











# THE MIRROR OF A MOVEMENT

*Henry Seymour Adams*



**THE  
MIRROR  
OF A  
MOVEMENT**

**CHURCHES OF CHRIST**

**AS SEEN THROUGH**

**THE ABILENE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE LECTURESHIP**

**WILLIAM S. BANOWSKY, Ph. D.**

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*to my grandfathers*

**WILL W. SLATER**  
*and*  
**R. H. BANOWSKY**

*who gave their lives to the movement*



## Preface

**T**his book is an essay in understanding. It is an interpretation of the American Restoration movement, history's "greatest religious movement of peculiarly American origin."

But this is not merely a re-telling of the familiar nineteenth-century events which gave birth and greatness to the movement. It is a distinctly twentieth-century account. It is the first serious attempt—and herein rests its justification—to tell the twentieth-century story of the Restoration movement's so-called "right-wing." It deals in depth with the genius of the religious body known as churches of Christ.

What are the churches of Christ? Where did they come from? What do they believe? In answering these questions, this book provides a theological and historical interpretation of what is now the largest communion claiming a Restoration heritage and, hence, the largest church body indigenous to America. It also proposes the argument that within the Restoration family, what some have formerly regarded as the "right wing" appendage must now be reckoned as the representative center.

**I**n 1906, when fellowship was officially severed with the Christian Church, so small and scattered were churches of Christ as to be scarcely measurable in the United States Religious Census. While events of the half century just past have catapulted them into numerical prominence, the causes of their remarkable growth have not been adequately chronicled. In fact, there has been no systematic effort to synthesize their beliefs or to account for their meteoric rise. A profile of their distinguishing characteristics is greatly needed.

But taking the measurements of the militantly autonomous churches of Christ is no small task. They have no creed but the Bible; possess no brotherhood-wide ecclesiasticism; are opposed to legislative assemblies. The most tangible unifying force throughout this century—aside from biblical principles themselves—has been an annual Bible Lectureship at Abilene Christian College. In an effort to get at the very heartbeat of the movement, the speechmaking at this tradition honored Lectureship has been exhaustively examined as the primary source material for this book.

Since the establishment of Abilene Christian College in 1906, the world's largest assemblies among churches of Christ have been staged each "last full week in February" at the Lectureship. More than 6,000 church members now make the annual pilgrimage to the small, west Texas city. Here, then, is one of America's outstanding public address forums which for fifty years has gathered to itself the men who have guided the destiny of the conservative voice of the Restoration.

Unlike denominationalism, the development of churches of Christ has not been steered by conference-table legislation. Its surge has been pulpit-centered. The Lectureship, without becoming a policy making conference, has filled a crucial vacuum by providing a medium for brotherhood-wide fellowship and stimulation. The church has benefited tremendously from the spiritual and intellectual nourishment of this, its chief vehicle for the communication of ideas. In short, the Lectureship has been the most vital pulpit of a pulpit-sparked movement. It has been the vanguard of the church's phenomenal growth.

**B**ut the Lectureship is also—and here is our special thesis—a reliable *mirror* of the very image of the movement. In 46 years of "official" Lectureships, 349 speakers delivered a total of 753 formal lectures. These 349 men, the most able ministers, elders, educators, journalists, and missionaries of

the church, addressed at Abilene the largest and most discerning audiences of their careers. For the Abilene assignment they made their most painstaking preparation. These 753 lectures embody the best thinking of the brotherhood's best thinkers. If churches of Christ are saying anything, they are surely saying it at Abilene. As early as 1923, F. L. Rowe, editor of the *Christian Leader*, wrote:

We believe that these speeches will be treasured representatives of the best products of the Brotherhood. When a man delivers a discourse at the Abilene Lectureship he is bound to give his hearers the best he can produce that it may be perpetuated in their lives and on the printed page.

Our study of these speeches, then, is *idea-centered*. History's significant public utterances inform us not merely in the art of oratory but also serve admirably to shed light on the aspects of the culture of which they are expressions. To know the heart and history of this renowned series, to be acquainted with the men who came to talk and those who came to listen, and above all, to grasp the *ideas* they tested and developed is to touch the threads of thought forming the warp and woof of churches of Christ. The principal ideas woven through more than seven hundred Abilene lectures reveal the actual nature of this movement.

This volume has defined and analyzed the issues and ideas with which the speakers were concerned and interpreted them against the bold backdrop of the historical matrix of which they were a part. Within such categories as the Bible, science and evolution, the Godhead, the plan of salvation, the nature and work of the church, evangelism, Christian education, benevolence, and the Christ-centered life, the convictions of the Abilene lecturers have been analyzed and contrasted with the prevailing thought of America's religious mainstream. The growing pains and controversies, the giant strides of progress as well as the bitter divisions are all reviewed and documented.

Beyond comprising an index into beliefs and attitudes of churches of Christ themselves, this volume seeks to clarify the relevance of the movement to other religious groups. The point of reference unavoidably focuses on the historic movement known as Fundamentalism, the early-century protest to religious modernism. On grounds involving both chronology and theology, one would expect to find the church in the midst of the science-religion controversy which climaxed at the 1925 Scopes "monkey trial." After all, the Fundamentalists—led by Bryan, Machen, Macartney, Sunday, Norris, Riley, Warfield, Gray, Torrey and a host of others—had challenged Fosdick and company over biblical principles similar in kind to those upon which the brotherhood had recently divorced from the Christian Church.

The proximity of the Fundamentalist movement to the birth of churches of Christ as an independent body; the two movements' similarly conservative doctrinal views; and the establishment of the Winona-type Lectureship at Abilene within a scant fifteen months of the formation of the World's Christian Fundamentals Association, would tempt the hurried historian to regard the church as a young and rising tributary emptying its fundamentalistic tide into the protest flooding the American mainstream.

But such was not the case. Churches of Christ were no organic part of the Fundamentalist movement. Yet strangely, they have been more faithful to the cause of conservative Christianity than the Fundamentalist denominations themselves. Chagrined by the subsequent assessments of history, the old-line denominations have abandoned the bizarre movement and many of the theological tenets for which it stood. But churches of Christ, according to one of the clearest conclusions of this study, have undergone no major theological shifts since 1900. While answerable for none of Fundamentalism's absurdities and shouldering none of its embarrassment, they have kept alive its insistence upon biblical

authority. Though by no direct line of descent from Dayton, Tennessee, they are now the rightful heirs of valid fundamental Christianity.

What a paradox! That one of the nation's largest doctrinally conservative bodies at mid-century—2,000,000 members and 16,000 congregations—was in no way implicated in the century's loudest conservative protest. Why was the church's development unrelated to this religious phenomenon with which it logically should have been thoroughly entangled? The answer comprises within itself a long over-due contribution to restoration literature.

This book unfolds into three parts. *The Making of the Lectureship* traces the details of founding and development and presents the context in which the Lectureship message may be clearly interpreted. *The Message of the Lectureship* embraces that speechmaking which portrays the doctrinal foundation upon which the movement rests. *The Meaning of the Lectureship* focuses on the lectures which translate that message into practical terms. It presents the impact of the Lectureship upon the church's program of work.

**T**he pages of parts two and three are teeming with copious Lectureship quotations, many of which are longer than would ordinarily be acceptable. But they will enable the reader to evaluate the ideas as presented in the speakers' own style and context without the loss of force which paraphrasing would inevitably incur. In addition, many of the volumes of the Abilene lectures are virtually inaccessible and any attempt to master all of them one at a time is impractical. Hence, this compilation with its generous direct quotations is a service to the reader.

Thorough footnote references have been cited and summarized at the conclusion of each chapter. For this reason, the accumulative bibliography has been omitted from its traditional position at the end of the book. All quoted



materials have been acknowledged and the bibliographic references may be easily examined in relation to the chapter to which they are pertinent.

The important *Appendix* presenting the Lectureship speakers and years of appearance is the first such listing ever to be compiled. An exhaustive reference *Index* has been prepared to enhance the value of this work as a resource volume.

Finally, I should like to express formal appreciation to Dr. James H. McBath of the University of Southern California, whose scholarly guidance and refreshing convictions regarding the place of public address in *the history of ideas* gave to this book both its inception and fruition. I must also acknowledge a special debt of gratitude to President M. Norvel Young of Pepperdine College, to the late Dr. Forrest L. Seal of the University of Southern California, and to President Don. H. Morris and much of the faculty of Abilene Christian College for invaluable counsel and encouragement.

Most of all, I am indebted to my wife, Gay, for the love and companionship which have supplied, during these years of writing, the reason.

William S. Banowsky

January, 1965





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PART I

THE MAKING  
OF THE LECTURESHIP

*When we build, let us think that we build forever. Let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for. And let us think, as we lay stone on stone, a time is to come when these stones are held sacred, because our hands have touched them—and that they will say as they look upon the labor and wrought substance of them: See—this our fathers did for us.*

*—John Ruskin*



# 1

## The Restoration Movement Gets a Mirror

Six hundred years before Christ, Daniel the prophet predicted: "And the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed."<sup>1</sup> For a thousand years and more God's work, in Christ, had been accomplished. Through a thousand years and more the kingdom had flourished—and virtually vanished. But though afflicted, the kingdom was never destroyed. Then the strange, and tragic, and thrilling events of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries blended themselves together to make it all possible. And ultimately, with the dawning of the nineteenth century, came the glorious restoration of allegiance to the kingdom—and the King! These events, all of them, were behind the birth of what, at first glance, might appear to be merely history's "greatest religious movement of peculiarly American origin."<sup>2</sup> The movement with which this story is concerned is that, of course. But it is a great deal more.



*The Restoration Movement*

As the nineteenth century dawned, all of these events were in readiness and the stage was set. Recently gained religious liberty, the multiplying sects of a divided Christendom, and the rapid expansion of the frontier were among the more immediate factors which encouraged the rise of the unionistic, non-creedal, Bible-centered movement. With incredible simultaneity, distressed preachers from many denominations up and down the Eastern seaboard grew dissatisfied with the acrid fruits of Protestantism and began to plead for a return—for a restoration of simple New Testament Christianity. The two fundamental principles that guided their similar but separate efforts were: that all believers in Christ should be unified in one body, and that the only possible basis for such unity was the acceptance of the Bible as the absolute authority in religion. Theirs was a genuinely ecumenical plea long before the world came to know the meaning of the word.

The religious upheaval which issued from their vigorous proclamation of this plea is often termed the American Restoration movement. While the movement has yet failed to unify Christendom, it has brought into existence the two largest church bodies indigenous to America—the churches of Christ and the Christian Church. More significantly, through 175 of history's most electrifying years, the movement has not forsaken its birthright. It continues today to serve and seek for its ideal—New Testament Christianity.

But back to the story. In 1807, when Thomas Jefferson was president of a nation so young and wobbly that no one was sure it could survive, a brilliant Irishman named Thomas Campbell migrated to the new world. Because of the timely and dynamic leadership he and his son Alexander provided, they are often considered founders of the Restoration movement.<sup>3</sup> The awakening was well under way in America, however, before the Campbells arrived from Ireland to favor it

with their leadership. James O'Kelley, in Virginia and North Carolina; Elias Smith and Abner Jones, in New England; and Barton W. Stone, in Kentucky were but a few of those who had announced restoration intentions well before the Campbells set foot on American soil.

The most significant movement to anticipate the Campbells was initiated when Barton Stone left the Presbyterian Church in 1802, and, with four other Kentucky preachers, formed the Springfield Presbytery. In less than a year, it occurred to this group that the very existence of the presbytery "savored of the party spirit" and weakened their plea for freedom from the rule of human organization. On June 28, 1804, Stone and his colleagues issued "The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery." It urged the right of self government for each congregation, protested against religious division and party splits, and insisted that the Bible be accepted as the sole authority in religion. The document declared:

We will that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large; for there is but one Body and one Spirit, even as we are called in one Hope of our calling.<sup>4</sup>

While Stone staged a series of fervent camp meetings attracting thousands of Kentucky followers, Thomas Campbell arrived from Ireland and formed the Christian Association of Washington.<sup>5</sup> He delivered to this group in 1809 the famous Declaration and Address, now considered the theological Magna Charta of the Restoration movement. It announced that, in faith and practice, all religious activity must date back to the "founding of the church on the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection." In advancing this position, Campbell adopted the slogan: "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent." The motto was destined to become the battle cry of the movement. It was also in 1809 that Alexander Campbell joined his father in America, and soon became the movement's most able leader.

Despite difficulties of travel and communication, the separate streams of dissatisfaction criss-crossing the frontier inevitably became aware of one another, and began to merge into one determinate river of restoration effort. By 1802, the labors of Smith and Jones in New England and the work of O'Kelley in Virginia and North Carolina had united in purpose with Stone's large following. Walter Scott became the youngest member of the restoration foursome which, including the two Campbells and Stone, is given credit for laying the foundation of the American movement. Beginning in the 1820's, Scott's vigorous promotional and popular evangelistic appeals provided a powerful compliment for Alexander Campbell's incisive intellect and theological acumen. In 1831, the disciples of Stone gathered in Lexington, Kentucky, with the Campbell-Scott forces to explore the possibilities of a mighty merger. "A complete union occurred resulting in a large church body frequently called the "Disciples of Christ." "Racoon" John Smith, a colorful restoration preacher, gave the address just prior to the meeting's final "amen."

Let us, then, my brethren, be no longer Campbellites or Stoneites, new lights or old lights, or any other kind of lights, but let us come to the Bible alone, as the only book in the world that can give us all the light we need.<sup>7</sup>

A few years earlier Alexander Campbell had begun publication of an influential periodical, *The Christian Baptist*. As had been true two centuries earlier with the Reformation movement, its American counterpart, the Restoration movement, was also to fulfill its purposes largely through the medium of the printing press. Campbell's potent pen matched the combined voices of hundreds of frontier evangelists as the agitation for reform was spread throughout the country. In 1830 the name of his paper was changed to *The Millennial Harbinger*. During the next forty years this publication formed the backbone of the movement's literature.

Due largely to the absence of centralized organization, the disciples were one of the few religious bodies to avoid severe schism over the issues of the Civil War. In fact, their remarkable prosperity through this era was cited by Sweet as proof that Christian unity can not only exist but is perhaps made more accessible without the formulation of any creedal system.<sup>8</sup> In the census of 1860 the disciples numbered 225,000 members in 2,070 congregations, seventh in the nation in overall size but first in rate of growth.

### *Dark Clouds Of Division*

The post-war period, however, saw this bright outlook of uninterrupted progress quickly darken. By 1865, just as the ascending power of the disciples' unity plea gave genuine promise of earning the ear of all Christendom, the ugly head of dissension rose to cripple and quiet it. Dark clouds of division were cast over the church concerning issues which some regarded as matters of biblical faith and others considered matters of personal opinion. The two tangible points of tension, both involving methods, concerned inter-congregational cooperation through a missionary society; and the use of instrumental music in worship. The real basis of disagreement was rooted in a differing attitude toward the interpretation of scripture. The more conservative disciples contended that endorsement of the missionary society and use of a mechanical instrument in worship were forthright refusals to respect the authority of the scriptures' silence. Conversely, the more liberal body of brethren maintained that such matters were clearly in the realm of discretion and represented the freedom allowed in non-essentials. Tolbert Fanning and David Lipscomb, through the pages of the Gospel Advocate, defended the conservative position; while Isaac Errett, editor of the Christian Standard, and J. H. Garrison, editor of the Christian-Evangelist, represented the more liberal point of view.

For a time each faction claimed to be following the original platform set forth by Campbell and Stone, but the deadly

scythe of division had begun its full swath. While the separation was at first gradual—in some quarters virtually imperceptible—by the turn of the century the lines of division were sharply drawn. The liberal branch, its budding ecclesiastical machinery providing considerable self-awareness, was coming to be known as the Christian Church. The de facto identification around which the militantly autonomous congregations of the right wing found themselves unifying was the term "churches of Christ." Finally in 1906 the movement founded for unity and formerly regarded as one brotherhood was officially divided. That year the United States Government Religious Census listed the churches of Christ as a religious body separate from the Christian Church.

J. W. Shepherd conducted the survey and compiled the figures which reflected the numerical strength of churches of Christ. He discovered a total membership of only 159,658 worshipping in 2,649 congregations scattered throughout thirty-three states, with heaviest concentration in the South and Southwest. Almost half of the churches were located in two states—631 in Tennessee and 627 in Texas. The congregations met, for the most part, in small, modest facilities, and more than one-fourth of them owned no building at all. The Gospel Advocate in Tennessee, the Firm Foundation in Texas, and the Christian Leader in Ohio were the periodicals which furnished the new movement's journalistic cohesion. To the scattered local congregations, detached from one another and disillusioned by the recent dissension, these leading journals provided the much needed media of extracongregational contact. But the combined circulation of all three was less than 7,000. In short, the 1906 census report which first took the measurements of the churches of Christ was not particularly impressive. And there was no shortage of prognosticators who claimed to see in the meager figures the first definite signs of the withering demise of the right wing.

### *A City Set On a Hill*

But birth rather than death was the mood of the move-

ment. While 1906 was a year of formalized division, it was also a year of fresh new beginnings. The harvest season of strife was also a planting time—a time for the sowing of momentous seeds in the movement's conservative soil destined to flourish into another kind of harvest.

As has been true with most religious schisms, the disciples' shipwreck saw most of the progressive and formally educated minds list to the left. At this time of official division seven small and struggling schools were being supported by members of the churches of Christ. They were the Nashville Bible School in Tennessee, Western Bible and Literary School in Missouri, Potter Bible College in Kentucky, and Thorp Spring Christian College, Lockney Christian College, Gunter Bible College and Southwestern Christian College in Texas. A total of but seventy-three teachers was required to staff all seven institutions which were, both academically and economically, extremely unsteady. They actually were not salvaged by the conservatives from the liberal storm but rather were hastily erected as a protective sheltering from it. With the exception of the Nashville Bible School, all were extremely short lived<sup>9</sup>

The liberals moved the institution originally founded at Thorp Spring to Waco, and then to Fort Worth where it developed into Texas Christian University. They also retained control of historic Bethany and Hiram colleges and Transylvania University. By 1900, they controlled thirty-five major institutions of higher learning, including Drake University and Butler College, with eight thousand students and assets exceeding six million dollars. The narrowing of the circle of fellowship precipitously narrowed the reservoir of educational leadership available to the conservatives. The educated upper echelon was siphoned off into the Christian Church. In one generation's time, the mantle of brotherhood leadership slipped from men like J. W. McGarvey, brilliant Princeton-trained language scholar, to men like J. D. Tant and G. H. P. Showalter in Texas, and John T. Hinds and N. B. Hardeman

in Tennessee, who though strong and able men, were no academic match for McGarvey.

Though not all of its sons had been equally blessed, Christian education nurtured and strengthened the restoration cause in general. As a result, the stamp of schools and colleges had been indelibly impressed on both conservatives and liberals. Alexander Campbell had very early stressed the relationship between education and the restoration hope: "We indeed as a people devoted to the Bible cause, and to the Bible alone, for Christian faith and manners, and discipline, have derived much advantage from literature and science, from schools and colleges. Of all people in the world we ought then to be, according to our means, the greatest patrons of schools and colleges."<sup>10</sup> The early influence of Campbell's Bethany College had helped form the very roots of the restoration—both its right and left roots. In 1906, therefore, a number of preachers who preferred the fellowship of churches of Christ were convinced that the cause could be most effectively advanced through Bible schools and colleges. Among these were young men like H. Leo Boles, Jesse P. Sewell, A. W. Young, A. B. Barret, R. C. Bell, Batsell Baxter, C. R. Nichol, W. F. Ledlow, Joseph Yarbrough, J. N. Armstrong, B. F. Rhodes, and Charles H. Roberson.

In December of 1905 Sewell invited Barret, a former classmate at Nashville Bible School, to San Angelo, Texas to discuss possibilities for the establishment of a new Bible school. When local interest proved insufficient, Barret journeyed up to Abilene where he proposed to church members the establishment of "a high-grade school in Abilene, if they would stand by him."<sup>11</sup> Colonel J. W. Childers furnished land for the school at a reduced price, and the new institution was named "Childers' Classical Institute."<sup>12</sup> The charter, which was drawn up in the winter of 1906, announced the "establishment and maintenance of a college for the advancement of education in which the arts, science, languages, and the Holy Scriptures shall always be taught . . ."<sup>13</sup> The charter

required that the trustees be members "of a congregation of the church of Christ which takes the New Testament as its only sufficient rule of faith, worship, and practice."<sup>14</sup> This stipulation reflected the position of the school's founders on the real issue involved in the 1906 separation.

In 1912, after Barret, H. C. Darden, R. L. Whiteside, and James F. Cox had served brief terms as president, the board selected Jesse P. Sewell of San Angelo to lead the school. "As long as the walls of Abilene Christian College stand," historians of the institution were later to remark, "the name of Sewell will inevitably be remembered in connection with the school."<sup>15</sup> Sewell was not only the preserver and developer of Abilene Christian College, but was also the chief architect of the annual Bible Lectureship. During the twelve years of his presidency, the school grew from an unaccredited academy offering only preparatory work, to a senior college recognized by the state's accrediting agencies as an "A plus" four-year institution. The enrollment during his last year of service was five hundred twenty-five, with six hundred registering the year immediately following. Sewell also initiated many of the traditional extracurricular activities of the college, including a program which he called in 1918 an annual Bible Lectureship.<sup>16</sup>

In September, 1924, Batsell Baxter replaced Sewell as president. By 1925, more students were wanting to attend the college than could be accommodated, and it was apparent that the campus would have to be moved if the college were to maintain its rate of growth. On January 28, 1929, after negotiations had been completed to move the campus to a new site, the administration building on the old campus burned, destroying all but a few student records and five thousand volumes from the library. Much more serious, however, than this loss by fire was the trauma caused by the economic depression of 1929. "Survival" financial campaigns, desperation loans, and personal sacrifice by faculty and staff saved the school from disaster during the bleak hours of the depres-



sion. On June 1, 1932, Baxter resigned to take the presidency of his alma mater, David Lipscomb College. The board elevated James F. Cox from Dean to President, and appointed Don H. Morris to the newly created office of vice president. Walter H. Adams was named Dean of Students. The first few years which this new administration faced were perhaps the most difficult years of the school's history. In February, 1934, with the announcement that Mr. and Mrs. John A. Hardin of Burkburnett, Texas, had assured the continued existence of the college with a gift of \$160,000, Abilene Christian College's "time of greatest crisis" was at an end. Morris was named to succeed Cox in 1940 and under his leadership the institution has grown in stature until it is now regarded as one of the nation's truly outstanding independent liberal arts colleges.

### *The Preachers' Meetings*

The seeds that blossomed into the Bible lectures of 1918 were actually sown during the very first months of the school's existence. From its founding the college immediately became a rallying center for conservative Christianity and a focal point of brotherhood activity. In January of 1907, George A. Klingman, "one of the prominent preachers of the brotherhood," came to the campus at the invitation of President Barret to deliver a special series of lectures. Though primarily designed for the benefit of the student body, a number of preachers in the Abilene vicinity attended the sessions.

The series featuring Klingman was so well received that the following year Barret expanded it in an effort to attract more visitors to the campus. He called the expanded program "a short course in the Bible." Darden perpetuated these winter programs, and by 1909 the idea of a special offering by the college along the lines of Bible instruction, and open to all, was crystalizing into a fixed pattern. That year the Tuesday, January 26, *Abilene Reporter-News* stated: "The church workers and preachers training school is moving along nicely."<sup>17</sup>

The two-year administration of R. L. Whiteside, who replaced Darden in 1909, marked a significant step in the evolution of the annual lecture week. An outstanding preacher, Whiteside was also hired, at a salary of \$12.50 per week, as minister of the local church. During the winter of 1910 he took measures to transform the loosely structured "church workers training school" into a more formal "preachers' meeting." The 1910 college catalogue reports that C. R. Nichol and Price Billingsley, two well-known preachers, taught during January and February in a "special Bible reading and training course."<sup>18</sup> This "preachers' meeting" attracted approximately fifty evangelists who assembled to hear the lectures of Nichol and Billingsley and to discuss problems related to their work. From the first, these "preachers' meetings" also provided an opportunity for students to meet and hear distinguished church leaders.

The college was heavily in debt when the practical Sewell became president in 1912. He recognized that if it were to survive, a wider scope of the church constituency would have to assist with its direction and support. His predecessors had viewed the institution as a private enterprise to be owned and operated as a business venture of the college administration. Sewell moved to give it to the brotherhood. He conceived of the "preachers' meeting" perfected during the Whiteside administration as an ideal avenue for communicating the basic aims and needs of the college to the brotherhood. Consequently, during his first months in office Sewell and his aides took steps to make the 1913 assembly the most elaborate ever staged on the campus. Nonetheless, the event was still billed simply as a "preachers' meeting."

Scheduled during the first week in February, the "preachers' meeting" boasted a list of well-known special speakers: Batsell Baxter of Corsicana, A. J. McCarty of Killeen, C. R. Nichol of Clifton, G. H. P. Showalter of Austin, Early Arceaux of Fort Worth, W. M. Davis of San Angelo, and R. C. Bell of Thorp Spring. A decree issued February 11, 1913, by

the Texas Railroad Commission allowing "one-half fare for clergymen" encouraged a good attendance of out-of-town preachers.<sup>19</sup> Although some sources term the 1913 meeting the "actual beginning" of the Lectureship, it was more accurately a major step toward the evolution of the annual Bible lecture week first programmed in 1918.<sup>20</sup> The programs from 1914 through 1917 were primarily designed for the college students and evangelists residing in the immediate Abilene vicinity.

### *The First Lecture Week*

The phrase "Bible lecture week," destined to become a household expression in the brotherhood, first appeared rather modestly in the catalogue for 1917-1918. Observing the "preachers' meetings" since 1913, Sewell had become convinced of their latent power as a forum at which the movement's most able men could teach New Testament Christianity to the key church leaders in Texas. And from the school's point of view, he saw the meetings as a unique opportunity to attract large numbers of potential supporters to the campus. As he expressed it: "I wanted them to come and see for themselves what we are trying to do at the college."<sup>21</sup>

Hence, "an imposing array of speakers" was scheduled for the week of January 7-11, 1918. In December of 1917 thousands of invitations were mailed to the patrons and friends of the school, and to all congregations in west Texas. Students were urged to write their parents and invite them to the campus for the week. In building the program, Sewell hoped to interest the general church membership as well as the preachers of the area. The morning prior to the Lectureship's opening, the Abilene newspaper reported: "The program consists of a number of splendid subjects with equally as many well-known and capable speakers. All of the speakers are out-of-town except two . . . ."<sup>22</sup>

Dr. George A. Klingman of the Abilene faculty opened the series on Monday, January 7, with a 7:00 p.m. lecture,

"Destructive Higher Criticism." The program, featuring morning, afternoon, and evening lectures, concluded on Friday, January 11. While Klingman, who also discussed "Verbal Inspiration," explored theological issues, most of the speakers confined their remarks to such practical aspects of church work as: "Organization of the New Testament Church," by A. B. Barret; "The Work of the Evangelist," by W. G. Cypert; "Public Worship," by T. W. Phillips; "Church Discipline," by Liff Sanders; "Church Finance," by O. E. Phillips; "The Country Church Problem," by Tice Elkins; and "The Large Town Church Problem," by Ben West. Completing the program were special addresses on "Missions," by C. C. Klingman; "Christian Education," by H. E. Speck; and "The Three States of Man," by H. W. Wyre.<sup>23</sup>

The 1918 audience was the largest which had assembled at the college during its twelve-year history. The local newspaper described the keynote lecture:

Interest is running high at the Abilene Christian College Bible Lecture course. Some of the ablest speakers in the city were present, and pronounced the address on "Destructive Higher Criticism" by Dr. George A. Klingman, one of the greatest ever delivered in this city. Dr. Klingman held his audience, which more than filled the auditorium, spellbound from start to finish.<sup>24</sup>

Later in the week the newspaper reported large crowds in attendance for morning, afternoon, and evening sessions. Toward the close of the series, however, a traditional harassment, the west Texas winter weather, began to plague this first annual Lectureship. The last evening's lectures had to be canceled as the *Reporter-News* stated that the area was "in the grip of one of the most severe blizzards in history. Two inches of snow is driven by high north winds. The temperature at 7:00 p.m. was nine degrees above zero and still falling at half a degree an hour."<sup>25</sup> Despite these adverse conditions, Sewell announced that the same type of program would be scheduled for 1919, and that it would be called the second an-

nual Bible lecture week. Stating that the Lectureship would be a regular feature on the college calendar, he summarized the 1918 event:

Not a low note was sounded the entire week. The entire faculty was very greatly pleased with the outcome of the course. Every program was witnessed by a good audience, even to overflowing part of the time. However, the program attendance fell slightly when the blizzard arrived. The last program had to be omitted when the speaker failed to arrive being detained by the weather. The students, however, were inspired and instructed, and many visitors were present from towns all over the state.<sup>26</sup>

Before the snows of the 1918 winter had melted, Sewell launched plans to improve the 1919 program. Some of the faculty urged scheduling of the series during the spring of the year in order to avoid the wrath of the winter season. But Sewell disagreed, contending that the winter months provided "an ideal time for the three classes of people most interested in the lectures." He argued that a relatively relaxed winter school calendar allowed teachers and students an opportunity to attend the sessions. There would also be no "gospel meeting conflict" so that the preachers could be present. Church schedules were much less active in the winter months. Finally, he reasoned, "the farmers of the Texas plains would be able to leave their fields to attend a winter program, whereas a fall or spring Lectureship would interfere with planting and harvesting."<sup>27</sup>

After much discussion, the 1919 series was scheduled six weeks later in the year than the 1918 program had been conducted. The dates were fixed for the last full week in February, Sunday through Friday, and Sewell inaugurated the "principal speaker" tradition by inviting G. Dallas Smith to deliver a series of five addresses on the study and interpretation of the Bible. George A. Klingman and H. E. Speck, both of whom had lectured in 1918, were re-scheduled for the 1919 series. The rest of the program included M. D. Gano, A. R. Holton, Joseph U. Yarborough, Cled E. Wallace, F. L. Rowe, F. L.

Young, John Straiton, Batsell Baxter, G. H. P. Showalter, and F. B. Shepherd. Sewell summarized the program's purpose:

This week was inaugurated for the purpose of deepening and strengthening the teaching and influence of the college with its students. The service proved to be so rich that we decided to invite our patrons and friends to be our guests during the time to enjoy it with us. Large numbers have accepted this invitation and our memories are filled with sweet association and communion. In this, the service has been greatly expanded.<sup>28</sup>

If there were ever any question about the permanence of the Abilene Christian College Lectureship, all doubt was removed in February of 1919. The audience was among the largest ever assembled in the interest of the American Restoration movement. Visitors were present from all parts of Texas and many other states. A news headline shouted: "BIG CROWDS, FINE ADDRESSES, GOOD TIMES AT ACC," and the opening day activities were etched in historic terms:

Sunday, February 23, was an epochal day in the history of Abilene Christian College. When the history of this institution is written, the day will be honored as one of the greatest occasions for the forward looking friends of the college. The auditorium was filled to capacity for Judge Gano's address . . . Many members of the bar association in Abilene heard Gano's address. All pronounced the services as being highly profitable.<sup>29</sup>

By the time plans were formulated for the 1920 session, the Lectureship had achieved the type of program that it was to perpetuate for more than four decades. Resting securely upon the foundation of thirteen years of midwinter "preachers' meetings," the first two Abilene Christian College Bible lecture weeks served official notice of the birth of a new American public address platform. Even more significant, the loosely-knit churches of Christ, still dazed and disillusioned by the disciples' division, had now discovered their crucial rallying center—soon to become a national forum to reflect and defend the distinguishing features of their faith. Or to put it more succinctly, the *movement* had found its *mirror*.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Daniel 2:44

<sup>2</sup>James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1962), p. 35.

<sup>3</sup>Willard L. Sperry, *Religion in America* (New York: the Macmillian Company, 1946), p. 81. Also see William Warren Sweet, *Makers of Christianity*, Sweet affirms, "in a real sense, Thomas, the father, is the founder of the movement which Alexander, the son, developed and carried on." p. 73.

<sup>4</sup>Vergilus Ferm, (ed.), *The American Church of the Protestant Heritage* (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1953), p. 421.

<sup>5</sup>Sweet described Stone's Cane Ridge Kentucky camp meetings as "the greatest of all the single phases of the Western revival." William Warren Sweet, *The Story of Religion in America* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930), p. 330.

<sup>6</sup>Earl Irwin West, *The Search for the Ancient Order* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1946), pp. 1-35.

<sup>7</sup>John Augustus Williams, *Life of Elder John Smith* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1956), p. 454.

<sup>8</sup>William Warren Sweet, *Our American Churches* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1924), p. 111.

<sup>9</sup>For a discussion of the rise and fall of these early schools see M. Norvel Young, *A History of Colleges Established and Controlled by Members of the Church of Christ* (Kansas City: The Old Paths Book Club, 1949).

<sup>10</sup>Alexander Campbell, "Education," *Millennial Harbinger*, Series One, VII (1836), p. 377.

<sup>11</sup>Childers' Classical Institute *Catalogue*, 1906-1907 (Abilene, Texas), p. 7.

