

Wineskins Magazine

Passion for Justice

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Content

Passion for Justice is a “Mark of the Church” By Rubel Shelly

Traumatic Winds of Change By Mike Cope

Aggressive Grace: Central Church of Christ in Action By Harold Shank

Racism and the Body of Christ By John Allen Chalk

Pure and Undeified Religion By Rick Mars

The Man Who Would Not Be King By Joy McMillon

The Write Side: The Betrayers By Jack Welch

The New Woman By C. Leonard Allen

The Sounds of Worship By Jeff Berryman

Remembering a Martyr: Malcolm X and America’s Struggle for Racial Justice

By Larry James

Hope Network Newsletter: You Can Teach an Old Dog New Tricks! By Lynn

Anderson

AfterGlow: Black and White By Phillip Morrison

Terms of Service By Zoe Group & New Wineskins Staff

Privacy Policy By New Wineskins Staff

Passion for Justice is a “Mark of the Church”

*Editorial by Rubel Shelly
August, 1992*

The hope of God’s people is not concentrated on Planet Earth. There is a real sense in which “this world is not our home,” and we must always remember that we are “just a-passin’ through” lest we become too attached to this-worldly concerns.

At the same time, however, we must not think that a heavenward goal exempts us from responsibility to our planet, our fellows, and social institutions. The church of Jesus Christ is called by its founder to help make the world better for all its creatures. The church need not be conceived as a political action committee in order to be an instrument of God’s righteousness. A religion so other-worldly that it does no good for the people of this world will be neither salt nor light.

To understand Scripture is to be warned against making the church into an institution allied with the rich and powerful. When faithful to its calling, the church always takes the side of the powerless and becomes an advocate for oppressed, poor, and victimized persons.

If “the Lord is known by his justice” (Psalm 9:16a), his people must exhibit the same concern. If Jesus chose a prophecy about ministering to the poor, prisoners, blind, and oppressed to explain the nature of his ministry (Luke 4:14-21; cf. Isaiah 61:1-2), the church as his spiritual body must identify with what he started. And if the Judgment Day will call us to account for how we have treated the hungry, strangers, homeless persons, and the sick (Matthew 25:31-46), we had best be encouraging each other to these tasks daily.

Dozens of workers and millions of dollars have been sent to help with medical missions and evangelism in Africa. Yet some of the very churches that were contributing most heavily to those works in the 1960s set themselves to deny blacks in the United States the right to worship in their assemblies. Christian schools had to be forced by the federal government to permit African-Americans the experience of “Christian (?) education” in integrated classes. Such inconsistencies reveal a fundamental blindness to the issue of justice.

The social justice issues facing this generation are monumental. We have a spotty record in responding to them. This issue of *Wineskins* calls all of us to examine our hearts again for evidences of our identification with Jesus’ ministry to the poor and outcast.

Is abortion a concern to you? It is one thing to protest the destruction of infants in the womb and something else again to open your home to a pregnant teen as she awaits the delivery of her baby. How dare we convince her to forego abortion and then not care for her?

Does the AIDS epidemic frighten you? Do you see moral implications about teaching our children sexual purity? Are you willing to affirm celibacy rather than “safer sex” for sexually active adults – whether heterosexual or homosexual? But what about the HIV-infected babies

who have been abandoned by their drug-using mothers or whose mothers have already died of AIDS? Will you help take care of one of these helpless, hopeless babies?

Suggesting that we be hands-on with this world's problems is not an invitation to the social gospel as an alternative to the New Testament message. To the contrary, it is an appeal for us to face up to the social implications of the true gospel. We have neither right nor credibility for offering people a better prospect in the new heaven and earth if we are not actively concerned about justice for them in today's anguish. God has acted in history to show his passion for victims of injustice, poverty, disease, and evil. A widespread sin of the church in our generation is its lack of passion for these same people. We betray our distance from God whenever we can be indifferent toward those for whom he feels such commitment.

The things that are the concerns of God will not be neglected by his people. It is a "mark of the church" to teach and practice justice and for its members to be advocates for the powerless. While not neglecting the traditional items of worship, organization, and the like, some of us must also begin to see that holy compassion must be added to the items they look for in order to be Christ's church.

Traumatic Winds of Change

by Mike Cope
August, 1992

“Before we let you come, we need to know something,” the administrator insisted. “Are you associated with the new hermeneutic?”

While 99.99% of the American public would think he was speaking in tongues (which I feel certain he’d deny!), many members of Churches of Christ have almost grown accustomed to the phrase “new hermeneutic.”

What he was asking wasn’t really what he wanted to know. “New hermeneutic” literally means a new way of reading or interpreting (in this case) Scripture. He was asking a much larger question. Just as “Rodney King” has stood for gigantic issues bigger than one man, “new hermeneutic” is a code phrase for much of the tension we’re feeling in Churches of Christ right now: *TENSION* that has brought forced resignations in some of our colleges and churches; *TENSION* that led one editor to invite readers to send in proof of apostasy in their own congregations; *TENSION* that has families in religious conflict, so that some have found it easier not to discuss spiritual concerns.

“Yes,” I replied, “I guess by what you probably mean I am associated with it.” I believe that the winds of change we feel are gusts of spiritual renewal; that the sound we hear is the sound of wineskins expanding from the new wine of the gospel. I believe that we are again returning to some strengths of the Restoration Movement: a deep commitment to the authority of Scripture, a focus on central issues of faith, and a commitment to unity within diversity.

And this return isn’t being led by scholars, as Tom Olbricht has pointed out. Rather, the leadership springs from Spirit-filled Christians who are led of God. What does the renewal entail?

A Healthier View of God

Many of us grew up believing that God is just a heavenly prosecutor who winces with pain and anger when Christians veer one iota from some supposed exact pattern of worship.

Followers of Jesus who are attentive to the winds of renewal believe in a God who is our defender – a God who is so much for us that he died for us in Jesus Christ. While not wanting to leave off one word about holiness, discipleship, and healthy doctrine, they underscore mercy, atonement, and grace.

They place the emphasis of salvation on what God has already done, believing that we are saved in spite of our failures because of what God has accomplished at the cross. They believe that if he grants grace with moral imperfections, he’ll surely offer grace for doctrinal imperfections as well.

These God-intoxicated believers cling to the truth of 2 Corinthians 5:19: “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them.” What a difference: a God of love who is for us rather than a scornful magistrate who’s got it out for us!

A Healthier View of Scripture

Christians caught up in this renewal movement also seek a healthier view of God’s word in Scripture. It makes us nervous when someone removes our security blanket of absolute doctrinal precision. There’s great comfort in believing that we’re through searching, that we’ve fully arrived in our understanding of Scripture. No wonder many are alarmed!

We are rediscovering the central issues of Scripture. The “domino theory,” that all doctrine is equal height and if one falls they all fall, doesn’t jibe with the many times when Scripture speaks of “weightier matters.” (See 1 Corinthians 15:1ff; Matthew 22:34-40; Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 23:23; Romans 14:17.)

This revival in Churches of Christ is also putting greater emphasis on the full Bible – realizing that the books of the Old Testament were not “nailed to the cross.” Reclamation of these 39 books will continue to help reshape us with those words that Paul said were “useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

It also sees in Scripture a vibrant pattern for our lives, but not an exact blueprint that is to be copiously and slavishly followed. It understands, for example, that Paul’s letters didn’t come together as a systematic theology so we could analyze them together and make arguments from silence. Rather, they were written one by one to struggling Christians and churches to help them understand the implications of what God had done in Jesus Christ.

The “new hermeneutic” seems to be based upon a thorough appreciation for the authority of Scripture. Its proponents may come to some different conclusions but it isn’t because they have any less desire to be guided by God’s word.

A healthier View of the Church

The trauma also stems from a changing view of the church. Some beg for a few of the old sermons on “identity marks of the church” – usually meaning distinctive identity that sets us apart from other religious groups. But the result of this preaching has been a narrow, reactionary, divisive theology. One can peek at Matthew 23 for what groups look like when they have the wrong agenda. Not a pretty sight!

As Leonard Allen and Richard Hughes point out in *Illusions of Innocence*, a great irony is that when restoration groups narrow their focus to begin firing upon “the denominations,” they tend to become even more denominational!

The “new hermeneutic” includes an appreciation for what God is doing among other groups of believers. Earlier this summer I saw in *Christianity Today* an article on “The Restoration

Movement.” I tore open to that page, eager to read about “us.” What a shock to find out that it wasn’t even about us – it was about another group. And they stole our name!

The longing of many today is just to be the people of God: sinners redeemed by God who have been baptized into his new community of faith. The body of Christ. The family of God.

Two Great Enemies

During this time of transition and renewal we face two dreaded enemies.

The first is pride. Some show their pride by asking, “Could what we’ve always believed be wrong?” Others show their pride by implying that “we” (a younger generation) are more God-loving than “they” (an older generation). In either case, the answer for pride is confession. We have all fallen short and are saved by God’s faithfulness.

The second is fear. When someone asks me, “Where is this leading us?” I have to say, “I’m not sure.” Then when they ask, “Is it safe?” I have to respond, “Probably not! But it’s the direction God is leading us as we continue learning to trust him.” The answer to fear is faith – faith in the Sovereign God who has called us to him in Jesus Christ.

Aggressive Grace: Central Church of Christ in Action

*by Harold Shank
August, 1992*

In the late 1920s, the Cumberland River flooded the tenement housing in the lower part of downtown Nashville. Before any other agency in the city acted, the Central Church of Christ went on radio and told people that two trucks were parked in front of their building; one contained mattresses and the other dry clothes. The announcement urged people hurt by the flood to take what they needed.

A few years later, an automobile accident claimed the life of a young boy. When the police learned that his parents were moving from Texas to Tennessee seeking work and had no money, they called the Central Church of Christ. People from the congregation soon arrived, made arrangements for the family's housing and later conducted the funeral, burying the boy in one of the church-owned lots at Spring Hill Cemetery.

