The Broader Purposes of God
Welcome Trials as Friends?

Being thankful for the good things, happy times, and caring people in our lives comes easily even though we may often fail to express our gratitude and assume that these are ours "by right." But there are some things I find it difficult to be thankful for. Paul, for example, suggests that one should be able to pass through an experience of grief or pain and "endure it with joy" and even "thank God in the midst of pain and distress." Peter says, "Be glad ... though it may ... be necessary for you to be sad for a while because of the many kinds of trials you suffer." James sounds even more unreal: "When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends!" Peter even goes so far as to say how happy you are "if you should suffer for doing what is right!" Now, that's hard to swallow.

This does not, I think, mean that we tell parents who have lost a beautiful child at the hands of a drunken driver to "thank God," nor that you should shout "Hallelujah!" if you discover you have cancer. Nor do we say to one engulfed in the clutches of undeserved wrong, "You just have to accept," as if preaching or ordering could make it so. The biblical writers do not glorify suffering for its own sake, for that would often be to glorify evil and sin. Paul did not say to thank God for pain and distress, but rather "IN THE MIDST OF ... " Thank God for redemption in the Son that empowers us, for the privilege of helping to complete Christ's suffering on behalf of the Church, for his safe-keeping, for the hope He has given, that "the glorious Spirit is resting on you," that you are worthy of suffering for Him, that you are enabled through suffering to help others "who have all kinds of trouble, using the same help you have received from God." Gratitude comes because of what we know in Jesus and acceptance gradually becomes possible through slow changes within prompted by love and the presence of the Spirit. Our own wills are not sufficient. Paul points out the source of this gratitude: "You will be strengthened from God's boundless resources." He is "the merciful Father, the God from whom all help comes."

Suffering in and of itself is not enriching, ennobling, or faith-enhancing, for it is life-crippling and defeating to many. It all hinges on our personal responses, our inner attitudes, our saying the fundamental "yes" to God so that he can work through all the circumstances of our lives. Paul comforts his Philippian friends whom he had hurt by some hard things he had written them: "You can look back now and see how the hand of God was in that sorrow. Look how seriously it made you think ... Look how it stirred up your keenness for the faith."

Paul Tournier sums it up aptly in his book Creative Suffering: "This, then, is the lesson. . . . It is that what disturbs our lives, affects us, makes us suffer — severely sometimes — does not make us grow and develop, but does make growth and development possible. . . . The call to creative renewal rings out at every one of the trials that beset us on our way through life. . . . The new state of life must be undertaken and not just undergone."

Thanks be to God!

—the Editor
The Thankfulness That Comes From Contentment

In times of distress it is easy to lose sight of all the blessings we receive from the hand of God; and in times of abundance we often slip into smugness, taking our wealth for granted and convincing ourselves that it is all the product of our ingenuity, our ability, our energy.

Sometimes I suspect God must feel a little like the sailor of whom Sir Winston Churchill once spoke. It seems that one day a Royal Navy sailor dived into the frigid waters of Plymouth Harbor to save the life of a little boy who was drowning. Three days later the sailor met the boy and his mother in the street. He saw the boy nudge his mother. The mother stopped the sailor and asked, “Are you the man who pulled my little boy out of the water?” Expecting an expression of gratitude, the sailor smiled, stood erect, saluted, and said, “Yes, Ma’am.” “Then,” replied the mother, with increasing temper, “where’s his cap?”

All of us are oblivious at times to the magnitude of our blessings. Many of us discover that the level of our gratitude fluctuates drastically, depending on the circumstances that surround us. In 1979 I spoke at the community Thanksgiving service in the City of New Orleans. During that time we found ourselves in the depths of a severe recession. Myriad were the news stories that spoke of how little we had for which to be thankful. Unemployment was high; interest rates were over 20 percent; and many were afraid of what the future might hold. This Thanksgiving our national circumstances are quite different. We live in an expanding economy, witnessing the rapid growth of high technology industries. Interest rates are down. The stock market is up, and unemployment continues to decrease. All of this raises interesting questions. Do we have Thanksgiving only in the years the GNP is up, or should Thanksgiving be celebrated only in certain high-growth areas of our country?

Surely our thankfulness and joy should not be so dependent on external circumstances. Is there not something much more permanent and enduring which is the source of our joy and thankfulness? In times of distress it is easy to lose sight of all the blessings we receive from the hand of God; and in times of abundance we often slip into smugness, taking our wealth for granted and convincing ourselves that it is all the product of our ingenuity, our ability, our energy.

There was one, whom we might take as an example, however, who stood firm, who exuded both joy and thankfulness even though his life took roller coaster changes of fortune. His was a thankfulness that grew out of a deep contentment.

It had been a rough year for the Apostle Paul. He had been arrested in Jerusalem, barely escaping with his life from a lynch mob. He had spent time in prison in Caesarea and had undergone two trials. At the end of the second trial, he was then sent to Rome on appeal. On the way to Rome by sea his ship sank, and he was marooned on an island. Now at year’s end he found himself in a Roman prison. Paul was experiencing rough times, times of economic distress, and times of severe deprivation.

And yet, while he was in prison in Rome, Paul wrote a letter, a letter to dear friends back in Philippi, a letter exuding a spirit of joy and confidence.

David Sampson, a graduate of David Lipscomb College and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, is Minister for the Park Row Church of Christ in Arlington, Texas.
One passage I think particularly revealing in this letter is Philippians 4:10-20:

I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me but you had no opportunity to show it, not that I complain of want, for I have learned that in whatever state I am to be content. I know how to be abased, I know how to abound, in any and all circumstances. I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in him who strengthens me.

Paul had been born into a prosperous Jewish family. He had attended “Ivy League” synagogue schools. He had attained the highest and most prestigious positions in his society, yet he had also experienced severe economic deprivation and repression of the most basic human rights. How could Paul under those circumstances write with such joy and thankfulness? It was because he had learned to be content. Now Paul was not magically born with nor endowed with contentment. It was something that he had learned through the experience of life and through his experience with God. Contentment is not complacency; nor is it a false peace based on ignorance. Contentment is not escape from the battle of life; rather it is an abiding peace and confidence in the midst of the battle.

Paul said that he had learned the secret of being content regardless of the circumstances. When Paul said that he had learned to be content, he was using a term that was very popular among the Stoics, for the Stoics, self-sufficiency was their pride. Their method of dealing with external circumstances was to renounce all desires and wants. The Stoic aim was to abolish every feeling and emotion of the human heart. Love was rooted out and caring was forbidden. The Stoics made of the heart a desert and called it peace.

Contentment is not escape from the battle of life; rather it is an abiding peace and confidence in the midst of the battle.

The secret of Paul’s contentment, however, was very different, for it was not self-generated at the cost of his humanity. Paul had come to know the peace of God and his sufficiency to meet all of life’s circumstances. For Paul the secret of contentment was to be “in Christ.” But what was it about being in Christ that enabled Paul to face the changing fortunes of life and still remain joyful and thankful? His perspective had been changed: (1) Christ had changed Paul’s perspective of success and failure; (2) Christ had changed Paul’s perspective of who God is and what the source of sustaining power in life is.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE

Earlier in this Philippian letter, Paul gives us an insight into his previous concept of success. In chapter 3 he says, “If any other man thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have none.” Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews. As to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, blameless under the law.” Paul’s concept of success was based upon his race and his achievements, especially religious achievements. His importance was determined by how high he had climbed the social ladder. But all of that was laid bare on the Damascus Road.

Jesus had defined success in terms of service: “He who would be the greatest among you must be servant of all (Mark 9:35).” The night before his crucifixion, He served his closest followers by washing their feet. The Messiah of God served; and to that group of disciples, He said, “You call me Lord and you are right to do so for so I am. If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:13-14). Jesus changed Paul’s concept of success and failure by demonstrating in his own life that the greatest measure of success is in obedience to God. During his time of temptation in the wilderness, Satan displayed for Christ all that he would measure success by: the kingdoms of the world in all their glory. Satan said, “All these I will give to you if you will fall down and worship me.” Jesus forever altered the measure of success by saying, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve (Matt. 4:8-10).”

In Philippians we see just how radically Paul’s concept of success was changed by the Risen Lord. After he had listed all the prestigious things in which he had placed so much confidence and which defined his view of success, Paul said, “But whatever gain I had I counted it as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own based on law but that which is through faith in Christ, a righteousness from God that depends on faith” (Phil. 3:7).

We too can learn the secret of contentment if we will allow Christ to redefine our concept of success and failure. For many of us, success is measured by
the kinds of cars we drive or the size of our houses, by the power that we are able to wield over others, by the recognition that people give us. As long as we hold on to such measures of success, we can never know contentment and the thankfulness that comes from it. But when we allow Christ to restructure the concepts of success and failure in our lives in terms of service and obedience to the will of God, then we too can learn the contentment that Paul experienced.