<sup>12</sup>Charter of Childers' Classical Institute. In its beginning the school was informally referred to as Abilene Christian College. In 1912 this name was officially used in the college catalogue and encouraged in general usage by President Sewell. However, the technical name remained Childers' Classical Institute until the board voted to have it changed January 11, 1919. "Minutes," January 11, 1919.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>"Charter of Childers' Classical Institute," as quoted in Board of Trustees "minutes," November 3, 1906.

<sup>15</sup>Don H. Morris and Max Leach, *Like Stars Shining Brightly* (Abilene: Abilene Christian College Press, 1953), p. 111.

<sup>16</sup>Mrs. E. W. McMillian, "Traditions of Abilene Christian College," Unpublished article, April 19, 1934. "Beginning formally in 1918 an annual Bible Lectureship during the last week in February has been conducted by the college. Outstanding church leaders and preachers are invited to deliver

messages on Bible themes. Since 1922, these lectures have been published." (Actually, however, the 1918 lectures were held in January, rather than February, and the first lectures were published in 1919, rather than 1922.)

<sup>17</sup>*Abilene Reporter-News*, January 26, 1909, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup>Childers' Classical Institute Catalogue, 1909-1910, p. 7. A number of sources incorrectly refer to this program of 1910 as "the first lecture program" or the "beginning of the annual series."

<sup>19</sup>*Abilene Reporter-News*, February 24, 1913. The Texas and Pacific Railroad which ran right by the old campus and stopped within a mile of the school, was inextricably linked with the large Lectureship attendance during the platform's early years.

<sup>20</sup>Morris and Leach state: "This February of 1913 is usually marked as the actual beginning of Abilene Christian College's annual Bible Lectureship, though the seeds for it, in the special Bible classes and lectures, were sown during the first winter of the life of the school." *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>21</sup>Jesse P. Sewell, personal interview, October 21, 1961.

<sup>22</sup>*Abilene Reporter-News*, January 6, 1918, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup>*Abilene Reporter-News*, January 7, 1918. Judge W. B. Lewis and Tice Elkins could not appear because of "family sickness." They were replaced by J. A. Lawson and Ben West, respectively. *Abilene Reporter-News*, January 10, 1918.

<sup>24</sup>*Abilene Reporter-News*, January 8, 1918, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup>*Abilene Reporter-News*, January 11, 1918, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>*Abilene Reporter-News*, January 13, 1918, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup>Jesse P. Sewell, personal interview, October 23, 1961.

<sup>28</sup>*Abilene Christian College Bible Lectures*, 1919, p. 5. The published lectures for each year will hereafter be referred to simply as Lectures. On the matter of scheduling, it should be noted that the "last full week in February" has been used each year since 1919, except for 1962 and 1963, when the tradition was temporarily interrupted. The date was changed from the last full week in February to the week in which April 20 falls. The old nemesis, "bad weather," was listed as the chief reason for the change of date. The program was returned "permanently" to the February tradition in 1964.

<sup>29</sup>*Abilene Reporter-News*, February 24, 1919, p. 1.





## Churches of Christ and the Mainstream

“Perhaps at no time in its American development,” wrote Arthur M. Schlesinger, “has the path of Christianity been so sorely beset with pitfalls and perils as in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.”<sup>1</sup> As the new century approached, the American Restoration movement had no corner on the market of schismatic misery. The bold pronouncements of science and scholarship appeared to impeach the validity of the Bible itself. A mass epidemic of spiritual doubt was sweeping across Christendom infecting, to some degree, every religious organization in the nation.

### *The Science-Religion Controversy*

As might be anticipated, the icy fingers of doubt first seized the academic precincts and theological centers. But the infection quickly spread to the circumference, afflicting a multitude of practicing preachers and earnest but skeptical occupiers of the pews. To the irreligious and unchurched the doubt came as welcomed confirmation to long held suspicions. But

to the believer whose life had been explained in terms of complete reliance upon the Bible as God's inerrant decree, the doubt was agonizing. "At the heart of it," Walter Lippmann moaned, "are moments of blank misgiving in which he finds that the civilization of which he is a part leaves a dusty taste in his mouth. He may be very busy with many things, but he discovers one day that he is no longer sure they are worth doing. He finds it hard to believe that doing any one thing is better than doing any other thing, or, in fact, that it is better than doing nothing at all. It occurs to him that it is a great deal of trouble to live."<sup>2</sup>

To the once simple faith of millions the doubt posed strange new anxieties and grotesque, unthinkable possibilities. Could Wellhausen and his breed really be right? If so, the Bible was clearly amiss in the field of history, geology, and cosmology. And if untrustworthy there, could it be trusted as a rule of religious faith and practice. Lippman called the spiritual nightmare the first age "in the history of mankind when the circumstances of life conspired with the intellectual habits of the time to render any fixed and authoritative belief incredible to large masses of men."<sup>3</sup> But those perplexed by the consequences of professional irreligion were not nearly so frightened as those whose religious profession was riddled with doubt. And from curious-minded little boys persuing their first biology text, to the sophisticated clergymen digesting Lyman Abbott's *Theology of an Evolutionist*, even folks with considerable religion were suddenly plagued by grave suspicions about the very book of religion. Yes, even suspicions about the very God of religion.<sup>4</sup>

As the twentieth century turned, the disciples were not then, to grossly understate the case, the only segment of Christendom to groan and bleed in the futile attempt to keep the peace between "things new and old." In fact, the breach within the restoration tributary was virtually smothered and obscured by a mighty tidal wave of turbulence within the mainstream of Christian thought. Fifty years of cataclysmic scientific change had honed sharp the edge of the theologi-

cal axe which now threatened to rend asunder Christendom itself. By 1900 the intensity of the strife had reached the breaking point. The changes and threats, the doubts and suspicions, the groaning and bleeding, were set to explode into a full scale theological war between conservatives and liberals, sometimes called the science-religion controversy. And the violent controversy spawned an organized militant reaction within the mainstream of American Protestantism known historically as the Fundamentalist movement.

For more than half a century the determined discoveries of science and philosophy had been fashioning the battlefield. Although the sixteenth century scientific revolution furnished the momentum, and Lyell's *The Principles of Geology* drew, in 1830, some early rounds of fire, the real vanguard of the fight was Charles Darwin's 1859 publication of *The Origin of Species*. The public sensation which it immediately stirred in England was not duplicated in America, but an ultimate showdown was unavoidable.

The Darwinian theory appeared to initiate impeachment proceedings against God himself. From the first, however, there were numerous efforts to temper the theory so that it and God could live in the same world together. The Harvard botanist Aza Gray, a friend of Darwin's who had examined an advance copy of *The Origin of Species*, was the first to interpret evolution as God's method in creation—the purposes of providence unfolded on the installment plan.<sup>5</sup> Across the Atlantic, Herbert Spencer, from a background of physics rather than biology, had circulated his own concept of evolution independent of Darwin. In an 1857 essay, "Progress, Its Laws and Causes," he enunciated as an equivalent of Darwin's "natural selection," the theory of "survival of the fittest."<sup>6</sup> John Fiske, Spencer's leading American disciple, was influential in the efforts to prove that this "survival" theory eliminated the sting of blind chance from evolution. But the 1871 appearance of Darwin's *The Descent of Man*, made clear his contention that man was only one of the many species of animals, a species which might in time be surpassed, and which would def-

initely, like all others, suffer eventual extinction. The issue was clear. If Darwinism were true, traditional biblical theology was false. The Christian world braced itself for the oncoming storm.

In Germany, a school of theologians, earlier influenced by Kant and Hegel and then later by Schleiermacher, became immediately entranced in the spell of the evolutionary hypothesis and the empirical method of modern science. They proceeded at once to reconstruct biblical theology accordingly. Their approach was a devastating tool of scholarship called higher criticism. Processed and perfected at such institutions as Bauer's Tübingen School, the method summarily reduced much of the Bible to myth and legend.

While the tempo of Darwinian reaction was delayed in America by the coming of the Civil War, by 1875 its prestige had mushroomed to colossal dimensions. The awesome image of science and its religious off-spring, the German technique of textual criticism, found strong allies among the Protestant clergy and theological faculties. All informed men of religion agreed that the questions posed by evolution and by higher criticism were dramatically antagonistic to orthodox theology. The great national, as distinct from denominational, division issued from the two sharply divergent convictions regarding the removal of the antagonism. In many intellectual circles, harmony was thought possible only by renovating and remodeling the archaic doctrines of the Bible. Thus Christianity could be made more compatible with science and contemporary to the wonderful new age of test tubes.

The modernists, therefore, had a real sense of mission. To the leaders of the liberal cause true Christianity would not be destroyed, but actually saved, by an honest trimming away of biblical fat by the unbiased blade of scholarship. The truths of science could not be ignored. These truths did not destroy God, the liberals contended, but made him relevant to the modern world. Washington Gadden, Henry Fairchild Osborn, Lyman Abbott, Shailer Matthews, Kirsopp Lake, Her-

bert L. Willett, A. C. McGiffert, Walter Rauschenbusch, Gerald Birney Smith, Harry Emerson Fosdick and Clarence Darrow were but a few of the American voices which plead for a departure from what was termed the impossibilities of bibliolatry and orthodox theology. Though they often disagreed with one another, the modernists concurred that a vital Christianity would not survive if confined to the straight jacket of first century mythology.

As the Bible became suspect, the mind of man was substituted as the final court of appeal. Many cardinal doctrines of classical Christianity appeared to be headed for the ash heaps of history. In a sense, every vestige of the supernatural was abandoned. The verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Bible were vehemently rejected. God was relieved of any concreteness or definite personality. The virgin birth and the unique diety of Christ were denied. Other traditional tenets of the faith—the validity of the miracles, the resurrection of Christ, his second coming, the literalness of heaven and hell—all were openly indicted and judged as unfit for the new theology of the twentieth century. These drastic doctrinal alterations inevitably affected the concept of the church and its role in the world. Evangelistic urgency and personal redemption were translated into programs of social reform and institutions for human progress.

### *The Fundamentalist Movement*

The conservatives, meanwhile, had neither capitulated nor gone to sleep. Not by a long shot. An army of stunned clergymen and horrified lay members rose to protest. Hues and cries of outrage were heard from every quarter of Protestantism. They agreed with the liberals on one point—orthodox Christianity could not countenance the iconoclastic allegations of modern science. One or the other must yield. The conservatives contended that it was the new theories of science, not the changeless verities of the gospel, which needed to be challenged and changed. The issue was sharply pitched.

Bitter battle lines were soon drawn within every major American denomination. In a sense it was to be an age-old struggle. Every generation's conservatives and liberals had carried on its own fight over some form of this issue. But there was now something new. A widespread conservative movement was taking shape—an organized cause whose advocates were willing to ignore minor differences and align together against a common foe over issues transcending sectarian lines.

Before establishing, for the first time ever incidentally, the role of the churches of Christ in this early century science-religion conflict, it is necessary in the interest of clarity to carefully define terms. In recent years, the term Fundamentalism has been so casually bandied about that it has been bereft of its real meaning. At least in the usage of many, it has been corrupted from a historical into a popular term, and has come to embody a very vague and generalized sense. As a result, it is now used broadly to suggest any bizarre brand of religious hyper-conservatism. It is commonly employed as a nebulous catch-all expression used handily to label any and all severely reactionary or abusively extreme religious sects. It has thus come to carry a singularly unfavorable connotation. Unfortunately, its historic denotative meaning has been shrouded in this fog of ignorance and ambiguity. Because it has been incorrectly used to mean so much, it has inevitably come to mean very little.

It is prerequisite to our present task that the real meaning of the term Fundamentalism be rescued and clearly understood. In its accurate historical and strictly theological sense, Fundamentalism is a technical term which pinpoints a specific religious movement. Williston Walker's prodigious history focuses on the movement: "By the dawn of the twentieth century, the liberals had won a place for themselves in many denominations. In the early decades of the new century militant conservatives made a resolute drive to oust them in the bitter fundamentalist-controversy. Largely failing by 1931 . . . conspicuous leadership was provided for the fundamentalists by Presbyterian professor J. Gresham Machen, and for the liberals by Baptist minister Harry Emerson Fosdick."<sup>7</sup>

Harold B. Kuhn carefully defined the term Fundamentalism: "The term denotes a movement in theology in recent decades designed to conserve the principles which lie at the foundation of the Christian system, and to resist what were considered dangerous theological tendencies in the movement calling itself Modernism. Its tenets are not those distinctive of any Protestant denomination, but comprise the verities essential to the Christian gospel as inherited from all branches of the Reformation."<sup>8</sup> While it is often applied, in general layman's usage, to the holiness groups and other doctrinally peculiar or extremely devout cults and sects, such application is abject misapplication. It is an abuse of the term and a hindrance to communication to use it carelessly as a handle for any particular doctrine or denomination. It does not denote a religious practice, but a religious movement. It is not a description, but a name.

The movement derived its name from the publication, begun in 1909, of a widely-distributed series of pamphlets called, *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*. Our use, therefore, of the term Fundamentalism has exclusive and rigid reference to the organized historical Fundamentalist movement which rose and then subsided in America between the years 1900 and 1935. In its heyday of the 1920's, the avalanche of publicity it received on the front pages of the American press was called by Ralph H. Gabriel, "both a novel and unexpected phenomenon."<sup>9</sup>

While the Fundamentalist movement was certainly novel enough, it was not entirely unexpected. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and for the first few years of the twentieth, the alarmed conservatives had been in definite retreat, fighting for the most part a holding action. Then, and as Gail Kennedy suggests "for reasons which no historian has, as yet, satisfactorily explained," they began to marshal forces for an all-out offensive.<sup>10</sup> As an organized movement Fundamentalism may be said to have started from *The Fundamentals* pamphlets published from 1909 to 1912. Eventually bound into twelve august volumes, three million copies of the tracts

were financed by two wealthy laymen and mailed free of charge to "every pastor, evangelist, missionary, theological student, Sunday School superintendent, Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. secretary in the English speaking world."<sup>11</sup> The following "five points of Fundamentalism" were endorsed: the inerrancy of the Bible, the virgin birth, the atonement, the resurrection and the second coming of Christ.

Organizationally, Fundamentalism took shape as a consequence of the World Conference of Christian Fundamentalism which convened at Philadelphia in May of 1919. Adopting the name, the World's Christian Fundamentals Association, this inter-denominational organization required of its members adherence to nine points of doctrine, namely: (1) the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, (2) the Trinity, (3) the deity and virgin birth of Christ, (4) the creation and fall of man, (5) a substitutionary atonement, (6) the bodily resurrection and ascension of Christ, (7) the regeneration of believers, (8) the personal and imminent return of Christ, and (9) the resurrection and final assignment of all men to eternal blessedness or eternal woe.

Alarmed by the steady growth of liberalism, leaders of many different denominations banded themselves together under these tenets of faith in a determined drive to stay the rising tide of apostasy within their separate communions.

It was in 1920 that the burgeoning reaction served solemn notice to the nation that its angry voice would have to be heard. For in that year William Jennings Bryan, who three times had campaigned for the American presidency, took up the conservative banner and the movement assumed national significance. Like the modernists, the leaders of Fundamentalism were an illustrious but motley corps. They represented various denominations and divergent intellectual strata. The accepted notion that they were merely an amalgamation of rabble-rousers is untrue. There were men of competent scholarship like B. B. Warfield, Robert Dick Wilson and J. Gresham Machen, whose sense of dignity and justice was praised by the



most liberal of their foes. Then there was the political figure and national populizer, Bryan. While few liberals were awed by the vastness of his gray matter, his character and incentives were never subject to suspicion. The whole fabric of Fundamentalism was not dyed the color of ludicrousness. Humanist Walter Lippmann, no comforter of the conservatives, described Machen as "both a scholar and a gentleman," and of his *Christianity and Liberalism* said: "For its acumen, for its saliency, and for its wit this cool and stinging defence of orthodox Protestantism is, I think, the best popular argument produced by either side in the current controversy. We shall do well to listen to Dr. Machen."<sup>12</sup>

But unfortunately, there were some who were not so scholarly, others who were not so gentlemanly, and a very sufficient number who were endowed with neither trait. There were many influential clergymen like Clarence E. Macartney and John R. Straton. There were a few alleged scientists like Harry Rimmer and George McCready Price. There were some league builders and organization promoters like William Bell Riley, R. A. Torrey, Gerald B. Winrod, and Edgar Young Clarke. Finally, there were the opportunistic and flamboyant evangelists like Gypsy Smith, Cyclone Mack, Billy Sunday, Amiee Semple McPhearson, and J. Frank Norris. Some of these were, at their worst, only extravagant and bizarre. Others were more offensive. The barbarous behavior of a few of the movement's chief personalities was a malodorous repellent to more moderate men.

Deserving first mention in point of the dubiousness of his antics is the example of Edgar Young Clarke, a refugee from the Ku Klux Klan who founded in 1926 the Supreme Kingdom. His enthusiasm for Fundamentalism was only bettered by his predilection for making easy money. As a consequence of this tendency, his pious protests against the evils of evolution were dampened with an accumulation of legal charges including mishandling church funds, disorderly conduct, theft, use of the mails to defraud, adultery, bootlegging whiskey (in his suitcase), and a violation of the Mann Act.

Gerald Winrod of Kansas, while avoiding entanglement with legal authorities, was another Fundamentalist whose appetite for highly questionable techniques was ample. An unsurpassed promoter of hatred and bigotry, Winrod organized in 1926 the Defenders of the Christian Faith as a tool to manipulate racial and religious prejudice. Meanwhile, in Arkansas Ben Bogard the bizarre Baptist intimidated every state legislator with the warning that any who dared vote against his anti-evolution bill would be blacklisted, and "the evolution issue will enter every race from governor to constable in subsequent elections."<sup>13</sup> Fosdick's New York antithesis, John Roach Straton, was known affectionately as the "Pope of Fundamentalism." In 1927 Clarke invited him to deliver a series of addresses in Macon, Georgia, on the theme, "The Responsibility for the Moral Collapse of the Youth of the Country." When the *Macon Telegraph* circulated the report that Straton was to receive exorbitant payment for the brief appointment, a smelly scandal ensued. Straton eased out of town without delivering a speech, but there were some who questioned the completeness of his parting explanation: that he had been motivated to speak, not for filthy lucre's sake, but strictly for Clarke's sake, and "for the sake of my noble, old-fashioned Christian mother."<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps the most flamboyant Fundamentalist of them all was the Fort Worth Baptist, J. Frank Norris. Through the venomous pages of his Searchlight, he scathingly attacked gambling, drinking, dancing, immodest dress, Catholicism, and the Southern Baptist Association with which he was constantly at war. But his chief grudge was with evolution and modernism. Norris' sensational career was punctuated by numerous scrapes with the law. When his church building was destroyed by fire in 1909, the district attorney summarily charged him with arson. At the trial, Norris was accused of such theatrics as writing himself threatening notes and hiring a detective to shoot at him—all for the alleged purpose of gaining public sympathy. Although acquitted on grounds of insufficient evidence, an irritated band of citizens largely composed, it is said, of Baptists, gave him thirty days to clear out of "cow-

town." But he stayed and by 1925 had maneuvered his flock into the largest Baptist congregation in the world.

But the harrassment of Norris by the law's long arm was only beginning. The tragic climax came in 1936 when D. E. Chipps, a local politician, came to the church office to contest the pastor's charges of graft and corruption in city government. Norris promptly reached for the gun he kept under the date book in his desk and shot Chipps to death. Although the jury ruled in favor of Norris' plea of self defence, public opinion in general looked with disfavor upon the fact that the unarmed politician had been shot, not once, but three times. When within the next two years Norris again lost not only his church but also his house by fire, the suspicion grew that he would resort to any means to gain popular sympathy for his Fundamentalist programs.

### *The Liberal "Victory"*

To see Fundamentalism's full profile, it is no exaggeration to say that Machen had very little in common with Macartney, who had still less in common with Bryan, and that neither Machen nor Macartney nor Bryan had anything at all in common with J. Frank Norris. Nothing at all, that is, save one unifying cord of fellowship—a deep disavowal of the gospel of modernism. Even before these strange bedfellows could form their inter-sectarian alliances for defense, early setbacks to their common cause were suffered within the separate denominational confines. In the Presbyterian Church the controversy centered about Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick and such affrontery as his May, 1922, sermon, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" Fosdick, a displaced Baptist, chose in 1924 to resign from the prestigious pulpit of New York's First Presbyterian Church rather than conform to a mandate by the General Assembly that he subscribe to the Confession of Faith. Liberal policies were ultimately adopted by the Presbyterians, however, despite the able and articulate opposition from men like Macartney and Machen.<sup>15</sup>

In the Baptist, Episcopal, and Methodist Churches the storm centered about such questions as tests of ministerial fellowship, doctrinal qualifications for missionaries, and literal adherence to denominational creeds. "Scarcely a single evangelical Protestant denomination anywhere in the world," wrote Murch, "escaped the devastating apostasy."<sup>16</sup> His own Christian Church denomination certainly did not. The *Christian Standard* and its writers who earlier had sown to the winds of liberalism—swinging much of the disciples' movement from the conservative position urged by the *Gospel Advocate*—now reaped the whirlwind. Herbert L. Willett and the *Christian Century* rose to put the shoe on the other foot and, ironically, the *Christian Standard* found itself pleading the conservative cause. And the *Christian-Evangelist* turned the tide toward liberalism by aiding the *Christian Century* position. Transylvania and the College of the Bible were soon saturated with modernism, and the Christian Church created by the 1906 Restoration split plunged full-throttle down the theological trail leading to the left—and leading to nowhere. From 1900 to 1930 the Christian Church reported an exiguous membership gain totaling less than 435,000. Murch admits that "the old-time drive was gone" and that there was even some talk of "a disappearing brotherhood."<sup>17</sup>

As within the Christian Church, educational institutions within all of the denominations became focal points of the Fundamentalist struggle. Almost the entire academic machinery of Protestantism came under liberal control during the controversy. Amidst a climate of rancor and censorship, Machen and several colleagues resigned distinguished positions at Princeton Theological Seminary and founded Westminster Theological Seminary. As virtually all of the ministerial training schools were lost, other men less able than Machen established a battery of much less creditable propaganda and preacher training institutions. The Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles were the most significant of this species.

Although the handwriting of defeat was on the wall, the tide of Fundamentalism continued to rise until it reached its

highwater mark on July 10, 1925. On that day William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow squared off in a sultry courtroom of sleepy Dayton, Tennessee, in a tug-of-war over the paternity of mankind. The famous "monkey trial" was more than a test of the constitutionality of Tennessee's anti-evolution law, and John Thomas Scopes, the tow-headed science teacher, was not the only one on trial. It was Fundamentalism's golden opportunity to expose modernism and to witness to the waiting world. It was also Fundamentalism's acid test and greatest challenge. Young Scopes was convicted of violating a state law by teaching evolution to his high school students, but that doesn't tell all of the story.

Although Bryan won the conviction, Darrow clearly won the trial. The technical verdict went to the cheering Fundamentalists, but the verdict of the on-looking world and the subsequent assessments of history favored the liberal cause — not because of the incredibility of conservative Christianity, but because of its inept defense. Admittedly no Bible scholar, Bryan's zeal for the righteousness of his cause led him to several untenable positions. Using Bishop Ussher's calculation, Bryan testified on the witness stand that the world was created, unequivocally, in 4004 B.C. Ussher also figured the day as October 23 and the time at nine o'clock in the morning, to which some liberal voice in the audience piped, "Eastern Standard Time." Bryan dated the flood at 2348 B.C. Though admittedly never having studied philology, Bryan traced all language to the Tower of Babel in 2218 B.C. When interrogated as to why the earth was not converted into a molten mass when Joshua made the sun stand still, Bryan confessed that he had never considered the problem.<sup>1E</sup> The night the trial closed, the Dayton High students honored Darrow at a dance.

Though a master in the political arena, the Great Commoner was a fluke on the Pentateuch. His silver tongue was no match for Darrow's cynical intellect and incisive wit. Fundamentalism had long been hampered by ill-prepared men and dubious techniques. But at Dayton, Tennessee, through the vast and not so sympathetic coverage of the national press,

the whole of America watched as, at the unwitting hands of its friends, the case for conservative Christianity was rendered a staggering blow. It was Fundamentalism, however, and not biblical Christianity which had invited the fight and which was unable to stand beneath its fury.

Almost as a mute symbol of the turning tide of the battle, the Tennessee Supreme Court reversed the judgment against John T. Scopes. Fundamentalism, as an organized movement, was on the way out. One barometer of the decline could be clearly read in the state legislatures as the drive to create laws prohibiting the teaching of the theory of evolution in public schools began to sputter. Within twenty-four months after the trial, the states of West Virginia, Missouri, New Hampshire, Arkansas, Delaware, Texas, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Minnesota rejected anti-evolution bills. Tennessee, Mississippi, and Oklahoma, the only states to pass such laws, slowly began to ignore them. As discouragement mounted at the political level, conservatives were concomitantly losing the heated skirmishes staged in upper echelons of the individual churches. With the exception of the Southern Baptist Association, by 1935 all major denominational apparatus was controlled by majorities sympathetic toward the liberal views. Only the Bible Institutes and Anti-Evolution Leagues remained as an organized echo of the once mighty voice of Fundamentalism.

Ironically, the rotundous William Jennings Bryan fell dead after consuming a heaping platter of Southern fried chicken, just one week after his Dayton defense. Fundamentalism, in its hour of greatest crisis, was impoverished of its popularizer and stripped of its one nationally prominent personality. The straw had struck the camel's back. And, as an organized movement, the spine of the most significant conservative protest of the century was mortally broken. As the ever leftward winding theological trail between 1925 and 1965 is traced, one can but speculate about the potentially different course which the mainstream of American Christianity might have charted if, at Dayton, Darrow had faced, not Bryan, but the erudite Dr. J. Gresham Machen. One can, at least, speculate.

*Abilene, Texas, and Dayton, Tennessee*

As a prelude to the following chapter which sketches the relationship between churches of Christ and Fundamentalism, it is appropriate now to point out the arresting chronological coincidence between the establishment of the Abilene Christian College Lectureship and the formal organization of Fundamentalism as a movement. Or was it more than coincidence? In 1919, during the very next year after the first Abilene Christian College Bible Lectureship, more than six thousand conservatives from scores of faiths gathered in Philadelphia for the World's Conference of Christian Fundamentalism. Eighteen nationally known exponents of orthodox theology addressed the massive audience which represented the organized, militant mind of reactionary evangelism.<sup>19</sup> At the opening session, William B. Riley described the occasion as of more historic moment than the nailing up of Luther's theses at the Wittenberg Cathedral. His speech heralded the birth of a "great new movement." As a result of the conference, the World's Christian Fundamentals Association was born.<sup>20</sup>

It should be carefully noted that just as Sewell and his Abilene colleagues were laying the Lectureship cornerstone, all across the nation many other "distressed conservatives organized in reaction."<sup>21</sup> Williston Walker reveals that many of those who "were shaken by the new ideas . . . reacted by holding to their view of Biblical infallibility with greater rigidity." Walker adds that the shaken conservatives "founded a series of important Bible conferences in defense of their views—Niagara, Winona, Rocky Mountain."<sup>22</sup> Stewart G. Cole even described the establishment of such Bible conferences and lectureships as a general movement which became one of the chief means of organized reaction to liberal Christianity. Rather than being a mere sequestered complaint, therefore, the Abilene Lectureship appears to be but one clarion voice in a loud conservative chorus of vigorous protestations.

No annual retreat or lectureship did more to reinforce orthodox Protestantism than the Niagara Bible Conference.

Founded in 1876, the Niagara platform put forth in 1895 the famous "five points" of doctrine which eventually came to represent the creedal statement of Fundamentalism. In addition to Niagara, the Winona and Rocky Mountain Bible conferences became the rallying centers for Midwest and Far West conservatives, respectively. Cole revealed some of the ingredients which had converged by 1920 to transform the Bible lectureship movement into a permanent type of social institution within Christianity—ingredients not entirely unknown to the infant Abilene Lectureship:

The hearty singing of revival hymns, the spirit of deep piety, the vigorous doctrinal convictions awakened by different types of preachers, and the development of suspicion and distrust toward progressive churchmen, empowered the company with a sense of Christian invincibility and with one of divine commission to champion the threatened faith.<sup>23</sup>

Many of the conferences and lectureships which cropped up around the country were sponsored by educational institutions quite similar to Bible schools like Abilene Christian College. Such Bible schools were described by Cole as "the normal centers of appeal for this pattern of religion" during the great controversy.<sup>24</sup> So right was the timing and so striking the similarities, that Fundamentalism's Bible conference begins to look like the master pattern from which the Abilene lectureship was cut. But such was not the case. "Some time after 1918 I learned about the Niagara, Winona, and Rocky Mountain meetings," wrote Jesse P. Sewell. "I had not attended any of these meetings and did not know of them at the time."<sup>25</sup> Sewell was not seeking an Abilene carbon-copy of Fundamentalism's original Bible lectureships, nor was he attempting to duplicate the programming of the national assemblies.

Furthermore, while there existed definite likenesses between Fundamentalism's Bible conferences and Abilene's Lectureship, there were also some salient differences. The Abilene emphasis was biblical rather than prophetic; its ends



were informational rather than revivalistic. The Lectureship was designed to encourage a specific religious movement rather than a widespread national reaction. Fundamentalism's conferences and retreats attracted large audiences from every section of the country. They enjoyed the loyalty of conservative believers from various denominational bodies. The Abilene Lectureship was designed to serve a particular religious group and its appeal was made to a more localized constituency.

Despite these differences, the social and spiritual forces which gave rise to the nationally prominent meetings contributed to the birth of the Abilene assembly. "I was aware of the Fundamentalist movement," remembered Sewell, "in fact, I actively participated in it, attending meetings and reporting to the college." The Lectureship founder also wrote: "William Jennings Bryan honored me by including me in what he called his 'inner circle of friends.' He invited me with a small number of others to Dallas to discuss the question as to whether he should resign as Secretary of State. During the Dayton debate," added Sewell, "I received a note from him, written with a pencil on a sheet of common note paper."<sup>26</sup>

In the interest of historical relevancy, the Abilene Lectureship must be interpreted against the bold backdrop of the science-religion controversy being waged within the mainstream. Its speechmaking must be analyzed as a contribution to this homogeneous national reaction. And any valid historical interpretation must seek to evaluate the impact of that speechmaking in the light of the Fundamentalist movement. To be sure, any serious effort to historically identify churches of Christ with, or for that matter, even relate them to the mainstream of twentieth century Christian thought, must first of all come to grips with the intriguing potentiality of a relationship between Fundamentalism and churches of Christ. And some most intriguing potentialities are lying all about the very surface of the case.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, "A Critical Period in American Religion, 1875-1900," *Proceeding of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, LXIV (June, 1932), pp. 523-524.

<sup>2</sup>Walter Lippmann, *A Preface to Morals* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1929), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup>Lyman Abbott, *The Theology of an Evolutionist* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1898).

<sup>5</sup>Asa Gray's review and articles have been collected in *Darwiniana* (New York, 1884).

<sup>6</sup>Gail Kennedy, (ed.), *Evolution and Religion: The Conflict Between Science and Religion in Modern America* (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1957), p. vii.

<sup>7</sup>Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), p. 517.

<sup>8</sup>Harold B. Kuhn, "Fundamentalism," *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1960) p. 233.

<sup>9</sup>Ralph H. Gabriel; *Christianity and Modern Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924), pp. 269-282.

<sup>10</sup>Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. viii.

<sup>11</sup>*The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, 12 vols., (Chicago, 1910-1912).

<sup>12</sup>Lippmann, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>13</sup>*Independent*, 119 (1927), p. 327.

<sup>14</sup>*Independent*, 118 (1927), p. 282-283.

<sup>15</sup>For a fascinating account of the complex New York theological tug-of-war, see Harry Emerson Fosdick's autobiography, *The Living of These Days* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956).

<sup>16</sup>James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1962), p. 232.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 262.

<sup>18</sup>The fullest account of the Scopes trial is *Bryan and Darrow at Dayton*. (New York, 1925) compiled by Leslie H. Allen. For a lively, though not too objective, interpretation of the fracas see the account by Arthur Garfield Hays, *Let Freedom Ring* (New York: Liveright Publishers, 1955).

<sup>19</sup>The Philadelphia addresses were preserved in the volume, *God Hath Spoken*, William L. Pettingill (ed.), (Philadelphia, Sunday School Times, 1919).

<sup>20</sup>*Christian Fundamentals in School and Church*. October-December, 1922, pp. 4-5. This quarterly magazine, edited by William B. Riley and later called *The Christian Fundamentals*, was chosen to voice the Association's ideals.

<sup>21</sup>James Hastings Nichols, *History of Christianity, 1650-1950* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1956), p. 273.

<sup>22</sup>Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 517.

<sup>23</sup>Stewart G. Cole, *History of Fundamentalism* (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), p. 233.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>25</sup>Jesse P. Sewell, personal letter to William S. Banowsky, September 2, 1964.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

# 3

## Churches of Christ and Fundamentalism

If the story of Christianity can best be told by following its transition from crisis to crisis, the colorful chapter called "Fundamentalism" dare not be discarded, nor even hurriedly scanned. In the first three decades of the twentieth century this was Christianity's crisis. As an organized cause it was clearly a lost cause but it dare not be ignored. Like many another battle which was not won, its importance cannot be measured in the winning or the losing. Since this is true, churches of Christ, with their own immediate past lying so close to this chapter, should be the last to ignore it. And they should be the first to challenge the charge of guilt by oblivion such as that made by James DeForest Murch: "The rank-and-file members were for the most part oblivious to the scientific and theological influences which were undermining the faith of millions."<sup>1</sup> But challenge the charge we dare not. For if not actually oblivious to Fundamentalism, the members of churches of Christ have certainly ignored this colorful chapter of church history.