The aggressive service to the poor reflected in these incidents stands in stark contrast to the defensive benevolence practiced by many modern churches of Christ, who maintain small, locked rooms of musty-smelling, cast-off clothing and unwanted canned goods that they thrust into the arms of any unfortunate people who approach the church building with their needs. To seek out the poor actively not only fulfills biblical demands, but also results in astounding success, as the Central experience illustrates.

Distressed by attitudes toward the poor within post-World War I churches, a group of Nashville Christians led by A.M. Burton and E.H. Ijams set out to start a church that would be different. Tired of church leaders who were "too money-minded," Ijams reports, "an increasing number of Christians ... were becoming clearly aware of the inconsistency of niggardly attitudes and glaring deficiencies in New Testament 'good works.' "

In the mid-1920s, the group dreamed about a "congregation of genuinely converted Christians, prayerfully avoiding every wrong, humbly and lovingly active in every good work ... feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, ministering to the sick" According to their charter, they began "seeking first the Kingdom of God ... worshipping God and serving man." They excelled at both.

Their efforts to "serve man" went far beyond emergency situations like floods and automobile accidents. The church invited the homeless and poor to a daily meal in a large parlor off their building's main lobby. They served over 45,000 hot meals from 1925-29. Another 6,046 people received lunch in 1930.

They operated dental and medical clinics in their building, where health care professionals saw patients unable to afford treatment. A public library, a day-care center, and a full-time job counselor became part of their outreach.

The purchase of a five-story hotel and an addition to the church building in 1928 allowed Central to house men and women who needed help. The refurbished hotel's 67 rooms kept an average of 110 women. As many as 60 men and boys lived in the three-story addition.

A daily noon service not only attracted people to Central's auditorium, but people throughout Tennessee listened in on radio. The extent of the audience is reflected in the 2,478 letters received in 1929-30 from 33 states, Canada, Cuba, and the Bahamas.

Central mastered the biblical ideal of "preaching Good News to the poor." In the first five years, Central gave away more than 5,000 New Testaments and 10,000 portions of the Bible. From 1925-28, they distributed over 275,000 pieces of religious literature.

As a result, people flocked to Central. From an initial nucleus of about 50 people in October 1925, the congregation grew to 150 within the month. Continued growth saw 550 members by 1931, before reaching a high of about 1,200 in 1941. From 1925-45, Central baptized over 8,000 people, a average of a little over one person a day. Baptisms were typical at the daily noon service and nearly certain at the Sunday morning assembly.

People in Nashville knew Central cared. A man who was only a child when he attended Central recalls that after a particularly disastrous flood in Louisville, many refugees poured into Nashville. Central threw open its doors (which were never locked), and people entered the building. He remembers walking through the auditorium seeing people asleep in the aisles, and crossing the lobby filled wall-to-wall with refugees.

Do people in our community know we care? Would downcast people find refuge in our facilities? Do hungry people think of us when they need food? How many of our members count it a blessing to be allowed to help a homeless child?

Not only did others know that Central cared, they also understood that the church stood for Christ. Central's initial contacts focused on the fundamentals of love, grace and mercy, not the more specific doctrines of the church. Central tried not to leave an impression about the Central Church of Christ, but they tried to instill an image of the Father and Son.

When E. H. Ijams moved his family into the apartment on Fifth Avenue where Central Church would soon begin meeting, the sign across the street from his living room window advertised a dance hall and the associated establishments that surrounded such places in the 1920s.

During those early years, Central never campaigned before City Hall about any person, place or business in the area. But each day at noon, six days a week, twice on Sunday, and every day on radio, they talked about the love of God. Women from Central talked to the prostitutes on the next corner about God's love. College students delivered food and coal in the church's pick-up trucks. Ijams reported that soon the undesirable businesses in the area moved.

The Nashville Chamber of Commerce issued this report about the Central Church: *There is nothing pretentious and grand about this wonderful church. It is simple and appealing, just the kind of place that both the fortunate and the unfortunate like to go for spiritual comfort, and*

within is found those with their hearts in the work, and who grasp the hand of him in rags and tatters and make him feel as much at home as the man in finer dress; where the woman of the underworld and the primrose path is as welcome as the woman in finery and splendor. The new institution has become a wonderful power in the civic life of the city of Nashville through its simplicity and whole-heartedness ... In reality, the church is a civic center, and any and all are welcome.

The unofficial transition of downtown Nashville neighborhood and this official record by civic leaders both illustrate the reaction to the work of the Central Church, which stood as a symbol of God and good in the Nashville community.

When our church name is mentioned, do people think of the love and mercy of God? Does the evil in our neighborhood wilt under the glow of our work for good? Do our secular friends understand that our church belongs to Christ?

Because of Central's concern for others and stand for God, people in Nashville wanted to know more. No study was required to get help. No baptisms had to be in place before purse strings were opened.

Unemployed and unable to control his drinking problem, a 23-year-old man sought aid from Central. They helped him face his difficulty, gave him housing, and even offered him part-time employment. Within a year, he had become a Christian, married a young woman in the congregation, and went on to become a successful businessman in Nashville.

Evangelism at Central never emerged as a separate ministry. Helping the poor was evangelism because it communicated the grace of Christ. There were not "benevolent people" and "evangelistic people" at Central. There were just Christians.

The blending of ministries stands in contrast to our segmented ministry systems. Have we become "worshipping Christians" at one place and "evangelistic Christians" at another place in our own crude form of sectarianism?

Depression-era poverty bears little resemblance to generations of welfare families currently living in American ghettos. The novelty of radio and the use of the printed page provided the means for evangelism then that might be difficult to duplicate today.

But the heart Central Church had for the lost and poor sends a clear challenge to those of us at the other end of our shared century: a call to be and to do as Christians should. Wineskins do need changing.

Hall L. Calhoun, Preacher to Thousands

Hall Calhoun was not only a Harvard Ph.D. who taught Bible at David Lipscomb College during the 1930s, he was also the pulpit and radio preacher for the Central Church of Christ in

downtown Nashville. In this capacity, he reached thousands each day with the gospel of Christ. The Central church was among the first to use the radio in preaching the Good News, initially on WDAD and then on WLAC. Each day at noon most radio receivers were tuned to 1510 to hear Hall Calhoun. many still remember that a person could walk the streets of Nashville and never miss a word of Calhoun's sermon. He truly had an impact on Nashville until his death in 1935.

A.M. Burton, Man of Vision

He was neither an elder nor a preacher for the Central church, but he was the driving force behind one of the most unique churches to be found anywhere. As a successful businessman, Burton invested his wealth in good works. He stated his understanding of Christianity and the mission of the Central church in these words: "True religion and practical Christianity is a matter of faith and works, of profession and performance, of theory and practice. It ministers to the body, mind, and spirit. True religion is a religion of faith, hope, and love; the religion of holiness and righteousness; the religion that prays for and works for the doing of the will of God on earth, here and now, as it is done in Heaven." Concerning Burton and the work in Nashville, J.D. Tant exclaimed: "I am glad that Brother A.M. Burton is not a preacher, else I fear he would be dropped from the preacher ring for suggesting such a change in our practice."

E.H. Ijams – An Answer to His Dream

E.H. Ijams moved to Nashville to teach at David Lipscomb College during the 1920s. In 1934 he would become president of the college. One of the highlights of his life, however, was his participation in the founding of the Central Church of Christ. Along with A.M. Burton, Ijams had a dream of a church in the central city that practiced "real religion." It became a church that combined daily teaching with daily benevolence. Announcing the plans for the church, Ijams stated: "The Central Church of Christ proposed to emphasize doing the word as well as hearing it, and to make the doing humble, godly, and in every respect consistent with all the teachings of the New Testament. The congregation hopes to show its faith by its works." Remembering the first service, Ijams recalled in 1968 that the scenes, the meaning, the desires, and the thrills of that day "come back to me vivid, comforting and precious!"

These biographical sketches were supplied by Dr. Robert Hooper, Chairman of the History and Political Science Department at Lipscomb University.

Racism and the Body of Christ

by John Allen Chalk
August, 1992

When Los Angeles exploded recently, I remembered my visit with Los Angeles County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn in Watts on the day after the 1967 riot had been quelled. Supervisor Hahn, a committed Christian and a lifelong political leader in Los Angeles County, had invited me to come to Los Angeles and tour the riot-torn area of his district. What I saw changed me forever. Kenny said to me, “Christ is the answer, but how do we get both the church and the world to understand he’s the answer?”

The late 1960s produced meetings of concerned Christians all across the United States – Christians of all races, looking for answers to racial strife. Most of those meeting in Atlanta, Baltimore, Nashville, Dallas, Abilene, Los Angeles, and Memphis were consumed with bringing white church leaders into some grudging realization that there was a problem. Only a few of those meetings resulted in any concrete action.

Then came the prosperity and economic growth of the 1970s and 80s. Christians and local churches were swept along with the rising prosperity of secular America. The Worldly Church¹ lost any concern it had for the continued hurts, insults, pain, and suffering of African-Americans. The Worldly Church and its related institutions experienced rapid growth, built new buildings, started new programs, and incurred staggering amounts of debt. All the additional accoutrements – material, secular, economic, egocentric – the Worldly Church indebted herself to acquire and own deadened any sensitivity to what racism continued to inflict on its victims – black and white!

