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### The New Testament Church Pattern and The Disciples of Christ and The World of Tomorrow

Pearl H. Welshimer

A. Dale Fiers

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FEB 4 1947

# The New Testament Church Pattern



THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST AND  
THE WORLD OF TOMORROW



**First Christian Church**  
**New Castle, Pennsylvania**

## FOREWORD

The two sermons included in this booklet were delivered at the 113th Annual Convention of the Disciples of Christ in Pennsylvania, held at the First Christian Church, New Castle, September 16-18, 1946, with 1045 registered delegates. This was the largest convention of our Brotherhood in this state since records have been kept and the many excellent addresses and fine fellowship helped to make it one of the best such gatherings.

However, it was felt by many in the large audiences who heard these two sermons on our position and our responsibilities in the religious world of today and tomorrow, that they were worthy of permanent record and should be widely distributed throughout our Brotherhood. Such distinctive sermons as these on our unique position in these changing times are urgently needed.

So, this booklet is sent to you with the best wishes of the Official Board of the host church in the hope and with the prayer that these sermons may be as inspiring and helpful to you who read them as they were to those of us who had the privilege of hearing them.

G. S. Bennett, Pastor,  
First Christian Church,  
New Castle, Pennsylvania.

October 15, 1946



# The New Testament Church Pattern

P. H. WELSHIMER, Canton, Ohio

The word "church" is used ninety-seven times in the New Testament. It is a New Testament term. The promise of a church was made by Jesus in Matthew 16:18 when he said, "On this Rock I will build my church," The next reference is found in Acts 2:47 when Luke, the historian, said, "The Lord added to the Church day by day those who were being saved."

Before His ascension, Jesus told the disciples to return to Jerusalem and to tarry there until endued with power from on high. After He ascended to the Father, the disciples returned to Jerusalem and tarried there, meeting in the Upper Room until the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon them. They spake with tongues, and Peter, to whom the keys of the kingdom had been promised, preached a sermon proclaiming the lordship of Jesus. From that audience 3000, believing in the Christ and asking what they should do to be saved, were commanded to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. That was the birthday of the church, the record of which is given in Acts 2.

The church is not a man-made institution, but was established according to the will of Christ, which was made known to the apostles by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Those apostles were men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

The facts of that church with respect to creed, name, organization, ordinances and all the essential matters pertaining thereto can be found in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles.

The creed was Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the creed that needs no revision. It is not a statement about a person, or matters of doctrine, but is a belief in the personal Christ, the living creed, the one who is both Builder and Foundation of the church. In the Good Confession made by Peter he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." John tells us many things were said and done by Jesus which have not been recorded in the Scriptures, but the things that have been written are to the end that men are to believe in the Christ and have life through His name.

The New Testament Scriptures, given by inspiration to the writers of the twenty-seven books, constitute the rule of faith and practice. "These men stand alone as the divinely inspired teachers, legislators and rulers in Christ's church and kingdom."

The need today is to go back to the first century and reproduce that church of the New Testament. This will bring about the unity for which Christ prayed and will present to the world the institution which was not an experiment, came not from the brain and the brawn of man, but is the manifestation of the will of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the kind of an institution that is fitted to bring the world to the knowledge of Christ and to the acceptance of His redemptive power.

We are interested in presenting the essential things of the church and to note the unity that was to be found among the believers in the Christ. They were in agreement on the name. The church was known as the Church of Christ, or the Church of God. They were called disciples, indicating they were learners, and brethren, showing the relationship one to another; Christians, having been baptized into Christ and growing into His likeness; saints, with respect to character.

There was uniformity among those believers with respect to the ordinance of Christian baptism. There is only one baptismal question raised in the New Testament, and that was in Ephesus (Acts 19), when Appollos came into Ephesus and preached correctly concerning the deity of the Christ. He was all right on the action, but had gone no further than John's baptism, which was the baptism of repentance and was not by the authority of, or into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Two well-informed members of the church, Aquila and Priscilla, set the young preacher aright on this baptismal question, after which he was given letters of introduction to the church at Corinth. When Paul came to town Aquila and Priscilla informed him of what had taken place, and he reimmersed a dozen men, giving them Christian baptism, which is in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Then to show that what he had done was the correct thing to do, he laid his hands upon them and through this miraculous gift they spake in tongues, which was of evidential value, showing that what had been done in this reimmersion was according to the will of God.