*Two Corresponding Contests*

The stormy years from 1875 to 1900 witnessed within the ranks of the Restoration movement an acute reaction to the same virulent fruits of religious liberalism which sprang from the fecund seedbed of scientism. Furthermore, the years from 1900 to 1930—those same “first three decades” of crisis—were the very formative years of independence for the churches of Christ. These recollections should at once make poignant the fact that churches of Christ were compelled to declare that independence from their restoration relatives because of brothers they considered digressive and tendencies they regarded as liberal and modern. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Restoration movement was thus beset with “pitfalls and perils” of its own. But not *all* its own. The fight for survival was shared with other conservatives, who, on a similar but decidedly larger battlefield, had gone forth to challenge the prophets of modernism.

The deluge of disillusionment flooding the American mainstream was, therefore, paralleled by a miniature disaster swelling the banks of the restoration tributary. These two inundations of strife, a big one and a little one, whether rising from separate sources or from the same fountain-head, reached their respective flood-tides and issued into two spiritual contests. A big one and a little one. The contests were held in vastly different arenas. One was a widespread theological struggle. The other was much more of a church fight. The widespread struggle began in renowned theological centers; was fanned by celebrated books and prolific pamphlets; spread from cities to towns to communities and from Bangor to Los Angeles; and ultimately

tightened its brawny arms of belligerence about the very neck of Protestantism. The smaller fight was much more contained. It took the form of congregational infighting between "the sound" and "the digressives," heated skirmishes to determine which point of view would maintain control of the various congregations. The issues at stake divided congregations and eventually knifed bisectionally through the heart of the brotherhood. While different, both the big struggle and the small fight were started at about the same time, though as with all fights, it is quite difficult to say precisely when. The very term "started" is perhaps misleading. It would be more accurate to say that the two contexts of hard feelings, which grew from small and uncertain beginnings, broke out into the open at about the same time. But the hard feelings erupted into actual fights at slightly different times. The one of more moment was officially engaged about 1910, reached full bore by 1920, and staged its donnybrook in 1925. The less conspicuous one got underway more briskly, peaked out sooner, and was pronounced finished by 1906. Neither was terminated by an armistice or peace treaty.

And now the plot thickens. For while the outcome of the smaller contest was announced in 1906, the contest itself was not held that year. A fight is never quite as tidy as its press report. To see the real fight in the restoration ranks one must begin watching at least as early as 1875, and the first vilifications were exchanged even before then. They started, interestingly enough, back about the very moment Darwin's theory first began to disturb the larger arena of Protestantism. Therefore, while the combatants and the specific battlegrounds were obviously different, the war in the mainstream and the war in the tributary were conducted at essentially the same time. And for generally the same reasons. And in much the same way. Both were executed in the name of God. Both were waged around questions involving the treatment and interpretation of the Bible. Both were engaged by arch foes separated into embattled camps called "liberal" on the one hand, and "con-

servative'' on the other. In both battles, the suspicion and censorship, the tons of tracts and scads of sermons, the charges and counter-charges, all had a most familiar ring. If one but listens long enough—and carefully enough—to the giant reverberations in the mainstream, the tremors of the tributary begin to take on the sound of a faint echo. And there seems in all of this to be reasonable basis for the following legitimate conjecture: that in its embryonic stage, the new conservative cause known as churches of Christ might have been affected by, perhaps even organically related to, America's large organized inter-communion outcries against religious liberalism.

It would seem only logical, as the new century came, for churches of Christ to be greatly interested in the Fundamentalist controversy. After all, their leaders had been lately aroused to the menace of modernism by digressives who had arisen from among their own number. In the disciples' struggle which ensued, these conservative leaders had given no quarter and spared no cost in defence of their biblical convictions. Theirs had been a trial by fire. They had been through the crucible of controversy and were tempered by bitter experience. They had been schooled to identify the subtle overtures and to combat the open onslaughts of the liberal enemy. It would seem only logical that these preachers now would sense a familiar, rancid odor as the acids of modernism moved noxiously across the nation. And it would seem only logical, due to their conditioned, if not constitutional reaction to liberalism, for these preachers to leap forth and volunteer eager reinforcement. Not reinforcement to any conservative denomination, they would, of course, hasten to explain. But reinforcement to the cause of conservative biblical Christianity as a whole. It would, at least on the surface of the case, seem logical.

On grounds, therefore, involving both chronology and theology, one might legitimately expect to find preachers

and elders of churches of Christ among the active combatants in the far-reaching Fundamentalist fight. After all, the Fundamentalists were defending principles similar in kind to the cause for which the restorers had recently divorced from the Christian Church. Was the close chronological proximity of the emergence of Fundamentalism to the birth of the churches of Christ as an independent American body merely a strange coincidence of events? Or was it more than mere coincidence? And as the passing years brought increased tension, was the establishment of a Winona-type lectureship at Abilene Christian College, within a scant fifteen months of the formation of the World's Christian Fundamentals Association, only another coincidence? Were these merely, and thus remarkably, concurrent events lacking causal connection? Or were they more than coincidental? Was there some significant relationship between these two militantly conservative movements? It may be impossible to fully uncover and unravel all of the intricate chronological threads woven in common through the fabrics of the two movements. But what is possible, even mandatory, is the exposure of any formal doctrinal alliance or any organic theological affinity which may have existed between Fundamentalism and the churches of Christ.

### *A Significant Silence*

Were the churches of Christ an official voice in the organized early-century conservative protest against the sweeping conclusions of science and higher criticism? For two concrete reasons, one chronological and the other theological, they at least ought to be doggedly curious about the rise and fall of Fundamentalism. Its surging influence at the very hour of the church's birth as a separate American body arouses that curiosity; and the striking doctrinal similarities between the two movements insist that it be satisfied.



The relationship deserves to be exhumed and made known. However, the initial thrusts of the researcher's spade produce, not satisfaction, but deepened curiosity. The authoritative histories of Fundamentalism by S. G. Cole, Maynard Shipley, and Norman F. Furniss make no mention whatsoever of the role played by churches of Christ in the controversy.<sup>2</sup> The mass of official literature of the movement is disturbingly silent about the position of the church during the entire science-religion controversy. How curious, indeed, that while expected to be found entrenched on the front lines, the church cannot even be found at the supply depot—or for that matter, anywhere else in the battle.

Is it likely that the church and its preachers were there but were merely overlooked inadvertantly? Weakened by the split of 1906, the church was, of course, a numerically insignificant body. The students of Fundamentalism may have concluded that the disciples of Christ—liberals and conservatives alike—could be adequately covered in one treatment. They may have assumed that in their analyses of the controversy's impact upon the Christian Church, they were at the same time justly representing the smaller, more diverse conservative bloc. If so, it was an unfortunate assumption. Though insignificant, the churches of Christ were tenaciously independent during this era, steadfastly refusing to consider themselves a branch of the Christian Church. No, the yawning absence cannot be neatly explained as a clerical oversight on the part of the movement's chroniclers.

Churches of Christ have been left out of every report of the Fundamentalist controversy for the most obvious reason of all. They were simply never a part of it. The convincing rationale of timing and doctrinal commonalty notwithstanding, it must be concluded that they were in no manner organically related to Fundamentalism.

Moreover, neither were they officially involved in any substantial phase of the science-religion controversy. The church's course charters were either unaware of, or disinterested in, the fight; or both. A fight into the very middle of which they predictably should have jumped. This then, constitutes a most significant discovery within itself: that the churches of Christ were entirely detached from the conservative reaction with which, logically, their past should have been entangled thoroughly. A fine-tooth combing of the news media, religious journals, and other primary sources of the day suggests this conclusion. The stubborn silence of the scholarly literature devoted to the controversy solidly buttresses it.<sup>3</sup> All available early-century brotherhood sources clearly confirm it. And the Abilene Christian College Lectureship speechmaking itself absolutely insists upon it—not by what is said, but by what is left unsaid. While the waters of the two streams had a strikingly similar taste, the right wing of the Restoration movement never merged interests with the Fundamentalist movement. An irrefutable conspiracy of silence renders any other conclusion untenable. But unfortunately, while silence may present itself as irresistible proof, it is a frustrating substitute for that kind of evidence which provides explanation and understanding.

### *Striking Doctrinal Similarities*

How is the apparent indifference of churches of Christ to the science-religion controversy to be explained? The surprising aloofness of the church from the cause of Fundamentalism assumes sharpest relevance when analyzed in the light of the two movements' similarly conservative doctrinal views. And the unmistakable absence of any organic relationship between the movements grows most anomalous when subjected to that same light. The analysis and comparison of doctrinal positions bring into focus much ground which the movements shared in common on the key

points of Christian theology. Since the doctrinal position of historic Fundamentalism has been made clear, in what way did it correspond to the early-century posture of churches of Christ? The classic documents of restoration history served the church as a *de facto* constitution, the re-statement of New Testament doctrine in terse, contemporaneous terms. In insistence upon biblical infallibility these documents could have served Fundamentalism equally as well. In the famous *Declaration and Address*, Thomas Campbell declared that "it is high time for us . . . to take our measures directly and immediately from the Divine Standard. To this alone we feel ourselves divinely bound to be conformed, as by this alone we must be judged."<sup>4</sup> Later, as questions concerning the validity of the virgin birth, the atonement, the resurrection, and the judgment were raised, the answers given in the sermons of preachers of the church were as unequivocally conservative as any contemporary replies.<sup>5</sup> After the 1906 division, sermons from the churches of Christ pulpits were freely punctuated with affirmations and denials characteristic of Fundamentalist utterances. Still later, the "five points" forming the creedal statement of Fundamentalism were tenets which the evangelistic emphasis of the church's preachers tacitly approved. On these five points which concerned biblical inerrancy, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the atonement, and the resurrection and second coming of Christ, pronouncements of the Abilene lecturers themselves, as shall be seen later, were as decidedly fundamental as the Fundamentalists.

In addition to the cardinal Christian doctrines, early-century preachers of the church voiced implicit agreement with the Fundamentalists on several controversial issues of the era. For instance, allowing for individual exceptions and minor modifications, they held an identical attitude toward the theory of evolution. In attacking the theory, it was not unusual for spokesmen of the church to cite some pithy remark from William Jennings Bryan as appeal to the impeccable opinion of a trusted friend and authority.

Churches of Christ also moved to a position of opposition against religious modernism and destructive higher criticism consonant with the Fundamentalist position. Regrettably, writers of the church have published few works thus far in this century dealing with the problems posed by scientism. But the one or two that appeared prior to 1940, such as Trice and Roberson's *Bible Versus Modernism*, were quickly pigeon-holed according to philosophy and content as typical Fundamentalist literature.<sup>6</sup>

### *A Strange Paradox*

In the realm of broad and basic theological dogma churches of Christ and Fundamentalism were in essential agreement. It is true—and historically speaking an enigma—that even the most extremely fundamental of the Fundamentalist churches subscribed to certain denominational doctrines which the advocates of a restored New Testament church considered to be *liberal* innovations. This, however, in no way suggests that churches of Christ were to be found even further right than Fundamentalism on the doctrinal continuum. As shall be seen shortly, their argument with these denominations did not center in theological detail but in the very nature of the church. But if they were not to the right, neither were they to be found to the left of Fundamentalism. Where then were they found? Within the expansive context of 2,000 years of church history, any significant 1920 doctrinal differences between churches of Christ and Fundamentalism may seem to the hurried historian so minute as to be unworthy of the trouble of measurement. The scribe of the era would certainly not have discovered members of churches of Christ among those many critics labeling Fundamentalism as a hyper-conservative cause deserving to fail because of its overly-orthodox interpretation of basic Christian doctrine. On the surface of things—in any event at first glance—the average historian of the period from 1900 to 1935 might be prone to

present churches of Christ as a young and rising conservative tributary emptying its contribution into the mainstream of protest flooding across the country. And if that historian were also given to speculation, he might even guess that the tributary was one of the off-shoot denominations created by the flood of violence in the mainstream.

But churches of Christ were not a product of the mainstream controversy; neither were they direct contributors to its swelling currents. This complete detachment of churches of Christ from the organized conservative protest is suprising enough in the presence of an obvious doctrinal commonalty. But the surprise becomes incredulous in the light of subsequent religious history. For from the scraggling survivors of a church fuss in 1906, churches of Christ by 1960 had soared in numerical strength into the select circle of the nation's top ten religious bodies. To further compound the paradox, they have steered a consistent course so biblically preservative that they now prevail as the most doctrinally conservative of the country's major religious organizations.

The necessary consequence, strange yet unavoidable, is that the nation's largest doctrinally conservative church at mid-century was in no way implicated in the century's loudest conservative protest. The paradox may be made a trifle less knotty—but only a trifle—by remembering the church's precipitous growth from the point of the protest to the middle of the century. Unfortunately, no systematic account of the fifty eventful years in which the church has become the largest "home-grown" religious product has yet been written. While the record from 1800 to 1906 has been adequately documented, a thorough history of the Restoration movement in the twentieth century is greatly needed. Particularly wanting is a history of the movement's conservative voice. In tracing its recent inflections, this voice must now rely on the Christian Church

historians who, adding a touch of nostalgic reminiscence to their own denomination's story, have devoted a sparse chapter or so to the estranged "rightists."<sup>7</sup> But by the convincing argument of subsequent success, not altogether unlike the tale of the tortoise and the hare, the right wing should now be writing the story for the left. For the so-called right wing is no longer only a militant appendage. Its independence has now been justified. Its conservative plea has evoked a powerful response. A surging, ascending momentum now positions it as the solid center of the mid-century Restoration movement. The story of its dramatic growth deserves to be told. And, out of respect for the hosts now earnestly inquiring, the proximity of its conservative conscience to other similarly conservative causes implores to be made known. The telling, and the making known, will be no simple task, however. The very autonomous nature of its congregations coupled with a dearth of reliable data, particularly from 1906 to 1925, renders the events surrounding its early-century development disturbingly hazy. The haziness is doubly disturbing since it shrouds the church's attitudes toward that most colorful of conservative causes, Fundamentalism. An understanding of those attitudes and an adequate explanation of the events which removed churches of Christ from the Fundamentalist movement appear to be a long-overdue contribution to restoration history.

### *A False Explanation*

The traditional explanation has been that churches of Christ were not involved in the conservative crusade because they were unaware of it; because they were being led by academically blind, ill-informed guides, men even out-of-touch with the monumental issues fomenting Fundamentalism. It has been indisputably established that the habits and attitudes of "large numbers of people, especially those in the rural and more 'backward' areas," were

almost entirely unaffected by the science-religion controversy.<sup>8</sup> This was especially true of the members of bucolic, backward sects. Churches of Christ have been regarded heretofore as just such a sect. Their absence from the controversy has been accounted for by assuming their total ignorance of the real issues. Such an assumption does not answer the question, however, it merely evades it. For too long, the slick evasion has been couched in words as these: "The right wing of the movement, the Churches of Christ, had so isolated itself from the mainstream of the Christian world and from the cultural and scientific movements of society in general that it was almost wholly unaffected."<sup>9</sup> This is part of the answer, perhaps. But only a part. These largely rural congregations were, no doubt, more intellectually removed than were the more urbane denominations. Also their policy of rigid autonomy might have crystallized into a spirit of exclusiveness, isolating them somewhat from the mainstream. Furthermore, the charge that this isolationism was compounded by a famine of current information and timely enlightenment from the churches' pulpits may also be granted. But granting the whole package of these probabilities does not fully answer the question. It is only part of the answer, and in its partiality, like all half truth, is the vicious deception.

The acids of modernity were spewed into the bloodstream of every significant religious group in the nation. While the disease struck with varying vehemence, no truly national movement was completely immune. The Restoration plea was the largest movement indigenous to the nation. Only the sectional, ineptly led, intellectually sterile sects escaped unscathed. Churches of Christ formed no such sect, the arbitrary judgments of Christian Church histories notwithstanding.<sup>10</sup> The movement's Sunday morning crowd, for the reasons already cited, may have been unable to see, beyond the brotherhood's private battle, the ominous preparations for a great national war. Even the local leadership, preoccupied with the task of salvaging

the community's congregation from the digressives, may have supposed that theirs was the only important fight in progress. But no such preoccupation victimized the taller leaders of the entire extracongregational brotherhood. No such oblivion characterized the prime movers of the restoration right wing. A distinction must be made between the congregational leaders of purely local influence and the brotherhood makers whose acumen and insight had helped to salvage from the restoration wreckage a significant conservative movement.

The rank-and-file may well have avoided the pungent problems at the national level through a conspiracy of detachment. But no such alternative was available to the men who had led in the fight against liberalism in the disciples' ranks. They had come to be well versed, for the sake of survival, in the techniques of liberalism. Many an ordinary preacher may have been spared actual confrontation with the problems of doubt by sheer default. But there were others of a less ordinary variety, graduates of Franklin and Bethany colleges, rare men one generation removed from Campbell and Stone—men whom no lack of information had excused. They were men of their times, men capable of acknowledging the issues. They cannot be dismissed with a sweeping geographical or theological generalization.

By what weird plot of fate would the science-religion controversy have gone unnoticed before the discerning eyes of men like J. W. McGarvey, David Lipscomb, James A. Harding, Moses E. Lard, Tolbert Fanning, George A. Klingman, and Hall L. Calhoun? These men had taken the torch of leadership from Alexander Campbell—to whom the United States Congress was accustomed to listening. While they were preeminently devoted to the spiritual kingdom of Heaven, they were neither indifferent to nor



unaffected by the prevailing issues of this temporal world. Many earlier disciples had been active in public affairs, leading out in the search for solutions to political and cultural problems. In November of 1880 a restoration preacher, James A. Garfield, sought and won the nation's highest office. That very year two other gospel preachers, D. R. Dungan in Iowa and J. M. Pickens in Oklahoma, were defeated in close gubernatorial races for the top offices of their states. In 1892 Ira J. Chase, a well-known gospel preacher, was elected governor of Indiana. Another of the brethren, J. A. Brooks, was vice presidential nominee on the potent Prohibitionist ticket of 1888.<sup>11</sup> While some of these men came to be identified with the Christian Church, members of churches of Christ also participated vigorously enough in political and civic life to cause Lipscomb to sound the warning that the spreading of the spiritual kingdom was being subordinated. Our point in all of this, is that the spokesmen for the Restoration movement, part and parcel of America, treasured the tradition of contemporary relevance and practical involvement which they had inherited. Able conservative spokesmen had also inherited and equally treasured this tradition. The "right-wing" label could not change their restoration roots. As the twentieth century turned, an ample number of them were fully abreast of the nature of the contest dominating the American press and the religious mainstream.

### *A Relationship of Causes*

While the Restoration right wing was not a part of Fundamentalism, it would be a rare naive, indeed, and most unfortunate on top of that, to assume that it was totally unaffected by the stirring environmental forces of the era. Our contention is that those very forces—the scientific and theological issues which drove the wedge through the heart of American Christianity—created the tensions which severed the Restoration movement into two distinct camps. Before

the terrible turbulence within Christianity's mainstream issued in the full-fledged Fundamentalist controversy, it flooded over, with considerably less intensity, into the disciples' tributary. The violent repercussions of the main controversy, as well as many of the specific issues of disagreement themselves, were never fully felt in the smaller stream. But the treacherous undercurrent was all there. An undercurrent, however, is difficult to detect, and in the tremendous tempest at the surface, the real cause of the disciples' breach of 1906 was engulfed and unnoticed. We are thus on very virgin but very solid ground in maintaining that the founding of the Fundamentalist movement was related causally to the division among the disciples, and hence, was related to the events which gave birth to churches of Christ as an independent body. That is, the root cause of Fundamentalism and the root cause of the disciples' division stemmed directly from the issues of the science-religion encounter of the late nineteenth century. This relationship of causes, though never previously made clear, can be readily demonstrated and documented.

The two items of controversy traditionally assigned to the disciples' division as its dissension producing causes were the introduction of instruments of music in worship and the performance of missionary work by means of extra-congregational societies.<sup>12</sup> But did these two items of debate go fully to the heart of the schism between conservatives and liberals? Is there explained in them the essence of the schism? They were, unquestionably, the tangible, emotion-packed issues of specific contention. Issues so tangible that the men of the movement, including those like McGarvey who sought in vain to do otherwise, were compelled to make a choice. With the choosing came the contention which split homes, congregations, communities and severed an entire movement.

These were the issues of division, to be sure. But there is a difference between issues and causes. It may be

categorically stated that neither the missionary society nor L. L. Pinkerton's melodeon was a primary cause. Both were secondary. Both were issues. Both were results. And the results were occasioned by the real root cause: a loss of respect among restorationists for the "New Testament as a perfect constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament Church, and as a perfect rule for the particular duties of its members." That premise from Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address* was no longer acceptable to liberal disciples.<sup>13</sup> The dramatic loss of confidence in the Bible which was sweeping across the nation in the wake of evolution and higher criticism was no respecter of church boundary lines. It had slipped stealthily over into the disciples' camp and taken captive a number of articulate preachers. Membership in the New Testament Church carries no guarantee of immunity from fierce environmental forces.

One does not have to look far to find restoration preachers who were tainted with the same dye of liberalism which characterized the prophets of the modernistic mainstream. For instance, in 1889 worshipers at the Central Church in St. Louis, Missouri, were treated to a bold sermon by R. C. Cave which clearly revealed his loss of respect for scriptural authority. In language strongly reminiscent of Robert G. Ingersoll's gripping lectures during the era, Cave contended that Abraham and Moses had been sadly mistaken about the true nature and personality of God. He also revealed an apparent awareness of and appreciation for a famous liberal sermon preached by Henry Ward Beecher just four years earlier. The most popular pulpiteer of the generation, Beecher subscribed to the Gray-Spencer-Fiske explanation of evolution and delivered in 1885 a discourse on "The Two Revelations" which amounted to a positive defense of theistic evolution. To be compatible with the progression of scientific discovery, Beecher concluded, Christianity must be accepted as a progressive, unfolding religion.<sup>14</sup> Cave's 1889 message

to the St. Louis brethren similarly described the Bible as an evolution rather than a revelation. It negated both the virgin birth and bodily resurrection of Christ. In subsequent lessons to his congregation, Cave urged that nothing be made "a test of fellowship but that which a man's own conscience tells him is right or true . . . . Strict loyalty to self is the real loyalty to God."<sup>15</sup>

### *A Question of Authority*

Both Cave and the Central Church were well-known for their liberalism and might be discounted as rare exceptions to the rule. But the very existence of their liberalism is verification of the premise that the doubts and suspicions of the mainstream were infiltrating the restoration tributary. While the St. Louis liberalism may have been exceptional, it was certainly not exclusive. J. H. Garrison, the influential editor of the *Christian-Evangelist*, mildly censored Cave for his liberalism, only to be sharply censored as a liberal himself by David Lipscomb. In essence, Lipscomb's attack on Garrison and his followers charged that they had lost confidence in the authority and sufficiency of the scriptures. The *Gospel Advocate* editor wrote:

Whenever a man begins to draw the distinction between believing in Christ, and believing in the Bible, which reveals Christ, he does not believe in the Christ of the Bible or of God . . . . There is a school of rationalism in the church of Christ. They use terms out of their ordinary meaning. They mean by inspiration, as Longan calls it, "inspired genius." The Bible . . . is not the complete and perfect standard of religious truth. It is all to be subjected to the judgment of man, or to the spirit of holiness within man and may yet develop new revelations and higher manifestations of truth . . . . Let us go to the bottom and make clean work in purifying the church of this infidelity. Longan and Proctor have been the leaders

in this school. Others follow after them. They do not believe the Scriptures are given by inspiration of God, hence that they are not the final and perfect revelation of God to man, and the standard of truth.<sup>16</sup>

Alexander Proctor and George W. Longan, to whom Lipscomb made such disparaging reference, were Missouri preachers frequently branded as "rationalists." These and other liberal preachers brought the scholarly J. W. McGarvey into the fight. McGarvey authored a series of 1886 articles for the *Christian Standard* on the problem of textual criticism. These articles were the forerunner for a regular feature in the paper called, "Biblical Criticism." McGarvey's target was the method of destructive textual criticism borrowed from German theological circles by brethren within the ranks of the Restoration movement. After entering the fight in answer to his own liberal brethren, McGarvey soon discovered himself in a much larger arena. Preparing himself to meet restoration digressives, he became aware of the actual cause of the apostasy and its national scope. He traced the liberal tracks of his own brethren to the doorstep of Protestant modernism.<sup>17</sup> McGarvey's was perhaps the one voice among restorationists widely respected by liberal scholars in the pre-Fundamentalism warm-ups. Unlike his many brethren who were either unable or unwilling, McGarvey stepped above the disciples' battle to offer direct opposition to the prophets guiding Christianity's modernistic mainstream. It was among his own brethren, however, that he first detected the modernism and against whom he preped for the larger fight.

The seeds of the restoration division were sown by the same relentless hands of scientism which later moulded the Fundamentalist controversy. The cause of the division was a lessening of respect for the Bible, an attitude of skepticism bred within the soil of the science-religion controversy. While this may appear to be but concluding the

obvious, it is an obvious conclusion which has never before been clearly enunciated. In fact, no autopsy heretofore performed on the pre-1900 Restoration movement has even attempted to explain the cause of the disciples' division in the light of the widespread strife saturating all pre-1900 Christian thought. Rather, the traditional explanation, like so much of the movement itself, has tended to evade a truly national relevance, to avoid the truly causal factors, and has placated itself with secondary, if not superficial, details.

The deep spiritual unrest which the soul-shaking questions of evolution and higher criticism brought to the mainstream had an influence upon the comparatively mild tremors of organ music and missionary methods which came to trouble the tributary. The questions which agitated both movements were related to the mighty science-religion controversy. The first—the primary questions posed by evolution and higher criticism—*raised* the national controversy. The more secondary questions of instrumental music and societies were raised *by* the controversy. The primary ones conspired to create doubt as to the authority of the Bible. The secondary ones were inevitable by-products of that doubt. They were the fruits of discord which rushed greedily into the vacuum created by the departure of biblical authority from one segment of the Restoration movement.

The real question, then, has always been one of biblical authority. The St. Louis congregation which in 1889 was pleased to entertain R. C. Cave's bold modernism, had split twenty years earlier because of dissension over instrumental music. The split of 1869 and the rank modernism of 1889 were sequentially related steps on the road to apostasy. Both were created by a loss of respect for the authority of the scriptures. L. L. Brigrance analyzed the real cause: "The little end of the tap-root of the division in the ranks of the Restoration movement is not instruments of music

and human societies, but a lack of respect for the authority of God's word."<sup>18</sup> This was the real issue at stake. The bed-rock question is, and has been throughout, one of religious authority. Once trusted and infallible authority has been undermined, as it was with a great segment of the disciples, the gateway to unlimited apostasy has been opened. Those mild tremors which initially separated the churches of Christ and the Christian Church so minutely, have now reached earthquake proportions. A mighty gulf caused by the subtle but steady erosion of biblical authority now leaves the two direct descendants of restoration's unity plea poles apart. Dr. A. T. Degrott, Chairman of the Department of Church History and Distinguished Professor at Texas Christian University, wishes to make it clear that the Christian Church is now a denomination which no longer subscribes to the notion that the New Testament contains the pattern authority for the organization, work, and worship of the church. The Restoration movement, he says, "can never wholly reconstitute . . . the original structure . . ." He is frank to raise the extremely pertinent question as to how, in the absence of biblical pattern authority, his ecumenically minded brethren can "be given enough structure to exist and perpetuate themselves as a church?"<sup>19</sup>

### *The Restoration Principle*

If aware of the issues and sympathetic with the basic convictions which led conservatives within major denominations to organize against modernism, what kept the church from adding its weight to the Fundamentalist movement? The satisfactory answer to that question can be found only in the inherent difference between the New Testament church and denominationalism. And this difference brings into sharp focus the contrast between the restoration principle and the principle upon which a divided, sectarian Christendom is now built. Churches of Christ, with

a determination to follow the New Testament as the only rule of faith and practice, were dedicated to a restoration of the non-sectarian church of the New Testament. Fundamentalism, alarmed at the attack of modernism, was seeking to preserve its several traditional denominations by a defense of the fundamental doctrines upon which they were established. Churches of Christ, while subscribing to most of those same cardinal doctrines, were by no means convinced that denominationalism deserved to be preserved. It was, in their judgment, a violation of the most cardinal principle of all: "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The restoration of Christ's Church, not the preservation of the cardinal doctrines and traditions of Protestant Christianity, was their objective. During the years of Fundamentalism, orthodox denominationalism was caught up in a great reaction; churches of Christ were engaged in a great return. The first was a defensive maneuver; the second was an offensive movement.

The question of biblical interpretation which Fundamentalism raised was also involved in the division which separated the Christian Church from the churches of Christ. But that pitched question did not give conception to, nor did that separation give birth to Christ's church. Though assigned a separate identity in 1906, the lineage of churches of Christ did not initiate there. Nor did it begin in the work of the Campbells and other eighteenth century restorers. The emergence of the church on American soil signified not birth, but re-birth. Alexander Campbell described the apostolic nature of the church to which his efforts were devoted: "I have no idea of adding to the catalogue of new sects. This game has been played too long. I labor to see sectarianism abolished, and all Christians of every name united upon the one foundation on which the apostolic church was founded."<sup>20</sup> He added that his purpose was "to make a move in the business of restoration, and in returning to the covenant." In 1825, he wrote in the *Christian Baptist*: "A restoration of the



ancient order of things is all that is contemplated . . . . To contribute to this is our most ardent desire—our daily and diligent inquiry and pursuit. Now, in attempting to accomplish this, it belongs to every individual and to every congregation of individuals to discard from their faith and their practice everything that is not found written in the New Testament of the Lord, and to believe and practice whatever is there enjoined. This done, and everything is done which ought to be done.”<sup>21</sup> Upon this foundation of complete trust in biblical pattern authority, the efforts to re-build the church of the Bible had been launched.

The concept of the church and its role in the world obviated the entrance of churches of Christ into the Fundamentalist fray. The church was regarded as the kingdom of Heaven whose business was not the transient controversies of this world but the abiding issues of the world to come. Its burden was seen not as social progress but worldwide evangelism and eternal salvation. The all-consuming appeal for the restoration of first century Christianity tended to numb the church's interest in the passing cross-currents of the twentieth century. The fact that Fundamentalism encumbered itself with social and secular interest ranging from agitation in the Ku Klux Klan to fanatical prohibition schemes, discouraged participation in the movement.

Since the New Testament pattern made no provision for extracongregational organization, churches of Christ held deep convictions against synod or conference ecclesiasticisms. The practical matter of moulding mass opinion and marshaling it into overt action behind any given cause was rendered difficult. The brotherhood soon came to depend upon the Abilene Lectureship and the several widely-read periodicals for essential information and direction. These, however, sought to perform no legislative or ecclesiastical function. Fundamentalism, a creation of organized

denominationalism, relied heavily upon conference assemblies to air grievances and gather momentum for its march against modernism. Churches of Christ, seeking to reassert the principle of autonomy, possessed no such mechanism for mobilization.

### *Some Hostile Dissimilarities*

The pursuit of the restoration principle further sharpened the many specific differences between the church and denominationalism, forestalling any formal fellowship with Fundamentalism. The early restorers had been aggressively opposed to denominationalism. By the century's turn, churches of Christ had come to discourage articulation in concert with any man-made religious organization. To the preachers of the church, the dangers of denominational division and sectarian error were far more imminent and deadly than the seemingly theoretical perils of evolution and higher criticism. With the former they were in daily confrontation. They often regarded the latter as the eccentric hobby of the academic community.

Beyond the harmony at the bedrock level of Christian dogma, the hostile dissimilarities between the church and Fundamentalism emerge at the plane of more secondary doctrinal principles. Divergent positions on two specific doctrines, premillennialism and predestination, will serve to illustrate this antipathy. The church countenanced neither doctrine; formal Fundamentalism, with rare exceptions, subscribed to both.

Most of Fundamentalism's denominations were strongly Calvinistic; hence, the movement's theological base was essentially predestinarian. The Restoration movement had openly denounced Calvinism prior to 1900 through a round of public debates with Baptists and Pres-

byterians. The Calvinistic doctrine of predestination or foreordination was particularly repugnant to churches of Christ and helped to obviate their fellowship with the Fundamentalist cause.