The Worldly Church reflected the secular culture’s attitude toward racism. Cornel West, director of Princeton University’s Afro-American Studies, has observed that, “The fundamental failure of this country is to engage in a candid and critical discussion about race.”² A female African-American businesswoman in Atlanta recently remarked that what she wanted to see from whites she knows is “a true interest in how so many fall out of the American dream and that there are forces clearly stronger than the individual. It’s like you’re in a boat and so many are falling off and people just keep singing and rowing.”³

I think some of us got the theology right in the 1960s and confronted the church’s failure with racism.⁴ We pointed to the nature of God as Creator of us all, to the nature of man as made in the image of God and restored to the image of God in Jesus Christ, and to the nature of our neighbor with whom we have the closest relationship in the body of Jesus Christ, the church. We got the theology right, and some of us preached it but didn’t practice what we preached. And our voices faded with the coming of the Worldly Church.

Racism is bigger, stronger, deadlier than any single individual. One of my good friends who watched from the sidelines the tempest over racism in Churches of Christ in the 1960s once chided me for concentrating on individuals rather than on the social institutions which, in his

view, perpetuated racism's stranglehold on America and on the Church. I didn't understand then. I do now. America's institutions, all of them, have kept alive racism. The Worldly Church included!

But I still believe that the actualization of the body of Christ on earth and in America can help eradicate racism. The church began in the midst of political, linguistic, cultural, and even religious diversity. Pentecost was no neighborhood picnic even though it was a Jewish festival. The first proclaimers of Jesus Christ that day in Jerusalem were given many different tongues required by the national, cultural, political, and linguistic differences among those who heard the gospel that day (Acts 2:5-13).

After Pentecost, the early church continually crossed religious, cultural and racial lines. The Hellenists and the Hebrews (Acts 6:1-6), the Samaritans (Acts 8:4-25), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40), the Gentile centurion, Cornelius (Acts 10) – first century church history tells a polyglot, multi-cultural, and multi-racial story. So direct, immediate, and uncompromising was the gospel's proclamation and acceptance by different racial, political, and religious groups that the first church council had to confront racism. It determined that God had given the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles and had cleansed their hearts by faith without racial distinction (Acts 15:6-11). God's gracious choice, the Holy Spirit's work, and the recognition of Jesus Christ as Lord overwhelmed the racially biased Jerusalem leaders who concluded, "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us to lay upon you [Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia] no greater burden than these necessary things" (Acts 15:38).

How do we actualize the body of Christ in today's racially divided world? We must recognize and obey the one sovereign Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 12:3; Philippians 2:5-11; Romans 10:9-10). We must allow the sovereign Holy Spirit of God to gift believers for the life and work of the church (1 Corinthians 12:11, 13).

Christ's body materializes in the world through her members, believers in Jesus Christ as Lord who have been filled with the Holy Spirit. As members of Christ, we have radically different moral imperative and power (1 Corinthians 6:12-20). As members of Christ's body, we exercise our Holy Spirit-given gifts for the good of all the body's members (1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 14-31; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:7-16; 1 Peter 4:7-11). Holy Spirit-filled members of Christ's body produce healthy, redemptive, serving lives described in Galatians 5:16-26. There will be no racism in Christ's body of obedient, Holy Spirit-filled believers.

What can we expect the actualized body of Christ in our communities to do practically and concretely about racism? You and your fellow believers must ask and answer this question, in faith, for your local fellowship (Romans 14:23). Here are some of my personal suggestions:

1. Identify and become personally acquainted with every African-American sister church in your community. Identify areas of reciprocal concern and service.
2. Determine why African-Americans or the relevant racial groups in your community have not been attracted to your fellowship.
3. Create a college or vocational school scholarship fund that pays all living and tuition expenses for a racial minority person from your community. Award that scholarship to

one new recipient each year. Follow the progress of and support emotionally and spiritually the scholarship recipient throughout his or her school period.

4. Hire a trained African-American staff minister for your fellowship. If you can't find one, then select and begin training one immediately.
5. Start a subsidized day-care center for minority working mothers and make it the best child-nurturing center in your community.
6. Determine what job skills are needed but not available in the minority work force in your community and start a non-profit vocational training center in the name of Jesus.
7. Find a Holy Spirit-gifted person in your fellowship who can monitor and participate, as his or her gift to the body, in community political and social groups where racial problems are being addressed. Charge that person with the responsibility of making and keeping your fellowship aware of the racial problems in your community and the ways your fellowship can concretely address these problems.

Will any of these initiatives require money? Yes! If your fellowship doesn't have the funds to start healing these divisions in our land, why aren't they available? How are you spending your fellowship's funds? Are all the current uses of your funds the result of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ or for the support of the Worldly Church?

The body of Christ takes up its cross and follows Jesus (Mark 8:34-38). The body of Christ is servant for all (Mark 9:33-37). The actualized body of Christ can and will heal racism as persons of all colors recognize the Lordship of Jesus Christ and respond to the work of God's Holy Spirit who gifts all the body's members.

1 See Leonard Allen, Richard Hughes, and Michael Weed, *The Worldly Church – A Call for Biblical Renewal* (Abilene, Texas: ACU Press (1988) for an excellent discussion of the secularization of the Church of Christ. I have borrowed the term "Worldly Church" from this insightful work.

2 Alex Kotlowitz and Susan Alexander, "Tacit Code of Silence on Matters of Race Perpetuates Divisions," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 28, 1992, P. A6.

3 Ibid.

4 John Allen Chalk, "Three American Revolutions," Herald of Truth Radio Sermons, June-August 1966, Abilene Texas; *Three American Revolutions* (New York: Carlton Press, Inc., 1970).

Pure and Undefined Religion

*by Rick Mars
August, 1992*

“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream” (Amos 5:24).

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

“Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow” (Isaiah 1:16-17).

Hearing the call and claim of the gospel is never easy, but perhaps more difficult when we enter the world of the Old Testament prophets. With the mention of “social justice,” sensitive listeners fear that the true essence of the gospel may be diluted into nothing more than social activism. Others, perhaps unfamiliar with the bulk of the prophetic literature, assume that the only gospel present lies in the messianic references anticipating the advent of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, such limited vision hinders us from a full and rewarding hearing of the call and claim of the Lord upon our lives through these ancient prophets of God. God’s men of old provide us with rich resources as they delineate for us the practical social implications inherent in being a child of God and a glad recipient of his gracious kindness.

Isarelite society of the 8th century B.C. reverberates with irony. During the middle of that century, Israel had once again risen to impressive heights economically, politically, and militarily. Those in power naively assumed that such prestige and affluence were the rewards of God’s favorable beneficence. Tragically, this rise in wealth and socio-political power was in direct proportion to the alarming rise in social injustice and exploitation within the society. Not surprisingly, God’s spokesmen can only decry the appalling circumstances of the day.

Amos, surveying the social inequities and judicial travesties during the height of Israel’s power, poignantly laments:

Alas for those who are at ease in Zion, and for those who feel secure on Mount Samarium, the notables of the first of the nations ...

Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the stall; who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and like David improvise on instruments of music; who drink wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph! (Amos 6:1, 4-6)

Where the establishment sees a prosperous and flourishing land, God's prophets see a society wracked with violent oppression and callous disregard for the rights and needs of the poor and lowly.

For the prophets of the 8th century (viz., Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah), the scene is doubly tragic, for these are not social horrors committed by the impious and irreligious, but by those who see themselves as deeply religious and faithfully devoted to the Lord. In fact, in a most striking scene, Amos depicts those in power devising unethical business ventures while sitting in worship (see Amos 8:4-6)!

As we view these graphic scenes of God's people from old, we must ask what led to such disregard and lack of concern for the plight of the needy and cause of the poor. The powerful indictments of the prophets of God can only be understood and appreciated against this backdrop of social injustice and unrighteousness. For many in ancient Israel, religious life and ethical behavior had become completely severed. The prevalent notion envisioned God as simply and solely concerned with correct religious practices and matters having to do with formal religious obligations. Not surprisingly, the prosperity and political stability of the day was interpreted as convincing evidence that God was pleased with their religious practices!

In response, the prophets of God struck at the core of God's relationship with his people and the requirements of the covenant. This holy God, the redeemer of battered slaves and righter of atrocious inequities, would not tolerate similar abusive and exploitative practices among his own people! This God of justice and righteousness refused to condone heinous acts of injustice within his own people. No amount of religious behavior could offset this fundamental disregard for the rights of another.

If we will hear, the message of the 8th century prophets continues to speak loudly to the contemporary church. These prophets forcefully remind us that our God is a God not simply nor solely concerned with religious behavior and practice, but intensely concerned with our daily treatment of the powerless and less fortunate.

Our God of justice and righteousness is keenly observing whether we will manifest a fundamental fairness in our daily lives and treat everyone, regardless of social position, with basic justice and righteousness. The prophets remind us that no amount of religious activity and piety can negate God's fundamental demand of active and compassionate concern for another human, especially for that individual without socio-economic clout.

Requirement of such behavior does not cease with the closing of the Old Testament; it is the stuff of which the life of Jesus is made. The prophetic call for the active manifestation of compassion rings out in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16). Jesus' concern for the potential abuse and exploitation of the powerless is strikingly manifested in his caring treatment of the entrapped woman (John 8). Such is the nature of a life given daily to manifesting justice and righteousness in every sphere of activity.

The Man Who Would Not Be King: Profile of Charles Hutchison

by Joy McMillon
August, 1992

At age 31, Charles Hutchison still looks like the ordinary college student in the ubiquitous blue jeans and tee shirt. As he strolls casually across the campus, he seems no different from thousands of others across the nation. But appearances can be deceptive. Indeed, this intelligent young African has made a choice that few can imagine. Like the lonely traveler in Robert Frost's poem, he has chosen "the road less travelled."

"I grew up in a family where living a Christian life is very important," he explains, seated in the Oklahoma Christian University library, where he spends much of his time. "We went to church faithfully, and the importance of spiritual disciplines such as prayer and Bible reading was greatly stressed."

Born in Cape Coast, Ghana, Hutchison is the eldest son of a royal family of the Fanti tribe, one of seven major African tribes in this vast west African nation of 15 million people.

His great grandmother, who helped rear the children while his parents worked, was a devout believer, and her deeply personal faith sculpted his future life.