THE RELATIVE VALUE OF THINGS

In Paul’s earlier life, things, abstractions, and doctrines were more important than people. People somehow got lost in the religious system. He even held the coats of those who were stoning Stephen so that the garments might not get soiled. But the message of Jesus’ entire life was that people are more important than things. He demonstrated his concern for persons by his healing on the Sabbath, his kindness toward the Samaritan woman. When the religious system of his day viewed her as lower than a dog, Jesus demonstrated this reality in his kindness toward the woman taken in adultery.

Jesus said also that people and relationships are more important than the wealth we can accumulate here: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust consume and where thieves break through and steal. Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, for where your treasure is there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:19-21).

Paul had experienced this change of perspective. All the things he had held so tightly he was willing to turn loose when he discovered the ultimate value of knowing Christ. Only in the knowledge of this ultimate value could everything else be properly evaluated. He could learn how to be thankful and enjoy all the blessings of life; but he could still have this joy and thankfulness even in difficult times because he had found the deeper truths and meanings undergirding his life. You see him reveling in his relationships not only with God but with his fellow Christians who cared for him though miles separated him from Philippi.

We too can learn the secret of the thankfulness that comes from contentment if we will allow Christ to change our perspective. When we once have the firm standard of the ultimate value which is in Christ, we are able to put everything else in our lives into its proper place and ascribe to it its proper value. In times of abundance, we can learn the joy of sharing. We can learn to enjoy God’s creation without allowing that creation to become our master; and in times of adversity, we can learn to revel in our relationship with God and with those people who are so dear to us—in those relationships that are constant even though physical circumstances change. That is the secret of Paul’s contentment.

GOD AS THE SOURCE OF SUSTAINING POWER

In Paul’s life before Christ, his understanding of God was that He was a hard God and a distant God. Paul felt that he had to make himself good enough before he could receive God’s blessings. His concept of God’s love was so inadequate that he believed God’s love could only embrace those of his own nation and only a relatively small segment within that nation. But after he had met the Risen Christ, Paul’s perspective on who God is was changed. He discovered in the Incarnate Christ that God is a God rich in love and grace, who doesn’t stand aloof from humanity but will go to any limits and bear any cost to share his love and expend his grace on us. He learned that God’s love and God’s storehouse of treasure was indeed broad enough to encompass all of humanity, the Gentile as well as the Jew. This change of perspective meant a radical change in life, so vividly demonstrated in his becoming the apostle to the Gentiles. Indeed as Paul wrote the Philippian letter, he was in prison in Rome precisely because of his faithfully standing for the right of the Gentiles to enter the kingdom of God on equal footing with the Jews.

Before he had met Christ, the sustaining power in Paul’s life was his ability to merit righteousness under the law. When we look at the autobiographical section in Romans 7, we see what despair that led to as Paul cried out, “Oh, wretched man that I am, who will deliver me?” He could now cry out in thanksgiving, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Moreover he could conclude this letter to his Philippian friends with this confessional statement: “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

We too can learn the secret of contentment that Paul learned if we will allow Christ to change our perspective of who God is as the source of our sustaining power. We can indeed be thankful when we understand that we need not make ourselves good enough to receive God’s love or God’s grace. We can indeed be thankful and joyful when we find that our source of power is not in our bank account or in our stock portfolio, but rather in the undying love of God and in the vast resources of his treasure house.

My friend Larry James, of Richardson, Texas, has written an eloquent reflection on this section of Philippians:

Incredible words, Paul. I’m not sure I’m
able to relate to them based on my experiences in life to this point. I don’t know much of anything about being abased. I’ve never been hungry for more than a few hours at a time and always between meals. Want is an unknown factor in my life.

On the other side of the coin, I’m convinced I don’t know the secret of facing plenty either. I enjoy more than plenty when it comes to material wealth, abundance of possessions and purchasing power, but I’m not convinced I handle this blessedness very well. In times of plenty, I enjoy consuming, but the selfishness that abundance breeds is frightening to me. And even in my abundance, I seem to vacillate between pleasure and anxiety. I enjoy my wealth often as I treat myself to more and more of the good life, but I despise my affluence when I am confronted with the needs of others who know abasement and hunger like lifelong friends. And in my dilemma it is easy to despair. But Paul provides hope beyond the anxiety.

He trusted in the Lord and he learned to depend on relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ. In plenty, he praised God, never thinking for a moment that the possessions at his disposal belonged exclusively to him. He recognized that it all came from God and it all belonged to God and that he was entrusted with it to enjoy but not to allow these things to become his master.

So, how do I handle plenty? Open my tightly clenched fist and my button-down heart and release my wealth to the Lord by being willing to share out of my resources with others in this process. I will be able to identify with want, but at the same time plenty will take on a brand new meaning.

In this Thanksgiving season, may we come a little nearer the secret of contentment that Paul experienced, contentment that can come only when we are in Christ. When this happens, we like Paul will only be able to cry out in benediction, “To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

**Good News! Celebration!**

BY ROBERT M. RANDOLPH

Two years ago a friend returned from a Christmas sojourn at home lamenting that the worship services she attended on Christmas Day never even acknowledged it was Christmas. “At least,” she noted, “I didn’t have to hear a sermon on why we don’t celebrate Christmas!” We laughed because the experience is a common one in our tradition.

True to our Puritan origins, our churches often pay little attention to Christmas and Easter in their worship calendar. One of the benefits of renewed interaction with Christian Churches and the broader Restoration Movement is that we may discover again the meaning of these holidays.

Times change and if the burdensome observance of holy days was offensive to our restoration/reformationist ancestors, today in a world far more secular than sacred their absence is an offense. In truth, we do observe Christmas, but it has become an orgy of materialism. Feeling righteous because we have not done anything not mentioned in Scripture, we celebrate our wealth and worship the God of materialism. It is painful to think of our churches ignoring the opportunity to speak of the Prince of Peace, God’s gift to the world, at a time when those around us are most open to hearing the Good News. What comfort it must be to those captured by material pursuits to hear not a word from our communities of faith. We teach by our actions, and it is clear that Santa Claus occupies a candy cross.

Better to risk that God is a legalist and celebrate Christmas in our churches. Use the Sundays leading to Christmas to speak of what it really means. Gather together on Christmas Eve to sing the carols of the season, in our family we have begun a month of evening devotionals, lighting a white candle each week until at Christmas we light the royal purple candle celebrating Christ come into the world. We celebrate in church; we celebrate at home. But always there is the reminder that the gifts we share are made possible by the great gift of God. And if there comes a time when pomp and false worship weigh us down, then I’ll lead the chorus of those calling for less observance. For now, however, I’ll take my chances and hope to hear the heavenly chorus sing of peace on earth and goodwill to men. It sure beats the noise of the cash register!
Thoughts On The Role of The Christian Scholar

If God is the source of all truth, then there is no inherent contradiction between the ideal of free inquiry in the search for truth and the view that God has revealed this truth to humankind. To the Christian, both faith and scholarship are necessary to have an accurate and complete understanding of our world.

By WILLIAM B. ADRIAN

From the time Tertullian posed the question “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” there has been a long series of attempts to define the relationship of Christian faith and higher learning. Tension has existed in the relationship and continues to pose a problem for Christian scholars today. How does the Christian intellectual integrate the heritage of Athens (the objective search for truth) with that of Jerusalem (the Christian faith as revealed in Scripture)? This paper is an attempt to address the issue by reviewing its historical developments and suggesting implications and opportunities for the Christian today who lives, sometimes uncomfortably, in two worlds—the world of faith and the world of learning.

HISTORICAL TENSIONS BETWEEN INTELLECT AND FAITH

The relationship has been defined in numerous ways, usually in the form of a dichotomy: belief versus reason, faith versus learning, reason versus revelation. While the question reflects a difference in goals between the Greek ideal of objective reasoning and the Christian ideal of faith, it is unfortunate that the two ideals become mutually exclusive in intellectual circles.

When Aristotelian thought challenged intellectuals in the medieval universities, the Church responded in several ways. Initially, the writings of Aristotle were banned from the universities. Subsequently, several scholars attempted to harmonize Christian and Aristotelian thought, the most notable of whom was Thomas Aquinas. Finally, a convenient separation was made between “natural” order and “supernatural” order. It is this separation that ultimately grew into a sharp dichotomy.