Premillennialism was a second tenet of Fundamentalism which the church could not endorse. A controversial concept of the second coming of Christ, the doctrine gained great strength in America during the first decade of the 1900's. It also had won solid support from some churches of Christ. The millennial theory that Christ would reign on earth for a literal thousand years was born of a sophomoric system of hermeneutics which allowed for no symbolic interpretation of scripture. Thorny symbolism from apocryphal passages in such books as Daniel, Numbers, Ezekiel, and Revelation was taken, not symbolically but quite literally. Such inflexible literalism was explained and justified through highly complex numerical formulae and weird historical speculations. By 1900, most churches of Christ had argued themselves out of such abusive literalism through intrabrotherhood dialogue and debate. In doing so they developed a valid method of hermeneutics and a reasonably mature approach to the problems of symbolism—an approach which left room for interpretation. By 1920, although an unyielding minority dissented—and still does so today—the momentum of the church had moved decidedly away from the theory of premillennialism. Fundamentalism's momentum made no such move. Therefore, as the caustic reagents of modernism seethed forth to test all biblical literalism, even the timeless tenets of the faith were challenged; but the barnacles of wild beasts and goblins were dislodged and utterly dissolved. Churches of Christ, on the one hand, would have been sympathetic with any attempt to defend the challenged tenets. But, on the other hand, the fanciful millennial theories of the second coming were quite another matter. When, on the question of premillennialism, the denominations of Fundamentalism were exposed and chagrined by the higher critics, churches of Christ not only missed the chastisement, they agreed with it.

Preachers for the church were opposed to theological liberalism. But in a practical sense, they held to a very general definition of the term. As they looked to the left from their biblical position, they were not particularly interested in distinguishing the sensitive shades of difference which separated schools of thought. They tended to classify all departures from the apostolic pattern, whether slight or radical, Methodist or modern, as equally wrong and equally liberal. Even though the fight against modernism was being waged by denominationalists whose conservative views substantially approximated those of churches of Christ, preachers of the church were not disposed to relax their restoration stance and join hands with the avowed enemy of sectarianism in a less immediate battle against a less real foe. While it is not known how many preachers of the church had been exposed to the writings of Fosdick, their acquaintance with the antics of Ben Boggard and J. Frank Norris was of long standing. Evangelists like G. C. Brewer and Foy Wallace, Jr. had conducted public debates with these leading Fundamentalists of the southwest over specific points of doctrine.<sup>22</sup> They also came, in time, to oppose Norris and his helpers on grounds involving techniques and character. Hence, it is not surprising that preachers of the church would hesitate to assist Norris in his war on evolution. Not because they preferred Fosdick's theology to Norris', but because Fosdick was a newspaper name from far-away New York. Norris, whom they considered to be of the Devil himself, was a neighborhood nuisance with whom they were daily confronted. Churches of Christ had little use for Fundamentalism because it was the crusading cause of their antipathy—the Texas prototype of Sinclair Lewis' *Elmer Gantry*.

### *Reaction Versus Return*

In short, Fundamentalism was a crusade, not for biblical Christianity, but for orthodox Protestantism. Commitment to the former dictated the church's opposition to the latter. One must not be deceived by the mirage of sim-

ilarity between the principle of complete reliance upon biblical authority which demands reconstruction of the house of God, and the arbitrary attitude of acceptance of biblical doctrines which demands only *their* defence and preservation. Both the complete reliance and the arbitrary belief will produce a system of faith conservative in outward appearance. A salient difference inheres, however, within the respective principles upon which the two approaches are hinged. One is restorative; the other is preservative. One is genuinely biblical; the other merely orthodox. One is usually at enmity with existing customs; the other is dedicated to the perpetuation of its ecclesiastical traditions. One is submissive to the principle of pattern authority; the other is arbitrarily selective of a few biblical patterns it makes its creed and to which it will submit.

The principle of complete reliance and the attitude of arbitrary belief will produce separate organisms whose differences are not always discernable by a comparison of the practical fruits growing at the ends of the branches; nor even by an examination of the similarities between the doctrinal trunks. The seminal difference, being essentially one in purpose or principle, leaps forth in but one glance at the clashing tap roots. That difference can be vividly drawn in two contrasting words: *reaction versus return*.

Fundamentalism, like the Reformation movement itself, was brought forth in the travail of reaction. The tap root from which churches of Christ have thrived traces itself back to neither one of these reactionary movements. So remarkable were the victories of the Reformation that one is cautious to criticize its champions on any grounds. But while making great progress, the Reformation revolt was ultimately abortive due to its deficiency at the tap root. It sought to reform an apostate church rather than to restore the Pentecost church. This plea for reform—rather than for restoration—was a colossal error in purpose and in principle which inevitably determined the uncertain direction and lost destination of the movement.

The revolt triumphantly fractured and in sizable measure reframed the Catholic denomination; but it failed to restore—because it did not even attempt to restore—the New Testament church. The pivotal door which the Reformation swung open and through, which the restoration principle subsequently entered, was a contribution so vital as to more than excuse the Reformation's own failure. Except that, and here is the gruesome tragedy; it seeks no excuse and admits of no failure. It daringly broke through the crusted mould of Romanism and then, exhilarated with its liberty, set about to form other moulds evolving into a splintered, grotesque replica of that very perversion which it had set out to reform. By 1900 it could dig back through the debris of multiplied division to its tap root, and with amazing objectivity and unfeigned honesty, claim as the "Mother Church" of it all something other than the one founded in Jerusalem.

Then came the momentous storm of scientism lashing against and cracking the stale traditions of orthodox Protestantism. With the storm came history's chance to exercise its acute habit of repeating itself. Only this time, the orthodox heirs of the Reformation revolt were playing, ironically, the part of the Pope in the challenged church; and concentrating all their efforts on the defence of the denominational status quo. Long forgotten was the principle of restoration.

It was orthodox denominationalism, not biblical Christianity, which went down before the merciless charge of modernism. Its fall was borne of its flimsy foundation and its misplaced purpose. Darwin's discovery did not doom denominational orthodoxy, nor did Darrow's debating. The genius of divisive denominationalism had doomed itself much, much earlier; and its death sentence had been announced by the Holy Spirit: "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel only there are some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we or

an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any other gospel than that which we preached unto, let him be anathema."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>1</sup>James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1962), p. 237.

<sup>2</sup>Perhaps the most adequate study of historic Fundamentalism is Norman F. Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954). Other standard works include S. G. Cole, *History of Fundamentalism* (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), and Maynard Shipley, *The War on Modern Science: A Short History of the Fundamentalist Attacks on Evolution and Modernism* (New York: Knopf, 1927).

<sup>3</sup>E. C. Vanderlaan's excellent compilation of the vast literature of the controversy, *Fundamentalism versus Modernism* (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1925), makes no reference to churches of Christ. The same can be said for the briefer discussions such as Virginia Dabney, *Liberalism in the South* (Chapel Hill, 1932), Harbor Allen, "The Anti-Evolution Campaign in America," *Current History*, (1926), pp. 893-897, and E. Mims, "Why the South is Anti-Evolution," *Worlds Work*, 50 (1925), pp. 548-552.

<sup>4</sup>Alexander Campbell, *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell* (Cincinnati: H. S. Bosworth, 1861), p. 32. For other statements of the restorers' doctrinal positions see Oram J. Swinney, *Restoration Readings* (Palm Springs, California: Old Paths Book Club, 1845).

<sup>5</sup>One among scores of examples is J. W. McGarvey, *Sermons* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1893).

<sup>6</sup>The annotated bibliography in Furniss, *op. cit.*, is one example of such categorization.

<sup>7</sup>The labels "rightists" and "right wing" are employed here only in the interest of clear communication. Restoration historians have come to use them to designate the conservative branch of the disciples' movement, or the body known as churches of Christ. Although loaded and somewhat objectionable, the labels are frequently used in this book to make the same designation. Their validity as accurate appellations or as legitimate descriptions is a question for another time.

<sup>8</sup>Gail Kennedy, (ed.), *Evolution and Religion: The Conflict Between Science and Theology in Modern America* (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1957), p. viii.

<sup>9</sup>Murch, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

<sup>10</sup>Alfred T. Degroot, *The Restoration Principle* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1960), p. 153. Degroot seeks, rather artificially, to demonstrate that

the Christian Church is a "church type," while the churches of Christ are a "sect type." He offers as evidence the names of periodicals allegedly published among churches of Christ: *Truth*, *Truth in Love*, *Truth Advance*, *Primitive Gospel Herald*, *Gospel Guardian*, *Lord's Way*, *Old Paths Advocate*, *Sound Words*, and the *Macedonian Call*. Ignoring the fact that Degroot's methodology of proof is rather strange within itself, it should be noted that all of these periodicals are obscurantistic, half are now extinct, half are produced by hobbyistic factions and the circulation of all combined would not measure 10,000. A rather shaky and subjective basis upon which to indict a brotherhood numbering more than two million members and represented by several truly responsible, significant publications. If churches of Christ are in fact a "sect type," some rationale and proof other than that offered by Degroot must supply the documentation.

<sup>11</sup>Earl Irwin West, *The Search for the Ancient Order*, Vol. 2 (Indianapolis: Religious Book Service, 1950), p. 197.

<sup>12</sup>For a traditional explanation of the disciples' division and its causes see W. E. Garrison and Alfred T. Degroot, *The Disciples of Christ: A History* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1948), and Alfred T. Degroot, *The Grounds of Division Among the Disciples of Christ* (Chicago: privately printed, 1940).

<sup>13</sup>Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address* (Pittsburg: Centennial Edition, 1909).

<sup>14</sup>Henry Ward Beecher, "The Two Revelations," from Kennedy, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-55.

<sup>15</sup>C. L. Loos, "A Protest," *Christian-Evangelist*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1. (January 2, 1890), p. 9.

<sup>16</sup>David Lipscomb, "Those Sad Apostasies," *Gospel Advocate*, Vol. XXXII, No. 6 (February 5, 1890), p. 87.

<sup>17</sup>McGarvey buttressed his opposition to destructive textual criticism through the production of such books as *Evidences of Christianity*, *The Authorship of Deuteronomy*, *Jesus and Jonah. The Text and Canon of the New Testament*, and *Credibility and Inspiration*.

<sup>18</sup>L. L. Brigance, "Studies in the Restoration," *Gospel Advocate*, (February 6, 1941).

<sup>19</sup>Degrott, *The Restoration Principle*, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-165.

<sup>20</sup>Alexander Campbell, "Reply to 'T. T.,'" *Christian Baptist* Vol. III, No. 7. (February 6, 1826), p. 217.

<sup>21</sup>Alexander Campbell, "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things—No. II." *Christian Baptist*, Vol. II, No. 8 (March 7, 1825), p. 133.

<sup>22</sup>Wallace staged a dramatic debate with J. Frank Norris during the Baptist pastor's heyday and Brewer's debate with Ben M. Boggard is reviewed in G. C. Brewer, *Forty Years on the Firing Line* (Kansas City: Old Paths Book Club, 1948).

<sup>23</sup>Galatians 1:6-8.



# 4

## The Men Who Made the Mirror

“The establishment of the Lectureship may prove to be the most significant contribution of my lifetime,” remarked the nimble, hoary-headed Jesse P. Sewell, his face finely chiseled by the hand of time. “It certainly was one of my most important duties as president of Abilene Christian College. With the help of my wife Daisy, and Dean H. E. Speck, I planned the program, invited the speakers, and handled the publicity.”<sup>1</sup> Publicity efforts, largely confined to the state of Texas, included direct mailings, articles, announcements, and paid advertisements in “all of the periodicals published by members of the church of Christ.” Students were urged to write relatives and friends extending a “special invitation to attend the Lectureship.”<sup>2</sup> Sewell initiated in 1919 the custom of building the program around one main speaker delivering a group of five or six addresses. Since no Lectureship theme was selected, both the principal lecturer and those delivering individual addresses chose their own topics.

### *The "Old Campus" Years*

The administration building of the original "old campus" served as the first lecture hall. With seven hundred permanent wooden opera seats, including a balcony on three sides, a maximum seating capacity of one thousand was possible by placing folding chairs in two large entrance halls, adjacent classrooms, and administrative offices. During its ten years of service, the lower floor was usually full, and frequently the balcony was "fully packed for the evening services and even practically filled at the morning services." By 1921, "the large auditorium was completely filled to overflowing," in 1922 listeners "also filled the aisles," and in 1925, "the packed houses" were described as "the largest crowds in the history of the program."<sup>3</sup>

Free room and board for all visitors, an obligation initiated in 1918 and shared by the college and the Abilene church for thirty-one years, encouraged a large out-of-town attendance. Extending the 1920 invitation, Sewell said: "The church members throw open their doors to all visitors. The college is made your home for the week."<sup>4</sup> Two years later, the *Reporter-News* stated that "men and women from all parts of Texas, Oklahoma, and from Missouri, Ohio, and several other states have arrived . . . homes of all the members of the church of Christ in the city and all the spare rooms on the campus of the college have been opened to them." Guests were encouraged to write college officials of the number in their party and anticipated time of arrival so "that they might be met at the train and assigned to a good home while they are here."<sup>5</sup>

In 1919, Sewell arranged for F. L. Rowe and his *Christian Leader* to preserve the lectures in printed form. Rowe took it upon himself to assemble the manuscripts, and in the summer of 1919 the book was released with Sewell's introduction: "We hope each year to present a similar volume . . . to add something of permanent value to Christian literature."<sup>6</sup> With the exception of two periods of three

years each — 1930-1932 and 1947-1949 — every subsequent series has been published.

Batsell Baxter assumed directorship responsibilities with his tenure as president from 1924 through 1933. He brought to the campus increasingly larger audiences, especially in out-of-state visitors. By 1926 Baxter accurately termed his platform "the greatest gathering of members of the church of Christ that is held annually in this country."

When the prominent Hall L. Calhoun was secured as principal lecturer in 1927, Baxter sought to escape the shrinking confines of the auditorium by arranging temporary seats in the gymnasium. Approximately 2000 listeners, doubling the attendance of previous years, were accommodated at the main sessions. After returning in 1928 to the auditorium, the 1929 program was forced back into the gymnasium when fire destroyed the entire administration building. "This calamity came in the midst of preparations for the Lectureship," reported the yearbook, but despite the crisis "one of the greatest programs in history took place."<sup>8</sup> Calhoun was also featured as principal speaker in 1929.

"Visitors, ACC Welcomes You to the New Plant," was the 1930 slogan which christened the spacious lecture hall constructed "on the hill"—the new campus site east of Abilene. Named in honor of the Lectureship's founder, Sewell Auditorium was the scene of every Lectureship address from 1930 until 1952.

Although speakers had previously been given room and board, Baxter attracted very able lecturers from great distances by initiating the policy of reimbursing travel expenses. He also replaced the traditional afternoon lectures with "round table discussions." As a final programming contribution, Baxter tailored the "last full week in February" schedule from eight to five days. In January of 1929 he announced:

Contrary to the usual custom of former years, the lectureship this year will not last an entire week, but will close on Friday night. President Baxter states that inasmuch as all visitors leave for their homes on Saturday, the services here on Saturday night and Sunday are no more than regular services of the church.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Cox Years, 1933-1940*

James F. Cox replaced Baxter as president in 1932 and immediately increased the Lectureship mailing to "over seven thousand programs extending an invitation to members of the church of Christ in Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arkansas, Missouri, and Kansas." Seven years later *The Optimist* stated in bold headline: "NATIONWIDE PUBLICITY EXPECTED TO DRAW LARGEST CROWD IN LECTURESHIP HISTORY." The news story reported that in addition to 12,000 mailed invitations, "the radio programs sponsored by members of the church of Christ from California to West Virginia are calling attention to the program."

Cox discontinued the sixteen-year-old principal lecturer tradition at the 1935 program, reasoning that the abundance of speakers coupled with the need for variety demanded that "each speaker make but one address." He further streamlined the program with the 1936 decision to conclude on Thursday rather than Friday, a precedent followed by every subsequent series except 1938. Records of attendance and visitor registration also date from Cox's tenure as director. But his most significant contribution was the creation of a single theme each year. In 1933, he said of the Lectureship's first theme, "The Church We Read About in the New Testament": "The purpose of the program is to present a thorough and complete study of the church from the viewpoint of the Bible." Cox designed thirteen sub-topics and nominated speakers "thoroughly capable of discussing the phase of the subject assigned to them." As a fringe benefit of the theme-controlled pro-

gram, the published volume was thoughtfully organized. Introducing the 1933 book, Charles H. Roberson wrote in July that,

The purpose in arranging such a program was to bring together in a compact form a thorough and complete study of the "New Testament Church." Cox requested each speaker to make a complete survey of that which is revealed in the Bible so that the work might be done so well as to give the book now being sent out a value as a textbook for class work among the various congregations for study in the church. With that in view a group of questions for study and review is given for each address. So far as the writer is aware, there is no book just like this one either in design or treatment.<sup>12</sup>

Favorable response encouraged Cox to maintain three-year continuity by selecting related themes for 1934 and 1935, "The Church in History" and "The Church As It Is Today." C. A. Norred introduced the published lectures for 1936 by explaining that it was "the four hundredth anniversary of the printing of the English Bible" and that Cox related the lectures "particularly to the history of the Bible. He named the subjects, set the order of their delivery, and selected the speakers."<sup>13</sup>

With his keen concern for improving general brotherhood instruction, Cox unwittingly initiated a shift of the program from the student to a church-oriented emphasis. Originally designed "for the purpose of deepening and strengthening the teaching and influence of the college with its students," in 1924 the event was still described by student leaders as "the nucleus of the school term." College classes were shortened to forty-five minutes "in order to give more time to the lecturers." Student attendance was compulsory and the chapel roll was "checked at the 11:15 service as usual. Ample seating accommodations for visitors will be arranged in order not to interfere with the students' regular seats." A student editorial in 1925 called lecture week "the time the student body has choice morsels

of thought brought to them from the length and breadth of the land." The *Prickly Pear* of the same year carried these "Extracts From a Student's Diary":

This is the first time I have had time to think of you, little book, for nearly a month. Especially has the last week been busy. But I haven't missed a single lecture and I am sure glad because I have enjoyed every one of them. Some of the strongest men of the brotherhood were here. Mamma and Pappa came. They said I have improved very much indeed. They liked Jack, too.<sup>14</sup>

Early speakers prepared their lectures with the student audience specifically in mind. G. C. Brewer's 1931 address on "The Problems of Modern Youth," was "very interesting to the students," and three years later, at the special request of the biology and science students of the college, he delivered a lecture on the theory of evolution. The warm relationship which lecture week established between students and speakers was reflected in the "resolution of appreciation," drafted by the 1923 student body for the "stirring and inspirational addresses" of W. D. Campbell. After a "rising vote" in chapel they wrote the Detroit minister: "You will never know how much good you have done and how many waves of good influence you have set in motion."<sup>15</sup>

Not all reaction to lecture week inconveniences was so favorable. A 1930 student, disenchanted with the "open house" custom, complained that the "only hours during the last week not designated as inspection were set aside for meals or preparation for the inspection hours." Another one authored in 1927 a humorous lecture week satire, "How to Become a Successful Speaker (With Apologies to Brewer)."<sup>16</sup> As late as 1930, however, they regarded the program as their "outstanding feature of the year."<sup>17</sup> But the steady departure from the students which was begun by Cox was complete by 1940. This metamorphosis was not precipitated by lack of student interest but by the platform's inability to be aimed simultaneously at the needs of the student listeners and the general church constituency. One close observer, Professor R.

C. Bell, explained that while the students continued to be interested in the programs, they were planned more and more with the lecture week visitors in mind.<sup>18</sup> But Cox's success in employing the program as a means of better educating the church, though diminishing student interest, did much to insure the life and to enhance the usefulness of the platform which was given its birth by Sewell, and brought to its maturity under Baxter.

### *The Years of Morris and Thomas*

When Don H. Morris was appointed president in 1940 the Lectureship, which had evolved from city, to state, to national importance, took on an international dimension. Missionaries inspired by the Lectureship covered the globe following the war, and Morris invited them back to report their foreign evangelistic experiences. With Professor Paul Southern he initiated the lecture week tradition, "Opportunities in New Fields." These morning and afternoon meetings consisted of "reports of work being done in many parts of the world . . . opportunity will be given to persons not on the program to report plans and needs in new fields and to make appeals for work in those places."<sup>19</sup>

As the program increased in evangelistic impact, Morris provided space for commercial and religious exhibits. Upon the suggestion of Board chairman B Sherrod, he also inaugurated an annual fellowship dinner for preachers and elders at a Wednesday evening banquet in 1948. A highlight of every subsequent Lectureship, the fellowship dinner has graduated from the basement of the girls' dormitory and a crowd of less than two hundred, to a gathering of more than two thousand in the college gymnasium, the largest regular assembly of elders and preachers of the churches of Christ.

The first official break with the tradition of providing free room and board for all guests came with the 1947 announcement that a nominal fee of fifty cents would be

charged for each dining hall meal. A year earlier visitors had been urged to make private housing arrangements if possible with friends or relatives. After the 1948 publicity was significantly silent on the promise of free housing, a full-page *Gospel Advocate* advertisement of the 1949 series solemnly stated that because "of the large number attending it is no longer possible for the college to provide accommodations for visitors."<sup>20</sup>

Although his predecessors had capitalized upon the fund raising and public relations opportunities provided by the Lectureship, Morris made this purpose a matter of record: "ACC's biggest annual event begins this Sunday. Beyond a doubt the Lectureship is some of the best advertising the school receives. This is true because such a large number of people are attracted by it and because the school is at its best during that time." In 1948 the annual contribution was initiated. Originally termed "a collection to assist foreign students at ACC," the lecture week contribution is now a major asset to the college's fiscal program.<sup>21</sup>

The twelve years of Morris' active directorship were fraught with the disturbances of the World War II and witnessed not only these most rewarding, but also some of the most harrassing events in Lectureship history. These included the war-wrecked low attendance figures of 1942, 1943, and 1944; the cancellation of the 1945 series; the lack of a unifying major theme for the programs of 1943, 1944, 1948 and 1949; and the absence of published volumes of the lectures for the years 1947, 1948, and 1949.

In 1953, Bible Professor J. D. Thomas became the first man to serve as director of the Lectureship who was not at the same time president of the college. Under his supervision the program reached its zenith in attendance, elaborateness and brotherhood impact. Working with an advisory committee, Thomas selected supervisors over such areas as publicity and program, reservations and housing, development and collections, and physical arrangements. In turn,



these areas were sub-divided, so that the director of physical arrangements had serving under him those responsible for meals, exhibits, registration, recording services, parking, ushering, public address equipment, janitorial services, distribution of physical equipment and telephone services. The organization now touches approximately five hundred members of the staff, faculty, and student body each year. In addition to greatly expanding publicity activities, Thomas launched publication in 1956 of *Vision*, a special Lectureship bulletin printed quarterly.

Following in the Cox tradition, Thomas upgraded the content of the series by strengthening the theme-controlled program. "We select the best man we can get for each subject," said Thomas. It is a matter of "fitting the man to the slot."<sup>22</sup> The committee presents a topic rationale and occasionally a bibliography of resource materials along with the speaker's individual assignments. Assignments, made ten months in advance of the program, are determined by a theme-to-speaker system of nomination.

Thomas also brought to the program more than one hundred commercial and non-commercial exhibits housed in a half-mile space provided by a huge rented tent. A spirit of competition generated by the colorful exhibit tent resulted in the drafting of a "code of ethics" to cope with the "tendency toward high pressure methods."<sup>23</sup> He further improved programming by adding many new features including: fifty daily classes, the Biblical Forum, a communications conference, and teen-age activities. Thomas also graduated the Lectureship into the multi-auditorium dimension. Since 1946 folding chairs had been required to seat the swelling crowds. In 1947 three hundred folding chairs raised the seating capacity to 1,700 for a single session. Later President Morris described conditions under which the "largest crowd in the college's forty-two year history" was accommodated in 1949: "By placing extra chairs in aisles, foyer and on the stage, and using two large rooms in another building connected by a public address system, more

than 2,200 persons heard Brother Pullias' Tuesday evening address."<sup>24</sup>

Marshall Keeble, introduced as "the church of Christ's greatest Negro evangelist," attracted in 1950 the largest afternoon audience on record; and it is a matter of mathematics that in 1951 at least one-fifth of the 2,500 alleged to have heard John Banister were not close enough to see him. Consequently, this announcement in January of 1952 was a milestone:

The college announces that this year it will be able to seat twice as many as ever before. This is made possible by the use of the new spacious auditorium of the college church of Christ building now being completed across the street from the ACC campus . . . each speaker will make appearances in both and deliver the same lecture at different times, thus giving all persons present two chances to hear each speaker and all of the lectures. Formal opening of the new building will be held Sunday, February 17.<sup>25</sup>

Two of the platform's princes, G. C. Brewer and C. R. Nichol, whose voices had echoed in every lecture hall in the college's history, spoke simultaneously on the opening 1952 evening as a vast audience of 4,000 gathered. The size of the 1952 assemblies prompted the 1953 use of Bennett Gymnasium as a third auditorium for the evening lectures as attendance at single sessions reached as high as 4,200. Since 1955, crowds of more than 5,000 have assembled in the three auditoriums for the evening lectures; and since 1956, when the college celebrated its Golden Anniversary, a third auditorium has been used for the morning lectures. The 1960 completion of the Hillcrest church building provided a total seating capacity exceeding 5,000 a session.

Although from the first the audience backbone came from Texas communities—Roscoe, Trent, Winters, Rising Star, Hamlin, Weatherford, Merkel, Hatchell, Lubbock,

Fort Worth, Waco—soon hundreds were also present from every other state and many foreign nations. Traditionally, Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas, and New Mexico have ranked behind Texas in state representation. Abilene civic leaders have eulogized the college platform which, aside from athletic events, provides the city's largest annual gathering. The estimate that Lectureship visitors "spend \$300,000 annually to bolster the city's economy," prompted a terse understatement from the Chamber of Commerce: "We appreciate the Lectureship."<sup>26</sup>

Through fifty years of change and convulsion, the Lectureship has served as a binding together of preachers, elders, alumni, trustees, teachers, missionaries, parents and students with the ties of common purpose. As the college alumni have formed an ever-widening circle, the force of the February festivities has drawn them back to the center. The annual meeting of the Board of Trustees has filled lecture week with the drama and excitement of virtually every significant announcement in the college's history. The merging place of the movement's small and great, golfer Byron Nelson termed it "the most inspiring meeting I have ever attended," and a more obscure visitor penned a little note to director Thomas: "I could not keep the tears from falling as we left Friday. I felt that God had been so good."<sup>27</sup> Though another observer felt that Thomas had "turned the program into a three ring circus,"<sup>28</sup> hundreds of others believe that under his able direction a tradition has been transformed into an institution.

### *The Platform's "Hall of Fame"*

During the Lectureship's first forty-six years—from 1918 to 1964—349 speakers delivered 753 formal lectures. More than half of the total number of speakers, specifically 192 of them, made but one appearance. Eighty-two of the remaining speakers delivered but two addresses each. Therefore, a relatively small number of men, only 75 to be

precise, delivered more than two Lectureship speeches each. While on the one hand, the program has heard from 349 men representing every segment, opinion, and pocket of the brotherhood a much smaller circle of speakers has actually controlled the direction and emphasis of the platform.

Deserving particular attention are the 28 speakers who each delivered six or more addresses, and who collectively accounted for a total of 231 of the lectures. These 28 men, singlehandedly and amazingly producing two-thirds of the Abilene lectures, comprise in a very real sense the "Lectureship hall of fame." Heading this elite group was G. C. Brewer with a total of seventeen main addresses. First appearing at the age of thirty-seven in 1921, Brewer gave his last lecture a few months before his death thirty-four years later. Next in line behind Brewer was E. W. McMillan whose thirteen appearances covered a period of thirty-six years. He spoke first at the age of thirty-six in 1923, and last appeared on the 1962 program. Deserving of rank behind McMillan was A. R. Holton since his nine lectures spanned a greater gulf of time than those of any other speaker, a total of forty-four years. He was twenty-eight when he gave his first lecture during the 1919 series, and he made his final speech in 1963, one year before his death.

Fourteen other speakers delivered at least seven lectures each. They were F. B. Shepherd, with eleven; Jesse P. Sewell, Hall L. Calhoun, and Charles H. Roberson with ten; James F. Cox with nine; John H. Banister, Glen L. Wallace and M. Norvel Young with eight; and Batsell Baxter, Early Arceneaux, W. D. Campbell, C. M. Pullias, Paul Southern, and Athens Clay Pullias with seven addresses. Rounding out this circle of prominence were eleven men who delivered six speeches each: Reuel Lemmons, George S. Benson, A. Hugh Clark, John T. Hinds, M. C. Kurfees, Cline Paden, S. P. Pittman, F. W. Smith, John T. Smith, J. P. Sanders, and Don H. Morris.

Also worthy of special mention are sixteen men who appeared as principal lecturer, a role originated in 1919;

discontinued after the 1934 series; and momentarily revived for the programs of 1943, 1948, and 1949. The principal lecturers and the years in which they appeared were: G. Dallas Smith, 1919; M. C. Kurfees, 1920; F. W. Smith, 1921; W. D. Campbell, 1923; N. B. Hardeman, 1924; John T. Hinds, 1925; S. P. Pittman, 1926; Hall L. Calhoun, 1927; C. M. Pullias, 1928; Hall L. Calhoun, 1929; J. Paul Slayden, 1930; G. C. Brewer, 1931; S. H. Hall, 1932; Early Arce-neaux, 1933; G. C. Brewer, 1934; J. P. Sanders, 1943; John H. Banister, 1948; Athens Clay Pullias, 1949. Only two men, Calhoun in 1927 and 1929, and Brewer in 1931 and 1934, served as principal lecturer for two series. Interestingly, eight of these men, G. Dallas Smith, Kurfees, F. W. Smith, Hardeman, Hinds, Pittman, Slayden, and Hall made their only appearances in the principal speaker's role.

Many sons of former lecturers later gained positions on the program themselves. Perhaps the dream of some day speaking was first planted in the minds of these sons when they visited the program and listened to their fathers' addresses. The *Abilene Reporter-News* stated in 1934 that "a speaker on tonight's program will be Batsell Baxter, former president of the college. With him are his wife and their son, Batsell Barrett."<sup>29</sup> The son followed in his father's footsteps and delivered his first Abilene lecture in 1947. Together the Baxters contributed a total of ten addresses to the anthologies. In 1952, James W. Nichols introduced his lecture remembering that,

Twenty-six years ago this week my father, Elmer Lee Nichols, stood in the auditorium on the old campus, and delivered his first Lectureship address on "The Man of Galilee." He, too, was twenty-four years of age. Although I do not remember him, this occasion brings to my heart memories that have been established by the words of his friends. As I recently read his introductory remarks on that occasion, I was convinced that I could in no way better express my gratefulness than by his own words.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the Baxters and Nichols, many other father-son combinations made widely separated appearances

including the Speck Starnes, L. S. White, Smithson, Gus Nichols and Malone families. One father, Foy Wallace, Sr., had two sons, Foy, Jr. and Cled E. Wallace, to succeed him at the rostrum. The Wallace clan, including kinsmen G. K., Glen L., and Paul L., achieved the distinction of family prolificacy with an aggregate of seventeen addresses.

### *Characteristics of the Speakers*

All of the speakers were male members of churches of Christ, free from "suspicion of liberal or digressive tendencies" at the time of their appearances.<sup>31</sup> An example of the caution exercised concerning a prospective speaker's doctrinal views was seen in the nomination of Calhoun as principal lecturer in 1927. Regarded by some as sympathetic with the liberal wing of the disciple's movement, the college newspaper termed him "one of the ripest scholars of our brethren who use the organ in worship and the Missionary Society in practice . . . about two years ago he definitely severed his connection with our transgressive brethren." Despite this alleged conversion to a more conservative point of view, because Calhoun's work had formerly been at the digressive Transylvania College, "considerable controversy" accompanied his nomination as a speaker. To reassert his doctrinal soundness, a letter written by Calhoun to N. B. Hardeman concerning a teaching position at Freed-Hardeman College was secured and published. Calhoun disclaimed:

I do not believe that instrumental music is any part of the ordained worship of God or that it is permissible to use in worship. My observation of its use leads me to believe that it tends toward formalism and show and that it leads away from and hinders rather than helps the true spiritual worship. I believe that humanly organized missionary societies lead to ecclesiasticism and human authority in religion and that their use is not a help but a hindrance to the progress of the truth. I have reached the point where I am resolved to associate myself with those who are standing for those things for which we can give a plain, "Thus saith the Lord."<sup>32</sup>

Although an effort was made to choose "men in whom we may safely place our trust and confidence,"<sup>33</sup> some former speakers were later among the platform's most caustic critics. From the dozen or more men who subsequent to their Lectureship addresses severed fellowship with the doctrinal position of the church, two widely divergent criticisms have emerged. Some have roundly attacked the platform as a hotbed of liberalism and ecclesiastical control. Conversely, and much less vehemently, a handful of former speakers have come to view the program as a "house organ of narrow-minded fundamentalism and radical conservatism."