"One of the messages I got as a child was the importance of faith and of serving others. Great Grandmother taught us humility, that we were to hid ourselves in the service of other people's welfare. Our parents taught us to save money, help the poor, read the Bible, and make the most of our lives," says Hutchison.

Surprisingly, as a young child, Hutchison didn't realize his family was royal or that he was heir to two Fanti thrones in Ghana. "What our family managed to do was to make the children unconscious of our royalty, but at the same time we were given a special education with emphasis upon traditions, etiquette, and a certain finesse."

Eventually, he noticed that in his mother's wedding pictures she was holding a peculiar-looking staff. When he questioned her about it, she told him it was their family's symbol. It was not until he was in high school that he was officially told about the family's position and his future as a king.

At 14, the reflective adolescent was sent to boarding school in Cape Coast where he became the top student in his class, and his life-long love for learning flowered. "I was always reading. When other kids were fighting, I was reading. I think I nearly drove my parents to distraction because I wouldn't stop reading even during family meals."

Besides his academic interests, Hutchison became a leader in the Scripture Union, a worldwide organization emphasizing Bible study and moral living. Later he became president of another student group, the Christian Fellowship.

“The idea of going through any kind of adolescent rebellion didn’t occur to me. From the Christian principles I was taught as a child, together with the special education my family gave me, I had a very carefully constructed conscience. I was taught that no matter what society says, the greatest values in life don’t have anything to do with money or position or popularity.”

After graduating from the University of Cape Coast in 1986, Hutchison completed two years of national services as a high school biology teacher. Active in religious activities, he began preaching on weekends and was elected secretary of the World Council of Churches in Abudo, a city in southern Ghana, an unprecedented honor for such a young man. Then a grant from the Hungarian Academy of Science sent him to Hungary for post-graduate studies.

In 1988, some Fanti elders contacted him and began preliminary discussions about his assuming the throne in Abudo. To serve in such a distinguished position of political leadership and power would be a singular honor, to say nothing of the access it would provide to impressive wealth, labor, and land. But Hutchison, determined not to send a mixed message about his own faith, courageously declined to go further with the process.

“As a Christian, I just couldn’t say yes. The king, or chief as he is called, has to practice African tribal religion, which is essentially ancestor veneration. He has to call on the ancestral world and plead with the gods to make a better life for the living. It just didn’t seem right to me,” he says. Fanti elders subsequently appointed a respected uncle as chief.

Hutchison emphasizes that his decision not to become chief of his tribe is neither a reflection on his uncle’s dignity nor a rejection of his people, whom he deeply loves. In some ways, the costly decision has made drastic changes in his lifestyle, but it has also left him very much at peace with himself. “Whatever happens, I am still in the family, and any glories that come to the family are for me. People know me, so I don’t need to assert myself through kingship or ascendancy.”

His mother, who was an administrator with the Ghana Broadcasting Company, initially was disappointed with his difficult decision. But she eventually understood his choice, he says. “She also cherishes the value of the church, and she knows that no matter what it costs, if I believe something is the right thing, I will do it.”

When he graduated with a master’s degree in genetics in 1989, family members urged him to return to Ghana. However, no jobs in his field were available, and, he says, “I didn’t want to use my position unfairly to get one.” he decided to look for a job in the United States where he could work on a doctorate in molecular biology.

Officials at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. soon hired Hutchison as a research specialist and put him to work in the laboratory cloning genes. The Immigration and Naturalization Service granted Hutchison a rare category of visa, which entitled him to live in the United States indefinitely so long as he continued his scientific work.

The summer of 1990 was a highlight for Hutchison. The Boston chapter of the Returned Peace Corps volunteers selected him as one of the first two participants in the Foreign Volunteer International Program, also called the “Reverse Peace Corps.” The organization brings

volunteers from Africa and Europe to work in American community service programs and to promote understanding, according to Jean Ussher, a doctoral student and former Peace Corps worker.

Hutchison was overwhelmed by the exposure to “street kids” who didn’t trust anyone. Within weeks, however, he had won their confidence and was able to talk with many of them about their life goals, according to Ussher.

Hutchison still recalls the tearful nine-year-old girl who confided in him that she wanted to die if there were nothing more to life than what she had experienced. “I will never forget that sad look on her face,” he says with pain in his own voice. “I told her, ‘You are only looking at life on the surface. There is a deeper purpose to life, and you have an important contribution to make. That’s why you are here.’”

The highly-touted program captured extensive media attention, and Hutchison was interviewed by the ABC news program *Nightline*, as well as *The Christian Science Monitor* newspaper, the Voice of America public radio, the *Boston Globe*, and the Associated Press.

Hutchison says his experiences helped him to realize that “for all the differences of race, I think that whatever the country, until the very poor feel they are getting a part of the cake, so to speak, there cannot be any real and lasting peace in society.”

Although he detests the effects of racism and prejudice, he is surprisingly tolerant toward those feelings. “Racism is a human problem. It isn’t just here; it’s all over the world. I find that some people tend to classify others. It doesn’t really matter to me how people classify me. One doesn’t dwell on the trifles of life. What really matters is to build and be constructive.”

Through his experiences at Georgetown and Boston were satisfying, he felt pulled in the direction of full-time ministry and the study of theology. Another agonizing decision faced him – whether to stay in science and be able to keep his secure visa, or to turn his back on all of his past training and listen to his heart. “Finally, one day I decided to quit fighting with God, and I just gave in.” He resigned his research job and began applying to schools of theology.

Hutchison was accepted for admission with a generous scholarship at Andover-Newton College in Boston; however, he elected to attend Oklahoma Christian University where he will graduate with a master’s degree in ministry in December. Classmates and faculty are unanimous in their accolades for his abilities and character. “Charles is a very bright, dedicated student, and well-liked by other students,” says OCU Bible professor Dr. Loren Gieger.

Classmate Hal Hester says Hutchison’s natural tendency is to help people at every opportunity. According to Hester, Hutchison refuses to let him pay for baby-sitting, insisting, “I couldn’t do that. We are brothers.” Says Hester: “I am convinced that if Charles met someone who needed his last few dollars, he would give it to them gladly.”

If the decision to study theology has been positive, it has also been stressful at times – partly because of financial difficulties and partly because of visa problems. When he resigned his

science post at Georgetown University, the Ghanaian knew his visa would be instantly revoked, according to INS regulations. Even so, his conscience dictated that he immediately inform the INS of his change in status.

Despite his appeals for another visa, immigration officials threatened to deport him within 30 days. At one point, the embattled ministry student sold his car, typewriter, and personal mementos in the belief he would be expelled within the month. Finally, after a year of bureaucratic hassles and several hundred dollars, he has been granted a temporary student visa. “But all of these problems have worked for good in my life,” says Charles, who believes that if at some future point the circumstances are right for him to become a Fanti chief, he can now be a more compassionate ruler. “I know what it means to feel pressure and stress,” he says.

While in Oklahoma City, he has come to worship at the Wilshire Church of Christ and to learn about “the importance of baptism in my salvation process.” Baptized last fall by OCU administrator, Duane Eggleston, he is eager to work with youth or teach classes at any opportunity.

Although he says he had never heard of the Church of Christ in Ghana, Hutchison is determined to take the fruits of his studies back to his native country. He has written the leaders of churches which he helped to establish and told them he is “learning many new things, and I have much to share with you about the Scriptures and baptism when I return.” In a recent letter to him, they responded, “We are waiting eagerly for the opportunity to hear you preach and teach.”

Hearing the satisfaction and zest in his voice, it is hard to imagine Charles Hutchison giving up the excitement of ministry for anything else. At the moment, he is enthusiastic about completing his classes and beginning a ministry practicum with a congregation this fall. But his voice takes on a personal passion when he talks about returning to his tribe one day soon. “First, I may have to get a job in order to take care of some financial obligations, but I’m eager to go back to Ghana when the right time comes,” he says, reflecting on the road ahead. As usual for Charles Hutchison, his road is the one less travelled by.

The Write Side: The Betrayers

A Short Story by Jack Welch
August, 1992

I am trying to write a story about how I was sabotaged by the Dean of the Graduate School. I was an undergraduate at a large state university, and he as one of the people who was supposed to prepare me to do well on the Rhodes Scholarship interview. He seemed the perfect person to do so because he was the most intelligent man on campus – perhaps in the entire state. He had been a Rhodes Scholar himself, and occasionally talked on the telephone with Prime Minister Harold Wilson of Great Britain. During our preparation sessions, he and another professor asked me questions that an undergraduate might know.

When I got to the actual interview in a suite in our state capital's only skyscraper, my Dean turned out to be one of the interviewers. I anticipated that he would ask me the same kind of undergraduate questions, but no – he asked me specialized questions. I lost the scholarship and blamed my Dean for making me look stupid.

This story is not progressing well. It's altogether too orderly but what happened was almost divinely balanced and orderly. (That's what I get for writing from my own experience.) Nevertheless, while I was away doing graduate work, this Dean commandeered the public address system at a basketball game and began cursing the University's president. The President soon found another Dean, but the ex-Dean, after undergoing therapy, remained on campus to teach. Soon after I returned to campus as an assistant professor, he used an RAF military pistol to shoot himself to death in his university office.

I remember that I had to struggle in order not to find some satisfaction in the ex-Dean's decline. But, he was buried and mostly forgotten except by people like me whom he had injured.

A few years later, my moral qualms concerning this man surfaced again when his only child, a son, turned up in my freshman composition class. I recognized the name at once and wondered if I would be able to resist doing something vengeful. I didn't want to sin against this person and yet ... I admit that I was still rankled at his father's betrayal of me. I coldly marked the grammatical errors on the essay, but didn't trust myself to evaluate the content. When I returned the paper, he seemed disappointed.