Throughout the middle ages, Christian intellectuals with the authority of the Church behind them clearly exalted the realm of faith over objective reasoning and the natural order. Anselm, one of the leading intellectuals in the medieval university, reflected the priorities when he stated, “I believe in order that I may know. I do not know in order to believe.” He viewed faith as a controlling presupposition: “Faith precedes science, fixes its boundaries, and prescribes its conditions.” Revelation, as interpreted officially by the medieval Church, clearly defined acceptable limits of intellectual thought, placing issues of the natural order in a secondary place to those of the spiritual or supernatural order. To be sure, there were thinkers who challenged the tenets of Church; but its authority was absolute, and dissenters were called into line, banned, or martyred.

Separation of the realms of faith and reason seemed a convenient way to satisfy intellectuals of all persuasions as it allowed those thinkers working in the natural sphere to continue their work without much interference as long as they did not challenge a specific church doctrine. At the same time the
dichotomy also seemed to protect faith by declaring it out of bounds to analytic reasoning. At the time of the Reformation, the faith/reason dichotomy was clearly established, and the ground rules for operating in both spheres were defined. Faith and revelation were distinct from reason and natural order. As scientific thought emerged, natural reason became associated with it, while revelation became associated with "super" naturalism.

With the coming of the Enlightenment and its emphasis on reason, nature, and science, the dominant role of the Christian intellectual began to erode. Since that period the Christian scholar has been on the defensive and has seen his place in intellectual thought so diminished that it is a barely heard minority voice in the higher learning of today. Indeed, there are a number of intellectuals who question whether traditional Christian presuppositions should even be permitted a hearing in current intellectual thought. The effects of the Enlightenment have been a greater challenge to traditional Christian thought than perhaps any other historical development.

The history of higher education in the United States reveals a continuing failure to integrate successfully the worlds of faith and reason. Attempts to address the problem have led to two extremes: a reaction against Enlightenment thought or total accommodation to its presuppositions, both of which have been unsuccessful when measured by the principle of historic Christianity. Since the Christian scholar stands in the same relationship to scholarship generally as the Christian college or university stands in relationship to higher education, a review of the colleges' early attempts in this country to wed faith and scholarship can assist in understanding the problem today.

EARLY ATTEMPTS TO INTEGRATE FAITH AND REASON

Harvard was founded to avoid leaving "an illiterate ministry to the churches when our present ministers shall lie in the dust." Yet it was a relatively short period of time before Harvard strayed from its orthodox Puritan roots and subsequently severed its ties with the Christian faith. Hofstadter reflects on the rapid shift from orthodoxy when he states,

It may seem at first blush a startling paradox that Harvard College founded in a community so dedicated to the enforcement of religious unity, should have become the university that for three centuries held the leading position for liberality of thought in American higher education. The historical developments that produced this paradox give the early history of Harvard a special significance for our story: for the seeds of Harvard liberalism were actually planted with Puritanism itself, and sprouted not long after the first generation of American Puritans had passed on to their rewards. (p. 81)

The Puritans sought to blend rational thought, piety, and scholarship in the new institution which they founded; but their sectarian attempts to build a doctrinal wall around the college were bound for failure. Thus the efforts of the Enlightenment quickly eroded Puritan orthodoxy. The assumed dichotomy of faith and reason, inherited from centuries before, hastened the movement away from orthodoxy when it began.

The founding fathers of Harvard were reactionary initially against other Christian groups while at the same time seeking to accommodate faith and reason. The early sectarian stance of the college was evident in a multitude of doctrines that separated it from other groups as a mighty bulwark against the theological intrusion: yet as these doctrines began to fall to the challenges of reason and freedom of conscience, the entire spectrum of Puritan orthodoxy collapsed as a house of cards.

Henry Dunster, the first designated president of the fledgling college, had to leave his position as president when he, as a matter of conscience, refused to submit his fourth child for baptism, denying the doctrine of infant baptism. He was accused further of being caught in "the snares of Anabaptism" (Hofstadter). Initial doctrinal battles were fought on the common ground of faith; but as these battles raged, the Christian faith itself was slowly undermined by the uncritical acceptance of many ideas emanating from the Enlightenment.

As the Puritans watched Harvard depart from their traditions, they attempted again to integrate orthodoxy and learning by establishing Yale College. Thus, Yale came into existence partly as a reaction against Harvard's movement away from Puritan orthodoxy. In an attempt to assure orthodoxy the ten original trustees of Yale were clergymen, and all of their successors were required to be Connecticut ministers who were at least forty years of age (Hofstadter, page 136). It was curious logic which assumed that having ministers in control of the
College would assure its orthodoxy in perpetuity. In reality, ministers and theologians were instrumental in leading Yale, as Harvard, away from orthodoxy. As these early colleges moved away from their roots, theologians had a diminishing influence on scholarship. Yet in the development of church-related higher education in this country, intellectual movements within theology had a profound effect on the institutions and the scholars within them. Theologians became the heirs of liberalism; and in

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an attempt to recast Christian faith into modern thought, they accommodated the presuppositions of the Enlightenment.

By the early nineteenth century, the influence of theologians was diminishing rapidly in higher education. The influence of the German ideal of the university which began to be felt at this time hastened the demise of the once prominent role of the theologian within the university. As thousands of Americans went to Germany in the 1800s for advanced higher education, they adopted the German ideals of Wissenschaft (original scientific investigation), Lehlfreiheit (freedom of the professor), and Lernfreiheit (freedom of the learner); this marked a significant turning point in American higher education. The German university, including its methods and ideals of scholarship, had one of the most significant and pervasive effects on the development of the higher learning in America. Theologians, as well as other scholars, accepted the German ideal which was built on a rigorous application of Enlightenment thought and scientific methodology. This tide of intellectual thought thoroughly engulfed the higher learning, and traditional Christian faith not only diminished in importance, but became suspect as having a legitimate role in higher education. Many theologians were adept at breaking down what they believed to be misconceptions of religion, but in many cases their effectiveness in building or replacing Christian faith was questionable. In some cases, their work contributed to a departure from denominational traditions, while in others, to a departure from the Christian faith. In their desire to shun pietism and make religion intellectual, there was a tendency to discard Christian beliefs along with pietism.

A landmark study of church-related higher education, sponsored by the Danforth Foundation and completed in 1966, reflected the theological shambles of the Christian faith within these institutions. The study, conducted by Manning Pattillo and Donald MacKenzie, revealed that the basic problem of the church-related college was theological: “The shifting sands of religious faith today provide an uncertain foundation for religiously oriented educational programs. Our proposals for action do not—indeed, cannot—solve this central problem” (Pattillo, p. 5). The role of the Christian scholar was in the same disarray religiously as these colleges.

The authors of the study categorized the church-related colleges into three major areas, the first of which contained the large majority of the colleges and was labeled as “non-affirming” institutions, reflecting a loose and vaguely defined religious orientation. Little attention was paid to religion within these colleges. A second category was labeled the “defender of the faith” colleges in which administrators, students, and faculty were committed to a particular denominational, if not sectarian, tradition. These fundamental colleges, while a relatively small group, were reactive against dominant intellectual thought and served a custodial function for their particular denomination. The third and smallest category in the Pattillo study was the “free Christian college,” which was attempting to integrate successfully the realms of faith and learning. Pattillo saw in this type of college an attempt to break down the dichotomy between faith and reason while still maintaining a Christian commitment. Most of its faculty shared its religious purposes and considered them to be important in the life of the college. Students were attracted by the dual emphasis on academic excellence and religious vitality” (Pattillo, p. 194).

In the free Christian college Pattillo was looking for a type of institution in which Christian faith and higher learning were not only compatible, but well integrated. However, there were only a handful of this type of institution, and the confusion evident among church-related colleges was a reflection of the confusion and lack of consensus among Christian scholars.

The Christian scholar in modern times has inherited a most unfortunate legacy: the faith/reason dichotomy, which places at odds Christian faith and higher learning. Living in both worlds, the Christian scholar is challenged to integrate and legitimize
According to Ramm, Barth modern learning and historic Christian faith theologians and leveled many criticisms against the defenders of orthodox theology, accusing them of obscurantism. Bernhard Ramm’s recent book entitled After Fundamentalism: The Future of Evangelical Theology views Barth as the most significant critic of the Enlightenment, while at the same time building on valid ideas in the Enlightenment with the purpose of integrating modern learning and the historic Christian faith. According to Ramm,

Barth is a child of the Enlightenment wherever it represents true learning and genuine progress in knowledge. He is a severe critic of the Enlightenment and its pretensions to final truth, to its perfect harmony with reason, and its criticism of orthodox Christianity. He lets the proud waves of the Enlightenment roll, but he marks a firm, clear line where they must stop. (Ramm, p. 14) 

Barth was equally critical of conservative Christian theologians and leveled many criticisms against the defenders of orthodox theology, accusing them of “obscurantism,” the denial of the validity of modern learning. What did Ramm learn from a careful study of Barth’s theology?