For purposes of distinction the 349 speakers might be reduced to five occupational groups: ministers or evangelists, religious journalists, missionaries, educators, and elders. In 1920 Sewell explained that the speakers were "chosen from both the gospel preachers and the laymen who have something to say both interesting and profitable." The very first series in 1918 boasted Judge W. B. Lewis, and the 1919 program featured Maurice D. Gano, billed as one of Texas' greatest civil lawyers. Of the latter's address a colleague of the bar eulogized: "I consider the most valuable hour of my life so far the hour I spent listening to Maurice Gano deliver his address on the inspiration of the Bible." On the program with Gano in 1919 was John A. Straiton, "a Scotchman of pleasing personality and pleasing address, a successful businessman in Fort Worth." The complete list of "laymen" speakers numbers less than twenty-five including six from the law profession, five of whom held judicial positions. Half of the elders who appeared on the program resided either in Abilene or the Fort Worth-Dallas area. Only four lived outside the state of Texas. John G. Young, a Dallas physician, spoke three times.<sup>34</sup>

More than one hundred and fifty of the Lectureship speakers were primarily preachers or evangelists; approximately twelve were principally engaged in the field of

Christian journalism; and seventy-two of the speakers were involved in some phase of missionary activity at the time of their Abilene appearances. Seventy-eight of the Abilene lecturers could most accurately be described as educators. They were almost exclusively associated with academic institutions controlled by members of the church. Among the notable exceptions to this rule were Joseph U. Yarborough, professor at the University of Texas; W. F. Ledlow, Chairman of the Department of Education, North Texas State Teachers College; Henry Eli Speck, Dean of San Marcos State Teachers College and Truman H. Etheridge, Dean of Sul Ross State College. Twenty-nine of the educators who spoke were college presidents. Eleven were college deans.

Churches of Christ require no ordination rites nor specific academic training for their preachers, hence many of the early speakers possessed little formal education. Liff Sanders, who spoke in 1918 and again in 1921, was pictured as "the hale and hearty pioneer evangelist of the plains country" and it was said that 1927 speaker G. F. Mickey "may not be counted among the 'big preachers' but he has in him the stuff and stamina of which real pioneers are made. He is never spectacular, but always busy and self sacrificing . . . ." <sup>35</sup> These men and scores of others gained respect and stature in the church through diligent work and innate ability, without benefit of college level academic training.

On the other hand, it was early Abilene lecturer F. L. Young who was recognized as "the first preacher in Texas to earn the B.A. degree." <sup>36</sup> More noteworthy is the fact that George A. Klingman, the very first of the Abilene lecturers, held the Ph.D. degree. Klingman, David L. Cooper, and Hall L. Calhoun were the only speakers appearing before 1930 with the earned doctorate. Calhoun was described as:

A recognized scholar outside of his immediate religious persuasion, he having been for several years a



member of the International Sunday School Committee. He is a graduate of Harvard University, with both the M.A. and the Ph.D. degrees. When the great McGarvey died, Brother Calhoun was thought to be the only man capable of filling the professorship of Sacred Literature in the College of the Bible, Transylvania University. He was also Dean of the same school until destructive critics and evolutionists, who had gained control of the university, made it impossible for him to conscientiously continue his work there.<sup>37</sup>

Led by Klingman, Cooper, and Calhoun, a total of forty-three speakers have held the earned doctorate. Whereas prior to 1930 only these three lecturers had achieved the Ph. D., from 1930 to 1950 nine of the speakers, and from 1951 to 1961 thirty-one of the speakers possessed the earned doctor's degree.

### *Selection of Speakers*

From the very beginning an invitation to appear on the Abilene platform has been considered a prestige assignment in the brotherhood. R. C. Bell, familiar with the entire history of the platform, was impressed with "how keen the preachers are to get on the program." In 1934, "of all the preachers Cox contacted for the program, only one, C. M. Pullias, was unable to accept." Thomas stated in 1959: "We rarely have anybody turn us down. The few instances I can recall in seven years as director were for health reasons." Though occasionally influential preachers were invited "because cultivation of their friendship would be beneficial to the aims and future of the college," the guiding motive of those directing the programs was to select, within the framework of the accepted doctrinal position, the most able men available to deal with the topics under consideration. In 1918 Sewell explained that "every speaker was chosen for a good reason. We simply made an effort to get the best men in the brotherhood."<sup>38</sup>

The audiences at Abilene have been afforded the cumulative opportunity of witnessing at least one example of every variation in speaking style, every mode of speech delivery, every possible means of argument support, every specimen of vocal strength and weakness, every type of physical gesticulation, every distracting mannerism as well as every mark of pulpit power, and every technique of argumentation and persuasion known to the art and history of public address. While the men were chosen primarily because of *what* they could say, there were also those who impressed listeners with the *way* they could say it. S. P. Pittman, a graduate of the Martyn School of Oratory, was representative of those early speakers concerned with elocutionary techniques.

Saturday evening after the lecture, Brother Pittman gave two readings to a few of his friends. He read "Jeannette" and "Sockery Sets the Old Blue Hen." The poems were good, but the manner in which the speaker presented them made them more impressive . . . . On Sunday evening a number of his old friends persuaded him to read again, this time "The Pathway of God," and "Pictures of Memories."<sup>39</sup>

Though shrinking through the years, the normal time length for lectures of the early years was one hour. Brewer, a sample of those men who refused to be confined to any time limitation, held a 1931 audience "of above 1,200 spell-bound for an hour and a half." Before the electric amplification system was introduced at Abilene in 1933, superior vocal power was a quality sought in speakers. Prior to 1930, many passionate perorations were rudely interrupted by the roaring trains which passed within a few yards of the auditorium. Listeners were understandably astounded in 1928 when C. M. Pullias challenged the formidable foe to a vocal duel and became "the only man who never had to pause for the noise to pass."<sup>40</sup> Hand clapping, leg slapping, rostrum pacing, and pulpit pounding were methods not infrequently employed to reinforce arguments and hold audience attention.

The speaking stock for the early programs was drawn largely from the state of Texas. In 1923, F. L. Rowe described the lineup as a "galaxy of speakers that cannot be excelled. True, most of them are Texas preachers, but they preach and teach the same gospel in the same simple manner that our representative brethren do 'over East!'"<sup>41</sup> The first slate of speakers in 1918 were all "out-of-town men except two, Dr. George A. Klingman, and Professor H. E. Speck." The practice of placing at least two members of the college faculty on each program was termed a "custom" in 1924, and has been perpetuated, with rare exceptions, through the years. Faculty members were scheduled to speak at the Sunday opening sessions since visiting preachers could not arrive until Monday. For the same reason local Abilene preachers were also scheduled earliest in the week, and by 1927 it was "customary for the local minister of the college church to open lecture week on Sunday morning." During the early years faculty members and area preachers were also used to "fill in around the group of speeches given by the principal lecturer."<sup>42</sup>

Altogether, thirty-six of the speakers were members of the college faculty or administration. In 1930, seven of the nine speakers were connected with the college, apparently because the school was facing severe financial problems and the program was designed so that "those attending will get a better idea of the spirit which characterizes teachers and leaders here." In 1931 Don H. Morris launched the "College Builders' Club" with an address on "Christian Education and Some of Its Problems." As economic conditions worsened, several 1932 addresses were "devoted to the problem . . . during the present critical period," with Brewer and Morris as chief spokesmen.<sup>43</sup> Through the years six men who served as president of the college—Barret, Baxter, Cox, Whiteside, Sewell, and Morris—delivered a total of thirty-six lectures, twenty dealing specifically with the financial problems confronting Christian education.

Another tradition in speaker selection was initiated in 1923 when Carl L. Etter, "only last June a graduate of ACC and now looked on as one of the strongest men in the brotherhood," was scheduled. By the following year it had become "customary for the college to have at least one of the graduates speak during Lecture Week," and in 1925, Elmer Nichols of the class of 1922 was formally described as the "alumni representative this year." For several years this custom was carefully maintained. By 1929, however, the expanding Abilene alumni contained some of the most able spokesmen in the church, and the format came to include several of them each year. Occasionally, students of the college have been allowed to speak. The first opportunity for formal student participation came in 1923 when the illness of John A. Durst's wife made available his key position. Sewell quickly planned a program, "ACC As Seen By Her Students," and selected several student leaders to report to the visitors. George H. Stephenson, a 1936 "senior ministerial student," was the first to deliver a principal address, speaking on "The Status of Bible Teaching Today."<sup>44</sup>

Speaker selection, however, was by no means limited to the faculty or to the state of Texas. As early as 1921 lecturers were described as "some of the best-known Bible students in the church in the Southwest," and "from every part of the country and the strongest congregations of the church." Prior to 1925, speakers gave their "time and labor without pay or profit"; hence, most of them came from the states of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arkansas.<sup>45</sup> In the late 1920's, Baxter adopted the practice of reimbursing speakers' expenses and made available a wider selection of lecturers. Representatives from more than forty states have appeared on the program through the years.

Since Englishman John Straiton spoke in 1919, twenty-one lecturers have traveled from foreign nations to appear

on the program. In addition to a number from England, speakers have journeyed from Italy, Germany, Japan, Belgium, Holland, Scotland, Korea, Canada, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Australia, and Switzerland. Others were invited to share experiences of recent travels abroad with the listeners. N. B. Hardeman, principal lecturer in 1924, had just returned from an extended tour of Europe and Asia Minor. "Pressure from students, visitors, and members of the local church" persuaded him to include in his speechmaking a discussion of his journey through the Holy Land. W. D. Campbell was selected as principal speaker in 1923 because of experience in "evangelistic meetings all over the United States, and in Canada, and Great Britain, having held revivals in London, Liverpool, and other large cities of the British Isles."<sup>46</sup> In 1927 C. R. Nichol used the experiences of a recent tour of the Holy Land for his discussion of modern Jerusalem.

The Abilene Lectureship has, from the very first, attracted the "pulpit giants" of the churches of Christ; and the "giants" have seldom stretched taller than for their Abilene efforts. Of course, not all were "giants." By following the natural degrees on a descending scale of excellence, one also uncovers the oft-forgotten inarticulate whose greatest public address accomplishment was a rare hour in Abilene.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Jesse P. Sewell, personal interview, October 23, 1961.

This data taken from issues of *The Optimist*, for 1920 and 1924. On February 16, 1922, the paper reported that "two thousand programs are being sent out to friends and patrons...equal to invitations. Also about two hundred congregations have been invited to send their ministers to this series of lectures." p. 3. And on February 12, 1920, a student had written: "Some of our ablest brethren will be here to deliver these lectures. We wish that every parent could be here to enjoy them. We have a place where you can feel at home during the entire week. And to you brethren in Christ, do you not desire to sit at the feet of these strong men and glean from them the way of truth in a more perfect form?" p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>*The Optimist*, February 25, 1926, p. 4; March 3, 1921, p. 1; February 23, 1922, p. 3; and *Abilene Reporter-News*, February 25, 1925, p. 5. "In the late 1920's," remembered Sewell, "the fire marshal put an end to the extra chairs in the entrance halls."

<sup>4</sup>*The Optimist*, February 19, 1920, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup>These facts from the *Abilene Reporter-News*, February 21, 1922, p. 4, *The Optimist*, February 8, 1923, p. 1, and *The Optimist*, February 5, 1925, p. 1. "O. E. Phillips, financial agent of ACC has received a large number of letters from patrons, friends, and trustees stating that they will be present at the ACC Lecture Week."

<sup>6</sup>Jesse P. Sewell, "Introduction," *Lectures*, 1919, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup>*Abilene Reporter-News*, February 25, 1925, p. 3, and *The Optimist*, February 18, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>*Prickly Pear*, 1929, p. 146. Also see *Prickly Pear*, 1927, p. 84 with half-page picture of gymnasium crowd and caption stating that approximately 2,000 were present; *The Optimist*, March 1, 1928, p. 1; and the *Abilene Reporter-News*, February 26, 1929, p. 3, which said that the first in Calhoun's series "of five addresses was heard by approximately 1,500." Whether the 1928 return to the auditorium was prompted by the pre-public address displeasure with the cavernous gymnasium, or the inability of principal lecturer C. M. Pullias to duplicate the larger audiences attracted by Calhoun, is not altogether clear.

<sup>9</sup>*The Optimist*, January 31, 1929, p. 1. Actually the Lectureship has undergone five different programming combinations. (1) Monday through Friday was used in 1918 and 1930-1932; (2) Sunday through Friday was used in 1919, 1929, 1934, 1935, and 1938; (3) Monday through Sunday was used in 1928 and 1933; (4) Sunday through Sunday was used for the eight-year period, 1920-1927; and (5) Sunday through Thursday was tried in 1936 and 1937, and has been used exclusively every year since 1939.

<sup>10</sup>From the *Abilene Reporter-News*, February 19, 1933, p. 3, *The Optimist*, February 9, 1939, p. 1, and *The Optimist*, February 2, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup>*The Optimist*, January 9, 1936, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup>This data cited in *Abilene Reporter-News*, February 19, 1933, p. 1, and "Introduction," *Lectures*, 1933.

<sup>13</sup>"Introduction," *Lectures*, 1936, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup>These quotations from *Lectures*, 1919, p. 5, *Prickly Pear*, 1924, p. 192, *The Optimist*, February 20, 1930, p. 1, February 25, 1920, p. 3, February 5, 1925, p. 1, February 22, 1923, p. 1, *Abilene Reporter-News*, February 20, 1928, and *Prickly Pear*, 1920, p. 135. As late as February 15, 1952, *The Optimist*, reported: "Most teachers assign less outside work during lecture week so that students may attend many lectures and then not go sleepless doing lessons." p. 1.

<sup>15</sup>The Brewer reference from *Prickly Pear*, 1931, p. 108, and *The Optimist*, February 22, 1934, p. 3, and the Campbell reference from *The Optimist*, March 8, 1923, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup>*The Optimist*, March 6, 1930, p. 4, and March 3, 1927, p. 3. The satire stated: "After seeing some long-winded Demosthenes rattle his jawbone at a sleeping audience for a period of time, too large to mention, I feel that some might be inspired to attempt this little stunt. For that reason I shall tell you how to become a public speaker. First, you must be able to wear a wide and profound expression on the anterior portion of the head. Second, you must have an ever abundant supply of heated atmosphere (or hot air). Third, you must be able to make ferocious, verocious, and diabolical sounds. It matters little what you say. That is not the point. Make the building ring with groans, sighs, shrieks, and moans. Fourth, you must be able to make such motions with your hands that can best be described by comparing them to a woman pumping water, a crow flying, or better yet, a Jew talking to a vanishing customer."

<sup>17</sup>*The Optimist*, February 20, 1930, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup>R. C. Bell, personal interview, October 21, 1961.

<sup>19</sup>*Gospel Advocate*, January 27, 1950, p. 210.

<sup>20</sup>*Gospel Advocate*, February 23, 1949, p. 189.

<sup>21</sup>*The Optimist*, February 16, 1951, p. 1, and *Gospel Advocate*, February 4, 1948, p. 212.

<sup>22</sup>*Abilene Reporter-News*, February 19, 1959, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup>*Vision*, April 1960, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup>Don H. Morris, unpublished Lectureship publicity memorandum, 1949, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup>*Abilene Reporter-News*, February 24, 1950, and February 22, 1951, and *Christian Chronicle*, January 9, 1952, p. 1. The 1952 announcement also appeared in such papers as the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, *Dallas Times Herald*, *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, and *Houston Post*.

<sup>26</sup>*Abilene Reporter-News*, February 22, 1959, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup>*Abilene Reporter-News* February 26, 1953, p. 6, and "Preface," *Lectures*, 1955.

<sup>28</sup>J. D. Thomas, personal interview, October 24, 1961.

<sup>29</sup>*Abilene Reporter-News*, February 22, 1933, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup>"The Power of Radio," *Lectures*, 1952, p. 204.

<sup>31</sup>Jesse P. Sewell, personal interview, October 21, 1961.

<sup>32</sup>*The Optimist*, January 27, 1927, p. 1, and R. C. Bell, personal interview, October 22, 1961.

<sup>33</sup>Homer E. Moore, "Introduction," *Lectures*, 1935, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup>Quotations in this paragraph taken from *The Optimist*, February 19, 1920, p. 4, and the *Abilene Reporter-News*, February 21, 1919, p. 6, Feb-

<sup>35</sup>From *The Optimist*, February 24, 1921, p. 4, and January 27, 1927, p. 1. p. 1.

<sup>36</sup>M. Norvel Young, personal interview, December 20, 1960.

<sup>37</sup>*The Optimist*, January 27, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup>Quotations from this paragraph drawn from R. C. Bell, personal interview, October 22, 1961, Jesse P. Sewell, personal interview, October 24, 1961, *The Optimist*, January 18, 1934, p. 1, and the *Abilene—Reporter-News*, February 19, 1959, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup>*The Optimist*, March 4, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup>*The Optimist*, February 26, 1931, p. 1, and Don H. Morris, personal interview, October 25, 1961.

<sup>41</sup>"Publisher's Announcement," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, p. 3.

<sup>42</sup>*Abilene Reporter-News*, January 6, 1918, p. 6, *Prickly Pear*, 1924, p. 192, *The Optimist*, January 27, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup>*The Optimist*, February 20, 1930, p. 1, February 18, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup>*Prickly Pear*, 1923, p. 90, 1924, p. 192, and 1929, p. 196. Roy H. Lanier and James H. Childress were graduate lecturers in 1924 and 1929 respectively.

<sup>45</sup>*Abilene Reporter-News*, February 20, 1921, p. 6, February 23, 1920, p. 4, *The Optimist*, February 17, 1921, p. 1, and *Lectures*, 1919, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup>*Prickly Pear*, 1924, p. 192, and *Abilene Reporter-News*, February 18, 1923, p. 4.





PART II

THE MESSAGE

OF THE LECTURESHIP

*We believe in the Divinity of Christ and in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.*

*Cornerstone  
Hardin Administration Building  
Abilene Christian College*



# 5

## Back to the Bible

It does not take a prophet to "discern the signs of the times," nor the son of a prophet to forecast the nature of the fight that must be fought within the next few years. The enemy has challenged us and must be met; yea, rather, "the fight is on" and we must meet the foe and give to the great hosts of young people who should and will be educated "the heritage of them that fear the Lord"; we are under obligation to show that the Bible stands the test of criticism; the present age makes that demand upon those of us who believe in God and accept the Bible as His inspired word.<sup>1</sup>

Despite George A. Klingman's disclaimer, it was prophetically appropriate that he should include these words in the opening paragraph of the first address ever delivered on the Abilene Christian College Lectureship. The inerrant authority of the Bible was the indispensable cornerstone upon which the Restoration movement had been founded. And yet, by the first decade of the twentieth century, church historians could quite accurately report: "One of the most obvious effects of the scientific spirit has been to weaken the unquestioning ac-

ceptance of the authority of the Bible."<sup>2</sup> Jars of germs and skeletons of the highest anthropoid apes had been marshaled into an imposing array of faith-shaking evidence. For the lecturers to ignore the problems pertaining to science was to forfeit their claims as "seekers of truth." To surrender to the allegations was to impeach the validity of the book upon which their faith was founded. The unavoidable response must be one of unyielding defense: "... yea, rather, 'the fight is on' ... we are under obligation to show that the Bible stands the test of criticism."

For centuries Christians had assumed that the Bible was a special revelation from God and that whatever it declared or decreed was to be accepted as truth without question. In 1892, however, President Harper of the new University of Chicago warned his Chautauqua audience of a rationalistic movement in which "the supernatural is ruled out. What is left? A few harmless stories; a few well-meant but mistaken warnings; a few dead songs; and many unfulfilled predictions."<sup>3</sup>

For the typical modernist of the early twentieth century the Bible was a varied literature issuing out of the long development of Hebrew and Christian tradition. Its validity as a final authority for religious belief was questionable; but it was exceedingly valuable when approached like any other literature, for whatever inspiration and guidance its several parts actually contained. It was no longer necessary to expend labor harmonizing the hopelessly discordant in the interest of an artificial theory of verbal inspiration. Above all, the modernist claimed that the spiritual force of the Bible was not weakened but strengthened when so used. Shortly before the turn of the century, Washington Gladden phrased the compromise position of many so-called modernists:

Are not the idolaters who make it treason to disbelieve a single word of the Bible, and the iconoclasts who treat it as nothing better than any other book, equally far from the truth? Is it not the part of wisdom to use the book rationally, but reverently; to refrain from worshipping the letter, but to rejoice in the gifts of the Spirit which it proffers?<sup>4</sup>

The Fundamentalists responded that under such qualifying clauses the Bible was no longer a revelation. Instead of a message from God to men, it was merely men's thoughts about God. Christianity, the Fundamentalists contended, had been founded upon an infallible message from God, to which all human reason must be subjected. If in the event of conflict between revelation and scholarship human judgment was to be the knife which bisected the Bible into portions of truth and error, then, argued the conservatives, reason rather than revelation has become the norm in religion. In his 1925 address, "The Indestructible Vitality of the Bible," just months prior to the Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee, Abilene lecturer W. M. Davis charged:

At the present time three recognized influences are converging on the Bible in an adverse way. Science is being diverted from its useful channel in an attempt to discredit the word of God . . . . Natural philosophy is being diverted from its useful sphere with a view to destroying the miraculous element of the Bible . . . . Higher criticism has joined hands with speculative science and false philosophy in an effort against the Bible.<sup>5</sup>

It was into this agitated emotional and intellectual environment that speakers at Abilene stepped when they rose to address Lectureship audiences on the nature and purpose of the Bible. This chapter and the next one consider the more than sixty lectures which dealt with the Bible—its inspiration, its relationship to science and the evolutionary hypothesis, the higher criticism of the Bible, and the study of the Bible.

### *The Inspiration of the Bible*

"It is significant," declared C. A. Norred in 1936, "that almost universally men have agreed that a Being worthy of worship would necessarily possess such qualities as would move him to reveal to those beneath him those things essential to their welfare and happiness."<sup>6</sup> To the men who lectured in Abilene and for the audience which listened, there was no

question more vital than that of inspiration. If the Bible were not of divine origin, they should not bow to its claims of authority, rely upon its statements of fact, and could not derive comfort and hope from its promises. In fact, the journey from their homes to the Lectureship had no real purpose if the Bible was but the work of men. On the other hand, if the Bible came from God, its authority was unquestionable and its statements infallible. For those who spoke and for those who listened, much was at stake.

The question of inspiration was not only crucial to the Abilene assembly but was at the very heart of the orthodox reaction across the nation. As the Lectureship was becoming a brotherhood "institution," other conservative bodies took official action to reaffirm their faith in the Bible as an inspired revelation. In 1923, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church re-adopted the "Five-Points" originally passed at its 1910 session. The minutes of the meeting read:

Furthermore, the General Assembly calls the attention of the Presbyteries to the deliverance of the General Assembly of 1910, which deliverance is hereby affirmed and which is as follows:

1. It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards that the Holy Spirit did so inspire, guide and move the writers of the Holy Scripture as to keep them from error.<sup>7</sup>

A year earlier, the Northern Baptist denomination had passed a similar resolution. In the strategy move designed to offset the advances of liberalism, the convention's minutes read:

Whereas: The Northern Baptist Convention, in its 1922 session, held at Indianapolis, officially declared the New Testament to be the sufficient ground of its faith,  
and

Whereas: There is a wide difference of opinion among our Baptist people, as to what the New Testament does teach,

Therefore: Be it resolved that the Bible teaches, and we believe,

1. *Of the Scriptures*—That the Bible was written by men supernaturally inspired; that it has truth without any admixture of error for its matter; that, as originally written, it is both scientifically and historically true and correct; and therefore is and shall remain to the end of the age, the only complete and final revelation of the will of God to man; the true center of the Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and opinions should be tried.<sup>8</sup>

In 1923, William Jennings Bryan, the titular head of the Fundamentalist party, wrote an article on the "Five-Points." He declared that "the Bible is either the Word of God or a man-made book." Concerning the first of the fundamentals, the inspiration of the Bible, Bryan said:

Upon the first proposition all the rest depends. If the Bible is true—that is, so divinely inspired as to be free from error—then the second, third, fourth and fifth propositions follow inevitably, because they are based upon what the Bible actually says in language clear and unmistakable. If, on the other hand, the Bible is not to be accepted as true, there is no reason why anybody should believe anything in it that he objects to, no matter upon what his objection is founded.<sup>9</sup>

To these thundering reaffirmations from organized Protestantism the modernists responded that they likewise believed the Bible to be in a sense inspired, but not infallibly so; to be valuable, but not perfect; to contain the word of God, but not equal to the word of God. The appeal of their position was undergirded with the insistent plea that their new view was not the destroyer but the savior of the Bible. William Newton Clarke, a well-known advocate of the new theology, said succinctly: "The Bible is inspired as it is inspired, and not as we may think it ought to be inspired."<sup>10</sup> An editorial in the *Christian Century* declared in 1924:

On the other hand, the Modernist starts with no preconception as to what the Bible ought to be, but is interested to discover what it actually reveals regarding its origin and nature. He perceives that the Protes-



tant reaction from the papal dogma of an infallible church resulted in the opposing doctrine of an infallible Bible, and that neither of these claims rests upon valid grounds. The Bible is not a supernaturally produced or safeguarded collection of documents, but the honest and reverent work of men living at various periods in the history of the Hebrew and Jewish people, over an interval of more than a thousand years; that it is the record of the most notable chapters in the history of religion . . . . These writings lay no claims to exactness in matters of history, chronology, or science .”<sup>11</sup>

“The greatest of all books,” continued Robert A. Ashworth, “is the Bible, the supreme literature of the spiritual life . . . but it is not infallible or inerrant, nor does it claim to be so.”<sup>12</sup> Shailer Matthew in his definitive work, *The Faith of Modernism*, maintained that deep within the modernist movement was a method of appreciating and using the Bible. He contended that the crucial conflict did not lie in differing degrees of loyalty to or respect for the Bible, but in dissimilar presuppositions regarding the Bible and the methods for studying it. Explaining his contention, he asserted:

The true method is followed by the Modernist: to study the Bible with full respect for its sanctity but with equal respect for the student’s intellectual integrity. We must begin with the facts concerning it, interpret its actual value and use it for what it is actually worth. Only thus can it properly minister to our spiritual needs.<sup>13</sup>

Auguste Sabatier, author of the significant book *Religions of Authority*, summarized the modernistic understanding of inspiration:

These writings, therefore, have no appearance of being the authorized publication of divine oracles, they appear as the spontaneous production of a great classic literature, born of a profound religious faith, of a powerful common inspiration, but in which the general unity does not exclude a diversity of genius, of thought, and of style, and in which are not lacking, side by side with beautiful thoughts and striking truths, imperfections of form, errors of detail, traces of former prejudices, and long superannuated methods of exegesis and reasoning.<sup>14</sup>

In their defense of the doctrine of inerrant inspiration, the Abilene lecturers were in essential agreement with such Fundamentalist leaders as Machen, Bryan, Horsch, Macartney, Riley, Gray, Straton and Torrey.<sup>15</sup> Although they rarely referred to the writings of these men, it is reasonable to conjecture that they were familiar with and encouraged by the vigilance of their contemporaries in the larger struggle. The few works which the speakers published during the period from 1920 to 1936 fit squarely as to subject matter and argumentation into the broad conservative mosaic.<sup>16</sup> In 1919, G. Dallas Smith served as the first principal speaker at the Lectureship. His series of five addresses on the Bible demonstrated awareness of the basic writings of the Fundamentalist leaders. Emphasizing the superiority of biblical teaching as evidencing divine inspiration, Smith cited the champion of Bible believers, William Jennings Bryan:

Mr. Bryan has challenged the scoffers and infidels who say the Bible was written by men to produce such a book as proof that men could write a Bible, but the challenge has never been accepted. Mr. Bryan insists that if men two thousand or three thousand years ago could write the Bible, surely men of today, whose advantages are far greater, ought to be able to produce a Bible. Still they make no attempt to do it, and thus they stand self condemned. The writers of the Bible are strictly in a class to themselves, writing as no other men ever have written.<sup>17</sup>

In discussing their concept of inspiration, the lecturers frequently referred to the etymology of the term. The editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, B. C. Goodpasture, told his 1950 Abilene audience:

"Inspiration" literally means a breathing in. It is derived from two Latin words, *in* and *spiro*, which means to blow or breathe into. In the original the Greek word *theopneustos* is employed. It is composed of two words—*Theos*, God; and *Pneustos*, breathed . . . God-spirited, or God-breathed, or 'filled with the breath of God' . . . . Inspiration means that influence which God exercises through the Holy Spirit over the minds of Biblical

writers to make them infallible in the receiving and recording of his will.<sup>18</sup>

To the Abilene lecturers, inspiration was a supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon divinely chosen men in consequence of which their writings became authoritative and infallible. The evidence advanced to demonstrate the inspiration of the Bible fell into two classes—internal and external. Goodpasture explained:

From the very nature of the case, however, the chief arguments in favor of the divine origin of the Bible are largely internal. This fact does not militate against the arguments in favor of inspiration. If the contents of a given bottle were in question, the best way to find out the truth would be to make a careful analysis of what was in the bottle. The internal evidence would be more conclusive than any kind of external evidence that could be produced.<sup>19</sup>

The unity of the scriptures was the internal quality most often pointed to as an evidence of inspiration. The lecturers were in agreement with conservatives at large in this stress upon the Bible's unity. James M. Gray, the Dean of Moody Bible Institute, wrote: "The character of its contents, the unity of its parts, the fulfillment of its prophecies . . . all these go to show that it is divine, and if so, that it may be believed in what it says about itself."<sup>20</sup> John Horsch's 1920 book, *Modern Religious Liberalism* was typical of scores of volumes dedicated to exposing the "destructiveness of modernist theology." On the point of biblical unity, Horsch declared:

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are an inseparable whole. The Old Testament Scriptures are the foundation, the foreshadowing and promise of the New . . . But the fact remains and cannot be too strongly emphasized, that though God's revelation in Scripture is of a progressive character, the whole Bible is God's inspired word.<sup>21</sup>

W. D. Campbell, a Detroit minister, journeyed to Abilene in 1923 to speak of "The Book of the Past, the Present, and the Future." He declared:

The writing of the Bible covered a period of about 1,500 years. This book was written by about forty different writers. Holy men of God, who spake, and wrote, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. That is, God taught the writers what to say. The majority of those writers never saw each other face to face. They wrote at different times: There was no chance for the writers to have any collusion. They wrote independently of each other, and yet when their writings are brought together, there is perfect harmony and agreement.<sup>22</sup>

In 1936, Clarence C. Morgan emphasized that the Bible was written primarily in two languages, on three continents, by about forty different men from all walks of life:

... some learned and some unlearned; there were lawyers, doctors, farmers, fishermen, capitalists, paupers, kings and sheep-herders, and yet, with all of this diversity of time, place, language, and people, there is not a single error or contradiction in it. Every single statement of a scientific, historical, or prophetic nature, agrees perfectly with known facts.<sup>23</sup>

"This book," said Melvin Wise in 1958, "contains law, history, hymns, prayers, biographies, sermons, and letters. Yet all the writers unite in presenting one grand theme. This unity is so remarkable that an accidental authorship is out of the question."<sup>24</sup> While stressing this general thematic unity, many speakers also mentioned the fulfillment of prophecy, historical accuracy, and scientific foreknowledge as features of the Bible which support its consonance with other fields of learning.

In addition to the unity of the Bible, lecturers often pointed to the superiority of biblical teaching as evidence of divine inspiration. This was also a means of proof commonly used by leading Fundamentalist writers. For instance, in 1925 Thomas J. McCrossan, a respected professor of Greek and Hebrew for the Presbytery of Minneapolis, published a book which featured five reasons "why we know the Bible is inspired of God." In addition to prophetic fulfillment, scientific

foreknowledge, and historical accuracy, two of his "reasons" were related to the character and influence of the biblical message: "the moral and spiritual teachings of the Bible," and the fact that his teachings "alone can transform character."<sup>25</sup> McCrossan's book is typical of hundreds of others published between 1915 and 1930.

In the effort to negate the infallibility of the scriptures, modernist writers countered that while the Bible possesses noble and elevating inspirations they are mingled with gross and immoral ideas. Durant Drake pressed the point to details:

God's anger and desire for vengeance are repeatedly mentioned; and the picture the unprejudiced reader would form of this Jewish deity from many Old Testament passages is that of a cruel and blood-thirsty tyrant. He "hardens Pharaoh's heart" that he may punish the Egyptians in a spectacular manner; He throws stones down from Heaven on Israel's foes; He commands the sun to stand still that more of them may be slain before dark; He bids His chosen people invade the land of a neighboring tribe, burn all their cities, slay all the males, adults and children, and all the married women, and keep the virgins for their own enjoyment; He slays seventy thousand innocent Israelites for David's sin in taking a census of the people.<sup>26</sup>

Although the Abilene speakers did not deal with the liberal charge that the Bible presents "bits of dross amid the gold," they did exert much effort in emphasizing the incomparable worth of the "gold." In a 1919 lecture, G. Dallas Smith asked:

Have you ever stopped to consider what the Bible has done for the world and mankind. It has made better homes, better fathers, better mothers, better husbands, better wives, and better children. It has made better masters, better servants, better teachers, and better pupils . . . . The Bible has been the forerunner of enlightenment, civilization and progress. Wherever it has been read, loved, and obeyed, the land has been made to prosper and blossom as the rose. It has built our schools, established our orphanages, and founded our institutions for the blind and the infirm.<sup>27</sup>

In illustrating the power and influence of Bible teachings, speakers gave attention to its impact upon world civilization, its cultural contributions, its transforming power, and its power to comfort. L. R. Wilson's 1936 lecture, "The Influence of the Bible," discussed the relationship of the Bible to the fields of painting, music, printing, architecture, language and literature, and dramatics. He credited the impact of the scriptures with such advances as the abolition of slavery, sorcery, and infanticide, the liberation of women, and the creation of respect for civil law. "It has done more," said Wilson, "to eliminate ignorance, malice, greed, and selfishness, than any other force in the world. It has lifted man up mentally, physically, and spiritually."<sup>28</sup>

After discussing in detail the moral, intellectual, and emotional contributions made through biblical teaching, Yater Tant concluded in 1946:

Can we credit for one minute the monstrous absurdity that the book which has had the greatest moral effect, the most stimulating intellectual effect, and the richest emotional effect of all ages of the world is at the same time the most blatant falsehood that ever existed? Are we willing to say that falsehood and fabrications and plain unadorned lies have proved the greatest boon to civilization, have brought the greatest happiness to the race, have lifted lives to the noblest pitch of living the earth has even seen.<sup>29</sup>

The indestructibility of the Bible was also featured as evidence of its superior teachings and proof of its divine inspiration. Robert C. Jones lectured in 1942 on the theme, "The Word of the Lord Endureth."