During the course of the semester, the ex-Dean's son improved but never rose to the brilliance which I had subconsciously anticipated. When the semester ended, I was relieved that I had not been unfair to the student. However, I knew that I had not offered him much in the way of constructive criticism, either. Had I sinned against him? I felt that I had at least shortchanged him.

Two semesters later the young man showed up, smiling, in my creative writing class. In this class I gave no grades until the end of the semester. My main method of helping students to improve was in a series of individual conferences throughout the semester. I confess that I put

off the conference with Jim as long as I could, but finally the day came. His five-page story lay on the metal desk between us.

“Why are you writing about blacks in New York City?” I asked.

He fidgeted and turned in the chair, crossing his legs. “Well ... I like the writings of James Baldwin.”

“I like the writings of Shakespeare, too, but”

“... but you don’t write about English kings,” Jim said, smiling.

“Didn’t you like the advice from R.V. Cassill to choose something from your own experience?”

“Oh, I liked it all right.”

“But you didn’t choose to do it.”

“I wasn’t able to do it.”

“Why not?”

Another long pause. “I don’t know.”

His answers were not matching my questions. So, I started down another path which I hoped would connect. “Let’s look for some personal conflict which might be turned into fiction,” I said, trying to appear casual.

“Have you ever had a serious illness? Any failed love affairs? That’s good enough for a novel.”

Jim smiled. “I guess not ... not yet. I have a girlfriend.”

“Well, let’s turn to the girlfriend ...”

Here Jim interrupted me. “No ... not her. I know what you want, Professor Welch. I know. I just ... I don’t know.”

“What do I want?” I asked.

“You want something that would make a great story; something that I know about so that I could put in all the right details that would make people believe it.”

“Exactly.”

“Well, I have that kind of story ... except”

I said nothing. Should I, out of charity, change the subject?

“My father killed himself. He betrayed my mother and me.”

“There’s your story.”

“... but I’m finding it very hard to forgive him. So is my mother. She turned to alcohol ... you know that already from our freshman class, but he left me ... well, with all the responsibility.”

I said nothing for a few moments, noticing that tears had welled up in Jim’s eyes.

“That’s a powerful story, Jim. If you can endure the pain, you may do yourself a lot of good.”

Jim said nothing more during the conference and left without even saying goodbye. He submitted nothing more the remainder of the semester although he attended every class and commented generously on the works of the other students. For our last conference, he hadn’t given me a manuscript beforehand, but when he arrived at my office, he had a neat stack of pages which he laid before me on the gray metal desk.

“This is it,” he said.

The title of the story was “Betrayed.” “Looks like 20 pages or more”

He nodded his head. “I’ll wait while you read it.”

The story was prefaced with comments from the narrator who depicted his father’s high expectations for his son by describing a childhood of continual, unrelenting criticism. The father is as hard on himself as he is on everyone else, and before the story is over, he collapses in nervous exhaustion. Finally, the father, no longer able to endure his limitations, takes his own life. The story ends with another comment by the narrator who asserts that the father’s worst legacy was the bitterness which he had left behind in the family. “Strangely, there’s no word in English to describe us,” the narrator commented. “We’re the betrayees.”

“This is a powerful story,” I commented to Jim. “You seem to have dealt kindly with your father. I can see that he hurt you again and again.”

Jim nodded. “His achievement was great. I know I’ll never equal his. But he paid the price. He demanded too much of us all – even himself.”

“This is a tragic story,” I said, leaning back in my oak chair and relaxing. “It’s redeemed by your forgiveness.”

“I feel better about it. It’s like therapy.”

“Writing can sometimes be like that.”

After the writing class, I rarely saw Jim again. Once, however, at the University's indoor swimming pool, he stopped by and told me that he had been accepted into medical school and that he was engaged to be married. "I'm happy for you, Jim. Having you in class was a blessing."

Jim looked at me strangely, not comprehending, then dove into the chlorine-scented pool and swam smoothly away.

This story may leave the impression that I was somehow as healed as Jim, but that would be false; otherwise, I wouldn't be writing this story. My life was diminished by my failure during that scholarship interview, and I've long avoided talking about it. Still, I don't suppose Jim's life or mine or that of any other betrayee is ever totally healed. Nevertheless, understanding which comes through art is apparently a prelude to forgiveness.

The New Woman

by C. Leonard Allen
August, 1992

“Shall the sisters pray and speak in public?”

Throughout 1888 and for several years following, that question was one of the most pressing among Churches of Christ. It aroused controversy and debate across the pages of the *Gospel Advocate* and other periodicals.

In March of 1888 a man wrote to David Lipscomb, editor of the *Advocate*, suggesting that the command, “Let your women keep silence in the churches” (1 Corinthians 14:34), prohibited women even from teaching children in the Sunday school. Lipscomb responded that they could teach children and even their husbands but only in a “modest deferential manner,” not in “an assuming, authoritative way.” And certainly, he added, women must never stand “before promiscuous [or mixed] assemblies” but should only teach in private.

Silena Moore Holman (1850-1915), an elder’s wife from Fayetteville, Tennessee and mother of eight children, responded to Lipscomb and the question of woman’s place. She boldly challenged some of the traditional assumptions, provoking sharp and lively exchanges with Lipscomb continuing on and off for many years.

In several lengthy articles she examined women in the Bible, underscoring the active and public ministries of women like Deborah the judge of Israel (Judges 4-6), Anna the prophetess (Luke 2:37-38), Priscilla who taught Apollos (Acts 18:26), the women assembled with the apostles on Pentecost (Acts 2), and Philip’s four daughters who prophesied (Acts 2:8-9). All of these provided biblical examples, she thought, of a public role for women that did not “usurp authority” over men.

Holman made clear her agreement with Lipscomb on one thing: “the man is the head of the woman, and should take the lead, most especially in the family relation.” But she strongly disagreed that women were thereby completely removed from public leadership roles and confined entirely to the private and domestic sphere. Women who possessed the God-given abilities should be allowed “to go out in the world and tell of the unsearchable riches of the gospel” and to combat the social evils that threatened the home.

Holman in fact rejected the distinction between private and public spheres that Lipscomb and many others sought to maintain. A woman could teach a man privately, they insisted, but not publicly, in her parlor but not in the assembly. Such a distinction, she argued, was much more cultural than scriptural. “Suppose a dozen men and women were in my parlor and I talked to them of the gospel and exhorted them to obey it. Exactly how many would have to be added to the number,” she asked, “to make my talk and exhortation a public instead of a private one?”

She made her own answer to that question very clear. “I believe that a learned Christian woman may expound the scriptures and urge obedience to them,” she stated, “to one hundred men and women at one time, as well as to one hundred, one at a time, and do much good, and no more violate a scriptural command in one instance than the other.”

Lipscomb’s basic response was that God assigned woman to the domestic sphere, and when she oversteps that realm she rebels against God and threatens the stability of society. By nature and temperament, Lipscomb believed, woman was suited to the domestic realm and no other. God had made her more emotional and less rational than man. As a result, she was wonderfully suited for nurturing children but not for public teaching or leadership.

In his exchange with Holman, Lipscomb revealed clearly his deep allegiance to what historians of the period have called the “cult of true womanhood” or the “cult of domesticity.” This vision of the ideal woman emerged in America between 1820 and 1860 and remained dominant until the end of the century.

The ideal permeated the women’s magazines, popular books, and religious literature of the period. Four attributes stood out: purity, piety, submissiveness, and domesticity. With their superior moral purity and spiritual sensibilities, women were to restrain the natural lust and aggressiveness of husbands and sons. They were to make their homes havens of stability and nurture.

At the same time, the ideal woman was passive, dependent, deferential, and childlike. As one Christian woman put it in 1870, “God has so made the sexes that women, like children, cling to men; lean upon them as though they were superior in mind and body.” Women could exert an enormous leavening, uplifting, and nurturing influence, but only by remaining properly submissive. Indeed, by remaining strictly within their ordained sphere, women served as the backbone of society.

David Lipscomb and many other leaders of the Restoration Movement in the 1880s held this ideal of “true womanhood” without question. It deeply shaped their interpretation of biblical teaching about the role of women.

On this basis, for example, Lipscomb, his co-editor E.G. Sewell, and most other leaders condemned the “strong-minded women” who sought the right to vote. Women voting, Sewell wrote, was based on “a principle which, if allowed to spread, threatens to destroy the most sacred of all institutions, and make America a homeless nation.” Women who sought the vote, he warned, would “break the ‘bond of subjection’ divinely laid upon them and assert their independence; vote, hold office, electioneer, and, if necessary, fight their way to the ballot box.”

By stepping beyond their divinely ordained sphere, women threatened the whole moral order of things. When women entered the public sphere, Lipscomb proclaimed, chaos resulted – “loose marriage, easy divorce, indisposition to bear children, and ... attendant social impurity.”

Silena Holman also assumed the ideal of “true womanhood” in certain ways but begged to differ with Lipscomb at major points. Against Lipscomb, she denied that women were unfit for

leadership due to their emotional nature. “The Bible nowhere intimates,” she retorted, “that the mind of woman is inferior to that of man (and it is the mind that makes the leader).” Indeed, in the fields of science, the arts, education, literature, journalism, business, and the professions, “woman has come to the front and proven her ability to cope with man, in anything she may undertake.”

Further, when Lipscomb charged that much of the moral disarray of American society was to be laid at the feet of women who neglected their domestic duties and sought public roles, Holman took sharp exception. “My dear sister,” Lipscomb had written, “man is what his mother makes him. The great and good men are always conceded to be the work of their mothers. The bad men [too] are just as much the work of their hands.”

Preposterous, replied Holman; women do not possess all the goodness in the world, and neither should they “shoulder the responsibility for all the bad.”