In every case of New Testament conversion from Pentecost on, it will be shown that by the authority of Jesus Christ penitent believers were



immersed into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. That is New Testament baptism and is so recognized by the scholarship of the world today.

When I was a boy, my home church at West Mansfield held an evangelistic meeting in which several were immersed. The Methodist Church, becoming somewhat alarmed over the situation, sent to Delaware, Ohio for Professor Williams, the teacher of Greek in that Methodist institution and requested him to preach on baptism: In his opening remarks he said he had not come to argue against immersion, for that is beyond all doubt the New Testament action for baptism. He said he was a Greek scholar, taught Greek in Delaware College and knew that "baptizo" was always translated "to immerse, to dip, to cover up, etc." He then added that while immersion was New Testament action for baptism, the Methodist Church practiced affusion, not because it was taught in the New Testament, but because it believed the church had the right to change the action. We ask the question: By what right can the Methodist Church, or any other church, erase what is written or change that which is given to an entirely different form? Jesus said, "All authority is given unto me." He in turn delegated authority to the apostles, and they have no successors.

If all believers in the Christ would follow strictly the teaching of the Scriptures on this subject there would be no baptismal controversy and all would say with Paul, "We are buried with Christ by baptism into His death."

The Lord's Supper was observed by the Christians of the first century in accordance with the request of the Christ who had told them to "Do this in remembrance of me." There is nothing mystical about it. It is simply a beautiful memorial service observed in memory of the Christ and shows forth His death each time we observe it, and will continue to do so until His return. The loaf, representing His body, and the cup, His blood, brought to the memory of the disciples upon the first day of every week the death of their Lord. This was the custom among the churches in all the communities in the first century.

The question, What must I do to be saved, had but one answer regardless of who the speaker was. Peter, Paul, Phillip and all the others taught as the essentials, faith in the Son of God, repentance, which is the bringing of one's will into submission to the divine will, the confessing before man that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and the burial of that penitent



believer in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. These were the steps taken everywhere. They were logical, reasonable and had their origin in the mind of God. The spiritual birth was as uniform and as universal as is the natural birth, both being ordained of God.

The organization of the church was simple. In all the churches the organization was perfected as the needs arose and in every church could be found elders and deacons and evangelists.

In all the places where the church was found uniformity obtained in all things essential. All had the same creed, all accepted the sacred names. They observed the ordinances alike. The organizations were alike and in every church there was the one uniform plan of admittance.

In the above we see uniformity. Here is a perfect pattern. That unity obtained because the preachers were of one mind and they were of that one mind because they were guided by the Holy Spirit, who makes no mistakes and never contradicts Himself. Opinions were not tests of fellowship. Christian men then, as well as today, were entitled to their opinions, so long as those opinions did not run counter to Christ's teaching.

They had opinions where there is no "thus saith the Lord." But where Christ speaks, or the apostles, guided by the Holy Spirit, speak, opinions were cast to the winds.

This church went on multiplying, establishing new congregations, all adhering to the divine pattern.

After the last of the apostles died, men came in with itching ears. Some attempted to incorporate in the new order the traditions of the Jews and some of the Mosaic teaching, not realizing the law had been nailed to the cross with Christ; many made void the teaching of Christ by attempting to substitute the doctrines of men. The change did not come about overnight, nor in one decade. Gradually, the leaders and teachers swung away from their moorings and after many cycles of years we find another organization on the earth calling itself the church, which did not fit into the pattern of the church described in the Scriptures. Take that organization today and lay it down on the New Testament outlined organization, and it will be seen the two do not fit. They are not one and the same thing.

Years passed. The Dark Ages came upon us. Then the light began to shine dimly when Martin Luther, attempting to reform the Roman Catholic Church and realizing its futility, withdrew from that organization, called together the people who later constituted a denominational branch. This was the beginning of denominationalism. The Reformation attempted to reform the apostate church, but in the main, failed in their idea of reformation. Some came together and looked toward the church of the New Testament, aiming to take up the teaching right where the apostles had left it, but they failed to go far enough. The horizon was limited. Each of the reformers such as Luther, Calvin, Huss and the Wesleys climbed upon the shoulders of their predecessors and with a larger horizon, looking further, they saw much to be accomplished and the movement known as the Reformation had its beginning.