Thousands of books have been written and millions of dollars spent in trying to destroy the Bible and its influence. Misguided men and women have written many foolish and contradictory books, claiming divine origin for them . . . . In spite of all the strenuous opposition for 1900 years, the Word of the Lord endureth . . . .<sup>30</sup>

The Abilene speakers also emphasized the fact that the Bible has been the world's best seller in every century since the invention of the printing press. Melvin Wise, speaking of the "phenomenal circulation of the scriptures," referred to a 1956 report of the American Bible Society which revealed that the Bible has been translated into 1,109 languages, and has found its way into every corner of the earth.

An interesting facet of the national controversy between liberals and conservatives which was reflected in the Abilene speechmaking concerned the method or nature of divine inspiration. An article in the liberal *Christian Century* asserted: "Both hold that the Bible is inspired of God, and is in a unique sense the word of God . . ." <sup>31</sup> The conservatives, however, refused to recognize any common ground for fellowship, claiming that the two positions were separated by a vast difference in theory concerning the nature of biblical inspiration. In short, the issue was whether God had *verbally* guided the writers of the Bible both in thought and in language, or whether the writers, while divinely inspired in thought, were at liberty to choose their own language. Abilene speaker Jack Meyer warned that it was customary for modernism to willingly accept the general plan of the Bible, while at the same time refusing to accept all of the language of the Bible. Such a refusal was grounds for Paul Southern's 1946 indictment: "Thousands of preachers now occupying denominational pulpits no longer believe in the inspiration of the scriptures."<sup>33</sup> B. C. Goodpasture suggested the problem in his 1950 message:

In view of the various modern uses of the word, it is hardly enough to say that the Bible is inspired. Almost any modernist will admit that it is inspired, if you will let him define what he means . . . . As a rule in granting that the Bible is inspired, he means only in the sense that Shakespeare, Milton, and Browning were inspired.<sup>34</sup>

Some of the liberals, though by no means all of them, held that the writers had recorded the thoughts given them by God but were not under special guidance in the selection of

language.<sup>35</sup> Gerald Birney Smith suggested that such thoughts had perhaps been given to the writers by means of their personal experiences with God. This concept of inspiration was frequently labeled the "natural" or "thought" theory. "We are becoming accustomed to the use of the Bible as a book of religious experience," wrote Professor Smith, "rather than a supernaturally produced literature."<sup>36</sup> The modernists were particularly irritated with the apparent mechanical and literalistic nature of the verbal position, charging that it reduced the writers to mere passive machines. They also asserted that many conscientious people having been taught to believe "all the Bible or none at all," had become understandably disenchanted with the literalistic word for word theory and were thus driven into rank skepticism. Admitting in his 1903 book that the verbal theory was "most convenient," E. C. Jefferson nonetheless branded it as obscure and absurd.

If you ask why so absurd a theory held such a long-continued sway over the minds of men, the answer is that the theory of verbal inspiration is the simplest of all possible theories, and most easily managed. If you say that God wrote this book from the first word to the last, you say something which a child can understand, and so long as you believe this you know exactly where you are. If anybody says there are mysteries in the Bible, you can reply there are mysteries in nature; if someone says there are contradictions in the Scriptures, you can say there are contradictions everywhere. If someone says there are pages here which are unsavory or which apparently have no significance, you can say that that is because we do not discern the hidden, spiritual meanings. If someone says there are moral atrocities sanctioned in the Bible, you can reply with indignation, "Who are you that you should find fault with God?"<sup>37</sup>

The conservatives met the liberal assault upon the verbal theory by reasoning that divine guidance in the selection of language was essential to the production of an infallible revelation. "Inspiration, then," reasoned John Horsch, "must be distinguished from illumination."<sup>38</sup> Horsch and his colleagues contended that even God himself could not give



a thought to man without the words to clothe it. They insisted that the thoughts and the words were inseparable, as much so "as a sum and its figures, or a tune and its notes." Dr. A. J. Gordon observed: "To deny that the Holy Spirit speaks in Scripture is an intelligible position, but to admit that He speaks, it is impossible to know what He says except as we have his words."<sup>39</sup> Hence, the question of verbal inspiration loomed as the key which determined whether the Bible was of human or divine production. If the Bible were nothing more than the record of the religious experiences of certain illuminated men, or even a more or less questionable record of what they thought they experienced, then it was at once both human and imperfect in character. If the scriptures were merely man's enlarging thought and discovery of God rather than God's progressive revelation of Himself to man, then they were worthless as a guide from the predicament of sin. Writing in the *Princeton Theological Review*, a learned journal which supported conservative views, Professor George Johnson summed up the conservative case: "If inspiration does not render the holy Scriptures infallible, their nature is no longer divine but human."<sup>40</sup>

The verbal theory of inspiration, sometimes called the plenary theory, was clearly the position which the early Lectureship speakers defended. The early lecturers who touched upon the method of inspiration maintained that the Holy Spirit put the words into the mouth of the speaker or guided the pen in the writing of the words in the original documents. Maurice D. Gano, a Dallas lawyer, was the first lecturer to discuss in detail the "how" of inspiration. His understanding of the verbal theory led him to conclude that the writers of the Bible simply recorded the words which the Holy Spirit dictated. In his 1919 lecture, "The Verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures," Gano argued that the difficulty of accurately expressing thoughts in words, and the fact that the correctness of a thought can only be tested in words, were "unanswerable reasons why the writers did not choose their own words." He also felt that the use of the Greek language was a matter of divine purpose:

Professors tell us that no medium for the expression of thought has ever equalled the Greek language . . . . This language, at least in its perfection, became a fit medium for the expression of God's thought. At this opportune time, Christ came, and the plan of salvation, the Gospel for the human race, was written in the words of this perfect language. And then God suffered the language to die. Its terms became rigid, in death; a dead language does not change. The meanings of its words remained fixed forever. Thus, for that age and for all coming time we have the perfect law crystallized in the perfect language; the living, changeless and perfect law, expressed in the dead, changeless and perfect language.<sup>41</sup>

Judge Gano concluded that if he could believe that God left the wording of the Bible to the erring judgment of fallible men, "I would take my Bible and my pencil and after every duty of the present and every promise of the future I would put a question mark."<sup>42</sup> "Jehovah has two books," continued Warren E. Starnes in 1928, "the book of nature and the book of revelation. He has written the book of nature in things; he has written the book of revelation in words."<sup>43</sup> In his 1955 address, George W. DeHoff unequivocally advanced the literalistic point of view. "Every word of the Bible is inspired," he declared. "If God had wanted another 'i' dotted or another 't' crossed, he would have done it."<sup>44</sup> Pat Hardeman, who also lectured in 1955, was perhaps less emphatic, but equally as conclusive in his attack upon liberalism and his defense of verbal inspiration. Hardeman said:

. . . Some of the preachers in the recent liberal movement have said the same thing of verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. They say, that is, that such a doctrine as verbal inspiration is legalistic and literalistic. May I suggest as kindly and as strongly as I know how: there is no New Testament passage, or principle, which indicates that God is concerned over the possibility of our studying and following too closely the exact meaning of the words of the New Covenant! There is every indication that God would have us study every word, every line, every syllable, and try to translate such teachings as are there found into daily living.<sup>45</sup>

While some conservatives defended the concept of inerrant revelation by means of such direct counter-attack, others claimed that the modernists had actually misrepresented the real doctrine of verbal inspiration. They urged that the verbal theory not be confounded with the mechanical or dictation theory, a concept of passive inspiration which implied the absolute suppression of the human element. In 1925, E. C. Vanderlaan reported that if the verbal theory were to be equated with the mechanical concept, even moderate conservatives would immediately consider it an untenable explanation for the method of inspiration.<sup>46</sup> The conservatives hastened to respond, however, that no tension existed between an accurate understanding of the verbal theory and the presence of the human element in the wording of the scriptures. They also insisted that the real nature of the verbal doctrine did not nullify the concept of an inerrant revelation. James M. Gray explained the supposed middle-ground between the mechanical and "natural" theories:

But we are insisting upon no theory—not even the verbal theory—if it altogether excludes the human element in the transmission of the sacred word. As Dr. Henry B. Smith says, "God speaks through the personality as well as the lips of His messengers," and we may pour into the word "personality" everything that goes to make it, the age in which the person lived, his environment his degree of culture, his temperament and all the rest. As Wayland Hoyt expressed it, "Inspiration is not a mechanical, crass, bald compulsion of the sacred writers, but rather a dynamic, divine influence over their freely-acting faculties" in order that the latter in relation to the subject-matter may be kept inerrant, i.e., without mistake or fault.<sup>47</sup>

Although the Abilene speakers were united in their rejection of the "natural" explanation of inspiration—that the Bible writers were inspired only as were Milton, Browning, or Shakespeare—there was a significant division of feeling as to the nature of the theory of verbal inspiration. Hall L. Calhoun, whose Harvard Ph.D. and experience at Transylvania College made him a brotherhood rarity, was the first Abilene lecturer

to recommend the compromise position. In his 1929 address, "Our Religion," he carefully qualified the verbal theory to include the dimension of human personality in the wording of the scriptures. Assuming that he spoke for the movement as a whole, Calhoun explained:

We believe that the inspiration of the writers, while sufficient to guide them into all truth, and to guard them from all error, did not convert them into mere automatons, dictographs, or mechanical instruments; that it left each writer free to use to the highest of his ability his own personality, style, and vocabulary; that the province of this inspiration was not subjecting nor subverting, but rather that of suggesting and supplementing.<sup>48</sup>

B. C. Goodpasture, in his 1950 speech, "The Inspiration of the Bible," came out strongly for the theory of verbal inspiration. "The words," he affirmed, "as well as the thoughts are inspired." But later in his lecture he voiced agreement with Calhoun and appeared to recommend a more moderate brand of verbal inspiration than that advocated by many earlier speakers. He admitted that the writers were free to speak through their own individual background, personality, vocabulary, and style. "Inspiration," he said, "did not involve the suspension or suppression of the human faculties, so neither did it interfere with the free exercise of the distinctive mental characteristics of the individual."<sup>49</sup>

David H. Bobo was the Abilene speaker who most boldly advocated the method of inspiration in which the individual writers enjoyed personal freedom in the recording of their accounts. Although he expanded only slightly the views of Calhoun and Goodpasture, a striking contrast emerges when Gano's 1919 concept of verbal inspiration is resurrected alongside Bobo's 1960 address, "Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible." Bobo stated:

Another factor involved is the number of different writers participating in the writing of Biblical history, each inevitably from his own particular viewpoint and

with his own set of emphasis. What different strands of tradition have lain behind them none can say with certainty. All these things, however, could not have failed to produce a certain diversity underneath the over-arching unity of the Bible. In these facts we see both the origin and the explanation of many alleged discrepancies.

In cases in which the same story is related or alluded to by two or more different writers, each necessarily leaving out what to him seems needless details, their stories may seem to disagree and yet may not necessarily contradict or antagonize each other.<sup>50</sup>

After stating "that on the surface there are innumerable discrepancies in the Bible," Bobo jolted many of his Lectureship predecessors by asserting: "Nothing is really at stake here except the possible theory that every original writer . . . was miraculously guarded against any minute lapse or slip."<sup>51</sup>

It was also at the 1960 program that Jack Meyer, a veteran preacher from the Deep South, selected conservative language to articulate a position with which both Gano and Bobo and all other Lectureship speakers would heartily concur:

...the same God who could conceive and execute the plan of redemption through Christ, and put it on record in the Bible clearly enough for modern theologians to see the plan, could and did . . . also guard the language of the Bible sufficiently to insure that we have the reliable word of God as he gave it.<sup>52</sup>

The lecturers believed that specially selected men had come under the influence of the Holy Spirit and had recorded the final and infallible will of the Creator in the Bible. Earliest speakers were generally agreed that the Bible was absolutely or verbally inspired—that God guided the writers both in thought and in the selection of every word used. A few speakers, however, suggested that the writers enjoyed the latitude of individual or personal expression in the recording of their accounts. While agreeing that God had inspired and protected the message of the original autographs,

a few recent speakers proposed that transmission errors or copyist flaws of several varieties had entered the text since the original canon was completed. Perhaps it would be accurate to conclude that the majority of the later speakers favored a modified verbal theory, as applied only to the original autographs. That is, while believing that the Holy Spirit influenced the very wording of the scriptures, they were nonetheless repelled by the mechanical or legalistic implications of the strict verbal view. On the other hand, while believing that each writer was free to color his account with his own style, personality, and background, they were vigorously suspicious of a theory which did not involve God in the actual selection of the language. It can also be concluded that the various shades of difference in the speakers' opinions found a common denominator and realized a practical meaning in the doctrine of infallibility.

### *Studying the Bible*

If the Bible is God's word, it ought to be studied diligently—and properly. G. Dallas Smith launched this theme with a series of five addresses in 1919: "Why Study the Bible" "Divisions of the Bible," "How 'To Study the Bible," "Mysteries of the Bible," and "Who Wrote the Bible." In one of his messages he stated the problem:

I confidently believe that much of the little time that is given to Bible study is wasted for the lack of a systematic plan of study . . . . Perhaps the most common way of reading the Bible among the masses is to allow it to fall open at random and read without anything definite in view . . . . Others think the only way to read the Bible profitably, is to read from book to book, from "lid to lid" in order . . . . Many others are contented to follow year after year the International Sunday School Lessons, limiting their Bible study almost altogether to this. The International Lesson plan, to my mind, is far from being perfect; in fact, it is distressingly defective. I seriously doubt if one would ever be able to get a clear and general grasp of the Bible as a whole by following the International Sunday School Lessons.<sup>53</sup>

Smith proffered a number of rules for Bible study: notice to whom the passage applies, study each passage in its proper setting, study every passage in the Bible that relates to a given subject, approach the study with an honest and open heart. In 1936, Melvin J. Wise recommended that the reader ask the following questions: Who speaks? To whom spoken? What spoken: narrative, prophesy or command? How spoken: figuratively, illustratively, or literally? For what purpose?<sup>54</sup>

Several speakers stressed the importance of "rightly dividing the word."<sup>55</sup> Smith urged Bible students to become familiar with the two testaments, the three dispensations and the sixty-six books. "If its contents are not properly classified," argued the colorful Early Arceneaux in 1921, "we will never understand the real teaching of the divine volume."<sup>56</sup> The lecturers thus spoke of the Bible in a deep spirit of reverence and with a keen sense of responsibility. It is virtually impossible to calculate how many times the walls of Sewell Auditorium resounded with the time-honored battle-cry: "When the Bible speaks, we will speak; where the Bible is silent, we will be silent." James Baird, an Oklahoma educator, concluded his 1952 address "Authority in Religion," with these appropriate words:

As I stand here and apprehend the thousands of elders and preachers that have been here in previous years, and have come or would like to be here during the coming week; and I think of the thousands of churches from which they came, I am thankful . . . . May we be humble and not proud; but resolute in our purpose of standing by the word of God by which Christ exercises his authority. Others before us have been unwilling to let the fires go out; now the matter is in our hands. Let us be careful that the fires of our fathers do not go out.<sup>57</sup>

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>George A. Klingman, "Destructive Higher Criticism," *Lectures*, 1919, p. 241. Although this address was printed in the 1919 volume, it was the keynote speech of the 1918 series.

<sup>2</sup>William Adams Brown, *The Church in America* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 142.

<sup>3</sup>William Rainey Harper, *Chautauqua Assembly Herald*, August 4, 1892, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>*Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Houghton Mufflin Co., 1891, pp. 380-381.

<sup>5</sup>*Lectures*, 1924-1925, pp. 76-78.

<sup>6</sup>"God Hath Spoken," *Lectures*, 1939, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup>E. C. Vanderlaan, *Fundamentalism versus Modernism* (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1925), p. 21.

<sup>8</sup>*Christian Work*, May 31, 1924, p. 702.

<sup>9</sup>"The Fundamentals," *Forum*, July, 1923, p. 1666.

<sup>10</sup>*Sixty Years with the Bible* (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1917), p. 133.

<sup>11</sup>*Christian Century*, April 3, 1924, p. 424.

<sup>12</sup>"Modernism and Christian Assurance," *Christian Work*, March 1, 1924, p. 269.

<sup>13</sup>*The Faith of Modernism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), p. 48.

<sup>14</sup>*Religions of Authority*, trans. Louise Seymour Houghton (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1904), p. 169.

<sup>15</sup>Macartney led the school of conservatives which held a qualified view of inerrancy. He admitted the possibility of a discrepancy between the numerals in Kings and Chronicles and suggested that the prophecy concerning Judas' disposal of the thirty pieces of silver should have been attributed to Jeremiah instead of Zechariah. He was as vigorous as any, however, in insisting that the crucial accounts of the virgin birth, the miracles, the substitutionary atonement, and so forth were inerrantly factual. *Presbyterian*, December 20, 1925, p. 93.

<sup>16</sup>See C. R. Nichol and R. L. Whiteside, *Sound Doctrine*, I (Clifton, Texas: C. R. Nichol, 1920); G. Dallas Smith, *Lectures on the Bible and What Is Man?* (Cincinnati, Ohio: F. L. Rowe, 1919); G. Dallas Smith, *Outlines of Bible Study* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1922); Allison N. Trice and Charles H. Roberson, *Bible versus Modernism* (Nashville: McQuiddy Press, 1935).

"Who Wrote the Bible," *Lectures*, 1919, p. 183. Among other places, Bryan's challenge was issued in an article titled "The Fundamentals," *Forum*, July, 1923, pp. 1665-1680.

"The Inspiration of the Bible," *Lectures*, 1950, p. 160.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 164. James Orr, a Fundamentalist leader of Glasgow, referred to internal proofs as "the Bible's own test of inspiration." He urged: "Look at its structure; look at its completeness; look at it in the



clearness and fullness and holiness of its teachings . . . ." *The Fundamentals* (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, 1910), IX, chap. IV, 617

<sup>20</sup>*The Fundamentals*, III, 310.

<sup>21</sup>*Modern Religion Liberalism* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1920), p. 33.

<sup>22</sup>*Lectures*, 1922-1923, pp. 173-174

<sup>23</sup>"The Genuineness and Credibility of the Bible," *Lectures*, 1936, p. 52.

<sup>24</sup>"God's Word," *Lectures*, 1958, p. 118.

<sup>25</sup>*The Bible: Its Christ and Modernism* (New York: The Christian Alliance Publishing Company, 1925), p. 5.

<sup>26</sup>*Problems of Religion: An Introductory Survey* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), p.272.

<sup>27</sup>"Why Study the Bible," *Lectures*, 1919, p. 107.

<sup>28</sup>*Lectures*, 1936, p. 124.

<sup>29</sup>"The Bible—God's Revelation—(II)," *Lectures*, 1946, p. 72.

<sup>30</sup>*Lectures*, 1942, p. 100.

<sup>31</sup>*Christian Century*, April 3, 1924, p. 424.

<sup>32</sup>"The Unity of the Bible," *Lectures*, 1960, p. 103.

<sup>33</sup>"This Changing World," *Lectures*, 1946, p. 51.

<sup>34</sup>Goodpasture, *op. cit.*, p. 158. Professor Edmond Scribner Ames of the University of Chicago suggested that writers such as Tennyson, Whittier, Bryant, Lowell, Phillips, Brooks, Shakespeare, Maeterlinck, Kepler, Darwin, John Locke, and William James should be included in the sacred canon of scripture. *The New Orthodoxy*, p. 81, as quoted in Horsch, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>35</sup>"But the genuine Modernist goes further than this. He maintains that the Bible does not teach a single, harmonious system of doctrine, but contains various theologies of unequal value . . . its true value is found where it is used like any other literature." Vanderlaan, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup>*A Guide to the Study of the Christian Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916), p. 555.

<sup>37</sup>*Things Fundamental* (New York: T. Y. Crowell Company, 1903), p. 115. p. 115.

<sup>38</sup>Horsch, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>39</sup>As quoted in E. C. Vanderlaan, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

<sup>40</sup>*The Princeton Theological Review*, 194, p. 461.

<sup>41</sup>*Lectures*, 1919, p. 48.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>43</sup>"I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," *Lectures*, 1928-1929, p. 22.

<sup>44</sup>"The Word of God Which Lives and Abides," *Lectures*, 1955, p. 12.

<sup>45</sup>"The Letter and the Spirit," *Lectures*, 1955, p. 102.

<sup>46</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup>*The Fundamentals*, III, 434.

<sup>48</sup>"Our Religion," *Lectures*, 1928-1929, p. 341.

<sup>49</sup>Goodpasture, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-162.

<sup>50</sup>*Lectures*, 1960, p. 78.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 77. Lectureship Director J. D. Thomas reported mixed and strong reaction to Bobo's address, a significant lecture reviewed more closely later in this chapter.

<sup>52</sup>Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>53</sup>"How to Study the Bible," *Lectures*, 1919, pp. 116-117.

<sup>54</sup>"Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth," *Lectures*, 1936, pp. 13-14.

<sup>55</sup>Harvey Childress, "Our Misunderstood Bible," *Lectures*, 1928-1929, pp. 65-88.

<sup>56</sup>"The Promises, Law, and the Gospel," *Lectures*, 1920-1921, pp. 218-219. 219.

<sup>57</sup>*Lectures*, 1952, pp. 166-167.

# 6

## The Bible and Science

The question of an inerrant Bible came most conspicuously into focus during the science-religion controversy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Roots of the iconoclastic theories regarding the inspiration of the Bible could be traced to Darwin's 1859 publication of the *Origin of Species*. The theological naturalism spawned by evolution encouraged the view that the Bible and the religion it embodied were products of a naturalistic development. Believing that all life had evolved from pre-existent life, Darwin concluded that animals and plants had gradually evolved in the course of untold centuries. Discounting the Genesis account of creation, man was presented not as the handiwork of divine purpose, but as the chance product of a process of natural selection. With the January, 1860, circulation of an American edition of Darwin's thesis "an irrepressible conflict of ideas on science and religion began to parallel the struggle over slavery and secession."<sup>1</sup> By the century's turn, even such an ardent defender of orthodoxy as John Horsch was forced to admit that the doctrine, though "an unproved supposition, has become an integral part of 'the modern mind.'"<sup>2</sup>

*The National Conflict*

The modernists maintained that the essence of the Bible and the spirit of the Christian religion were salvaged from obscurity and made relevant by the compromise of theistic evolution. They argued that evolution furnished new evidence for the plan of God in the creation of the world more spiritually and intellectually satisfying than the old argument from special creation. The theory was especially welcomed as a reasonable relief from the thorny difficulties implicit within the Genesis account. They reasoned that man's opportunities for understanding God and being related to him were not terminated but greatly enhanced by the findings of science. Harry Emerson Fosdick's *New York Times* article, "A Reply to Bryan in the Name of Religion," asserted:

In a world nailed together like a box, God, the Creator, had been thought of as a carpenter who created the universe long ago; now, in a world growing like a tree, ever putting out new roots and branches, God has more and more been seen as the indwelling Spiritual life . . . . Positively the idea of an imminent God, which is the God of evolution, is infinitely grander than the occasional wonder-worker who is the God of an old theology.<sup>3</sup>

The modernists had very little patience with what they termed the sweeping generalizations and uniformed denials of their adversaries. Edwin Grant Conklin, a scientist of Princeton University, charged that Billy Sunday and William Jennings Bryan had avoided even a "second hand" study of the evidence for evolution and hence failed "to qualify as trustworthy witnesses." Citing the evidences drawn from morphology, physiology, embryology, paleontology, homology, heredity and variation, Conklin observed:

Against all this mountain of evidence which Mr. Bryan tries to blow away by a word, what does he bring in support of his view of special creation? Only this, that evolution denies the Biblical account of creation of man.

In the face of all these facts, Mr. Bryan and his kind hurl their medieval theology. It would be amusing if it were not so pathetic and disheartening to see these modern defenders of the faith beating their gongs and firing their giant crackers against the ramparts of science.<sup>4</sup>

Henry Fairchild Osborn, president of the American Museum of Natural History, was another scientist who questioned the scholarship of the Fundamentalists. *The Earth Speaks to Bryan* and *Evolution and Religion in Education* were the two polemical volumes he contributed to the controversy. Suggesting that the Bible itself supports the spiritual and moral evolution of man, he asserted: "Evolution by no means takes God out of the universe, as Mr. Bryan supposes, but it greatly increases both the wonder, the mystery, and the marvelous order which we call 'natural law,' pervading all nature."<sup>5</sup> Reviewing for readers of the *New York Times* the Foxhall, Piltdown, Heidelberg, Neanderthal, and Cro-Magon fossil discoveries, Osborn concluded:

It is a dramatic circumstance that Darwin had within his reach the head of the Neanderthal man without realizing that it constituted the "missing link" between man and the lower order of creation. All this evidence is today within reach of every schoolboy. It is at the service of Mr. Bryan.<sup>6</sup>

For the conservatives, on the other hand, the doctrine of evolution quickly became the great Goliath of the Philistine camp. "Anyone who accepts the Bible literally," admitted the liberal Gerald Birney Smith, "must reject the evolutionary theory."<sup>7</sup> It seemed obvious that the theories of verbal inspiration and evolution could not mutually prevail. Evolution not only cut across the throat of the first chapters of Genesis but equally contradicted the whole system of substitutionary atonement built upon man's fall and redemption. The conservatives maintained that the Bible was structured around the doctrine of sin inherent in the account of the fall of Adam and Eve. If sin were only the remains of the ape in man, then it was not only less serious, but man was less guilty. Man's

need of salvation by a divine redeemer was challenged; the very life of the Christian religion was at stake.<sup>8</sup> Admitting that God could have used evolution as the tool of creation had he so elected, they replied that the Bible distinctly taught that man did not evolve from lower species but was created by special design.

The conservatives of the country, in addition to fighting the spread of the theory by means of revivalistic preaching and state-level legislation, presented a number of scientists to speak for their side. Geologist George McCready Price, advertised as one of the greatest living scientists, was the spokesman for the Anti-Evolution League of America. In Los Angeles, Harry Rimmer became a Christian in 1920 and with publicational prolificancy set about to reconcile the facts of science with the Bible. He and fifty other men established the Research Science Bureau, "the only scientific association in existence whose charter specifically states that it is a corporation that is set for the scientific defence of the Word of God." Cole was of the opinion that the bulk of Rimmer's writing was nothing more than shibboleths of pseudo-science. Paul W. Rood organized the Bryan Bible League in California with the testimony: "In the year that Bryan died, I saw also the Lord. The league has come into being through a vision from God."<sup>9</sup> In Florida, the wealthy capitalist George F. Washburn offered through his Bible Crusaders of America five hundred dollars to any "Agnostic, Modernist, Evolutionist, or Atheist of equal prominence," who would meet William Bell Riley, John R. Straton, or J. Frank Norris in public debate. Two thousand dollars was offered any opponent courageous enough to enter a series of six debates. In Atlanta, the headquarters of Edward Young Clarke's Supreme Kingdom featured a gorilla shackled in chains. A final example from the myriad leagues which rushed forth to extinguish evolution was the American Science Foundation. It was started in 1928 in Chicago by Fred Ellsworth Bennett who charged that all evils of crime, communism, capitalism, and militarism resulted from evolution as the explanation of mankind's heritage.

The essence of Fundamentalism's rebuttal was that evolution, at its best, was but an unproved hypothesis. Bryan emphasized that "the word 'hypothesis,' though euphonious, dignified, and high-sounding, is merely a scientific synonym for the old-fashioned word 'guess.'" He called for Bible believers everywhere to enter the battle to "protect religion from its most insidious enemy."<sup>10</sup>

### *Abilene and the Evolution Theory*

The speakers at the Abilene Lectureship were among those who rose to meet the enemy's challenge. From 1918 to 1964 more than a dozen lecturers discussed the problems posed by evolution. Among this number were ministers, lawyers, and college professors. An analysis of their addresses reveals a united attitude toward the evolutionary theory, theistic or otherwise—total rejection. Like nationally prominent conservatives, the men at Abilene were unable to envisage any grounds for harmonizing the evolutionary hypothesis and the teachings of the Bible. In the early programs the methods of refutation, resembling those employed by contemporary Fundamentalists, ranged from righteous indignation to heated vituperation. Later speakers discredited the theory with considerably more academic respectability. While some arguments dwelt on the frailties of science in general, the sounder ones zeroed in on specific weaknesses of the evolutionary hypothesis per se.

In 1918, Dr. George A. Klingman assured his listeners that "several notable books bearing on this subject have appeared in the past year," suggesting that "there is no room to doubt the decadence of the Darwinian theory in the highest scientific circles of Germany."<sup>11</sup> A LeRoy Elkins continued the direct frontal attack in his 1925 lecture, "God Hath Spoken":

Darwinism, the only real rival of the Bible in all the earth, teaches that everything came by evolution,

that we came from a lower order of animals, and that these came from a still lower order, and that this line can be run to a single organic cell. Here is where Darwinism completely breaks down, commits suicide, and digs its own grave. The world that we know does not do things that way. Nothing comes from a single cell. The law as we see it in operation today is that it requires the positive and the negative—the male and the female. This is just as true of the vegetable kingdom as it is of the animal.<sup>12</sup>

In 1926, W. L. Oliphant's speech, "The Bible and Science," examined three branches of learning often used to discredit the Bible: geology, astronomy, and anthropology. He suggested that the nebula hypothesis was man's attempt to explain the beginning of the earth on naturalistic grounds. Oliphant described the theory that the earth and other planets were slowly evolved through untold ages from the circular movement of cloudy vapour or masses of incandescent gas, "as being founded upon a series of assumptions so gigantic that they . . . stretch human credulity to the very breaking point."<sup>13</sup> The fact that Saturn and Jupiter move from east to west, the moons of Uranus and Neptune revolve from west to east, while Venus and Mercury have almost no movement at all, was presented as evidence in conflict with the basis of the nebula theory.

Dealing more specifically with Darwinism, Oliphant discussed and discounted the Pithecanthropus, Heidelberg, Piltown, Neanderthal, Cro-Magnon, and Talgai fossil specimens as possible "missing links" from lower to higher life forms.

J. P. Sanders' 1958 lecture, "God, the Creator," treated the Darwinian hypothesis. He particularly stressed the "improbable assumption" upon which the theory rests:

H. H. Newman in his book, *Outlines in General Zoology*, says that even though conditions as we know them on the earth today would preclude the possibility of the origin of living matter from lifeless materials that, nevertheless, it is necessary for us to assume that



at some time conditions were so favorable that living forms arose from lifeless material. This, of course, is a violent assumption and involves a greater strain on one's credulity than anything a Christian is called upon to believe.<sup>14</sup>

Sanders drew the point of improbability even further:

If some such germ of life should come into existence on the earth by mere chance or even by creation, and if it were then left to itself, it is impossible for us to imagine its survival. How long could it possibly continue to live?<sup>15</sup>

The most thoroughgoing Lectureship analysis of the Darwinian theory was J. D. Thomas' 1960 speech, "The Present Status of the Doctrine of Organic Evolution." Admitting that "those who accept the doctrine count the others of us as being quite naive, and even obscurantist," Thomas explained:

The present status of the doctrine of organic evolution might correctly be called a sort of "spiritual cold war." Certainly there is no attitude of "willing co-existence" on the part of either side. Those who believe in the doctrine of organic evolution have little tolerance for those who do not, and vice versa.<sup>16</sup>

To the Abilene speakers, the Christian faith and the evolutionary hypothesis were mutually exclusive. They, with one accord, were unable to tolerate any measure of compatibility between the implications of Darwinism and the concept and an infallible Bible. While attacking the hypothesis at several junctures—no explanation of first life, inadequate theories of mechanism, the unlikeliness of chance probabilities, the absence of "missing links," and the limitations of dating techniques—their crucial conclusion was that the theory was but a theory, requiring faith on the part of those electing to embrace it.