With such critique, Silena Holman stood among those who in the 1890s promoted the ideal of what they called the “new woman.” Proponents of the “new woman” accepted neither the passivity of the “true woman” nor the militancy of the emerging “women’s rights” movement. They supported women’s suffrage, women’s reform societies (like the Women’s Christian Temperance Union), higher education for women, and a more public role for women in the churches. They stressed loyalty to home and family and did not reject male headship. They did not promote a feminist rejection of the domestic sphere, but rather the belief that more opportunities for women would make better wives and mothers.

In 1895 the *Gospel Advocate* printed an attack on the “new woman.” six months later Holman published a spirited reply: “The days of the ‘clinging vine woman’ are gone forever,” she proclaimed. In her place a “husband will find walking by his side the bright, wide-awake companion, ... a helpmate in the best possible sense of the term.”

The “new woman” is well educated, and her education has not “impaired her feminine grace or lovable qualities in the slightest degree.” She will probably marry, but will not have to “marry for a living.” She knows the world around her and takes an active part in it. And she will vote when that right is granted her (only three states gave full suffrage to women at the time). “When the ‘new woman’ ... comes into her kingdom, wide-awake, alert, thoughtful, and up to date,” Holman wrote, “she will not depreciate, but ... magnify and glorify the profession of motherhood.”

David Lipscomb remained a staunch foe of this “new woman.” She was a “usurper” of male prerogatives and dangerous to society, he said in 1897. As for Silena Holman, he wrote: “It gives a body the blues to read Sister Holman’s article[s].”

Holman herself modeled the “new woman” in many ways. Besides raising eight children, she worked faithfully in her church, wrote many articles for publication, and served for 15 years as president of the Tennessee Women’s Christian Temperance Union. Under her dynamic leadership the organization grew from fewer than 200 members to over 4,000.

In 1913, two years before her death, she was still addressing “the woman question” in the *Advocate*, still arguing for a woman’s right to teach publicly before “mixed audiences.” “Men may change with the changing conditions of modern life,” she wrote, “but when women find themselves trying to keep step with their fathers, brothers, and husbands in the new order of things, the brethren stand in front of them with a drawn sword and demand a halt, because, they say, the Bible forbids, when it does nothing of the kind.”

When Holman died in 1915, well-known evangelist T.B. Larimore preached her funeral. She had requested Larimore, she said, because “I want no man to apologize for my work, and I know he will never do that.” Larimore didn’t apologize. He praised her “honorable and industrious life,” mentioning both her devotion to her family and her “wonderful intelligence” as a public leader.

“In her last conversation with me,” Larimore concluded, “she spoke of men who had been bitter foes of her work, speaking not unkindly, but in the spirit of charity, and I want to commend that spirit to all who are here.”

Two years later a portrait of Silena Holman was hung in the Tennessee State Capitol. She was only the second woman granted such an honor.

For further reading see the following articles by Silena Holman:

“Let Your Women Keep Silent,” *Gospel Advocate* 30 (August 1, 1888), 8.

“The Scriptural Status of Women.” *Gospel Advocate* 30 (October 10, 1888), 2-3.

“The ‘New Woman,’ ” *Gospel Advocate* 28 (July 9, 1896), 438.

“The ‘New Woman,’ No. 2” *Gospel Advocate* 28 (July 16, 1896), 452-53.

“Woman’s Scriptural Status Again.” *Gospel Advocate* 30 (November 21, 1888), 8.

The Sounds of Worship

by Jeff Berryman
August, 1992

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

It has become proverbial that modern people think less clearly than their “good ol’ days” ancestors. It is common knowledge that rulers of democracies and commonwealths are determined by the effectiveness of sound-bite techno-strategies.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Our eyes are dull with the glaze of prime-time pabulum and sitcoms. Our fingers are numb with grasping petty cash and goods, numb with touching forbidden flesh, numb with meaningless twiddling of time and thumbs. Our taste is filmy, a left-over grunge of spirits and goblins, indulgences that leave us fat and unsatisfied. And our ears – oh, our ears – what do they hear in this cavernous, swallowing world of spiritual and human noise?

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

And so we come to worship, we believers. We who are not of the world. We come to by holy (as if!), to praise (it’s a fad), to pray (to whom?), to wait (for what?), and perhaps – God help us – to hear a word from the regions of forever.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

One of the final, dominant phrases of the Book these words come to me, echoing through the centuries like a keening cry for help, like a call to war I want no part of. I listen, I hear ... nothing. Unlike John, I have no great desire to fall on my face. (That’s especially true because I have a lunch date after worship service.) Imagine – a king comes to see me, stars in his fist, sword sticking out of his mouth, whacking out these words, this roaring command, this clarion call to listen, and I grab a song book and belt ’em with the best. Imagine – a Creator’s ocean voice shriveling into a subtle whisper nestled somewhere in the back of a pew.

What is there to hear in worship?

“Excuse me, what number did he say?”

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

What is there to hear in worship? What are the sounds of a Sunday morning in the midst of what we typically think of as worship?

At 9:00 a.m. (starting time), it's the quiet "Mornin's" and "Lookin' sharp today's" that the worshippers offer to their Blest-Be-the-Tie-That-Binds brothers and sisters. There are songs to be heard (if the acoustics are good), prayers to be "amened," and sermons to be sat through and impressed by. Radical churches may even have clapping ("This ain't supposed t'be entertainment, Marge. I ain't comin' back!"). Then there are the children, noisemakers that they are, easily the biggest distraction on a Sunday. ("I don't know why I come. Kids and worship just don't mix.") Some of my personal favorites include the little clinkings of bread trays, the occasional clatter of a tray and its contents dropped, and the easy swishing of cash into plates. And you can't forget the mass grabbing of song books (zzripp! zzripp! zzripp!) on the invitation cue.

That's on the surface. If that's all you hear, you are what musicians call monophonic. You can't hear anything but the melody line. And a symphony is more – much, much more – than a tune.

Let me ask the question again:

What is there to hear in the worship of God?

The beat of our own hearts, perhaps? How about our reluctance to sing a particular song because it isn't (in our view) appropriate? Other attitudes? Thoughts? If our inner musings became audible, what would be heard? Over heavy sighs stuffed with self-pity and disguised pride? Greedy slurpings because "they" came in a new Cadillac? Bored snores of dull disinterest, too tired to care whether or not God is around?

And what about the sounds in the people around you? What's the sound of the silent tear staining the life of the girl over there in the red dress? What is the noise of a new mom's joy? Of new Christian's release from sin and death? Of dreams crackling, lives splintering, hope shattering? What sound does hurt make?

That's the seen world. How about the noise of the unseen?

What are the sounds of cherubim's wings? Seraphim singing "Holy, Holy, Holy"? Angels matching voices with ours as we call the heavens to join our praise? Would we recognize the sound of the Spirit's groaning for us? What is the clamorous noise of raging, soulful battle over the souls of God's children?

What is the sound of 1,247 prayers easing through a Sunday ceiling? Are we open to the vibrations of praise that soar from "all ye hills and mountains high"? What is the sound of God's joy, his pleasure, his revelry in his people? What might it be like to hear him laugh? Would we know the voice of God even if it came?

In worship and praise, and in fact, throughout our entire lives with Christ, there is much to hear. Voices, calls, songs, mournings, laughs, and a thousand other sounds. Some are to be relished and grasped, helpful and thrilling as they are. Some are to be imagined, dreamed over, longed for. Still others are hellish, to be ignored and rejected, killed on the first note. But Scripture is

emphatic about one sound. And if there is one sound to be surrounded by and lived in throughout eternity, it would be the one that Job says “thunders in marvelous ways.”

It is the sound of the voice of God.

Frankly, whenever God’s word is read, I get a little nervous, especially if the words are something like “You are my people. I am your God. Listen to me.” It’s as if he is speaking now, in space and time, with his own vocal chords, and saying something to me, something new, something to stop me dead in my tracks. I sneak a look around at the congregation behind me. Yawns. Shifting body weight. People reading bulletins. Teenagers passing notes. Someone stares into space, then looks at his shoes. I turn back to the podium. The scripture reading is over, and I wonder if we heard what God just said.

But, is the voice of God simply the Word read? I think not. If you’re like me, it makes you nervous too hear people talking about “hearing a word from the lord.” But I’m increasingly convinced of the logic to the idea that, if God is present here and now, and his children gather in his presence to seek him, he just might say something! And why would he speak, if not to be heard?

The voice of God is a mystery, and the hearing of it is his to give. When I praise him, consider him, seek him, I feel an awareness opening. In such moments of true worship, of true inner bowing down, of true adoration and thoughtful and God-filled devotion and sacrifice, the voice of God is there to be heard.

I pray for such moments.

Oh, God, our ears are dull. We are a deaf people. Our senses are deadened, satiated by a constant barrage of dark noise and meaningless hum-drummings. Where has our stillness gone? Where is your stillness, the quiet trickle of life’s river? Lord, hush us. Silence our tongues, even as we praise. Break our prideful shouts. Shut up our self-pity and pretentiousness. Lead us again to calm, so we can hear the truth in the world’s noise. Let the cries of the people haunt us. Let the weeping of your lost children move us to prayer and action. May you live in our praises, even as they form in our mouths, and may we hear in every word of Scripture a marvelous thunder. Your voice is a mystery whose secret we would learn. In our assemblies, O God, as we pray, as we sing, as we praise, and as we preach, open our ears. Teach us to listen to the reality of every sound in the place and time of worship filled with truth and spirit. Father, give us ears to hear, and let us hear.

In the name of Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega, Amen.

Remembering a Martyr: Malcolm X and America's Struggle for Racial Justice

by Larry James
August, 1992

Tanisha McCarthy's voice projected a calm, strong resolve across the crowded picnic area where her African-American church family joined my predominantly Anglo-American church family for a Sunday fellowship meal. Our two groups provided quite a study in contrast. Tanisha's small, mostly female, Missionary Baptist congregation serves one of the poorest, most drug-infested, crime-ridden parts of far south Dallas. My large, wealthy, pampered, suburban Church of Christ group thrives in one of the richest, safest, most well-protected areas of far north Dallas County. The day signalled the beginning of our mutual commitment to maintain an on-going relationship for the sake of understanding, racial harmony, and "nitty-gritty" ministry. As Tanisha's pastor introduced her, none of us realized that in just three days racial violence would ignite Los Angeles following the Rodney King verdict.