There were many people around the world who joined in that reformation, but were dissatisfied because it did not go back far enough. It began a Protestant movement standing in protest of Roman Catholicism.

Early in the last century Thomas Campbell, a Presbyterian minister, his son Alexander Campbell, a young man preparing for the ministry, came to the United States from Ireland. Both were highly educated men, and being dissatisfied with the existing order and chagrined at the disunity that obtained among believers in Christ, united hands and hearts with men from some of the denominations and went back to Augsburg, Westminster, Nicea, Constantinople and Rome, back to Antioch and to Jerusalem, with the purpose of continuing on earth today the Church whose pattern is found in the New Testament Scriptures. That movement is called the Restoration.

It was not their intention to start a denomination or a sectarian body. They were not presenting to the world an organization whose purpose was to compete with denominationalism. They were content to take up matters where the apostles had left them and carry on. They took as their slogan, "Where the Book speaks, we speak, and where the Book is silent, we will be silent." They did not make opinions a test of fellowship. They did not attempt to stifle thinking, but called men to think. Their invitation was—"Come, let us reason together."

They believed the church to be a divine institution, the Scriptures to be the rule of faith and practice, the creed to be the Christ. They taught that the ordinances should be observed in exactly the same manner as they were

observed by those men of God who were led by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they taught that baptism is the burial in water of a penitent believer in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. They never deviated from that plan. There was no quarrel among them concerning the two ordinances. The organization as given in the New Testament was sufficient for the first century and they believed it to be sufficient for every century. Accordingly the church was organized on the basis of the New Testament principles.

Today we carry on. We have a great plea, which is the unity of all believers in Christ. We have a perfect plan, which is the restoration of the church of the New Testament in all essential features. And our purpose is the evangelization of the world. Jesus prayed on the memorable night preceding His death that His disciples might all be one and that they who believed on Him through their preaching might be one, that the world might believe God had sent Him. A divided church will never save the world. It can never win that universal respect which is essential. It dissipates its power and is impotent before the task of winning the world to Christ.

Division is the tragedy of Christendom. The apostle Paul contended against it. Writing to the Corinthian church he said, "Let there be no divisions among you." He put to rout denominationalism when he informed the Corinthian brethren that Peter, Appollos and Paul had not been crucified for them, and they had not been baptized into the name of any of these men.

If in travelling on an island one time inhabited, a man should find a book entitled "Jones' Church" and in that book he found the name of the body, its creed, its organization, its ordinances, its laws of admission, its discipline, would it be possible for him to take that book and reproduce that church if he followed implicitly the pattern there laid down? There is but one answer and that is in the affirmative.

That is exactly what the fathers of the last century began to do. They took the Book they found and following its church pattern, reproduced the church described therein.

There is nothing sectarian or denominational about this. It derives its powers not from man, but from God. Its teaching came from the mind of God.

Here is to be found the basis for Christian unity today, not an amalgamation of sects, not a federation of different religious bodies, averse to one another

in their thinking, but a people united on the essentials of the Gospel, thus reproducing the church of the New Testament. This will restore the authority of Christ throughout all Christendom, will strip all Protestantism of its human element and will be the answer to that prayer—"that they all may be one."

The plea presented by our fathers on American soil in the beginning of the last century has not been outgrown. That plea is our plea. The plan then is the plan now, and the purpose that motivated their action is our purpose—the evangelization of the world.

Doctrinal preaching is one of the needs of the hour. The apostles said in their day the time would come when the world would not endure sound doctrine. That time has come. Paul requested Timothy to "preach the Word." Also, he said, "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine." That this great system of Christianity known as the faith is unchanging is declared by Jude when he said, "Contend for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints." Our faith is not a man-made faith. It is not something that has been agreed upon by a company of men in council or synod. It is a delivered faith. It is delivered from above. Jesus said to the disciples that when they were in a tight place they were to take no thought what to say, for in that hour it would be given unto them. He also told them that in Jerusalem they would be endued with power from on high. That which has been given by the Holy Spirit is safe. And regardless of what men may say or do, that teaching must stand.