In 1918, Klingman had boldly charged: "That the Darwinian theory has in the realms of nature not a single fact to

confirm it is the unequivocal testimony of men distinguished in their respective departments of scientific research."<sup>17</sup> Forty-two years later, with somewhat more modesty, Thomas made the same point: "... the doctrine of evolution today is really only an expression of faith on the part of those who hold it, and ... no single absolute fact of any kind has yet been determined that takes away our right to believe the Biblical account of creation."<sup>18</sup> The words of both men were strikingly reminiscent of Bryan's position: "Christianity has nothing to fear from any truth; no fact disturbs the Christian religion or the Christian. It is the unsupported guess that is substituted for science to which opposition is made, and I think the objection is a valid one."<sup>19</sup>

### *Three Attempts At Harmony*

Even among conservative believers, the prestige of science during the first three decades of the twentieth century was colossal. Merle Curti points out that in spite of traditional supernaturalism, the American environment provided congenial soil for the growth of the scientific point of view.<sup>20</sup> Under the deluge of new machines and the dictums of Albert Einstein the man in the street and the woman in the kitchen were ready to believe that science could accomplish anything. "When a prominent scientist comes out strongly for religion," said Dr. Fosdick, "all the churches thank Heaven and take courage as though it were the highest possible compliment to God to have Eddington believe in him."<sup>21</sup> Like the Fundamentalists, the Abilene Lectureship had seen no alternative but to unreservedly attack the evolutionary hypothesis. It did not, however, feel disposed to take on the whole scientific spirit of the age with its almost holy gamut of electrons, chromosomes, hormones, vitamins, reflexes, and psychoses. To fight evolution had been admittedly risky, but essential; to challenge science itself would have been suicidal. In searching for a solution to their dilemma, the lectures were reminded that evolution had been disposed of on the grounds that it was merely an unproven theory. Hence, they concluded

that the field was open to accommodate, with all consistency, the verified findings of science to the Christian faith.

It is certainly true that while the Abilene lecturers unanimously rejected the evolutionary hypothesis as an unproven theory inferior to the Genesis record, their attitudes toward scientific knowledge in general were varied and more favorable. From among the addresses which came to grips with the science-religion controversy, three dominant themes emerged, each embracing a chord of reconciliation. The first sought to avoid embarrassing conflict by appealing to the frailties of science. The second theme suggested that religion and science, though often at odds, could never actually clash because they dealt with different spheres of life; one the natural, the other the supernatural. The third approach was an attempt to harmonize proven scientific facts with the teachings of the Bible, to demonstrate the compatibility of science and religion.

W. L. Oliphant in 1926 was the first to affirm unwaveringly, "There are no conflicts between the Bible and Science":

The teachings of the Bible are true and only truth can be real science. Hence, a conflict is impossible. All the seeming discrepancies between science and the Bible may be accounted for by saying that where a difference appears, it is due to either ignorance of science or ignorance of God's word . . . . Many scientists are woefully ignorant of God's word. I venture the assertion that the average preacher knows more about science than the unbelieving scientist knows about Christianity.<sup>22</sup>

The limitations of science were also credited with creating most of the controversy concerning the age of the earth and the antiquity of man. Oliphant emphasized that a "number of prominent scientists now admit that geology knows nothing as to the age of the earth. Besides, the Bible does not say when the earth was created . . . ." He, too, quoted Bryan: "It is better to trust in the Rock of Ages, than in the age of the rocks."

There is no antagonism between the Bible and a completed science. Science must advance by climbing upon the dead ruins of discarded theories. Day by day she comes nearer to all truth and when, if ever, science learns all about God's great book of nature, every honest scientist will become a Christian, and upon the title page of the texts of science may be written the words: "In the beginning, God."<sup>23</sup>

J. D. Thomas echoed Oliphant's theory that a combination of biblical ignorance and scientific shortcoming caused the Genesis-geology incompatibility concerning the age of the earth. Questioning the idea that the earth was created in 4004 B.C., he revealed that Archbishop Ussher of the Church of England originated this notion by adding the ages of the patriarchs in the Hebrew text. Through Ussher's influence, explained Thomas, the figure was printed in the margin of the King James Version in 1701, "and many of us have thought that this is what the Bible taught . . . Actually, Ussher's findings are discounted today by all who have made a serious study of the matter." Thomas pointed his doubts toward the findings of geology and paleontology in an effort to demonstrate that the evidence of the high antiquity of man "is still suspect."

Since Romer acknowledges at least some degree of uncertainty in such dating, we have to conclude finally that we do not know for sure when man came upon the earth, nor does the Bible have any requirement at this point; but still there is good evidence from all the scientific disciplines to indicate that man is very recent. We know for sure that evolution is not by any means established, and we know that in order to believe in every statement of the Bible, we do not have to set any certain date for Adam. We can believe the Bible and accept every definite fact that science has advanced so far.<sup>24</sup>

A. DeWitt Chaddick, a 1938 lecturer, tersely summarized the views of his colleagues who held that any apparent quarrel between science and the Bible was largely due to the frailties of the former: "And mind you, I have no quarrel with

science. More power to science! . . . I accept every conclusion scientifically arrived at. I do not accept as truth mere guesses, hypotheses, or theories."<sup>25</sup>

A second group of lecturers, while not disparaging the merits of science per se, sought to resolve the controversy by emphasizing that science and religion treat different spheres of life. In 1943, J. P. Sanders suggested that spiritual values are not empirically verifiable:

The rapid developments of the last century and of this led many to feel that the hope of the world lay in the developments of scientific interests and scientific mechanisms. Science has done so many wonderful things that men have been wont to think that there was nothing that it could not do. To many of its servants, therefore, it has become a god. But science, too, has failed us in dealing with the ultimate. Its sphere, while useful, is too limited. It is only a tool of life and never an end. It has given us good light with which to extend our days, but has not been concerned with what we did with the extra time. It has enabled us to travel from one place to another much more quickly. It has not interested itself with the worthwhileness of the trip. It has prolonged our life by showing us how to conquer disease, but it has not dealt with the problem of what makes life worth prolonging.<sup>26</sup>

"Science," declared Joe Sanders in 1960, "is valid in some fields but is limited in its application to other fields." In his address on "Faith and Reason," he continued:

It cannot pass judgment on values, morals, right or wrong. It cannot prove or disprove God. These problems are not scientific, and therefore, the method of science cannot be applied. Just because science cannot determine the truth or error of these problems does not mean that they do not exist. If a Christian should say that by the application of his religion he could not find the adrenal gland in the body, and therefore, no such glands existed, the scientist would find fault. He would say that the method and tools of religion were not designed to discover such things. Yet the same man may

say that because God cannot be proved scientifically, He does not exist. The Christian would say that the method and tools of the scientist were not adequate in this area.<sup>27</sup>

Joe Sanders concluded that faith and science are not contradictory but supplementary. Religion should not refuse to use reason's instruments, but it should not be baffled when they prove inadequate. Faith can prevail in situations where reason alone is futile. Faith and reason conflict only when one seeks to usurp the function of the other.

J. D. Thomas, also lecturing in 1960, spoke somewhat more bluntly:

The field in which science and the scientific method can speak authoritatively is limited to that of things, or phenomena, which are empirically verifiable through our five senses. Science cannot pronounce with respect to the supernatural, but only to that which yields to nature's laws. All abstract mental concepts, or noumena; all supernatural realities; and all subjective values which men give to certain realities are outside the field of science. Yet these things do have true reality and are necessarily a part of total truth. They cannot be evaluated by science but are apprehended otherwise. For men, then, to worship science and nature and natural processes as a sort of "sacred cow" and to think that spiritual truths cannot be, unless they first be approved by a philosophy of "Scientism," is itself a *naivete par excellence*.<sup>28</sup>

Not all lecturers, however, concurred that science and religion deal with entirely different areas of life. In 1960, Virgil R. Trout termed the words of Alfred North Whitehead as "appropriate": "It is fashionable to state that religion and science can never clash because they deal with different topics. I believe that this solution is entirely mistaken." Trout agreed, however, with the premise that science is not qualified to speak authoritatively concerning the foundations of supernaturalism. "Creation must be regarded as a metaphysical problem rather than an experimental one . . . . The conclusion of the world transcends the realm of man's experimental knowl-

edge . . . The incarnation is a problem of history that cannot be solved in the laboratory."<sup>29</sup>

### *A Positive Compatibility*

A third group of lecturers launched a more vigorous counteroffensive in an effort to demonstrate the positive compatibility between the Bible and scientific investigation. Several not only refused to retreat from the charges of modern science, but even listed biblical scientific foreknowledge as a prominent proof of inspiration. Oliphant was again an early spokesman:

Inspiration declared the earth to be round long before the time of Christ. "He set a compass (or circle) upon the face of the deep" (Prov. 8:27). Isaiah is even clearer. He speaks of Him "who sitteth upon the circle of the earth" (Isa. 40:22). Moffatt's translation of this passage says that God "sits over the round earth." Yes, Isaiah knew of the spherical form of the earth, but he did not learn it from science. When science arrived at this knowledge of the truth, "the contradiction between science (?) and the Bible" on this point disappeared.<sup>30</sup>

The "harmony" Oliphant constructed also included the fields of astronomy and anthropology. In 1936, Clarence C. Morgan continued the rationale:

The Bible has stood the test of Astronomy, for as the so-called wise men of the earth were teaching that the world was flat and rested upon some super foundation the man of God was saying, "He hangeth the earth upon nothing."<sup>31</sup>

"In every instance," continued Yater Tant in 1946, "in which secular history and divine history touch on the same events, there is to be found a complete harmony between the two accounts."<sup>32</sup> B. C. Goodpasture added support to the harmony thesis in his 1950 lecture:

Jeremiah said that "the host of heaven cannot be numbered" (Jer. 33:22). The ancients thought, however, that the stars could be numbered. They thought that they had counted them. Now no astronomer ever hopes to know the number of the host of heaven. How did Jeremiah know this? Job said many centuries ago: "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7). How did this Uzzean sage know that there is a vast stretch in the northern heavens which is without stars? How did he know about the law of gravitation and the forces by which the earth is held in its proper place?<sup>33</sup>

George W. DeHoff in 1955 was the most recent Abilene lecturer to emphasize "scientific foreknowledge" as a proof of biblical inspiration.

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) declared that there are only five things in existence—five manifestations of the unknowable—time, force, action, space, and matter. All over the world men hailed this as a great discovery. Then someone opened the Bible and found that Moses had put all five of these scientific fundamentals into the first verse of the Bible . . . .

Linnaeus announced in 1735 that there are only three kinds of things in existence—mineral, vegetable, and animal. This made it possible for men to classify all things. Someone again turned to Genesis I and found that Moses used the first ten verses of the Bible telling of the mineral kingdom, the next nine verses telling of the vegetable kingdom and the last part of the chapter telling of the animal kingdom. Moses had his three scientific divisions right there!<sup>34</sup>

The thesis that the Bible is consistent with history and facts of science seemed, to the Abilene lecturers, to gain an ally with the advent of the science of archeology. In 1918 Klingman said:

It is one of the wonders of the modern times that just when the faith of Christian men in the Inspired Authority of the Scriptures is being sorely tried by the professed friends of the Bible, that the records of antiquity



should so providentially open to the aid of the genuine seeker after the truth. The testimony of Archeology definitely and uniformly sustains the historic truth of the Scriptures, and does not support the hypothesis of Higher Criticism in a single particular.<sup>35</sup>

In 1944, C. R. Nichol pointed specifically to the discoveries of Wadi Arabia and exclaimed: "It is amazing how much of the Bible story is verified by finds made in archeological exploration or excavation . . . It is becoming more and more apparent that the Bible contains much more historically valid material than was supposed before the spade added its independent evidence to that of the written word."<sup>36</sup> Two years later, Yater Tant asserted that the spade of the scientist had made contact in a thousand different places with the writing of the prophet. Pointing particularly to the archeological evidence discovered at the southern end of the Dead Sea, which he concluded were the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Tant stated:

Had the writer of Genesis been an eye-witness to the destruction of the Cities of the Plain, he could not have given a more accurate description of what the archeologist declares actually happened. Only a willful and perverted intellect would seek to deny it or evade its implications.<sup>37</sup>

In his 1950 address, "Archeology and Faith," J. D. Thomas discussed the finds of Jericho, Megiddo, the Ras Shamra tablets, the Oracular Shrine of Corinth, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. He concluded:

What does all of this mean? It means that although people have told you in days gone by that you could not believe the Bible, and that you could not believe the Lord Jesus Christ because much of what is in the Bible is not the truth, archeology is now able to tell you that these people are just making pure subjective judgments, without certainty of what they are saying.<sup>38</sup>

In recent years, however, a few Lectureship speakers have questioned the wisdom of attempting "overly optimis-

tic" harmonies between the Bible and scientific findings. Trout described the postulation of Dr. Carl F. H. Henry that "it is vain to construct so-called harmonies of science and the Bible. Although this has been popular, the results are generally superficial and ultimately contradictory."

Trout suggested that the Christian should transcend the conflict by demonstrating the reasonableness of supernaturalism. He approved a moderate form of harmony, however.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the scientific or experimental method is in sympathy with the Christian solution. While I wish to avoid with extreme care the making of sentimental or overly optimistic assertions about so-called "harmonies of science and Christianity," it is worthwhile to note that our science assumes that the universe is both regular and contingent—that is, events are subject to unforeseen or unknown conditions. While, of course, this is in no way proof of prayer or miracles, it does indicate that the universe is not the "closed book" as believed by nineteenth century physicists.<sup>39</sup>

The words of lecturer J. P. Sanders in 1958 appropriately summarized the attitudes of many of the speakers who were concerned with the conflicts between science and the Bible.

I believe that nature is the work of God and that the Bible is the word of God, and that between the two there can be no disharmony. Sometimes men incorrectly read the Bible, and sometimes scientists set forth theories that are incorrect interpretations of nature. Between these two, of course, there is likely to be a great conflict . . . . I believe that the scientists, as a result of their own investigations of nature, will reach conclusions ultimately that are in harmony with the teaching of the Bible. Science is young and has a great deal yet to learn.<sup>40</sup>

### *The Higher Criticism*

Not only did the Darwinian hypothesis imperil the foundations of the faith, but its companion, higher criticism

also appeared to represent an equally treacherous threat to the authority of the Bible. The application of scientific method to the study of history, "the higher criticism," said Schlesinger, "subjected the Holy Writ to rigorous historical analysis."<sup>41</sup> Imported from German university centers, the method proposed to answer definite questions about the scriptures: Who wrote them? Are the documents, as we have them, genuine compositions of the authors who were supposed to have written them? Has material been added? Have they been altered? What were the historic circumstances under which they have been written? Do the writings show reflections of those circumstances?

Scores of biblical scholars, the so-called higher critics, had concluded by 1900 that the Bible was not written at one time nor was it infallible. They insisted that the scriptures, the product of many authors, were human documents containing the errors one might expect to find in such a monumental literary production. Volumes such as Charles B. Waite's *History of the Christian Religion to the Year Two Hundred*, which alleged that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John had not been written until the last quarter of the second century, were common to the age. Common also were such indignant rebuttals as *The Date of Our Gospels* by Samuel Ives Curtis, who said of Waite's theory: "It is certain that the foundations of our faith, so far as the Gospel record is concerned, have not been shaken, except among the uninformed, and in the imaginations of those who wish to believe a lie."<sup>42</sup> By 1924, however, Shailer Matthews could render the following summary of the work of the critics:

... there is practical unanimity in the belief that the Pentateuch and many other Old Testament writings are combinations of much older material; that the Biblical material has been subjected to successive editings; that many of the Old Testament writings are centuries younger than the events they record; and that several of the New Testament books did not spring from apostolic sources in the sense that they were written by the apostles themselves.

... At the end of thirty years of widespread critical and historical study of the Scriptures it would seem as if ministers, at least, would know these conclusions. The fact that the rank and file of ministers are not only unacquainted with a scientific study of the Bible, but are ignorant of some of the more elementary facts concerning the Scriptures is a commentary on the working of the dogmatic mind.<sup>43</sup>

Without concurring with Matthews' conclusions regarding the historical method, the Abilene spokesmen would certainly have agreed that for most of the Lectureship listeners, and perhaps for some of the speakers, the problem of higher criticism had never really been a problem. "While it is not easy to over-emphasize the importance of the issues raised by modern science," wrote William Adams Brown in 1922, "it is well to remember that the number of persons directly and consciously affected by them is less than we are apt to suppose . . . ." <sup>44</sup> At any rate, whether for lack of information or in deference to the greater needs of the audience, many Abilene speakers either avoided the issue altogether or by-passed it as did M. C. Kurfees in his 1920 lecture, "The Supreme Authority in Religion":

It is not part of my purpose in this opening address to discuss the subject of authority in religion from the standing point of unbelief or the Higher Criticism of the Bible. On all proper occasions this phase of the subject is of the profoundest interest and is eminently worthy of the vast amount of critical attention bestowed upon it by scholars for the past century and a half, and particularly since the days of Ferdinand Christian Baur and the Tübingen school of rationalistic philosophy. I wish now to present the subject in its relation to those who accept the Bible as the inspired word of God . . . . But even among those who accept the Bible as the inspired word of God, including the conservatives in the school of Biblical Criticism, there is great confusion over what is, and what is not, of binding authority upon men today.<sup>45</sup>

It should also be remembered that the scorching winds of higher criticism, perhaps blowing at peak velocity around

the turn of the century, were beginning to subside by 1918. The liberals viewed this strange calm as the natural aftermath of a storm in which the fight for the scientific technique and its accompanying spiritual freedom had been clearly won. They maintained that the historical method was finally coming of age after a rather turbulent adolescence. Speaking of the established position of higher criticism, Professor E. F. Scott of Union Theological Seminary wrote in 1916: "We know at last what our religion is based on; faith has found a real starting point."<sup>46</sup> The conservatives, however, were inclined to assign to the same lessening of the winds a note of surrender and admission of error on the part of the liberals. Professor John L. Campbell of Carson and Newman College in Tennessee declared: "The tide has turned. In the realm of scholarship the battle against Higher Criticism has been fought and won. The haughty boast of Scientific Methods and assured results no more occasion any alarm . . . . An abler scholarship has pricked the bubble."<sup>47</sup> Campbell's comments were similar to those of E. W. McMillan at Abilene in 1946: "Destructive criticism, which twenty-five years ago rode high its vaunted pride in the name of science, saying that much in the Christian teachings is false and senseless, has become embarrassed by its own achievements and forced to admit that the Bible is true."<sup>48</sup> Whether the lull was due more to a truce born of weariness than a capitulation by the liberals is perhaps not certain.

It is possible to know that by 1918 the opposing positions had so crystallized with the gulf separating them so great that any meaningful dialogue between them was impossible. The higher critics of the late nineteenth century had sought a compromise which, in their minds, rejected both blind and unreasoning bibliolatry and destructive, irreligious criticism. They had hoped to placate the conservatives by retaining reverence for both the Bible and the scientific method. But as A. C. McGiffert, president of Union Theological Seminary admitted in 1916, "the conservatives who feared and opposed it in its early days, because they saw what revolution it portended, were far more clear-sighted than most of the liberals who

thought it meant simply a slight shifting of position." Then he explained: "It is not that simply our view of the Bible has changed as a result of it, but our whole view of religious authority has changed. Higher criticism, McGiffert concluded, "has cut deeper into the traditions of the past than any other single movement."<sup>49</sup>

Although the high tide of higher criticism had been reached in the American mainstream years earlier, its waves were just beginning to break on the congregational shores of the church when the Abilene Lectureship was being founded in 1918. That the spokesmen for a movement founded upon the inerrancy of the scriptures should react acutely against such caustic criticism is not surprising. In the 1918 address that christened the west Texas platform, Klingman repeated the orthodox answer to the questions of higher criticism:

We are not objecting to Biblical Criticism, lower or higher. We rejoice that . . . through the medium of higher criticism we have come into possession of very valuable information regarding the date, authorship, inspiration, genuineness, reliability and canonicity of the several books of the Bible, and have been taught to appreciate their literary beauty and value. We have no fight to make against criticism properly and legitimately conducted; nay, we welcome every test to which the Bible may be subjected for we know it will come out of the crucible sweeter, richer, purer, and more radiant with the promises of God and his eternal truth. Our fight is against the destructive criticism of the rationalistic school.<sup>50</sup>

Following the lead evidenced in Klingman's early address, the Abilene speakers who discussed higher criticism made two major points. There was, first, a tacit rejection of the conclusions of the so-called "rationalistic school of destructive critics." At the same time, however, there was a recognition of the valid contributions of genuine historical criticism. One of the platform's most thorough examinations of the problems posed by higher criticism was Jack P. Lewis' 1954 lecture, "Overcoming Modernism." He believed that the modern-

ist movement was founded upon two basic pillars: the critical analysis of the Bible, and the attempt to integrate religion around some focal point other than the Bible. He cited the important contributions which criticism had made to Bible study: the correction of erroneous ideas which had accumulated through the years, encouragement of the historical method, and the provision of valuable tools for biblical research. He complimented the modernist movement:

The questions they begin to ask are legitimate questions: When was this book written? Who is its author? What was his purpose in writing? What style did he use? What sources of information did he have? Did he use oral or written sources? Did he make any mistakes? What is the relation of this system to other religious currents of the time? These questions can be answered by what can be found in the book and what can be learned from other sources of the period from whence it came.<sup>57</sup>

### *Lewis Raises Four Objections*

Quickly dispensing with compliments, Lewis launched a systematic attack on higher criticism which he based on four flaws in the method's make-up: a dependance upon the evolutionary theory, a denial of the supernatural, a lack of proof concerning alleged discrepancies, and a lack of objectivity. These four points will serve as a structure around which the entire Lectureship treatment of modernism and its devastating tool, higher criticism, can be examined.

In reference to higher criticism's dependance upon the evolutionary theory as fact, Klingman had said in 1918: "Applying the principles of destructive criticism to the creation of man, we must strike out the Scriptural account as given in Genesis, and accept the Darwinian Theory of Evolution."<sup>52</sup> Almost four decades later, Lewis responded: "It is admitted by all that the critical movement has proceeded on the assumptions of the evolutionary hypothesis . . . . Is it necessary to remind ourselves that evolution, after all these years, is still only a hypothesis?"<sup>53</sup>

Lewis secondly explained that liberals had long been unable to accept the Bible because of their disdain for the reasonableness of supernaturalism. In 1918, Klingman had charged: "Not only does this doctrine of destructive criticism bear the brand 'made in Germany,' but its very foundation rests upon the denial of the supernatural or immediate revelation from God."<sup>54</sup> W. B. Barton, who later along with Lewis discussed modernism in thorough detail, divided the movement into three groups: classical modernism, scientism, and new-modernism. He next suggested four forms of scientism: logical positivism, championed by Bertrand Russell; naturalism, headed by John Dewey; materialism, led by R. W. Sellars; and psychologism. Of psychologism, his 1950 address declared:

The application of psychology to religion has its proper domain, but when it assumes the place of religion itself, this may be rightly called "psychologism" . . . it has become a faith and Freud is its God. It has beyond any doubt contributed much to our knowledge of man, mainly through the discoveries of Freud . . . . According to Freud, however, everyone who takes religion seriously is following an "illusion."<sup>55</sup>

"A modernist," continued Frank Pack in 1950, "can't accept a miracle as such. He is a man that can't believe in any supernatural power that has had any influence upon the course of man's development religiously or in the giving of the Bible to him."<sup>56</sup> In his 1954 lecture, Lewis extended the point:

Miracle does not fall in the realm with which science is prepared to deal. All history can do is report that people believed in a miracle at such and such a time. It can neither prove it happened nor disprove it. Here then we come again to a philosophical presupposition.<sup>57</sup>

Lewis' third point, and a major one for many speakers, was an objection to higher criticism because it had assumed the Bible to be "so full of errors and inconsistencies that no informed man could think of following it." The possibility of biblical discrepancy was a thought which the vast major-



ity of Lectureship speakers did not entertain. In the early programs, the Bible was unanimously accepted as free from any inconsistency. As late as 1955 George W. DeHoff asserted:

Every word of the Bible is inspired. If God had wanted another "i" dotted or another "t" crossed, he would have had it done. When one thinks he has found a contradiction in the Bible, he has only reached the limit of his own knowledge. It is a mighty sorry excuse for a man to make his own ignorance an excuse for criticizing the God of the Universe!<sup>58</sup>

A year earlier, however, Lewis had treated more realistically the problem of alleged discrepancies. Admitting that in the several thousand New Testament manuscripts there are 200,000 variant readings, Lewis emphasized that only two hundred of them affect the passage, with only fifteen of major importance. "They neither add to nor distract from a single duty of man."<sup>59</sup>

Neil R. Lightfoot agreed with Lewis' emphasis in his 1960 speech, "Origin and Preservation of the Bible." He explained that as the Bible was copied again and again, it "was inevitable that transmission mistakes would appear":

The human hand is never so firm or the eye so keen as to preclude the possibility of error. So errors crept in. Errors were copied and became a part of the text. And let us remember that it is just as possible to make an unintentional error in a Biblical manuscript as it is in dealing with a copy of Plato's *Republic*. To suppose otherwise is to lead to the assumption that the Holy Spirit overpowered the abilities and inabilities of tens of thousands of scribes for a period of 1500 years—an assumption that is not only unwarranted but also untrue.<sup>60</sup>

Lightfoot quoted the Greek authoritatives, Westcott and Hort, in affirming the reliable character of the New Testament text:

The proportion of words virtually accepted on all hands as raised without doubt is very great, not less on a rough computation, than seven-eighths of the whole . . . . The amount of what can in any sense be called substantial variation is but a small fraction of the whole residuary variation, and can hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text. Since there is reason to suspect that an exaggerated impression prevails as to the extent of possible textual corruption in the New Testament . . . we desire to make it clearly understood beforehand how much of the New Testament stands in no need of a textual critic's labors.<sup>61</sup>

### *Irreconcilable Discrepancies?*

David H. Bobo, who also lectured in 1960, went much beyond Lewis and Lightfoot in suggesting that "the many discrepancies of the Bible," fall into three categories, verbal, historical, and ideological. He stressed that there are discrepancies in all of nature and that the Bible is not proved invalid simply because it contains those "normal discrepancies which characterize all other manifestations of God-given life." Apparently referring to some of his brethren, Bobo said:

In their efforts to deny all discrepancies they have resorted to unscholarly, ridiculous, and sometimes dishonest means. Regardless of how good and pious their intentions may have been, their methods have often been below the level of respectability. This likewise has continued down to the present time . . . . Such behavior is sub-Christian and will never win the respect and confidence of intelligent people. In fact, it will do more to turn them from faith; for if *faith* must stand upon such sophistry, they want nothing to do with it. It weakens faith far more than it strengthens it, and far more than any of the alleged discrepancies alone could. It is itself a discrepancy of faith.<sup>62</sup>

Admitting that some of the discrepancies could not be "reconciled or eliminated," Bobo argued that they do not weaken the validity of the Bible. Focusing specifically upon an apparent discrepancy in David's association with Saul as

recorded in I Samuel 16 and 17, Bobo stated: "This is one of the discrepancies for which no satisfactory answer has yet been found . . . . What has that to do with the real value and spiritual relevance of the Bible? It is not the minute historical exactness that makes it the wonderful life-giving book that it is, but its spiritual quality and power."<sup>63</sup> Bobo's language had a different ring from that of Klingman's Lectureship opener:

But there is another class to which we now invite your attention. They are called the "Moderate Higher Critics." These are men who do not deny the supernatural but have consciously or unconsciously adopted some of the principles of the destructive school and are on that account the more dangerous. They follow what is known as "the Historic Method" and try to harmonize it with the Bible. They are carrying on a submarine warfare; we do not always know where they are . . . .<sup>64</sup>

A fourth objection which Jack P. Lewis leveled against the higher critics was their lack of critical objectivity.

Actually no small part of the objection to critical conclusions about the Bible is their subjective nature. After all the cry of "let's look at the Bible objectively," I believe one can be prejudiced "against" as easily as "for." Where one comes out depends to a degree on what presuppositions he has when he starts.

Many times when one looks over the method by which critical study proceeds, it seems that it only takes two "probablys" to make a "certainly." Three "certainlys" make an "undoubtedly." Two "undoubtedlys" make "all scholars agree." And then you have "It is no longer questioned." And yet the whole structure may be one unproved hypothesis leaned against another until people forget they are unproved.<sup>65</sup>

Earlier speakers had also questioned the objectivity and validity of the higher criticism. W. M. Davis charged in 1925:

Higher criticism has joined hands with speculative science and false philosophy in an effort against the Bi-

ble. The chief objection to higher criticism is its unreasonable hypothesis. It puts forth unsubstantiated claims with reference to some portions of the Bible, . . . . If the methods of higher criticism were employed against literature generally, there would be little or no literature left. A test was made on Burns' poem entitled "To a Mountain Daisy." There was nothing left of a genuine character after the test was made. The vocabulary of the first part of the poem could not be identified with Burns. The literary style of the last part was that of another man. But Burns was the author of the poem.<sup>66</sup>

In his 1936 address, "The Bible During the Dark Ages," Robert C. Jones also attacked the subjective presuppositions of the higher critics. After discussing the relevance of the Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Alexandrianus, Codex Vaticanus, and Codex Ephraemi manuscripts, he suggested:

When we consider the ancient manuscripts, the early translations, and the writings of the early fathers, we are assured that we have in our present Bible, without addition or subtraction, the truth that Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and we almost blush for the arrogance, ignorance, and stupidity of those who have stigmatized these sacred books as fictions or forgeries. Let them first prove that all history and all nations are an illusive cheat; that Homer never sang in Greece; that Caesar never reigned in Rome; and that Cromwell never rebelled in England. Until then, let them not think of denying the genuineness and the credibility of the Bible.<sup>67</sup>

"Is the modernistic system really scientific?" asked Jack Lewis. Examining the basic pillar of modernism, the effort to integrate life around some point other than the Bible, Lewis answered his own question:

We will not be led astray by all this talk of "religious consciousness." The old infallibility of the Roman church has just changed clothes to become the infallibility of all religious men. Or to put it in other terms, the age old *Vox populi, vox dei* raises its head again—this time, the voice of religious men is the voice of God. Though it has on grandmother's cap and is in grand-

mother's bed, the big eyes, the sharp teeth, and the long ears are the same. Despite the numbers, the education, and the sincerity of those who advocate it, Little Red Riding Hood need not be deceived. It is the wolf!<sup>68</sup>

By the late 1950's some Lectureship speakers were expressing concern that the wolf, in sheep's clothing, had even entered the flock. In 1956, Leslie Diestelkamp's lecture, "The Effects of Modernism," warned that the fruits of higher criticism were being nurtured in some quarters of the brotherhood.<sup>69</sup> "This spirit has pervaded the Church," added Jack Lewis, "... perhaps far more than any of us realize." He then listed six "danger signs" which usually characterize the departure of preachers from the brotherhood into the arms of modernism. The concluding remarks of Jack Lewis' address are appropriate:

In this conflict the churches of Christ must bear the brunt of the attack. Although the Catholic church has expressed itself in opposition to modern theories, and in the decree "Lamentabili" (1907) specified a number of objections to modern trends, its own position is too vulnerable for it to be of value in this struggle. It is exhibit "A" of the sort of development of which the critic speaks. The old line denominations are shot through with these theories . . . . The Holiness groups who claim to believe the Bible are really based on emotion and not on intellectual conviction. The New Testament church alone offers and is prepared to defend a faith "once delivered."

I am not impressed by the insinuations, subtle or open, of the opposition and also sometimes heard from brethren newly drunk on learning that Bible believers are afraid of investigation. I believe just the contrary to be true in most cases. Give us the facts. Investigation is the only lasting solution to any problem.<sup>70</sup>

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Sidney Ratner, "Evolution and the Rise of the Scientific Spirit in America," *Philosophy of Science*, II (January, 1936), p. 106.

<sup>2</sup>*Modern Religious Liberalism* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1920), p. 33.

<sup>8</sup>*New York Times*, March 12, 1922, p. 1. In the early months of 1922, the New York newspaper hosted a series of exchanges on the popular issue.

<sup>4</sup>*New York Times*, March 5, 1922, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>*Evolution and Religion in Education* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), pp. 34-35. Also see *The Earth Speaks to Bryan* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925).

<sup>6</sup>*New York Times*, March 5, 1922, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>*Current Christian Thinking* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1928), p. 176.

<sup>8</sup>See James Orr, *God's Image in Man and Its Defacement in the Light of Modern Denials* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1906), pp. 3-30.

<sup>9</sup>Stewart G. Cole, *History of Fundamentalism* (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), p. 262. Rood reported through his *Bryan Broadcaster*: "I am in this fight to the end; there is no retreat; the League has come into being through a vision from God."

<sup>10</sup>*New York Times*, February 26, 1922, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup>"Destructive Higher Criticism," *Lectures*, 1919, p. 248. Klingman named George Paulpin's *No Struggle for Existence; No Natural Selection*, L. T. Townsend's *Collapse of Evolution*, and Professor E. Dennert's *At the Death-bed of Darwinism*, as "scholarly works" which testify that "the theory is in extremis."

<sup>12</sup>*Lectures*, 1924-1925, p. 168.

<sup>13</sup>*Lectures*, 1926-1927, p. 258.

<sup>14</sup>*Lectures*, 1958, p. 43.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>16</sup>*Lectures*, 1960, p. 147.

<sup>17</sup>Klingman, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

<sup>18</sup>Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

<sup>19</sup>*New York Times*, February 26, 1922, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup>*The Growth of American Thought* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943), p. 555.

<sup>21</sup>Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931), p. 199.

<sup>22</sup>Oliphant, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 276-277.

<sup>24</sup>Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 175-178.

