties to New Testament principles, seems adrift in his own admitted preferences and subjective value judgments. His assessment of traditions as to their

beneficial or detrimental character is based on personal experiences from which he makes numerous generalizations, often confusing personal failure with failure of principle.

Actually our interest in this book was not awakened by Koivisto's strained exegesis or novel hermeneutics, but by his extensive critique of the brethren assemblies. We will concentrate the rest of our analysis on his critique, which provides much insight into ideas now being circulated world-wide among assemblies by a group of men, who have been well named the "Neo-Brethren". Rex Koivisto is one of their principle academic ideologists.

One Lord, One Faith expounds Rex Koivisto's long time polemics against brethren assemblies and their "traditions". He thoroughly "trashes" the assemblies and calls their distinctives nothing but tradition. It is doubtful if any devout Baptist or Anglican would write in this manner about his own church movement. Further it is doubtful if any person reading this book, knowing little about the brethren, would have any desire to be a part of their assemblies. He says, "I do not want to be too harsh on the Baptists", or their "specialized interpretive foibles" (page 229). He certainly doesn't spare the brethren, though, for he goes on, "I hope to show that very little that is unique to the Christian Brethren Movement has direct biblical mandate" (page 230). "Brethren distinctives need to fall into the category of (micro) tradition." Koivisto gives the following examples:

1. The statements in Acts 20:7 or I Cor. 11:26 about breaking bread on the first day or "often" is only

descriptive, not a mandate. It is not an "ought" (page 233).

2. The idea of a distinct meeting for the Breaking of Bread is clearly a brethren tradition (page 233).

3. An appeal to I Cor. 14:26 for a spontaneous, open meeting at the Breaking of Bread is simply "idyllic". We do not possess a clear description of a Christian worship format in the New Testament much less a mandated form (page 231). He appeals to the Didache, which "shows clear marks of a more formal approach to worship with standard prayers of thanksgiving for the bread and wine" (page 384).

4. The woman's covering and silence during the Breaking of Bread is said to be "interpretive tradition", which cannot be treated as a "biblical mandate" (page 238). The brethren have "developed an inconsistency about I Cor. 11 and 14", teaching that women are to have their heads covered "when they pray or prophecy," (1 Cor. 11:5-6), but must remain silent in the meeting (I Cor. 14:34). This is simply an inconsistent "Brethren idea". Koivisto wants to know why women can't pray or prophecy at the Breaking of Bread if they can do so with head coverings. Has he really forgotten that there are other occasions for prayer and prophecy besides the church meeting? We might well question the consistency of his camp. Why are they unwilling to accept the necessity of head coverings, when they encourage the vocal participation of women?

Koivisto is greatly concerned that "traditions which may conflict with the Word of God" adversely affect the role of women (page 243). He quotes the well-worn gibe that brethren believe only in a "priesthood of all male

believers" (page 244). Such comments are at best biblically ignorant at worst slanderous. To observe I Cor. 14:34 in the assembly meeting or to restrict women in public ministry according to I Timothy 2 does not eliminate our sisters' access to God, their silent worship, their praying for others, giving to the Lord or other varied priestly duties. This is no denial of priestly rights!

5. Though ambivalent on the issue of open participation of any brother at the Breaking of Bread, he does not directly endorse the idea that one man (clergyman, "the pastor") be given control of the communion services. In fact, he quotes John Stott's condemnation of "concentrating power and privilege in the hands of the clergy" (page 238). But Koivisto thinks the brethren attitude toward official clergy, or an ordained ministry is one of "reactionism", leading them "to downplay or squelch certain spiritual gifts in the assembly, particularly leadership type gifts....Brethren tend to behave as if a gifted ministry did not exist" (page 239).

He sees no problem in a salaried ministry (page 240), observing that "many salaried denominational Christians" come closer to "living by faith" than some brethren (page 241). This may well apply to some alleged "brethren-connected" men, and their organizations, which shamelessly solicit funds and build up huge reserves, claiming all the while to "live by faith". It certainly is not true of the majority of brethren workers who do not solicit money, waiting instead on the Lord for His supply. They are not salaried, don't raise support by "pledges" or make financial needs known.

It is ironic that the professed followers of Groves and Muller rather than Darby (as Koivisto), do not live by

their most renowned principle: not making financial needs known. The author says "going out in faith" is only "Brethren jargon" (page 387).

Citing an Anglican priest as his source, Koivisto defines clericalism in an unusual way: "an attitude of superiority or special privilege conveyed by formal or gifted leadership to those within the greater Christian community." Note this carefully. Establishing a clear distinction between an official, specially-trained and ordained group and others, called "laity" is not the wrong in itself. Clericalism is an attitude problem on the part of some ordained clergyman. He thinks the issue of clericalism "among Christian Brethren is really a shibboleth that often prevents them from heeding a balanced view of leadership gifting" (page 242).