To multitudes today Jesus would say as He said in olden times, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures." If men knew the Scriptures they would not be declaring that one church is just as good as another, and that it doesn't make any difference what a man believes, just so he is sincere; nor would they accept opinions instead of matters of faith.

There is a yearning today for unity, but men are walking in the dark. They are lost in the woods and cannot find the way out. They who accept the New Testament church pattern have the best thing in the world, and are the stingiest with it. This teaching should not only be heard from the pulpits, but should be put in tracts and sent to the ends of the earth.

Our minds need to be stirred up by way of remembrance—"lest we forget." The youth coming into the church must be indoctrinated. These



great principles that seem old to many of us are entirely new to the denominational world. We have been called to the kingdom for such a time as this. The times call for men to stand up and preach, declaring the whole counsel of God, and we need to make haste for "the night cometh when no man can work."

Our powers will be multiplied when we not only know and present the facts, but when we show the Christian spirit in all we do and say. Again, let me repeat, we must know how to disagree without being disagreeable. It was Emerson who said, "What you are speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you say." That applies to matters of doctrine and life.

The man on the street is bewildered and perplexed. The theologies of his day have unsettled his mind. The state of mind in which many well meaning people find themselves today is best illustrated by the story of the Jewish lad in Cincinnati, who was invited by a playmate to play in the gymnasium of a Presbyterian church. He accepted the invitation and enjoyed the games. The rabbi, passing, saw him come from the church one day, reprimanded him and told him never to enter that gymnasium again. The Hebrew lad, a few days later, met the Presbyterian minister and said, "I can't play in your gym anymore. The rabbi says that I, being of the Jewish faith, must stay out." Then sadly looking into the parson's face he said, "Hain't religion hell."

To relieve the stigma, to show the sanity of the religion of the Christ and to give wings to the Gospel, and to avoid the defeat that comes through disunity, let us contend for that faith once for all delivered unto the saints.

# The Disciples of Christ and the World of Tomorrow

A. DALE FIERS, Cleveland, Ohio

"The Disciples of Christ and the World Tomorrow"—there's a subject with real challenge. Dr. Gershon S. Bennett, beloved pastor of this church assigned it to me and in doing so he was running true to form, for I remember that as the professor of Bethany days, he was adept at giving assignments which sent his students forth in search of greater information and broader horizons of understanding.

I know of no subject, however, upon which I would rather speak tonight. For one thing this is an inspiring place to talk about our religious heritage. We are gathered in the closing session of a great Disciple convention, in one of the historic churches of the Brotherhood and in the state which cradled the religious movement of which we are a part. Moreover, this is a significant hour for us to do some realistic thinking about ourselves and our future. The world Christian movement is throbbing with new life. The churches of the world are mobilizing their forces for a great era of spiritual conquest and struggle. The crucial problems of the day are being brought within the focus of Christian thought and concern, and the church is mapping its strategy for tomorrow.

We are proud of our Disciples heritage, I suppose there is something in each of us that makes us respond affirmatively to the popular tune of the day, "Aren't You Glad You're You". But we want our interest in ourselves to be free from superficial and sectarian pride. While it is important for us, ever and again, to refresh our minds with the great principles and propositions which brought us into being as a people, we must never forget our relationship to the church universal and our responsibility to the age in which we live.

## Where We Came In

If we are to understand the place of the Disciples of Christ in the world tomorrow we need to look for a moment at the past and see why we came into the world in the first place.

Between the years of 1803 and 1832 there was born in this country what W. E. Garrison calls "An American Religious Movement"—the Disciples of Christ. Great personalities and principles were associated in this creative period. There was Barton W. Stone in Kentucky, brilliant and courageous Presbyterian minister. There was Thomas Campbell, sensitive and strong-willed spiritual giant, in Western Pennsylvania and his scholarly, talented son, Alexander, who became the intellectual leader of the new movement. There was Walter Scott, the intrepid evangelist, whose systematic preaching of the plan of salvation was so large a factor in the expansion of our people.

But it is not primarily my purpose to deal with the historical facts as important and interesting as that would be. Let us put the matter another way.