I learned that to capitulate to the Enlightenment as liberal theology did is to betray the Christian faith. I learned that to ignore the Enlightenment and gloss over the problems it raised is to engage in obscurantism. Furthermore I learned that obscurantism is a losing strategy in the modern world. (Ramm, p. 27) 

According to Ramm, Barth’s method of integrating modern learning and historic Christian faith “is the most consistent paradigm for evangelical theology” (Ramm, 18). While theological debates over Barth’s ideas will be waged for years to come, he has opened up a vista for the Christian scholar which promises the possibility of a renewed presentation of orthodox Christianity in the modern world of higher learning.

Barth’s criticism of the excesses of the Enlightenment are proving to be increasingly cogent, and these excesses provide a new opportunity both for the Christian scholar and the Christian university. The spiritual state of the higher learning is in chaos, and growing numbers of critics both inside and outside the Christian faith recognize it. The Christian scholar has the opportunity and responsibility to speak effectively to and within the higher learning by relating the presuppositions of historic Christianity in a credible and persuasive way to students and colleagues as well.

The prevailing philosophy of higher education today is summarized well by John Brubacher in his recent book entitled On the Philosophy of Higher Education. In his closing chapter on “The University as a Church” Brubacher indicates that the universities have become a type of secularized church, in which authority has shifted from ecclesiastical to the “universal company of scholars” (Brubacher, p. 129). He cites Dewey’s claim that knowledge is sacred and that intelligence is more legitimate as the source and object of faith than any completed revelation. What binds scholars together is the unity they have in the “process of seeking knowledge” rather than in any common body of knowledge or any overarching purpose. Salvation is thus assured “by the acquisition and application of knowledge” (Brubacher, p. 133).

While this is an accurate description of the philosophical underpinnings of the modern university, it also explains why there is confusion and lack of coherence in the enterprise. Brubacher noted several weaknesses in the community of scholars. He identified a need for and a lack of a unifying principle or deeper unity within the university and “little interest among faculties in... holistic integration. Scholars have come to master only pieces of knowledge, not the whole” (Brubacher, p. 132). He also recognized a void in the area of values, when he stated, “Unfortunately, values seem to have been obscured by the prevailing emphasis on science. The pursuit of scientific objectivity... has denigrated values of a source of error” (p. 134).

The problems of specialization, the lack of unity and the confusion of values in the higher learning have been noted by numerous authors. Clark Kerr’s use of the term “multiversity” was a recognition that the university indeed had lost any unifying principle,
and he likened the modern multiversity to the United Nations in which coexistence, rather than unity, was the best that could be hoped for (Kerr, p. 36).

**CHALLENGES FOR MODERN CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS**

Thus, many problems of the modern university can be traced to the excesses of the Enlightenment; and they are becoming more and more evident to secular as well as Christian scholars. It is naive to expect higher education to adopt Christian presuppositions; but the Christian intellectual is needed to provide a corrective voice within the higher learning, to show the limitations of “secular” faith, and to express and reaffirm the validity of the Christian faith within higher education. The challenge to the Christian scholar is to be true to the legitimate demands of both faith and scholarship. There are several ways in which Christian scholars can make significant contributions to the higher learning.

They can affirm the integration of knowledge and truth. God is the author of truth and there is unity in that truth. “There is one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” This suggests relationships among disciples, rather than fragmentation, and the need to go beyond specialization to a broader perspective. Pelikan indicated that “the Christian intellectual has a special responsibility to cultivate a depth that is more than specialization and a breadth that is more than dilettantism” (Pelikan, p. 125).

The great danger of specialization according to Pelikan is that specialists become “so preoccupied with their own research that the appearance of demonic forces in the culture escapes their notice or does not seem to be their concern” (Pelikan, p. 117). This is reinforced by the record of the German universities during the rise of Fascism. The German model of scholarship, which was the envy of the world, was voiceless in preventing evil from poisoning the society. Albert Einstein looked to the universities to defend freedom, but was disappointed that they were quickly silenced. The record of the German university and the German intellectual in preserving freedom and integrity was unimpressive; and the problem can be explained, at least in part, by the lack of an integrated view of truth and knowledge. The Christian scholar has the obligation to be a generalist in the sense of cultivating the ability to connect disciplines to each other and to the broader purposes of God in the world.

The Christian intellectual must depart from secular scholarship when it insists on a naturalistic world view in its approach to knowledge and truth. The Christian is clearly on the side of revelation, transcendence, and the supernatural and in opposition to naturalism when it becomes a religion. According to Anshen, “modern man is threatened by a world created by himself. He is faced with a conversion of mind to naturalism, a dogmatic secularism and an opposition to the belief in the transcendent” (Pelikan, p. 7). Many modern theologians have reinforced and accepted the false dichotomy between faith and learning in an attempt to accommodate the presuppositions of modern intellectual thought. Thus, Ernest Renan spoke for many theologians when he asserted that “absolute faith is incompatible with sincere history” (Pelikan, p. 106). What Buttrick calls the “cult of objectivity” (Buttrick, p. 7) assumes that objectivity and commitment cannot exist side by side and further that a secular approach to scholarship is the only way to insure objectivity.

Recently, however, it has been recognized by an increasing number of scholars that objectivity is always conditioned within a context of belief and commitments and that the more serious problem threatening objectivity is the lack of awareness of presuppositions of the part of the scholar. Pelikan indicated that there is a “growing recognition that there is no such thing as an uninterpreted fact and therefore an exegesis free of presuppositions is impossible...” (Pelikan, pp. 107-108). It is ironic that Christian scholars who operated within the context of historic Christian faith and were perceived as narrow and unenlightened for doing so are now issuing a challenge to the prevailing assumption of scientism and its closed philosophical system.

Ramm views Barth as a key figure in challenging the assumptions of the scientific world view:

As a child of the Enlightenment, he recognizes the development and legitimacy of modern scientific history; yet he defends the substantial truth of the resurrection narratives. As a child of the Enlightenment, he knows that we live in a scientific culture and enjoy its technological fruit; yet he scolds the scientists when they convert their science into world view. (Ramm, p. 16).

Barth rejected the relativism of liberal theologians, who interpret faith from a scientific world view, while he stood firmly in the Enlightenment traditions. Faith and learning cannot be separated,
and Christian scholarship can accommodate the legitimate demands of modern scholarship without accepting the limited worldview of many modern scholars.

One of the most important areas of involvement of the Christian scholar is that of values. Ambiguity over values and moral commitments is a commonly recognized shortcoming of modern higher education, and there are few promising developments to address this issue in most colleges and universities. There is a need to show how Christian values are essential to the health of higher learning and the society that supports it. The "value free" notion of much modern scholarship should be challenged, and the moral and ethical absolutes of the Christian faith ought to be in the vanguard of Christian scholarship.

The Christian scholar can best integrate faith and learning by accepting the biblical concept of "vocation." The Christian calling in higher education is not just an institution, a job, or a discipline, but reflects a broader purpose. The Christian is called to be a witness to the world and to share that calling with others. The doctrine of vocation declares that "the fullest possible actualization of the potential in the talents and endowments of each individual is not merely a means of fulfilling personal ambition, but an instrument for obeying and glorifying God" (Pelikan, p. 118). The result will be the highest quality of thought and scholarship emanating from the Christian scholar. This will be reflected in model behavior for both students and colleagues. Serving only a custodial function, whether it be to a discipline or to a church, will severely inhibit the vision of Christian vocation.

The demands and expectations on the Christian scholar are great indeed—nothing short of the ultimate of relating the mind of Christ to the Christian vocation of scholarship. As a professional, a scholar, and a reformer, the Christian must bring good news and hope to the community of scholars.

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**FORUM**

**Nuclear War**

The articles on nuclear war in the July issue were well done and appropriate as this past summer marked the fortieth year of the age of nuclear weapons. But not only is this the fortieth year that nuclear weapons have been in existence, it is also the fortieth year since the last global war. A lot of believers work on systems that are integral to the nuclear defense of the West, and many of us believe that there is a direct correlation between our work and these forty years without global conflict. We also believe that those who are "prepared to live without nuclear weapons" had better be prepared to live with global war and lots of it. As observed by Norris Bradbury, a former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory: "... the whole object or making these weapons is not to kill people but to provide time for somebody to find other ways to solve these problems."

As frightening as nuclear war may be, perhaps equally frightening is the abysmal ignorance that exists between the people of the Soviet Empire and the people of the West. As evidenced by KAL 007 attack, the suppression of Solidarity, the attempted assassination of the Pope, the censorship of Sakharov, etc., great differences separate us in political philosophy. So in my opinion, there is a severe need for increased communication between the people of the Soviet and of the West and AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL. Therein may be an opportunity for Christendom. Simply put, the best hope for peace may not lie in Christian pietism, but in Christian communication. In fact, it may be the only hope.