6. The writer questions whether the pattern of a plural assembly eldership, as opposed to "the Pastor" is a "precept for all congregations at all times in the church of Christ" stating that "There is no evidence that this is a divine precept" (page 244). Why not? Because according to Koivisto's novel hermeneutics, the consistent practice of the apostolic church and the teaching of the epistles do not constitute a mandate. He says "the Brethren are wrong if they set forth this model as a normative pattern or mandate for the church". These are simply a part of "Brethren interpretive tradition" (page 244). He was saddened when some churches, including Baptists, who "traditionally operate under a single pastor model", have changed to plural eldership, maintaining that it has sometimes had "devastating results". Noting that others have discovered plural leadership, he finds their "zeal for and delight in this new system…astonishing" and

doesn't think "the Brethren model (is) a biblical norm for all churches to follow" (page 245).

7. Koivisto seems to feel there is a necessity to have a strong emphasis on formal theological training as a primary qualification for a pastor. At least it should not disqualify a man, with which brethren would agree. But "in too many Brethren assemblies" there is a "shallow passing on of unreflected tradition which cannot sustain itself in the face of a more and more educated populace" (page 247). "There is often an aversion to biblical and theological scholarship." By way of rebuttal, many assemblies have utilized those with "theological training". However they don't believe this automatically qualifies them to be called from outside, promised a fixed income and then made "the pastor". The assemblies do not see the wide-spread denominational practice of "candidating" and negotiating a position as church "pastor" as having any biblical basis, but rather as a facet of self-perpetuating clericalism.

8. According to Koivisto, "Autonomy (of the local church) for the Brethren is a tradition, as well as for those other groups who practice it" (page 253). Thought not advocating a return to a centralized authority structure over all local churches, the author, citing Acts 15, does maintain that "in the book of Acts there was a hierarchy of authority over the churches." But "the situation has changed so that the New Testament pattern does not fit the nature of the non-apostolic church, and hence we cannot follow it here". He favors autonomy however "for practical reasons, not clear biblical ones" (page 253).

9. As to the "core Brethren distinctives", "each of them is, with few exceptions, only a part of interpretive tradition" (page 257).

In general, the author presents the assemblies in a most unflattering light. They are seen as:

1. having distinctives that are almost entirely traditional, not biblical.

2. having few, if any, good practices, not evident in other effective groups.

3. tradition bound.

4. dominated by other than "educated people".

5. sectarian and cursed by elements of Darbyism.

6. not being open to critical analysis or self-criticism.

This is more than enough to show that he is an arch-critic of the assemblies and not a friendly supporter. This book demonstrates that the Neo-Brethren ideologue Rex Koivisto is more than Neo-Brethren. He is anti-Brethren.

Furthermore no explanation or mention of the following questions is made:

1. Why do assemblies have such a disproportionately large group of able workers and influential believers? How has such an allegedly moribund group been used of God to establish thousands of churches throughout the world, often being the most significant group in a nation?

2. Why are so many parachurch organizations utilizing men and women from these assemblies, even funded by the assemblies? Rather than seeing this as an

indictment of these assemblies, as some do, why not credit them for developing and supporting the workers?

3. How could scores of men who have developed in brethren assemblies as preachers, teachers and leaders ever have developed within other church groups which require ordination and formal training outside the church in order to qualify for ministry? Is this not due to the fact that in preceding generations the clergy-laity distinction was not known or practiced in these assemblies?

4. If brethren are so closed to critical analysis, why have many of their own leaders led the way in calling for true spiritual renewal and denounced deadness? Who among the Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans or others have risen up to criticize their own movement as Koivisto has done in this book? Certainly an extended polemic, such as this book against brethren assemblies, would not be considered a good way to gain a bearing for their ideas about renewal. In fact, it is dubious that these ideas about "catholicity" have much to do at all with biblical principles about revival.

In light of the above, Koivisto would do well to examine the spiritual attitudes underlying his unkind statements and generalizations about those he claims as a church family. He needs a greater dose of humility about his own opinions. He should stop trashing the memory of departed godly men whose shoe laces he is not worthy to untie. When his achievements match theirs, however wrong they might be in some areas, then he will be qualified to have others take him apart some day. Hopefully his critics will be kinder and more gracious than he.

At the outset we said that Rex Koivisto has been an elder of Laurel Park assembly, which having shown initial signs of numerical growth was held up to us as a model of the Neo-Brethren ideas. But Laurel Park (as Oakdale and many others like it) has since gone into considerable decline. An individual formerly in fellowship at Laurel Park, now departed along with many others, said this about Koivisto: "After he preached about brethren assemblies and their 'traditions' I wondered why anyone would hear him and want to be a part of any assembly." That is a very appropriate observation!

Expanding Horizons (August 1993)

From Watch and Pray, August 1993 (Vol. 5, No. 2).

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Let's get the Word out!

Watch & Pray Information (August 1993)

From Watch and Pray, August 1993 (Vol. 5, No. 2). By Kevin Engle (Editor). Three short boxes on the back page; the "Thank You" box is signed "Kevin Engle, Editor". The page also carries "©1993 Scriptural Perspectives, Inc." and a partly unreadable line giving permission to make copies provided each article is copied in its entirety.

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Kevin Engle

Editor

Moving???

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