*For one thing the Disciples of Christ came into the world at a time when Sectarianism was being confronted by the desire for a larger and indeed a universal fellowship among Christians.*

Thomas Campbell rebelled against the restrictive measures that kept Christians away from the Lord's table and promoted division in the body of Christ. Barton W. Stone struggled valiantly for an undivided fellowship in the church. These were by no means the first to yearn for the unity of God's people. Many tributaries in this stream of influence reached back to England and the continent. But the Disciples of Christ came into being, first of all, because of a desire to give this rising tide of sentiment definite expression. Christian unity became the great ideal around which the thinking and the loyalties of our pioneers were crystallized.

Take for instance the "Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery" which Stone helped to formulate.

"We will that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large; for there is but one Body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling."

Or consider the more practical statement of Thomas Campbell in the "Declaration and Address",

"Although the Church of Christ upon earth must necessarily exist in particular and distinct societies, locally separate one from another; yet there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions among them."



The settled churches were not proclaiming this message of union and fellowship, hence what was at first intended to be nothing more than an association of Christians to promote unity actually became a mighty movement of religious life and thought, making articulate to a reluctant sectarianism the irresistible desire for a larger fellowship among those who love the Lord.

*Again, the Disciples of Christ came into the world at a time when creed, disciplines, and traditions of the church were being confronted by the Bible.*

There was a growing dissatisfaction with the creeds of Christendom which attempted to give an authoritative, final and binding interpretation of Christian orthodoxy. There was no objection to them as definitions of Christian faith or as a means of systematic teaching of the Christian principles. But there was growing objection to them as the standard of acceptance or rejection into the church fellowship.

In order to implement their plea for union among Christians the Disciples had to re-think the whole matter of religious authority and the basis of Christian faith and practice. This took them back beyond the creeds to the Bible itself. This was the inevitable climax of the Protestant Reformation which gave to the world an open Bible.

Modern biblical scholarship had not yet entered its great period of development but it was on the way. The pressures of an age of inquiry were stirring the Christian mind for this great new adventure which has made the Bible a new and more valuable book. In many ways the work of Alexander Campbell anticipated the present day literary and historical study of the Bible.

As every great issue came up, whether it was the mode of baptism, church polity, or missionary organization, the Disciples tried to meet it upon the basis of the Bible. When these preachers came into a community with their powerful plea few Bibles collected dust for people of all faiths "searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so".

The Disciples can never forget that they are a people of the Book. We have no written creed, but accept the scriptures as the rule of faith and practice to be diligently studied and faithfully obeyed to the best of our understanding as followers of Christ.

*Then, too, the Disciples of Christ came into the world when civilization confronted a new geographic frontier. A few years ago I was visiting a friend of mine who was then minister of the historic Platte City, Missouri Christian*

Church. He was showing me through the archives of a remarkable library of Disciple literature which belongs to the church. He turned to one item in the *Millenial Harbinger* which reported plans for the evangelizing of the area of the state where Platte City is now located. The article described the effort as taking the gospel to the "outposts of civilization".

The constant challenge of new territory greatly affected the character of our movement. It meant that the Disciples had to be aggressive, alert and evangelistic. With the rapid shift of population westward the movement had to expand by leaps and bounds. It developed tremendous energy and drive and yet it meant that many aspects of church life had to be neglected. We had no strong ties with old world culture. Church architecture, worship, and many other elements of the well-rounded Christian program had to wait for more settled conditions. But there was rugged faith, contagious enthusiasm, and disarming confidence on the part of these early pioneers who roamed far and wide willing to debate, discuss, or preach on any subject relating to the Ancient Order of Things as set forth in the New Testament.

### Where We Find Ourselves Today

Another step necessary to take before we can adequately determine what is to be our function as a people in the world tomorrow is to see where we stand in the world today.

In a span of less than 120 years the Disciples of Christ have become one of the half-dozen largest Protestant groups in America with a membership of 1,693,127. We have some 8000 churches, well organized district and state missionary societies, numerous colleges and educational foundations, far-flung missionary enterprises. We have benevolent institutions for children and the aged. We find ourselves allied with similar movements in England, Australia, New Zealand, and other countries.