Bill Buzbee
Los Alamos, New Mexico

(continued on p. 23)
The underlying issue is not the integration of faith and reason; that has already happened. Rather, the issue is to recognize that the Christian worldview is one among many and that every system demands both faith and reason. Our task as Christian scholars is to rise above the efforts of those who would have us believe that Christian faith is an inferior worldview.

By KATHY J. PULLEY

Tertullian's question "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" is an interesting one. Who would have suspected that the Athenians' classical worldview would decline, while over in the smaller city of Jerusalem another kind of history was taking form—one which outlasted Athens—a holy history. As Dr. Adrian notes, the worldview of Athens paid a great deal of attention to intellectualism and the expansion of the human being in every way; yet, in Jerusalem attention was paid to the expansion of faith, faith in Yahweh and later faith in Jesus Christ. As Christian faith became dominant in the Roman Empire, Athens and Jerusalem became much more integrated. Institutional Christianity emerged, and with it emerged an institutional Christian faith which prevailed throughout the Middle Ages. However, as Adrian points out, this particular Christian faith did not withstand the test of time. It was eventually replaced by the faith of the Enlightenment and secularism.

When faith in the Enlightenment emerged, a new kind of tension developed between that faith and traditional Christian faith. The new Athens and Jerusalem were believed to be incompatible; one could not retain faith in both. This dichotomy continues to be felt even today; however, intellectualism itself is compatible with Christian faith and it always has been. The New Testament records that Paul could go to Athens and talk about his faith, using intellectual language, to the philosophers on Mars Hill.

One thing we must recognize: the former represents a worldview, whereas the latter functions as an instrument to discuss a worldview.

I must disagree fundamentally with one aspect of Adrian's thesis: The underlying issue is not the integration of faith and reason; that has already happened. Rather, the issue is to recognize that the Christian worldview is one among many and that every system demands both faith and reason. Our task as Christian scholars is to rise above the efforts of those who would have us believe that Christian faith is an inferior worldview and must be made compatible with other worldviews. Christianity will always fall short of Enlightenment faith when efforts are made to merge it with secularism, because worldviews by their very nature are unique and incompatible.

For example, proving the existence of a creator—not to speak of a personal God—is very different from proving the existence of material objects. The latter is done by objective analysis, whereas the former lies beyond the scope of such analysis. In the West, the challenge is not faith against reason. It is the challenge of the Christian worldview against the more prevailing worldview of Enlightenment faith.

With this presupposition in mind let me now focus...
Although Mr. Adrian's intent is to give the reader a concise and general historical overview of the issue, he fails to assimilate all the relevant information. The paper does not mention nor deal with critical issues of the twentieth century which continue to have a direct impact on the Christian scholar's approach to conflicting worldviews today. At least three such critical issues are outstanding.

Critical Issue 1: How does the Modernist- Fundamentalist controversy of the early twentieth century affect our views about Christian faith and intellectualism today?

Enlightenment and Christian faith clashed before the twentieth century, but it was only after the famous Scopes Trial that Fundamentalism began to be ridiculed and an anti-intellectualism began to emerge from many conservative religious groups. As we are well aware, this anti-intellectual trend continues to exist in many churches and church-related institutions. One responsibility the Christian scholar may have is to be sensitive to those who are still fearful, while remaining committed to the pursuit of truth.

Critical Issue 2: Adrian mentioned that Karl Barth may have some significant contributions to make to conservative theology today and that raises a second question: What do the Neo-orthodox theologians, specifically Karl Barth, have to contribute to the challenge being discussed?

Karl Barth is regaining credibility among conservative theologians and Bernard Ramm's new book is an indication of this. Barth's writings challenged both the liberals and the conservatives of the 1920s, but what "paradigm for evangelical theology" does Barth offer that is relevant? Although Adrian fails to answer this question, he does raise an interesting possibility: all theology, both liberal, conservative, and in-between, may provide us with critical links between Enlightenment's rationalism and Christian faith.

It is crucial to reconsider the importance of the theologian within the context of struggling worldviews. Someone has mentioned during this conference that it is important that we not react too much to all the cultural shifts of today, and I would agree. But I suggest that such a reaction to the issues of the 1920s. Perhaps it is time that we not only start doing theology but that we also look back to all those theologians, both liberal and conservative, who seriously struggled over the issues of liberalism and orthodoxy. Theologians like Barth, Brunner, and Niebuhr may have more adequately assessed the ramifications of Enlightenment faith for the twentieth century than any other group.

Critical Issue 3: How does the resurgence of secularization in the post-World War II period affect Christian scholarship today?

Adrian refers to the Brubacher study of 1966 to indicate that the University itself has been considerably altered as it has come to play the role of a secularized church.

This is true, but he fails to note that the role of the University shifted after World War II. The new secularized role is directed toward research and production, whereas the pre-World War II role, which goes further back then even our English heritage, was directed toward character building. Before World War II the primary function of a university was to establish a sense of values within the society. The Brubacher study points out what the implications of this secular shift have meant; but it fails to recognize that until the very mission of the University itself is challenged to an actual return to its pre-World War II philosophy, there can be little expectation for the value-less void to be filled. This is not to deny validity of research. Both are essential. Perhaps the Christian scholar can be the voice which calls the University back to being what it was originally intended to be.

Many of the problems which the Christian scholar faces today are relatively new problems. They do not have a long history behind them, nor are they immutable. A survey of the historical development of the challenge between the faith of Christianity and that of the Enlightenment shows that careful attention must be paid to the twentieth century, because it is only within our own century that Enlightenment faith has been actualized and its assumptions accepted as facts among the general populace.

Turning now to the strengths of Adrian's paper: the thesis and insights which he brings to the topic are extremely valuable and merit considerable attention by all who are concerned with higher education. The last section of his paper concerning implications of such thought upon the contemporary Christian is especially relevant and practical.

I would like to respond specifically to the last implication he suggests and the one I believe to be the strongest. He says, "The Christian scholar can best integrate faith and learning by accepting the biblical concept of 'vocation.'" I like the use of the word "calling." It reflects the belief that a Christian scholar retains a dynamic relationship with God. Being a scholar and/or a teacher in the custodial and utilitarian sense of the word is not enough for the Christian.

Bryan Wilson, a British sociologist, has said that a
teacher's role in a society is a very unique one. Whereas doctors may turn persons into patients and lawyers may turn individuals into clients, the educator must turn students into whole persons.\(^2\) If this is the ideal task for all teachers, then it is certainly to be expected that Christian scholars will take their vocation just as seriously. The task of making students into whole persons will most likely involve modeling.

Robert Bellah commented in his Nobel Lectures at Harvard in 1982 that the best way to begin the task of reforming the University is through teaching; and more important than the curriculum is to find teachers who are not so overly specialized that they can't handle a tough question—a religious question, a question of ultimate meaning. 3 Those of us involved in Christian scholarship must not shy away from this aspect of our vocational task.

It is on this very point that our Christian worldview becomes so critical. Bellah states that,

\[
... the university has been the missionary outpost for the propagation of a modern worldview ... It is time we honestly accepted the fact that we are a missionary enterprise and we are peddling a specific worldview and take responsibility for that fact. 4
\]

As Christian scholars, do we not also have a responsibility to be aware of what worldview we “peddle,” both by our verbal responses and our silences?

Our vocation calls us to solid scholarship, to be motivated always to seek truth, to cultivate a spirit of inquiry both in ourselves and in others. It also calls us to be models of Christian principles. When prophetic judgments are needed, we respond; when reform is necessary, we are willing to be agents for change; and when Christian faith demands translation into praxis, we accept the responsibility of being translators.

To conclude, I suggest that instead of comparing the current challenge which Christianity faces against other worldviews to the faith of Jerusalem, perhaps we should use Antioch as our model. Antioch assertively and aggressively accepted the challenge of taking its worldview through the Roman Empire.

**NOTES**

4. Ibid., p. 53.

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Doctrinal Reflections

On the Mission of the Churches of Christ

At almost every point where Churches of Christ have confronted cultural values and prejudices in the last few decades, culture has won. But if our mode of operation is simply to bow to the prevailing winds of culture, we should be ashamed to claim credit even for the good.

By LYNN E. MITCHELL, JR.

Answering the question “What is the mission of the Church?” is a broad assignment and a difficult undertaking to say the least. It boggles my own theological confidence. For our purposes, however, we must first narrow the question to the more relevant question for us, i.e., “What should be the mission of Churches of Christ?” Since the Church is much broader than those churches denominated “Churches of Christ,” to consider the Church’s mission would involve analysis of and judgments about issues ranging from the pronouncements of bishops to the witness of peace churches and advocates of the simple life-style. Since we in Churches of Christ have no bishops’ conferences, and are certainly not peace churches nor people of the simple life, our mission has been defined for us in other ways.