"I want all of you to meet a very special young woman," L.J. Pate, her minister, began. "Tanisha is an honor student about to graduate from the Dallas school district's Health Care Magnet High school. She is a leader among her peers and an asset to her church and community. She plans to train for a career in one of the health care professions. But, I want you to know how worried I am about her. I want you to hear her talk about what her life has been like the last few years."

Tanisha, a beautiful, black teenager, stood perfectly erect. She started slowly.

"During the last three years, over 50 of my friends and classmates have been murdered," her words flowed almost without emotion. "This last week I attended funeral services for three close friends who died violently." We sat stunned as she painted a bleak, hopeless, helpless portrait of what it felt like to grow up in a black ghetto. In Tanisha's neighborhood the police do not respond to calls for assistance in a timely manner. Just down the street from her church building, "crack" dealers run a profitable business. Children roam the streets. Alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, crime, rape, fear – Tanisha used these words to tell her personal story.

"When I was a little girl, I asked my mother if I could date when I turned 16," Tanisha told us. "But now that I'm 17, I don't want to go anywhere. I just stay home and study." Across two tables her mother nodded smiling agreement, while her grandmother, seated beside me, simply hung her head.

In the frightening aftermath of the riots last May, Willie L. Williams, Los Angeles' new police chief, told *Time* (May 11, 1992, page 37), "We have to start talking to each other, not talking at each other." Tanisha and her brothers and sisters would add an "Amen!" Most of white America remains tragically ignorant of the day-to-day experience of much of black America.

The recent death of noted African-American author Alex Haley sent me searching for a copy of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Haley collaborated with the fiery, controversial black leader to produce this now-classic book almost 30 years ago. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* should

be read by every white American, and certainly by every Christian interested in understanding the mindset, life experience, and psyche of many African-Americans.

Born May 19, 1925 in Omaha, Nebraska, Malcolm Little's conflict with a white racist society began even before his birth. The opening paragraph of his autobiography sets the tone for all that follows:

When my mother was pregnant with me, she told me later, a party of hooded Ku Klux Klan riders galloped up to our home in Omaha, Nebraska, one night. Surrounding the house, brandishing their shotguns and rifles, they shouted for my father to come out. My mother went to the front door and opened it. Standing where they could see her pregnant condition, she told them that she was alone with her three small children, and that my father was away, preaching in Milwaukee. The Klansmen shouted threats and warnings at her that we had better get out of town because "the good Christian white people" were not going to stand for my father's "spreading trouble" among the "good" Negroes of Omaha with the "back to Africa" preaching of Marcus Garvey (page 3).

As a result of the Klan threats, Earl Little moved his family to Lansing, Michigan where racist violence continued. Malcolm shares vivid childhood memories of the terrifying night white men burned down his family's home. When Malcolm was six years old, members of the Klan murdered his father, crushing his head and almost severing it from his body. Authorities ruled the death as a suicide, depriving the survivors of all death benefits. The family quickly disintegrated following the death of Earl Little and the complete mental breakdown of his widow.

As a young man, Malcolm proved to be an accomplished student both academically and socially, being elected president of his class in a predominantly white school. A crucial encounter with an eighth grade English teacher radically altered the direction of his life. After sharing his dream of becoming a lawyer, the teacher counseled a more "realistic" approach to career plans. "Don't misunderstand me, now. We all here like you, you know that. But you've got to be realistic about being a nigger. A lawyer – that's no realistic goal for a nigger. You need to think about something you can be" (page 43). Recalling the shattering conversation, he notes, "It was then that I began to change – inside" (page 44).

After the eighth grade he dropped out of school and moved to Boston to live with his half-sister, Ella. Here began his slide into a life of crime, drug abuse, hustling, and despair. Immersed for the first time in the black culture and environment of Boston and Harlem, Malcolm landed in prison after being arrested for burglary. He was 21 years old. In prison he encountered the teachings of Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Lost-Found Nation of Islam, referred to popularly as the Black Muslims. He spent his prison years reading widely and familiarizing himself with the Afro-American version of Islam which maintained that the white man personified the devil with whom blacks could not live. Upon his release from prison, Malcolm converted to the Black Muslims. Adopting "X" as his last name, symbolic of his stolen identity as the child of African-American slaves, he served as minister of Temple No. 7 in Harlem, becoming the most effective national spokesman for the cause of Elijah Muhammad.

Elijah's jealousy of his disciple's popularity and Malcolm's disillusionment with his leader's sincerity led to a split between the two men. Malcolm journeyed to Mecca where he first heard orthodox Islamic teaching concerning the equality of all races. More importantly, he met white people who treated people of color with respect, appreciation, and dignity. Returning to America as El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, the still-fiery spokesman for black rights contended racism would destroy America and only blacks could free themselves from their oppression. In June 1964 Malcolm X founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity. Affected the American civil rights movement especially through his influence on the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) whose members were the first to call for black power for black people. Gunned down by a Black Muslim assassin at a rally in New York, Malcolm X died on February 21, 1965.

Why read a book now almost three decades old, about the life of such a radical spokesman for the rights of black people?

On April 29, 1992 a Simi Valley, California Superior Court jury, composed of 10 whites, one Asian and one Hispanic, acquitted four white Los Angeles police officers on all but one count brought against them as the result of their violently beating motorist Rodney King on the night of March 3, 1991. For over a year America watched the sickening video tape of King's arrest and brutal beating. The not-guilty verdict forced all Americans, black and white, to confront our nation's unfinished struggle for justice for African-Americans. Malcolm X confronted and addressed issues which blacks in this nation still face. His intriguing story remains extremely relevant for those of us who seek to improve race relations in America and in the church today.

Second, read Malcolm X's story as a beginning attempt to understand and to contextualize the rage, anger and pent-up frustration of millions of black Americans who live in the great cities of our nation. The easy assumptions, the confident, pseudo-expertise expressed by so many white social analysts and Christian leaders sound empty and ill-informed when compared to the stories of Malcolm and Tanisha.

Third, getting into the world of Malcolm X allows me to catch a glimpse of the daily roadblocks black people must break through in their attempts to move beyond the despair and hopelessness of poverty and social alienation. Malcolm X understood institutional racism. He learned it first from an eighth grade English teacher, held captive himself by the same oppressive, limiting worldview. My new, south Dallas friends live with it constantly, and so do I. Reading Malcolm's story teaches me so much about my own.

Finally, read his story to develop a context and a frame of reference for bringing about meaningful, substantive change in the Christian community. Christian leaders must make clear the connections between faithfulness and a radical commitment to pursue social justice, racial harmony, and the free assimilation of black and white believers into fully-integrated congregations.

Malcolm X, reflecting on his decision to drop out of school and move to Boston, writes, "All praise is due to Allah that I went to Boston when I did. If I hadn't, I'd probably still be a brainwashed black Christian" (page 46). What a sobering challenge to contemporary Christians

of all races to reconsider the message of Jesus Christ and to reject every attempt by a racist society to compromise, dilute or distort his clear commands.

Hope Network Newsletter: You Can Teach an Old Dog New Tricks!

by Lynn Anderson
August, 1992

Be careful what you say. Words can come back to haunt you – especially if they get into print. I know first-hand.

My friend's voice sounded weary over the phone. "Lynn, you were right," he reminded me. "It's hopeless. Old churches can't change. I'm tired of beating my head against brick walls. So what do I do? I don't think I have what it takes to go plant a new church. Besides, my wife couldn't handle the financial uncertainty of church planting. I give up. Over and out. Out of the ministry. Maybe out of the Church of Christ."

"Wait a minute," I objected. "That's not what I had in mind." Although I had meant to traffic in hope, inadvertently I had contributed to my friend's despair.

He had read an interview I had done some months earlier with *Image* magazine, where I had said, "Churches, like people, have stories and once a church's story is established (and by the time it is 25 years old it is very definitely established), you can't change it a great deal. You can clean up some habits here, change some cosmetics there, but the basic nature of that church will remain unchanged."¹

What can I say? I was wrong. I have changed my mind. I'm still passionately convinced that we must be planting new congregations that will be more culturally appropriate to our times, if we are to effectively reach lost people in our culture. But I am not about to give up on all old churches either. Let me tell you what has revived my hope that some old churches can change enough to reconnect with our times.

First: My map was obsolete!

True, the literature of the past couple of decades says that churches can't change. And church growth researcher Lyle Schaller told a gathering of "our" preachers that since declining churches can't likely change, we must "plant or perish." I had bought into that assessment. "You can't teach an old dog new tricks. Right?" Hence, the *Image* article: "Churches can't change."

But, my conclusions were built on what has happened in the past, not what can happen in the future. Rapid change has run us off the old map.

"Poor Henry Ford has lost his mind. Says he is going to manufacture buggies that (ha ha) will need no horses. Gimme a break!"

"Come on now, Mr. Wright. Fly? It can't be done. Look at history."

“No, no, Mr. Galileo. That is not how the universe works. Ask anyone – from the beginning of time until now.”

All these comments share two things in common:

- (1) They were dead wrong.
- (2) They were founded on old systems, old paradigms that did not allow for the astounding changes which were already in motion.

When I said that churches couldn't change I was wrong too, and for the same reason. The past had observed, “Don't try to change a church. It won't work.” But the underlying paradigms of our culture are shifting so swiftly and profoundly that what the past has taught us does not necessarily hold true for the future. We've run off the map. Our whole view of reality has shifted.