But once more I am not concerned to speak in historical or organizational terms. *As a people with great accomplishments, tremendous power and resources we stand at the place where denominationalism confronts ecumenicity.*

Someone has defined ecumenicity as "something we would have more of if it were called by any other name". But by whatever name you call it, universal Christian fellowship and cooperation is the great challenge of the present day. As a matter of fact the clamor for a united church has become so insistent

and is echoed from so many quarters that the voice of the Disciples sometimes seems little more than a whisper.

This trend toward a united Christendom has been motivated in recent decades by great ecumenical conferences dealing with faith and order and life and work among Christians. The significant progress that has been made is evidenced in the many church mergers, in the formation of numerous councils and federations of churches and most of all, in the consummation of a World Council of Churches to which over ninety communions have already declared their intention to adhere.

We are, to be sure, a long way from the ideal goal. Denominationalism is still with us and is likely to stay for a long time. It is not easy to cast off the bodies in which we have worked for centuries. But we have made gains and the Christian world is increasingly aware of the evil and futility of denominational rivalry and competition. The yearning for a universal fellowship of Christians is strong and on every hand there is an evident determination to subordinate sectarian divisions to the larger tasks of kingdom building and to break down the partitions that keep us apart.

But equally significant is the fact that *we stand today in the world at the place where religion meets secularism*—that is to say, life organized and lived as though God does not exist or does not count in human affairs.

The world Christian movement is confronted with a mighty and powerful enemy. Within the year one of our own Disciple leaders, Charles Clayton Morrison, has affirmed the proposition that we are losing our religion—losing it to a secularized way of life. Whether that be true or not we know that indifference toward Christian faith, and the repudiation of religion as a binding loyalty of life are factors to be contended with in the present hour.

This brings us into a vast realm of complex and uncharted social frontiers. The task of making Christian faith the frame of reference in which life finds its meaning and motivating purpose is no small one. It means ultimately advocating Christian faith with such force and cogency that it shall become the basis of our social, political and economic order. The alternative is to lose the battle of civilization to a self-destroying secularism.

It has been pointed out that when Alexander Campbell engaged in his debate with Robert Owen he was not the champion of the Disciples of Christ



but of all Christians, for he was debating against one who denied the very evidences of Christianity. Likewise as a vital part of the Christian forces of the world we stand today facing a great opportunity to advance the cause of Christian union among the churches, and to engage in a common attack upon the forces of irreligion and spiritual indifference.

## **The World Tomorrow**

This brings us to the all important question concerning the world tomorrow. What should the Disciples of Christ be doing? What should be our strategy?

The World Christian Movement in our day has been like a mighty stream which, gaining strength from many sources, grows larger and stronger as it proceeds toward its destination. That stream has its back eddies, its stagnant pools, but it has also a channel and a main current. It seems to me that more than ever we belong right out in the middle of the stream. There is always danger of getting caught in some doctrinal backlog or delayed in some stagnant pool of conservatism or liberalism, but these have been resolutely resisted by our people in the past.

The best in our heritage would indicate that our place is in the main stream of Christian life and work. Take the name Christian. Have you ever experienced difficulty with it? I have and I was interested in hearing my daughter remonstrate with her mother saying, "Why can't we be something? All my friends are something. They are Methodists, Presbyterians, or Baptists and when they ask me what I am all I can say is 'I am a Christian' ". There is more than chance in that dilemma. The name Christian was chosen because it was a universal name and could never be made the possession of one group.

The simple confession of faith in Christ as the Son of God indicates our desire to be in fellowship with all those who love Christ and desire to follow Him as Saviour and Lord regardless of peculiar doctrinal interpretations of matters not of fundamental importance. The inclusive invitation to the Lord's Table is a recognition of the common ties of brotherhood which we acknowledge with all who profess the Name which is above every name. The Book we adhere to as our guide is the common possession of all who follow the way, the truth and the life.

But let us be more specific now in some of the things which are implied in the suggestion that in the world tomorrow the Disciples of Christ should be in the main stream of Christian life and work.

*Tomorrow calls us to a dynamic fulfillment of the great commission.* It means a greatly intensified effort to Christianize individuals. The church tomorrow must be evangelistic. Basic to the whole Christian enterprise is the relationship of the individual to Christ. I went to hear H. H. Farmer of England this summer. He spoke on the direct theme, "What think ye of Christ". This he said was God's question and upon our answer the issues of the world will be decided. This fact demands greater effectiveness in winning men to faith in Christ. Every local church must begin here or the tap root of the Christian program in the world is cut.