Issues upon which Catholic bishops pronounce and to which peace churches witness are often not even discussable among Churches of Christ. Issues which are life and death matters to earth’s people and, in fact, impinge upon the well-being of every living creature (abortion, ecology, the arms race, euthanasia, peace, etc.) are evidently matters of less than secondary importance among Churches of Christ.

I use the expression “less than secondary” advisedly. Obviously for anyone who confesses Jesus as Lord, these are in a sense secondary to the primary task of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. About this we are in agreement with both Catholic bishops and Mennonite pacifists. Where we stand virtually alone, however, is in finding no way among our churches to relate these “secondary” issues to the Gospel which we preach. This leads some to inquire, “What kind of gospel is it that you preach which has nothing to do with the life and death issues facing all of God’s creatures?”

Do we have a mission other than “saving souls”? Once a soul is saved, what does he or she do then? What, in other words, are we saving souls for? Does it make any difference to God’s world that a soul is saved? Is a “saved soul” of no earthly good, having as its only mission to die and go to heaven? That seems to be the message of much of our singing, praying, and preaching.

It was not always that way. Churches in the early days of our movement seemed to have thought “saving souls” involved more than providing post-mortem fire insurance. Most of our early folks thought being a Christian involved at least a simple lifestyle and avoidance of extravagant dress and conspicuous consumption. Many of them assumed that it involved at least an anti-war and anti-slavery stance. A good portion of our “Restorationist” forebears would have conformed to the type described by H. Richard Niebuhr as “Christ against Culture” (Christ and Culture, Harper and Row, 1951). This type radically rejects any claims by culture on the Christian’s loyalty. Now there is a theologically respectable mission—one you can sink your teeth into. It takes gutsy people who are serious about their confession to be counted as partisans of “Christ against Culture.” To say “to hell with
culture” in the name of Christ is surely better than saying nothing. We have had elders shot by military authority and preachers imprisoned by civil courts back when we had peace churches among us—when some members of Churches of Christ were prepared to die rather than support the war machines of their own nation or give in to the waste and sinful ostentation of their own society. These were folks who were committed to obeying God rather than men—folks like Elias Smith, Barton W. Stone, Raccoon John Smith, Tolbert Fanning, Benjamin Franklin, David Lipscomb.

This is not the only one of Niebuhr’s types our people have fit, however. We have never been in the position politically or culturally to fit the “Christ above Culture” type. That type is represented by the grand synthesis of faith and culture of the Catholic Middle Ages. We will have to leave that to the Catholics. And we have never had a profound enough doctrine of sin to fit the “Christ and Culture in Paradox” type. This type does not seek to dews culture completely, but it stands always in serious tension with culture and all its sinful pretensions. It is the Lutherans who hold the field there.

That just leaves two of Niebuhr’s types, i.e., “Christ Transforming Culture” and the “Christ of Culture.” Niebuhr does not, of course, mention Alexander Campbell; but there cannot be a more striking example of “Christ Transforming Culture” than Campbell’s millenium which was to be brought about by the restoration of “the ancient order of things.” His “restoration” movement eventually turned into a collection of sects and denominations doing different things for different reasons. But it was originally envisioned by Campbell to be an efficient means for transforming all Christians into members of one restored, apostolic church, thereby transforming America into the launching pad of the millenium, and, ultimately, transforming the kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Rev. 11:15).

This is another mission our people have envisioned—a vision worthy of a great movement. It is a vision which attempts to transcend sectarian bounds while retaining what is good in the sectarian. It sees God at work in the world to redeem the whole of creation and restore it to Himself. The only problem with Campbell’s scheme, like all other millenial schemes of the period, is that it did not happen as he expected it to happen. It suffered the common fate of utopian dreams, a suffocating death at the hands of subsequent history. So his “Restoration Movement” had to go back to the drawing board.

The visions of mission which have succeeded Campbell’s have not been nearly so grand. From the
The Bitburg affair simply tore open old wounds and disrupted the healing process that had been going on for four decades.

PRESIDENT REAGAN AND V-E DAY PLUS FORTY YEARS IN GERMANY

By RICHARD V. PIERARD

A few months have passed since the commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of V-E Day, the end of World War II in Europe on May 8, 1945. It was a moving experience to be in Germany during this time of remembrance and reflection on the tragic events of a half-century ago which ruined a once proud and prosperous nation, and I have thought much about the things I observed there. It was painfully obvious that Germans were in a quandary over the ceremonies, because it was anything but easy to celebrate one’s own defeat with the victors. For some, V-E Day meant national catastrophe, capitulation, and the permanent division of their country. Others viewed it as the liberation from the Hitler dictatorship and Nazi tyranny, the opportunity for a fresh start. But, then, those in the latter category were faced with the very practical difficulty of how, when, where, and with whom to celebrate the occasion.

The whole matter was enormously complicated by President Ronald Reagan’s state visit to West Germany during the week before V-E Day plus forty. It was intended to underline and strengthen German-American friendship; but because the itinerary included a stop at a German military cemetery which contained the graves of 49 Waffen-SS soldiers, the projected trip evoked a storm of criticism in the United States that was unprecedented in his presidency. The painful situation was only made worse when Alfred Dregger, the leader of the Christian Democratic Union party in the West Germany parliament, released the text of a letter he had written to the fifty-three U.S. senators who had publicly asked Mr. Reagan to cancel the cemetery visit. Dregger declared that on the last day of the war he had been fighting against the Soviets in Silesia and that his brother had been killed on the Eastern Front in 1944; hence he regarded the senators’ demand as an “insult” to his brother and his fallen comrades. The solons’ reply was cast in just as strong terms as the CDU parliamentarian’s letter, and it revealed as much as anything that occurred during those heated days of late April and early May just how much the cordial German-American relationship had been placed in jeopardy by the ill-conceived presidential visit.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl was facing a crucial election in the populous state of North Rhine-Westphalia, and he hoped to use the two-day tour of Germany on May 5-6 (as well as the economic sum-

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mit conference of seven Western heads of state in the capital city of Bonn which preceded it) as devices to strengthen his position and that of his CDU party. He persuaded the other leaders to advance the annual economic confab from June to May and arranged for Reagan to give speeches at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp memorial and Hambach (site of a legendary liberal-democratic demonstration in 1832) and to lay a wreath at the German war cemetery on the outskirts of Bitburg. With the latter he hoped to score a public relations triumph like the reconciliation he had had with French President Francois Mitterand at Verdun the previous autumn.

Although the tempo of controversy increased steadily as the fateful day approached, Mr. Reagan felt he had to support the bumbling and (in the opinion of some political commentators) steadily weakening Chancellor, his true friend, who had authorized the stationing of Pershing missiles on German soil in spite of considerable public opposition and who also backed the Strategic Defense Initiative (“Star Wars”) scheme. But by pressuring Mr. Reagan to hold firm to the agreement to call at the military cemetery, the Chancellor embarrassed his guest and at the same time depleted his own political capital, as evidenced by the crushing defeat the CDU suffered in the May 12 state election. The whole affair completely overshadowed the economic parley which reporters cynically referred to as the “Bitburg summit.”

A small town in the hill country near the Belgian border, its main claim to fame up to this moment had been a popular brand of beer brewed there, Bitburger Pils. (Former Chancellor Willy Brandt, referring to John F. Kennedy’s celebrated visit to Berlin in 1963, commented tongue-in-cheek that Reagan should have said: “Ich bin ein Bitburger.”) His decision to come with Kohl to the Kulmehohe military cemetery not only was an error in judgment and the result of poor staff work but also revealed a failure in perception that reconciliation between Germans and Americans had long ago taken place. The Marshall Plan, Berlin Airlift, NATO, and the innumerable personal ties that have developed through marriages, teacher exchanges, tourism, and business ventures testify to this. The Bitburg affair simply tore open old wounds and disrupted the healing process.
that had been going on for four decades.

At times stubbornness can be a virtue, but in a statesman flexibility is all-important. But neither man was willing to back down, as each feared this would be perceived as weakness. In Bonn I heard White House Press Secretary Larry Speakes queried about a newspaper report of a reunion of SS veterans, which alleged that some of those present were saying that as a result of the Bitburg action they were “now feeling rehabilitated.” The only response he could come up with was the sarcastic retort: “I am not a spokesman for the SS.” Further, he declined to comment on the possibility that Reagan might be concerned about the SS taking comfort from this and asserted that “nothing” would embarrass the President.