For example, in his book *Future Perfect* Stanley M. Davis asserts, “In the industrial economy, our models helped us to manage aftermath, the consequences of events that had already happened. In this new economy however, we must learn to manage the beforemath; that is, the consequences of events that have not yet occurred.”²

Davis' thesis is that much current management theory was designed to operate organizational structures which were obsolete by the time the theory had been published. But the old rules concerning organizational cultures are off. Paradigms have shifted. We are sailing in uncharted waters and encountering what Peter Drucker calls “New Realities.”

The profound cultural paradigm shifts which alter the ground rules of change in the marketplace obviously impact churches as well. We can no longer assume that as things have been so shall they always be.

Second: Like you, I have actually seen some individuals change radically. Once I was “fired” then “rehired” three days later. A decade later one of the elders who had aggressively favored my firing wrote a long letter of profuse apology to Carolyn and me. Then point by point he explained significant ways in which his thinking had changed – after he reached the age of 70!

Third: we have seen whole congregations change. Leith Anderson's watershed book, *Dying for Change*, case-studied an old and declining city congregation that changed enough to become a flourishing church again. The successful renewal of Leith's church gave a lot of us hope that things can change where we are too.

Less than a year ago I was called to be the pulpit minister of the Preston Road church in Dallas. Yet some 10-12 years earlier I was occasionally “branded” in the Preston Road bulletin as an example of apostasy! Old dogs do learn new tricks.

Fourth: Not just individuals and congregations change, but our whole brotherhood has changed. The speakers headlining our lectureships and workshops represent a different breed from 15 to 20 years ago.

Our views have changed too! For example, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is assumed these days. But this was new and dangerous teaching two decades ago when a “word only” dominated fellowship took to task such visible leaders as Jimmy Allen and Carl Spain and others who helped us rethink the work of the Spirit.

We look different, too. You may remember when “kitchens in the church,” family life centers, gymnasiums, youth ministers, special singing groups, etc. were suspect in many of our churches and flatly “verboten” in others. Not so now!

Also, less than two decades ago cutting edge journals like *Image* and *Wineskins* would have been filed in the “dangerous fringe” category, but today they appeal to a broad cross-section of our fellowship. And the “yellow journals” which terrorized our fellowship two decades ago have painted themselves into corners of low circulation and even lower credibility.

Preaching is changing. Topical preaching which was once standard fare in our pulpits is giving way to textual, expository preaching – in user-friendly language.

Fifteen to twenty years ago, some of us were “blacklisted” from the major forums of fellowship and had numerous “revivals” cancelled. That lasted for nearly a decade. yet, nowadays we cannot begin to accept all our invitations. We have not become more traditional. It is the fellowship that has changed. Hang in, my ministry friends. Don’t give up on our fellowship.

Fifth: It is biblical to expect change. The gospel invites change so radical it is called “new birth” and results in “new creatures” who then keep on “changing from one degree of glory to another.”

As Paul moved from culture to culture he shifted strategies and became “all things to all men ... to win some.”

Paul expected the church to change on Crete, even said the older people should lead the charge! (Titus 2:1-5). Frankly I am troubled when I hear comments that older people are hard liners and that they cannot change. In fact they have had to do a lot of changing merely to survive in this quick-silver world.

Change is a major interest of the New Testament. Look again at Acts 15 and Galatians and the late chapters of Romans. And in Revelation, the seven churches of Asia were warned to change or get their wicks snuffed.

No, we had better not change biblical values – things like the gospel or the Lordship of Christ or the church as the redemptive community. But our methods, strategies, formats and styles will need constant updating. At a Leadership Network conference in Colorado Springs, a group of pace-setting ministers of large evangelical churches took an informal poll. Most of those ministers had some experience in both the revitalization of existing congregations and in the planting of new ones. They concluded that it takes more than ten times as much energy to bring a declining old church to a given level of growth, than to plant a new congregation and bring it to a similar level of growth.

Three decades ago, many Bible majors in our Christian colleges wanted to plant churches and many congregations planned daughter churches. Nowadays, an existing congregation often sees a new church plant as a threat and church planters as somehow potentially subversive. So, graduating Bible majors tend to seek the security of established pulpits, rather than the risk of planting new churches.

Yet, by contrast, the evangelical world around is experiencing growth rates through new plantings. For example, the Southern Baptists have started more than 200 congregations in just one state in the past year!

However, in spite of the fact that renewal of existing churches may be much slower and more challenging than church planting, renewal is still an important ministry. Frankly, it is the central focus of my own energy these days. Not all congregations can change – maybe not all should. But we might realistically expect:

1. Some congregations can change some – but not all congregations can change as much as some people want them to – especially not at the speed some expect. And some congregations will not be able to change – though they are dwindling and will soon die.
 2. Some other congregations, although unable to change, will likely not die – at least not in the near future. As Fred Smith says, they may survive “as a sport or an art form.” At one time international travel required sailing, and raising cattle required riding and roping. Today, however, regattas and rodeos exist only as sport for those who “like that sort of thing.” In the 16th century some forms of music were popular world wide that today are merely quaint art forms preserved by a few special interest musicians. Just so, some surviving churches will serve only a limited a limited audience. Although at one time their strategies and formats were culturally appropriate, producing explosive growth, today those outdated forms appeal primarily to a small nostalgic segment who may appreciate “that sort of thing.”
 3. A number of our congregations in key urban areas will experience the illusion of growth as rural people move to the city or as city people migrate from dying urban churches to newer, but still traditional, suburban churches. But this will merely consolidate our failures. These “swelling” churches may look successfully short term, even though they make no significant inroads to the unchurched population.
 4. Still other churches will be able to change some, maybe even enough to grow slowly – reaching at least some pockets of unchurched people.
- We see plenty of reason to hope that more and more old churches will change enough to grow significantly by reaching unchurched people. Church watcher Lyle Schaller reports that less than 5% of congregations 25 years or older are growing by evangelism. And the growing 5% have undergone “radical systemic and methodological change.” But the fact

that 5% have changed and adjusted enough to grow, proves that old churches can change. This may be especially true:

- as God renews our focus on word, worship and witness.
 - as God refines our understanding of the message.
 - as we learn more about the culture.
 - as our leadership skills expand
 - as we gain skills in the science of change.
-
- Most important of all: We trust in the God of surprises who made Ezekiel's dry bones dance! The God who himself never changes constantly keeps changing everything. He is changing us as a fellowship. We are becoming more tolerant, more pluralistic, less rigid – "a kinder, gentler people." Renewal is a valid ministry. However, renewal alone is too slow, too limited, and too late to reach all of our ever-changing, rapidly-growing, and pluralistic continent.

Besides renewing "old churches we must begin "new" churches that "look" different. In fact, at this very hour a number of these new churches are on the drawing boards or have already been launched. Let us all pray for these "pioneers of new paradigms" and encourage them as they sail off into uncharted waters.

Now is not the time to throw in the towel. You can teach old dogs new tricks. Believe me. I've seen it. Great days lie ahead.

P.S. We at Hope Network are elated at the overwhelming response from across the continent as registrations roll in for "A Church that Connects," our seminar on "Change" in Dallas, August 21-23. See you there. And bring us your most hopeful stories about healthy change.

1 Lynn Anderson, "An Interview, Part One." *Image*, VII, 3, May-June, 1991, p. 15.

2 Davis, Staley M. *Future Perfect*. Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Reading, Massachusetts, 1987, p. 8.

AfterGlow: Black and White

by Phillip Morrison
August, 1992

The guest preacher had just been introduced and was beginning his sermon when the black man came into the all-white church service. When he started toward an empty seat, one of the ushers stepped up, whispered in the African-American visitor's ear, produced a folding chair, and seated him all alone in the lobby.

The visiting minister was angered by what he saw, puzzled as to why the visiting worshipper would abide such treatment, and upset with himself for not speaking out against such blatant segregation. But he rationalized that maybe he had misinterpreted what he saw; the man for reasons of his own was willing to stay; and a guest speaker should not be rude to his hosts.

How do I know all this? I was that guest preacher, and I have lived for 10 years with the conviction that I should not have allowed the event to pass unchallenged.

America remains two societies – one black and one white – and that is nowhere more evident than in our churches. Much may have changed in the half century since Gunnar Myrdal's monumental study of racism in America, but not much has been corrected. In most communities we have achieved little integration in our churches, and we will make little progress in the future if we just let our sinful nature run its course.

Most church folks probably wouldn't know Richard Price or his novel *Clockers*, the story of black teen cocaine dealers and the white police who do battle with them. A former cocaine addict himself, Price spent many months with drug dealers and cops alike.

In its profile of Price, *Time* magazine described vividly the polarity between the white middle-class officers and black inner-city residents. Price was struck by hostility everywhere he looked, and sought to describe it for his readers: "I wanted to say, 'Look, this is happening in front of your nose, and you didn't see it. You pass these people every day, and you don't know anything about their lives.'"

Time concluded: "Price took the trouble to find out and returned from his voyage of discovery with an overpowering portrait of a grim and neglected world."

Racism is obviously not our only social injustice, but it may be the longest lingering and the most visible. The time for us to take our own voyage of discovery and commit ourselves to change is long overdue.

More than a century ago, David Lipscomb wrote in the *Gospel Advocate* of February 1878: "We believe it is sinful to have two congregations in the same community for persons of separate and distinct races. That race prejudice would cause trouble in the churches we know. It did this in apostolic days. Not once did the apostles suggest that they should form separate congregations

for the different races. But they always admonished them to unity, forbearance, love and brotherhood in Jesus Christ.”

We haven't changed all that much in the 114 years since Lipscomb wrote those words. Neither the inactivity of neglect nor the hyperactivity of ambitious social engineering is working. Maybe we don't know how to change the world – or even the church – but we can change ourselves. We can learn to see all people as brothers and sisters made in the image of God. If we will sow that seed of good will, he will provide the harvest.

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