*We must develop and deepen our Brotherhood life and further the practice of voluntary cooperation among a free people.* As Disciples we are a distinct group. We have a responsibility to work together for our common good and for the larger goals of our movement and the total cause of Christ.

There are sincere and genuine theological differences among us. There are differences in our view of the origin and nature of the Bible. There always have been and always will be differences if we are true to our heritage and the freedom which we have found in Christ. But underlying this freedom, or rather growing out of it there must be a greater spirit of unity and a deeper bond of brotherhood and more cooperation than ever before.

Recently in one of our Brotherhood journals I found these terms used by some Disciples to describe other Disciples: "vile infidels", "religious descendants of Judas Iscariot", "subversive preachers", "pulpit henchmen", "group of termites", "enemies of the Bible". Not for a moment would I minimize the importance of the issues which divide us in the realm of Christian thought and organization. Nor would I advocate being silent concerning our deep convictions. But to allow our Brotherhood to be weakened by name-calling or uncharitable divisions over secondary matters would be to stand condemned in the world tomorrow.

For one, I am glad that as a Brotherhood we can launch and I trust carry to completion such a great undertaking as the Crusade for a Christian World. We must learn to make our joint efforts count for Christ. To implement our great vision of a united church with cooperative effort is to

lift the local church above mere localism and make its impact world-wide. I sat in a committee meeting some time ago when great plans were being projected for a local church. Finally the chairman of the committee, a man who loves his own church passionately, said, "Gentlemen, I like these plans, but we must not forget that our church has a responsibility in the Brotherhood. We've got to help meet some of the needs of our world before we buy a new suit of clothes for ourselves". Such a conviction of Brotherhood responsibility will be needed by the Disciples of Christ in the world tomorrow.

*Still another thing necessary to keep us in the main stream will be to maintain our historic witness for Christian unity—for a universal fellowship of Christians based on simple faith in Christ as Lord.* I am not one of those who think to associate with other communions means casting aside the insights and truths we have gained and in which we greatly believe.

The Christian world is learning to speak the language of unity. We must share our convictions with strength and humility—the humility of those who know they have much to learn from others. The world tomorrow needs a united church and the Disciples can have a conspicuous part in making it a reality.

Then we must also add that our people should enter whole-heartedly into the constructive types of inter-denominational cooperation and help bring the full strength of the Christian church to bear upon the problems of the modern world. In every community Disciples of Christ should be among the leaders in common Christian tasks.

Dr. Walter W. Van Kirk wrote recently, "The most immediate and pressing need of Christendom is the development of a global strategy of spiritual conquest". And he added these words:

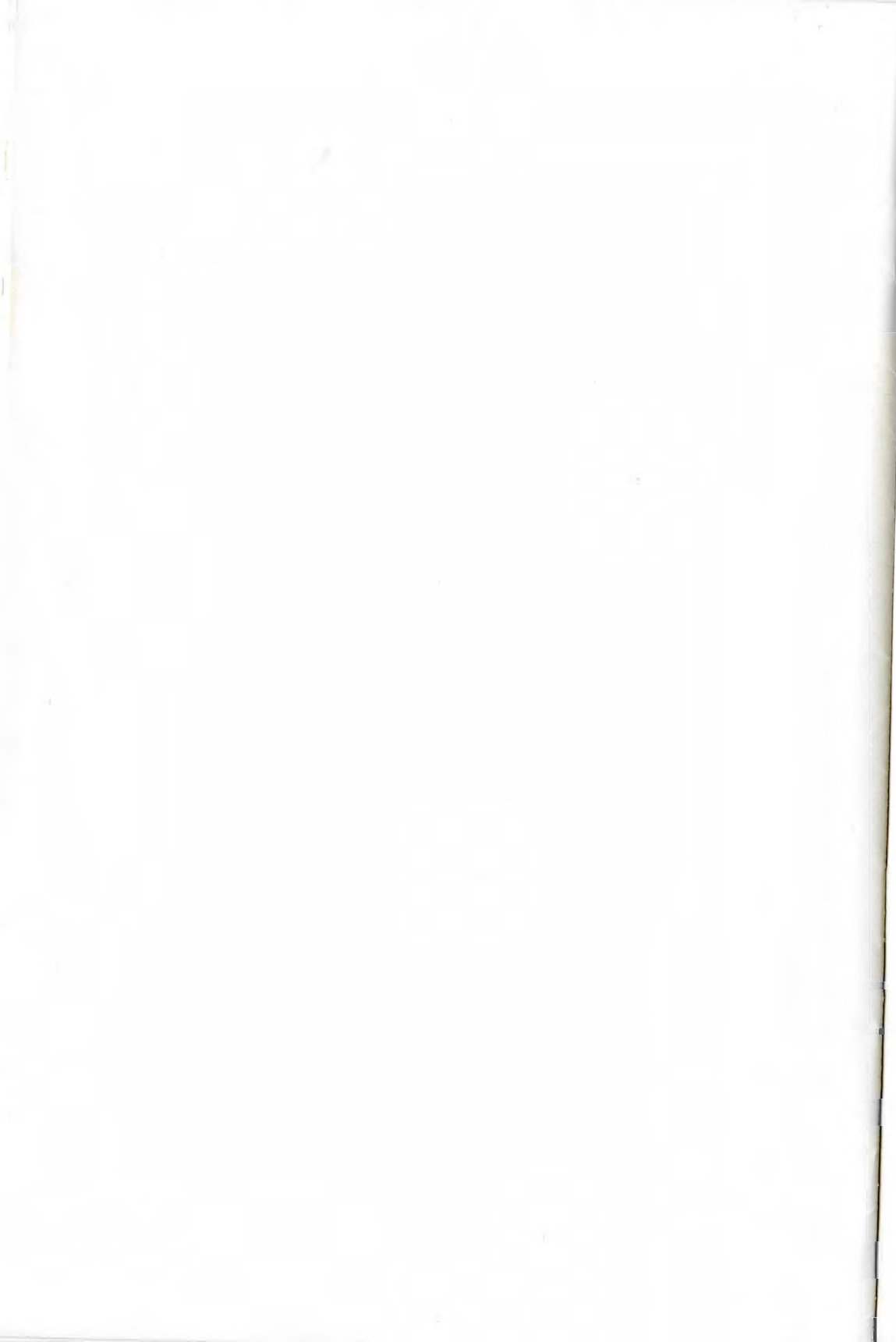
"If Christians are not now able to close ranks and evolve a spiritual solidarity capable of overcoming the potential evils of atomic power in the hands of a morally corrupt society, they may as well close their churches and join the parade of the pagans to perdition".

If this oneness can be achieved the world of nations may yet discover the unifying power so essential to the healing of its wounds.

A. W. Fortune wrote concerning the inter-denominational responsibilities of Disciples: "We are beginning to feel that we must embrace every opportunity to put into practice the unity about which we have been preaching".

As Disciples we face the world tomorrow. Let it be as those who feel a sincere gratitude for the achievements of a glorious past, as those who have confidence in their future. Let us determine to strive with all who wear the name of Christ for the salvation of our world and the coming of the Kingdom of God.





## BIOGRAPHICAL

### PEARL H. WELSHIMER

Pearl H. Welshimer was born in York, Ohio. He attended Ohio Northern University and Hiram College. He also received the D.D. degree from Butler University and the D. Litt. from Cincinnati Seminary. His first pastorate was at Millersburg, Ohio, for five years and since 1902 has been the pastor of the church at Canton, Ohio, where he has built the largest church in our Brotherhood in this country.

### A. DALE FIERS

A. Dale Fiers was born in Kankakee, Ill. He attended Bethany College graduating from that institution in 1929. After a two year pastorate at Shadyside, Ohio, Mr. Fiers entered Yale Divinity School where he received his B.D. degree in 1935. He served four years as minister of the High Street Church of Christ in Hamilton, Ohio and seven years as minister at Newark, Ohio. Mr. Fiers was called to be the successor of Dr. Jacob H. Goldner at the Euclid Avenue Christian Church, Cleveland, Ohio. He began his pastorate there on October 1, 1945.