Had Mr. Reagan a different group of evangelical Christians as spiritual advisers than the hard-nosed fundamentalists he hob-nobs with, perhaps they could have explained to him what the Bible says about strength in weakness. So he went through with the visit and the process demonstrated an insensitivity and inflexibility that exposed his own weakness. He tried to undo the damage with moving speeches at Bergen-Belsen and the U.S. air base at Bitburg, but to no avail. A group of non-violent Jewish protesters was expelled from the camp premises by order of the Secret Service, which, in its diligence to protect the President, had arrogantly taken over the direction of security from the Germans, who were merely treated as clients. Reagan rushed through the eight-minute Bitburg cemetery stop without saying anything or even looking around at the graves; and to the displeasure of the crowds who had lined the motorcade route holding small American flags and hoping for a smile from the President, he sped through the city to reach the more congenial environs of the air base. His address there included the usual sentimental anecdotes and an expression of sympathy for the victims of communist “totalitarianism” (but not for those of the South African or Chilean variety).

As a result, Mr. Reagan’s visit did little to promote better relations between the two nations. However, much more was done to advance the cause of reconciliation by Christians in Germany. For example, on May 8 an active churchman, the Federal Republic’s President Richard von Weizsacker stirred the nation with his oratory in an address to a joint session of both houses of parliament. His speech was extensively quoted in the press and even issued as a phonograph record. In clear terms he declared, “We need and we have the strength to look truth straight in the eye, without embellishment and without distortion.” The National Socialist crimes were carried out by a small number, screened from public view; but every German could witness what his Jewish compatriots were going through. “Who could remain unsuspecting in the face of the growing deprivation of human rights and the continual violation of human dignity?” von Weizsacker asked. “Whoever opened his eyes and ears and sought information could not fail to notice that Jews were being deported.”

While no one expected Germans to wear penitential robes just because they were German, “all of us, whether guilty or not, whether old or young, must accept the past. We are all affected by its consequences and liable for it.” He went on to label the anniversary a day for the remembrance of the victims of the war and Nazi tyranny, particularly the six million Jews murdered in the concentration camps and the countless citizens of the Soviet Union, Poland, and other countries who lost their lives. He insisted that “we seek reconciliation. Precisely for that reason we must understand that there can be no reconciliation without remembrance.” Then he called on his own people and others in the world to renounce force and live together with others in lasting peace.

Moreover, the churches were quite active in the commemoration. For example, in Frankfurt am Main (where I resided last spring) some fifty special services were scheduled in the city’s Protestant and Catholic churches in remembrance of May 8. Major ecumenical services were held at London’s Westminster Abbey, West Berlin’s Kaiser Wilhelm Gedachtniskirche, and Cologne Cathedral. At the latter, where Kohl and von Weizsacker both were in attendance, Archbishop Joseph Cardinal Hoeffner...
ficials hosted a gala spectacle in the ultramodern wreath-layings were the order of the day.

folk fest was organized at East Berlin's Alexanderplatz, the top party dignitaries and state officials and representatives from the U.S. National Council of Churches. Particularly noticeable was the large number of young people, several of whom had roles in the two-hour service. The liturgy was one of confession for responsibility and indifference on the part of all and a commitment to work for peace. The sermon by Bishop Johannes Hempel on 2 Corinthians 5:19-20 stressed reconciliation and the difficult but necessary quest for peace. As I left this house of worship to return to my lodging, I really felt I had been in the presence of God and his people.

In all of the hullabaloos over whether the fortieth anniversary should ever have been observed in the first place, the voice of the Church had rung out loud and clear. Yes, we must remember not to wallow in the muck of collective guilt or to shed bitter tears of remorse over the lost lives, territory, and honor, but rather to work to prevent such a thing from happening again. We must strive for peace and work against the nuclear arms race, the oppression of small nations, racial injustice, and the efforts to minimize the Holocaust or deny Israel's rights to exist as a nation. In remembrance is repentance, forgiveness, and healing; but this must be followed by actions. There lies the challenge of the future.

Possibly the most meaningful event of all, so it seemed to me, took place on the evening of May 8 in East Berlin, the capital of the German Democratic Republic. While West Germans were divided as to whether they should see the date as an occasion for mourning or a time of rejoicing (and some felt it should simply be ignored), the GDR had pulled out all the stops to celebrate it as the occasion of the liberation from fascist tyranny and the creation of the new socialist order in alliance with their Soviet comrades. May 8 was declared a national holiday, and military parades and wreath-layings were the order of the day.

However, at the same hour as a military tattoo on Unter den Linden, the East German Protestants conducted an ecumenical memorial service in the Marienkirche a half-mile away. Around 1,500 worshipers thronged into the historic church which only seats 1,200; among them were delegations from ten countries that had been involved in World War II, including the Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow and representatives from the U.S. National Council of Churches. Particularly noticeable was the large number of young people, several of whom had roles in the two-hour service. The liturgy was one of confession for responsibility and indifference on the part of all and a commitment to work for peace. The sermon by Bishop Johannes Hempel on 2 Corinthians 5:19-20 stressed reconciliation and the difficult but necessary quest for peace. As I left this house of worship to return to my lodging, I really felt I had been in the presence of God and his people.

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And I think it's calligraphy, not "choreography" that Kitty Jay enjoys.

— the Editor
Response to Opinion/RSVP

How Much Authority for Elders?
“the towel and the basin”

In the OPINION/RSVP questionnaire that appeared in the June 1985 issue of Mission Journal three statements were presented with the opportunity for readers to express agreement or disagreement: (1) The BIBLE TEACHES members have no right to know the business affairs of the congregation. (2) The BIBLE TEACHES elders should conduct all congregational business in absolute secrecy. (3) The BIBLE TEACHES elders are to be selected by elders—NOT BY THE CONGREGATION. Although the number of responses was not overwhelming, the respondents without exception marked the “disagree” column. One person pointed out, however, the statements were “loaded” so as to necessitate such agreement in disagreement. In one sense, perhaps, that’s true. However, inasmuch as many elders who have recently been challenged claim absolute power over the church and teach that they are acting on the authority given them by clear biblical teaching, the questions raised are valid.

Many thoughtful comments were made, and several threads of shared beliefs emerged in the discussion section.

1. Such total authority as is claimed by many elders and especially some of those whose power has been questioned is antithetical to biblical teaching. Those who take unto themselves such power usurp “from Jesus Christ, the true head of the Church,” writes one. Patricia Allbritten, Saratoga, CA expresses strong disagreement with the three statements and continues, “Only Christ Jesus is the head of the church and his example is our authority. Resistance to legalistic authority will certainly be met with outrage, but true servants will not be moved by intimidation.” Glen McGuire of Denver, CO emphasizes that “the elders are part of the body, they are not the head. In no way should they become dictatorial.” Making his appeal to Scripture, David Moreland, Milligan College, TN, says, “Jesus speaks to the whole issue of church leaders in Matt. 20:23-27. He states that leaders are not ‘to lord it over’ or ‘exercise authority’.” Kenneth Gallaway, Lake Como, Fl writes from a perspective of forty years: “I have seen the corrupting forces of power in the eldership.”

2. The secular model of leadership that now prevails is inappropriate for the Church. Elmer Prout, Roseville, CA sees that “an ‘executive board of elders’ has captured the imagination of an increasing number of believers. ‘What are elders for, if not to make the decisions?’ say many church members—and all too many elders ‘love to have it so.’ The biblical way which is seen in Acts 6 and 15 has been set aside in favor of closed meetings in which the executives operate at their pleasure.” Also putting it in a broader context, Bill Jenkins, Tulsa, OK points out that “the perversion of the Church by Americans parallels other past perversions in European history. The Church is not a corporation, not a business. The ignorance and un-Christlikeness of elders-who-control staggers me. The love of God and Christ’s work demands liberation from such.” Mike Sanders, Olympia, WA warns, “To the extent that congregations allow their elders to be corporate directors, they allow them to quit functioning as actual responsible shepherds.” “Let qualified business men make business decisions,” pleads Steve Bishop of Hearne, TX.

3. The real problem is spiritual. One correspondent says it bluntly: “Our problems are not as much financial as the fact that our eldership is scripturally unqualified.” “Elders are pastors who are involved in the lives of God’s people when they are outside the church building. The N.T. lists their responsibilities as teaching, preaching, and praying” (Bishop). Karen Mossman, Austin, TX asserts that “an elder is not an office. An elder is a person who functions as a shepherd, slave, servant, not a director, president, or boss. The folks out there washing feet, healing pain, visiting the sick, feeding the hungry and crying with the grieving are the elders—no matter who won the election buttons labeled ‘elder.’ Make no mistake, the sheep know the shepherd.” They are a select group of people to keep the eyes and hearts of the congregation focused on God (McGuire). Bill Lambert, Durham, NC reflects on other aspects of the spiritual dimension: “In principle the NT teaches leaders that they serve the Lord best when serving the believers. Believers are often most well served when their desires and opinions are well considered, then met, or at least thoughtfully answered. Spiritual people will feel remorse when their spiritual desires and opinions are unjustly considered by leaders acting as overlords. Any leadership (civil government, church government or God Himself) would be resented by ignored hearts and minds. Godly leadership, by definition always initiates positive response.” William Johnson, Tulare, CA holds up the Lord as the true model of leadership: “Mark 10:45—‘but to serve, and to give his life.’ He modeled leadership by illustrating servitude—the towel and the basin—not laying down the law and the gavel.”

4. Members should select elders, have a right to be part of the decision-making process, should have access to all matters that concern the congregation. Bob Scott, who is involved in the law suit in Little Rock, AR, writes concerning selection: “If elders are supposed to select elders (rather than members selecting), I have been misled for 40 years. I thought we (members) had been doing the selecting and elders were doing the appointing after we selected.” Cynthia Taylor of Ottawa, Canada, suggests that 1 Cor. 16:1-3 is directed to the church, not just the elders. “To me it assumes congregational involvement in selection of men to take the gift to
Jerusalem.” Herman M. Schlechter, Taylor Falls, MN believes that “elders do have the authority to make the decisions for a congregation through the wisdom of their years living for Christ” but they “need to be chosen by the congregation and receive input from the congregation.” An elderly brother writes that he has just resigned after 40 years as an elder and confesses that “there is some doubt about our actions on No. 3.”

Most agree with Elmer Prout’s statement that “the biblical way which is seen in Acts 6 and 15 has been set aside in favor of closed meetings in which the executives operate at their pleasure. It is time that we return to the association of friends with the openness spoken of in John 15:15.” Others also attest to this necessity: “We must return to Elders performing the shepherding role or function (spiritual) and bring members into the decision-making process on business of the church.” “All decisions should be made by all members.” One woman wrote that she had taken issue with the annual budget of the church and was grudgingly given salary information with instructions not to reveal it to anyone. “All churches,” says Steve Kenney, Bangor, ME “should be required to file annual reports stating total contributions and expenses. I’m sure that there would be opposition to this if the churches were not using the funds wisely.”

5. A number of persons took a different stance on the New Testament teaching about how elders are selected and what their role is, i.e., the New Testament does not really say. Steve Kenney admits, “I’m not sure how elders are ‘biblically selected.’” Observes another, “The right to know, conducting of business and selection process are not discussed in Scripture.” Rod Corner, Ocean Springs, MS points out the weakness in our methods of interpretation: “Concerning elders, I think the Church of Christ is again victimized by the ‘blueprint’ hermeneutic which has for so long characterized our interpretation of the Bible. I checked ‘disagree’ on the above questions, not because the N.T. teaches the opposite, although I would personally advocate such opposing positions, but because the Bible says nothing either way. We must realize that the N.T. does not give us a blueprint.” Lambert comments that “such matters are difficult to address with only ‘yea’ or ‘nay.’... every individual situation lies in its own individual set of conditions. The New Testament in principle, though, I believe, instructs against oligarchies in the Lord’s church and promotes democratic participation. This I feel is especially true when Jesus Christ is worshiped in a pro-democratic culture.”

Several had something to say about lawsuits: “I do not agree with taking ‘church matters’ to court—neither do I agree with elders not discussing ‘church matters’ with its members. What a disgrace!” One person confessed, “We contributed to the legal defense fund for the Collinsville, Oklahoma elders. We will not contribute to the Sixth and Izard in Little Rock, AK elders. Their application of New Testament Scripture is wrong.” However, Bobby Hoover of Arlington, TX says, “Three cheers for those folks in Little Rock who are gutsy enough to bring this type of tyranny to light—and back it up with their own personal risk.”

Finally, the most touching comment came from Joe Brown III, son of the chief plaintiff in the Little Rock case: “My father’s law suit was filed out of extreme love for Christ’s body and his church. Even though it has been hard, I am very proud of my earthly father.” (Note: Please see FORUM for longer responses.)

(Forum, continued from p. 12)

Science and Religion

The articles by Buffaloe and Langford in the May issue dealing with science and religion were excellent. Buffaloe makes two key points: 1. The practice of science is involved with values in that “it cannot survive without justice and honor and respect between people.” 2. The findings of science are “ethically neutral.” As a Christian and a scientist, I especially appreciate the first of these.

The second point is more complex than may appear initially. It is correct in the abstract. But technology does not exist in the abstract—it exists in our lives. For the most part technology has been a blessing to mankind, giving us transportation systems, communication systems, health care, food supplies, and a variety of goods that were inconceivable a mere century ago. Further, over the long term, technology has created more jobs than it has displaced. However, we are now entering an era of automation that may affect every thread of society, including religion. One disturbing measure of its impact is the steady growth in the average rate of unemployment in this country since the end of World War II. Clearly, high unemployment leads to economic and social instability. Already our political system is trying various approaches toward equitable distributions of work and income. Eventually, a solution will likely be found. In the process, there may be new opportunities for Christian service—both in the management of technology and in assisting those affected by it.

The article by Langford is exquisite in its timeliness. The notion that there are two books of God—one of words and one of works—and that there can be no conflict between them is in sore need of study and articulation. As evidenced by recent explanations for mass extinctions, (for example, see “Death Star,” Popular Science, June 1985), our understanding of the geologic record is incomplete and continues to grow. At the same time we continue to accumulate massive amounts of data confirming the accuracy of the historical record in the Bible. For those who know both science and Scripture, the forthcoming decades will be filled with wonder and excitement.

Bill Buzbee
Los Alamos, New Mexico

Authority of Elders

God’s people including elders should set an example in the community of complete open operations. I’m not at all sure that the elders have any place in the finances of the group. An independent audit should be performed annually!

God’s people as an assembly or a
family or a body of Christ are just as likely to be guilty of idolatry as an individual. The congregation as a whole is just as subject to having their heart “where their treasure is” as individuals are.

As evidence of the elders being out of their jurisdiction, the low utilization of huge facilities is convincing. Congregations that insist on building a new auditorium every few years and never show much real need are guilty (in my opinion) of gross mismanagement, massive waste and sin. (Christ said “Don’t waste anything,”) I find elders direct this kind of operation, they are guilty. If there were no data to show this to be true, it would be stupid for me to express these ideas. There is plenty of data. The collection of this body of data won’t go away. It cries for explanation. Congregations or elders who claim a vast building glorifies God need to study the idea of “glorifying.” The heavens declare God’s glory, but a vast empty cathedral probably does just the opposite.

Ralph E. Arceaux
Wichita Falls, Texas

At Golf Course Road Church of Christ in Midland, TX we currently have an excellent eldership composed of profoundly spiritual brothers who are trying to be the pastor-shepherds described in New Testament Scripture. Several Christians at our 1500-member congregation asked me last fall why I was one of two dissenting votes to the legal incorporation of the Church as a Texas not-for-profit corporation. My ‘no’ vote was not a vote of “no confidence” in the elders. Rather, my vote was directed against the fossilization of current concepts of the “authoritarian eldership” as practiced by many restoration New Testament elderships. Incorporating a church with elders/directors and granting the directors exclusive powers to borrow, buy, sell, etc. in the Articles of incorporation appears to me to be (1) an accretion of powers and responsibilities that vest in the entire congregation, (2) a state-sanctioned institutionalization of an incorrect interpretation of Scripture, and (3) an unnecessary constraint on the Lord’s people.

We in Restoration Churches of Christ have borrowed too heavily from the ideas and concepts of the corporate world in developing our ideas of who and what elders are and do. Elders are our leaders by their examples and the quality of their spiritual maturity. They are our leaders because we willingly follow them. They are our shepherds because we trust them to pray for and use wisdom. To equate the English word “oversee” to “rule by divine right” is to rip its original meaning in the Greek text completely out of context and grossly misinterpret the apostles’ message.

I would never sue a brother-in-Christ in violation of the clear teaching of 1 Cor. 6. But, . . . I might sue the Directors of a Texas Not-For-Profit Corporation for violation of Texas law governing such corporations. When does a man cease being an elder of the Lord’s church and become an officer of a state-created corporation? Where in any New Testament is protection from a lawsuit granted to a government legal entity?

Gary R. Willis
Midland, Texas

Life Beyond Death

I want to commend Brother Lynn E. Mitchell of Bering Drive Church of Christ, Houston, Texas, for the beautiful and truthful article “Life Beyond Death” in the July issue of Mission. We need more such articles by such dedicated men. God bless him and may he continue his articles.

Mrs. Sam Jones
Corpus Christi, Texas

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