- <sup>25</sup>"Jesus of Nazareth, God's Gift to Humanity," *Lectures*, 1938, p. 4.
- <sup>26</sup>"The Foundation of Christian Hope," *Lectures*, 1943, p. 18.
- <sup>27</sup>"Faith and Reason," *Lectures*, 1960, p. 118.
- <sup>28</sup>Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 150.
- <sup>29</sup>"The Reasonableness of Supernaturalism," *Lectures*, 1960, pp. 129, 137-138.
- <sup>30</sup>Oliphant, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-265.
- <sup>31</sup>"The Genuineness and Credibility of the Bible," *Lectures*, 1936, p. 55.
- <sup>32</sup>"The Bible, God's Revelation," *Lectures*, 1946, p. 59.
- <sup>33</sup>"The Inspiration of the Bible," *Lectures*, 1950, p. 166.
- <sup>34</sup>"The Word of God Which Lives and Abides," *Lectures*, 1950, p. 10.
- <sup>35</sup>Klingman, *op. cit.*, p. 249.
- <sup>36</sup>"The Bible, (II)," *Lectures*, 1944, p. 121.
- <sup>37</sup>"The Bible-God's Revelation (II)," *Lectures*, 1946, p. 57.
- <sup>38</sup>*Lectures*, 1950, p. 22.
- <sup>39</sup>Trout, *op. cit.*, pp. 131, 137.
- <sup>40</sup>Sanders, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.
- <sup>41</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Rise of the City*, Vol. X of *A History of American Life* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 324.
- <sup>42</sup>*The Date of Our Gospels*, pp. 75-76. As quoted in James H. Mc-Bath, "Speechmaking at the Chautauqua Assembly, 1874-1900" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1950), p. 115.
- <sup>43</sup>*The Faith of Modernism* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1924), p. 42.
- <sup>44</sup>*The Church in America*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), pp. 140-141.
- <sup>45</sup>"The Supreme Authority in Religion, or How God Speaks to Men," *Lectures*, 1920-1921, p. 4.
- <sup>46</sup>*The New Testament Today* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1921), p. 87.
- <sup>47</sup>*The Bible Under Fire* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1929), p. 105.
- <sup>48</sup>"The Kingdom That Cannot be Shaken, (II)," *Lectures*, 1946, p. 124. Also see William Ernest Hocking, "Science and Religion Today: A Truce or a Settlement," in *Science and the Idea of God* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1944), pp. 3-26.
- <sup>49</sup>"The Progress of Theological Thought During the Past Fifty Years," *American Journal of Theology*, July, 1916, pp. 326-327.

<sup>50</sup>Klingman, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

<sup>51</sup>*Lectures*, 1954, p. 85.

<sup>52</sup>Klingman, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

<sup>53</sup>Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>54</sup>Klingman, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

<sup>55</sup>"The Gods of Modernism," *Lectures*, 1958, p. 56.

<sup>56</sup>"The Church and the Times," *Lectures*, 1950, p. 85.

<sup>57</sup>Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>58</sup>DeHoff, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>59</sup>Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>60</sup>*Lectures*, 1960, p. 51.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 60. Also *The Houston-Post*, February 22, 1960. Several Texas newspapers carried the following story the morning after Lightfoot's lecture: "A Bible scholar said Sunday night that people worry unnecessarily about the accuracy of the Bible. He said fairly recent discoveries show the Bible as now printed substantially conforms to the words recorded almost 2,000 years ago. 'And even when a substantial variation may exist, not one fundamental Christian doctrine or command of the Lord is at stake,' said Dr. Neil R. Lightfoot, Assistant Professor of Bible at Abilene Christian College."

<sup>62</sup>"Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible," *Lectures*, 1960, pp. 66-67, 70.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>64</sup>Klingman, *op. cit.*, pp. 250-251.

<sup>65</sup>Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 104, 106.

<sup>66</sup>"The Indestructible Vitality of the Bible," *Lectures*, 1924-1925, pp. 78-79. At the time Davis mentioned Burns' "Mountain Daisy" it was common for the conservatives to dare the liberals to practice the historical method on Shakespeare, Coleridge, or the Anglican Prayer Book. See Franklin Johnson, *The Fundamentals* (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, 1910), Vol. II, Chap. III. Also see Campbell, "The Myth of Theodore Roosevelt," pp. 99-114.

<sup>67</sup>*Lectures*, 1936, p. 33.

<sup>68</sup>Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>69</sup>*Lectures*, 1956, p. 369.

<sup>70</sup>Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 107, 112.



# 7

## The Doctrine of the Godhead

*God or Gorilla* was more than the grisly title of Alfred Watterson McCann's widely-read repudiation of evolution.<sup>1</sup> It was the gnawing, pivotal question of an era. As church attendance declined during the post-war decade, Walter Lippmann felt that it was because people could no longer be assured that they were going to meet God when they went to worship. The certainty had departed from every facet of life. Tradition-honored ideas of right and wrong were questioned at the very source of their transcendental authority, and frequently abandoned. High school students pondered the accident of genetics that had placed them on an insignificant satellite spinning aimlessly through one of countless millions of galaxies scattered throughout space. The relentless pronouncements of science and scholarship boldly interrogated believers about the if, why, where, and how of God's existence, while supplying few satisfying answers. To the list of disintegrating discoveries of the 1920's, Frederick Lewis Allen added,

...that our behavior depends largely upon chromosomes and ductless glands; that the Hottentot obeys im-

pulses similar to those which activate the pastor of the First Baptist Church, and is probably already better adapted to his Hottentot environment than he would be if he followed the Baptist code; that sex is the most important thing in life, that inhibitions are not to be tolerated, that sin is an out-of-date term, that most untoward behavior is the result of complexes acquired at an early age, and that men and women are mere bundles of behavior patterns anyway.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Godhead*

The doctrine of the Godhead, implicit within scripture and formalized, as the *Trinity* in the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople, had been accepted by believers in all ages "not because it was proclaimed by universal councils, but because it commended itself to the Christian consciousness as scriptural and true."<sup>3</sup> The essence of the doctrine strives to lay equal emphasis on the unity and the trinality of God and can be simply stated: God is one; the Father is God; the Son is God; the Holy Spirit is God; yet the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are eternally distinct. Stearns' *Present Day Theology* stated it more technically:

God in His essence or nature is indivisibly One. . . . There are not three Eternals, but only one Eternal. . . . But in the unity of the Godhead three Eternal distinctions, which are called, in the technical language of theology, hypostases or persons . . . But the three divine persons possess the same nature, the one identical essence. They do not divide it, they do not share it; it is their common nature in the sense that each possesses the whole in its indivisible unity.<sup>4</sup>

More than sixty addresses at the Abilene Lectureship were devoted to a discussion of the doctrine of the Godhead or the nature of one of its three personalities. An important series of fourteen lectures was presented in 1958 under the general theme, "God." Other than a few earlier references to the Father-Son relationship, the first definitive study of the doctrine of the Godhead was Batsell Barrett Baxter's address

that year. Beginning with definitions, Baxter said: "Actually, the word 'Godhead' is just another form of the word 'Godhood' . . . the state, dignity, condition, quality of God." Early in his message, he summed up the Trinitarian doctrine: "When we have said that there is but one God, that the Father, Son, and Spirit is each God, and that the Father, Son and Spirit is each a distinct person, we have stated the doctrine of the Trinity fully and completely."<sup>5</sup> Three years before Baxter's message, LeMoine Lewis reviewed the Tertullian terminology which became the language of Trinitarian theology.

He thought he found in Roman Law an answer to the problem of how three could be one and one could be three, and how Jesus could be both human and divine . . . . The word "substance" suggested the idea of property. The term "person" suggested one who could own property. Divinity was a substance or piece of property. In Roman Law three persons could own the same piece of property. Divinity was a piece of property owned by Father, Son, and Spirit.<sup>6</sup>

The reverent attitude of the Abilene lectures toward the unsolved mysteries of the Trinity was captured in the closing exhortation of Baxter's address:

. . . it is far more important for us to have a right attitude toward and a right faith in the Godhead than it is for us to be sure that we understand all of the fine points of the doctrine of the Godhead. It is more important for us to be sure that our belief in God and Christ and the Holy Spirit is real than it is for us to be overly concerned with theoretical explanations of the differences in function among the three. It is far more important that we be reverent and obedient to the Godhead than it is for us to be scholars about the Godhead.<sup>7</sup>

The right of intelligent men to believe in God was perhaps never subject to greater challenge than during the dawning hours of the twentieth century. The triumvirate of evolution, biblical criticism, and the social gospel had conspired to reduce much of the hard-earned Reformation faith

to the level of folk-lore and fancy. The new ideas seemed "to destroy the very foundations of religion, and leave the individual forsaken in a Godless world."<sup>8</sup> Dillenberger and Welch, in their treatment of "Directions in Recent Protestant Thought," explained that for the followers of Schleiermacher God had become the counterpart of religious experience, and for the followers of Ritschl revelation had become identical with history. "The primary reality was religious experience," they wrote. "But God then is defined simply as the source of religious experience, and the reality of God is logically dependent upon the reality of religion."<sup>9</sup>

Many liberals no longer appealed to God as the guarantor of religion at all. Christianity, it seemed, could continue, even if God should cease to play any part in Christian thinking. "We are thus brought face to face with the question," wrote Gerald Birney Smith, "whether such a religion needs inevitably to affirm the existence of God. Is theism essential to religion?"<sup>10</sup> In Professor Smith's experimental interpretation, God was not a rigid religious essential for the person who did not feel his reality.

Consequently, as brotherhood leaders made preparation for Abilene addresses they sensed the challenge to defend the biblical concept of God on two battlefronts—that he actually existed, and that he existed as a personal, Heavenly Father, rather than "a sort of oblong blur."

### *The Reality of God*

Theologian Robert McAfee Brown recently asserted that "classical Protestantism has by and large taken a dim view of attempts to prove the existence of God."<sup>11</sup> Abilene lecturer W. B. West, in his 1946 address, "God Is," anticipated Brown's valid assertion. "The Bible assumes the existence of God. His reality and eternity are accepted. Evidence of his existence are abundant upon the pages of Sacred Scripture, but not arguments for it. The man who says, 'There is no God,'

is characterized as a 'fool.' West added that the very "idea of Scripture as a revelation presupposes belief in a God."<sup>12</sup>

In spite of this announced disdain for "proving God," several Abilene lectures were designed to do just that—to demonstrate his existence through the use of extra-biblical lines of reasoning. Along with West, the speeches of George H. Stephenson were chief among these. The four traditional philosophical arguments—ontological, cosmological, teleological, and moral—for God's existence served as a tidy structure for reviewing the Lectureship's proofs. The first three arguments form a trilogy and attempt to demonstrate the existence of God inferentially, that is, by means of rational demonstration. The fourth is an appeal based upon the experience of values.<sup>13</sup>

The *ontological argument*, a classical rationale based on the idea of perfection, boasts Anselm, and Descartes as its most notable proponents. Assuming the stance, "I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order that I may understand," Anselm declared that the existence of God is self-evident. God is simply "a being than which nothing greater can be conceived," and man's very ability to conceive an infinite perfection testifies to its existence. In 1919, journalist G. H. P. Showalter reasoned at Abilene: "Now an idea cannot obtain, except for the existence of the object or the thing which originates the idea."<sup>14</sup> W. B. West formalized the ontological argument in 1946, referring to the term's etymology:

The word "ontology" is derived from two Greek words, *ontos* and *logos*, which mean "the reason or ground of being." Stated briefly, God exists because we think He does. This is the argument from thought to Being . . . . The very idea of God is possible to us only because God is behind it; and by God, Anselm, the father of the ontological argument, meant "that than which nothing greater can be conceived."<sup>15</sup>

Twelve years later George Stephenson continued the discussion:

In a sense, even the man who says, "There is no God," bears testimony to the existence of God. Where did he get his idea of a God to deny? Whence came the thought of God? Is it just an invention of man? If so, when did man first originate the idea? How did this idea become so universal?<sup>16</sup>

The lectures of West and Stephenson also advanced the *cosmological theory*, an argument based upon the cause-effect hypothesis. They suggested that as a final cause of all things must be the one self-existent being, God. Plato, in the *Timaeus*, was among the first to say that every created thing must be created by some cause. Since there are countless secondary causes in existence, beyond all secondary causes there must be a first uncaused and self-existent cause. Philosopher G. Dawes Hicks elaborated upon the argument by saying, "we are logically driven to acknowledge that there is a real existence beyond nature, unless, indeed, we are prepared to rest in an ultimate inexplicability, and to relinquish the attempt to frame an intelligent conception of nature at all."<sup>17</sup>

At Abilene, Stephenson similarly reasoned:

Looking about us, it is but natural for us to point to some great cause for all of the effects we see in the world about us . . . . Looking at the sky on a clear night, while the stars are shining as a myriad of diamonds in the sky, we are made to exclaim with David of old, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork." (Psalms 19:1). Does one believe the Russian satellites got in the sky just by accident? No more than I believe the stars above us are there just by accident.<sup>18</sup>

J. P. Sanders also pointed in 1958 to the inevitability of viewing God as the first cause. He affirmed that basic to any philosophy of life, both Christian and non-Christian, are certain presuppositions or assumptions:

Any naturalistic hypothesis assumes the eternal existence of matter and force. From the naturalistic point of view, the origin of these cannot be explained, they

simply have to be taken for granted. Some of these points of view claim to hold strictly to the laws of phenomenon and reject any concern for ultimate causes. Within these systems there is no spiritual principle at all.<sup>19</sup>

Twenty years earlier, A. DeWitt Chaddick had pinpointed, a bit more pugnaciously, the cosmological premise:

The power to create is a power higher than that of man. This power we call God. If any man would be an atheist, let him create something. That alone would advance his argument. If science could produce life out of inert matter, he could not do away with God until he could create matter. And if, even, he should create matter, he would still be confronted with the problems of how man came first to be and to have the ability to create.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps the most forceful case for the existence of God is the *teleological theory*, commonly called the argument from design or order. It contends that the presence of order in the universe points to a transcendental source of that order. It is, therefore, really a specialized application of the cosmological argument. The Darwinian doctrine of natural selection, if valid, would effectively undermine the theory by proving that an orderly universe has evolved through purely natural causes rather than by supernatural design. Although both philosophers contend that the teleological argument cannot stand alone, Trueblood defends it by asserting that Darwin's attack "is by no means evident today," and MacGregor adds that "the contemplation of the evidence of order and purpose does make the atheist look inexcusably smug."<sup>21</sup>

Virgil Trout's 1960 Abilene lecture, "The Reasonableness of Supernaturalism," stated the teleological premise: "... the universe is the creation of God. Therefore, order exists not because of a system of natural law but because of the transcendent reason of the Creator."<sup>22</sup> Dean H. E. Speck had alluded to the teleological theory in 1939 by describing the immutable laws of the universe as fixed and unchangeable, and asserting that "the unity is produced by the Creator of

all living things.”<sup>23</sup> Paley’s classic illustration of the watch in his *Natural Order*, the habits of insects and animals, the grandeur of the human body, particularly the eye, and the precision of the stars and planets were data West and Stephenson used in support of this theory. West also cited the terse statement of physicist James Jeans: “The Universe begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine.”<sup>24</sup>

The fourth philosophical theory which the Abilene lecturers employed as a proof of the existence of God was the *anthropological or moral argument*. Though forms of the moral argument are more ancient, it has come to be associated with the name of Kant, who postulated: “Two things fill the mind with a new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them; the starry heavens above and the moral law within.” Stephenson treated his Abilene listeners to the gist of the theory: “It is wonderful to think of man’s physical make-up, yet it is more wonderful to think of his conscience and sense of moral values. If evolution instead of Creation be true, whence came man’s conscience.”<sup>25</sup> Expanding his discussion to include man’s sense of the beautiful, Stephenson became the only lecturer to advance an “aesthetic argument,” as proof of God’s existence. He reminded his hearers that birds have wonderful eyes and dogs hear better than men, but such animals are not the world’s great art critics and do not enjoy the concert of trained musicians. “We cannot conceive of beauty coming into existence by chance,” said Stephenson, “and we cannot conceive of that which is in man which can appreciate the beautiful coming into existence by chance.” As an addenda, West and Stephenson, who together did the lion’s share of “proving God,” advanced an argument which they termed historical evidence. “No fact of history,” contended West, “has been as well supported . . . than the fact that from times immemorial, wherever man has lived, he has had some conception of some kind of supernatural being.”<sup>26</sup>

While serving a useful purpose, the best that can be said for these classical proofs of God is that one helps the oth-



er; certainly, no one of them by itself does the required job. The very fact that a plurality of such arguments is needed indicates not only their separate shortcomings, but perhaps as well their combined insufficiency. Perhaps Anselm, who did not profess to be able to demonstrate God's existence to the unbeliever but sought only to justify to his own intellect the faith that he held, has established the purpose which these traditional arguments best serve. God can be adored, worshipped, intimately known; but empirically verified by human means?—He cannot be! The moral argument which had great influence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries does not purport to prove God by the exercise of pure reason. The very existence of moral law and human conscience prevents the contemplation of an ultimate Being who exists independently, as the source of all moral demands. To this source of proof the Abilene speakers most frequently and convincingly appealed.

### *The Heavenly Father*

The reality of God's existence was not as central to the science-religion controversy as was the question of the type or nature of the god which existed. An editorial in the *Christian Century* asserted: "In a debate on God the minds of the Fundamentalist and the modernist do not meet. To oppose system against system involves endless and sterile disputation."<sup>27</sup> Here, definitely, was a major source of difference between the two minds. Rather than pitting theism against atheism, the two systems actually began with two different gods. The essential qualities of one system's god would have been totally repugnant to the nature of the other god. What one god could logically be expected to do, the other god would not purport to accomplish.

The conservatives had inherited from the Reformation a concept of God as a being with personality, possessing both will and intelligence, and immeasurably more personal than mere idealized reality or absolute energy. God was the per-

sonal heavenly Father, the creator, ruler, savior and ultimate judge of the world. To the liberals, on the other hand, Christianity's only hope rested in the depersonalization of the Yahweh of Israel from the "conception of a deity whose character is on a level with that of Moloch." Horace James Bridges, in his attack upon the "God of Fundamentalism," interrogated Professor Machen:

I challenge Dr. Machen to say whether a human parent could under any circumstances have the right to consign his own child, for any offence whatsoever, to lifelong torture. More particularly, could we have the right to do so if the child's offence were admittedly due to some hereditary defect of nature which it could not avert? Add to this the supposition that the father, before begetting the child, had known what it would do, and had deliberately prepared the torture chamber in advance of its reception. That is as exact a parallel as can be drawn between human action and the procedure of God as described by Fundamentalism.<sup>28</sup>

Modernism's god was essentially the source and the product of religious experience; not a personality separate from the universe but rather the immanent law of the universe itself. "God is conceived . . . as the soul of the world, the spirit animating all nature; the universal force which takes the myriad forms of heat, light, gravitation, electricity and the like; the all-embracing substance of which even men and things are but differentiations . . ." <sup>29</sup> Stressing the doctrine of divine immanence, the liberals conceived of God as a unity of force or of substance, making all creatures and things the expression of one evolving, all-pervading energy. Concluding that the critical mind could no longer allow the imagery of a heavenly monarch to determine its thoughts of spiritual reality, many liberals insisted that no such God existed, except perhaps as a figment of frightened imaginations conjured up to meet a psychological need. "My position then," William L. Davidson frankly announced, "is that God is a necessity of human nature."<sup>30</sup> Denying existence of the biblical God, the liberals not only disclaimed any fear of divine wrath but manifestly insisted that they were bestowing honor upon that di-

vinity which actually existed. All doctrines concerning the "monarchical" God's will, covenants, modes of operation, plans for eternal reward and "schemes of punishment" were deemed fictitious and positively unethical.

To the conservatives, the depersonalization of God was liberalism's most insidious and devastating subterfuge. The theory of divine immanence, considered to be the satanic product of evolution equating God with the abstract energy which had developed the world, was the arch-enemy of Bible believers. The *Christian Register* charged in the year of the second Abilene lecture week that it had become fashionable to "disguise a practical atheism under theistic phrases."<sup>31</sup>

If only a handful of Abilene speakers sought to prove the existence of God, a large battalion of them answered the call to protect his personal character and preserve the dignity of the divine nature. Jack Bates pictured for the 1958 audience the abstract theory of God which many of his colleagues attacked with equal abandon. Describing the generation that grew up after World War I, he said:

God was robbed of His holiness. He was dethroned and defamed. He was described as "absolute energy," "idealized reality," or, in the words of one New England liberal as a "sort of oblong blur." Dr. Alfred North Whitehead, one of the better known philosophers of this country, once defined God as follows: "God is not concrete, but He is the ground for concrete actuality." It would seem that God is available to logicians only!<sup>32</sup>

Speaking on the same program, Batsell Barret Baxter countered with the biblical description of the first person of the Trinity.

First of all, there is the Creator, Jehovah, the Almighty, Lord God, and Father. He always stands first among the Triune Divinity. The Bible pictures Him as supreme in wisdom, power, love, mercy, and justice. He is the great planner, designer, and creator of the universe. He is the supreme Father and we are His children.

In Him we live and move and have our being. He is a Spirit and is to be worshipped. He is always referred to in the masculine gender and with a personal pronoun.<sup>33</sup>

The Abilene lecturers, reverencing the scriptural view of God, rejected the liberal implications of both immanentism and its opposite, the concept of God's transcendence. Another 1958 lecturer, W. B. Barton, stated that divine immanence was a theory championed by Friedrich Schliermacher which tended to identify God with the ideal processes of nature. "He cannot, therefore," said Barton, "refer to God as a person, or admit the Biblical doctrine of the Godhead, which teaches the distinction of three divine Personalities." Barton quoted a statement attributed to Henry Nelson Wieman, an influential professor at the University of Chicago: "Whatever else God is, He is not a personality."<sup>34</sup>

### *The Divine Nature*

Following the first war a theory emphasizing the transcendence of God began to sweep across the country in revolt against the emptiness of immanentism. Soren Kierkegaard had written, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, of the "absolute difference" between God and man. It was Karl Barth, however, a Swiss theologian, whose emphasis on "the otherness of God" depersonalized God into a kind of disinterested, motionless, impersonal force.<sup>35</sup> Barton cited the contributions which theologian Paul Tillich had made to this transcendence concept: "Tillich further asserts that God does not exist. When we attempt to apply any human categories, such as personality, will, love, and even existence to God we commit a grave error."<sup>36</sup>

The Abilene lecturers were equally repelled by these views of God. The first because it tended toward pantheism, and the second because it reduced God to an unapproachable, impersonal abstraction. They agreed, however, that the personal God of the Bible possessed both immanence and transcendence. Raymond Kelcy stated in his 1958 lecture:

Two words have come into use in comparatively recent times to set forth the relation between God and the universe . . . Immanence and Transcendence . . . Transcendence means that God . . . is more than the world and that He is above it. However, though He transcends the world, still He inhabits it and pervades it, drawing near to it in His love and continuing to work in it.<sup>37</sup>

A chronological glance at the approximately ten lectures which dealt specifically with the divine nature reveals the lecturers concept of God. In the series of 1919, G. H. P. Showalter expressed gratitude for the fact that all of God's attributes had "gradually been revealed." He named infinity, loftiness, holiness, power, mercy, peace, and constant presence as being the characteristics of God's personality: "Divine nature then is Spirit, Light, and Love, for God is these."<sup>38</sup> Ten years later, A. DeWitt Chaddick focused particular attention upon the first of these three qualities:

Jesus, who should know more about the nature of his Father than anybody else, said, "God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth" (John 4:24) . . . . Thus, I know that when speaking or thinking of God, I must get flesh and bones out of my mind.<sup>39</sup>

"Jehovah God Reigneth," was the title of L. S. White's 1942 lecture which described God as "personal, love, spirit, and goodness. A person who does not believe in a Personal God, does not believe in the true God at all." By personal, White meant that "God knows himself as God. directs His own actions, and is the one perfect personality."<sup>40</sup> The same year, Jesse P. Sewell stated: "In the eternal Father, we have an abiding source of: strength, power, love, mercy, grace, help, security, pleasure, joy, and victory."<sup>41</sup> In speaking of "The Goodness and Severity of God," J. Leonard Jackson pointed to the other side of God: "In the Bible we find God's love and His hatred, His mercy, and His wrath, His blessing and His curse." Later Jackson added: "Despite these warnings of God, however, some contend that eternal punishment is contrary to and incompatible with the mercy and goodness of

God. Modernism makes the mistake here of beholding the goodness of God, while at the same time blinding itself to the severity of God."<sup>42</sup>

Raymond C. Kelcy's 1958 address, "God's Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Omnipotence," was the platform's most thorough examination of God's nature. He reasoned:

There are two units of existence . . . God and the universe . . . God and all that is not God. Omnipresence implies that God, one unit, penetrates and fills the other unit, the universe, in all its parts. God is everywhere. Not that there is a part of Him in every place but that His entirety is every place.<sup>43</sup>

Kelcy next asserted that God's complete knowledge of all things is but a companion of His omnipresence. "Omnipresence implies omniscience . . . . The perfect mind cannot be present without knowing that to which it is present." Of divine omnipotence, Kelcy stated: "The power of God is the most obvious of his attributes. 'With God all things are possible,' declared Jesus (Matthew 19:26)." Kelcy reflected the attitude of all the lecturers who had attempted to articulate the divine nature as he concluded: "Any characteristic or attribute of God must be described in terms man can understand and we are to view such expressions as accommodative language."<sup>44</sup> In 1958, H. A. Dixon agreed: "The mind of man has never been able to grasp God fully. His eyes cannot see God. His hands cannot touch God. His mind cannot explore God. God accommodated Himself in revealing to man His nature and His attributes."<sup>45</sup>

### *The Holy Spirit*

The third personality of the Godhead received little more than passing attention at the Abilene Lectureship. Through the years there were but scant references to either the nature or the work of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, not a single main address was exclusively designed to delineate that

nature, and only one lecturer discussed in depth or at any length the work of the Spirit of God. And even that speech, by the Dallas minister John H. Banister in 1957, was limited to "The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit." In 1942 Jesse P. Sewell sought to identify the Holy Spirit as:

The same "Spirit of God" that "moved upon the face of the waters," in the process of the organization of the earth, the heavens, and the sea. The same Spirit that filled Jesus without measure. The same Spirit promised by Him to the apostles, and which came on Pentecost to make the material He had prepared into a living church, and to inspire the disciples that they might preach the gospel. The same Spirit that inspired the writing of the Bible.<sup>46</sup>

Batsell Barret Baxter was somewhat more definitive in his 1958 characterization of the Holy Spirit:

The third member of the Godhead is the Holy Spirit. He has the same nature and essence as God and Christ. Like them, He is referred to by a personal pronoun and always in the masculine gender. The Holy Spirit is always mentioned third when spoken of in the New Testament as the means by which man would be guided and instructed. He is our Comforter.<sup>47</sup>

While Lectureship information identifying the nature or personality of the Holy Spirit was exceedingly scarce, his work or role in the world was more generously described. The speakers touching upon this topic clearly mirrored the persistent disagreement in the brotherhood over the scope and limitations of the Spirit's work. Many preachers had doggedly held—and some still do—that the Holy Spirit is strictly equivalent to, and hence synonymous with, the power of the recorded word in the mind and memory of the believer. The Abilene speechmaking on the Spirit, though frustratingly sparse, gave very little comfort to such an opinion. The able W. D. Campbell taught in 1927 that the Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible and that God works today through the instru-

mentality of the Bible or the written word. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit . . . ." said Campbell. "In this sense the Spirit testifies, and is a witness for Christ on earth. This we can understand. What he does more, we do not know, and we should not seek to become wise above that which is written."<sup>48</sup> In 1940, Forrest R. Waldrop, discrediting the doctrine of the direct operation of the Spirit in man's salvation, echoed agreement with Campbell's contention that the Holy Spirit's chief role, and his only clear-cut work, was wrought in the production of the Bible. "Those who contend that the Spirit operates directly upon the heart of man, overlook the facts of the Gospel," asserted Waldrop. "For in every conversion the word of God was preached by men."<sup>49</sup>

Several other speakers were not so content to limit the activity of the Holy Spirit to the task of inspiring and energizing the written work. While agreeing that the Spirit does not function apart from the Bible in man's salvation, they maintained that God, through the person of his Holy Spirit, dwells constantly within the heart of every baptized believer. Two years following Waldrop's lecture, Jesse P. Sewell took violent issue with his several brethren who taught that "the Spirit dwells in Christians through the word and only so." He offered as proof for his position the scriptures which teach that the Spirit within the heart is the ultimate source of purpose and power in prayer. "This is one way at least," Sewell energetically argued, "in which he helps our infirmities, in a manner in which the word cannot."<sup>50</sup>

Though he was likely expressing a minority and decidedly unpopular opinion for his day, John C. Taylor was clear in making the same point as early as 1925. His speech, "Peter, Before and After Pentecost," attributed the precipitous change in the impetuous apostle's life to the powerful workings of the Spirit within his heart. "This change is accounted for by the fact that he had been 'begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'" And then Taylor explained what he meant: "Peter was now filled with the Holy Spirit."<sup>51</sup>



John H. Banister's discussion of the indwelling Spirit, distinguished as a Lectureship rarity, was prefaced with this admission:

It is freely admitted that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the lives and hearts of Christians is a great mystery which we can neither completely understand nor fully explain. Yet, we must not deny this well attested fact, because of the mystery surrounding it. We make a serious mistake when we reject the mystical and incomprehensible in religion. Christianity has many deep and profound mysteries which we can never fully understand in this life.<sup>52</sup>

The chief contribution of Banister's address was the presentation of seven ways in which the abiding person of the Holy Spirit "comforts" the child of God: by giving proof of sonship, by providing strength and help in Christian living, by interceding in prayer, by producing good fruit, by supplying an incentive for holiness, by inspiring hope, and by guaranteeing immortality. Banister concluded: "We should be thankful that God, in his mercy, has made such a gracious provision for our help and encouragement."<sup>53</sup>

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>McCann essayed a scientific denunciation of the natural theory of man's development in this ambitious 350-page volume embellished with graphic pictures and illustrations. *God or Gorilla* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1922).

<sup>2</sup>*Only Yesterday* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931), p. 198.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis French Stearns, *Present Day Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), p. 195.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 195-196.

"The Godhead," *Lectures*, 1958, pp. 17-19.

"The Word Became Flesh," *Lectures*, 1955, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup>Baxter, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup>Ralph H. Gabriel (ed.), *Christianity and Modern Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924), p. x.

<sup>7</sup>John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, *Protestant Christianity* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 271.

<sup>10</sup>*Current Christian Thinking* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1928), p. 146.

<sup>11</sup>"Classical Protestantism," *Patterns of Faith in America*, edited by F. Ernest Johnson (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 19.

<sup>12</sup>*Lectures*, 1946, p. 1. Lecturing on the identical topic, and in very similar phraseology, George H. Stephenson said in 1958: "The Bible does not present a list of arguments for the existence of God. His reality and eternity are accepted as facts. Evidences of the existence of God are found in the Bible, but not arguments to try to prove Him. The man who declares there is no God is characterized as a 'fool' (Psalms 14:1). The idea of Scripture as a revelation implies a God who gave the revelation." *Lectures*, 1958, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup>Perhaps the best contemporary restatement of the classic proofs is George H. Joyce, *Principles of Natural Theology* (London: Longman's, 1943). Also see Geddes MacGregor, *Introduction to Religious Philosophy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1956), and William Ernest Hocking, *Science and the Idea of God* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1944), p. 14.

<sup>14</sup>"God Revealed," *Lectures*, 1919, p. 162.

<sup>15</sup>West, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup>Stephenson, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup>G. Dawes Hicks, *The Philosophical Basis of Theism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), p. 180.

<sup>18</sup>Stephenson, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup>"God, the Creator," *Lectures*, 1958, p. 37. .

<sup>20</sup>"Jesus of Nazareth, God's Gift to Humanity," *Lectures*, 1938, pp. 5-6.

<sup>21</sup>David Elton Trueblood, *Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 92, and MacGregor, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>22</sup>*Lectures*, 1960, p. 130.

<sup>23</sup>"The Relationship of God's Natural and Spiritual Worlds." *Lectures*, 1939, pp. 94-97.

<sup>24</sup>West, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup>Stephenson, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>26</sup>West, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup>*Christian Century*, March 20, 1924, p. 359.

<sup>28</sup>*The God of Fundamentalism and Other Studies* (Chicago: Pascal Covici, 1925), p. 30. Bridges' sharp attacks upon Machen and Bryan reveal that not all of the vituperation was from the conservative column. When Bryan passed away before publication of this book, Bridges included the following "eulogistic" explanation:

NOTE—The sudden death of Mr. Bryan, when this book was in type and could not be extensively altered, gives occasion for a word of regret, if in the heat of controversy I have used any expression which his withdrawal renders unbecoming. I am glad to know that having never doubted his sincerity or his earnest devotion to what he thought right and good, I have never said or written a word implying doubt.

I gladly offer my tribute of respect to the dauntless courage, high purpose, and unwearied zeal of one whom it was to me a duty to oppose." p. xvii.

<sup>29</sup>Arthur Cushman McGiffert, *The Rise of Modern Religious Ideas* (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1915), p. 201.

<sup>30</sup>Gerald Birney Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>31</sup>George R. Dodson, *Christian Register*, October 2, 1919, p. 15.

<sup>32</sup>"The Holiness of God," *Lectures*, 1958, p. 73.

<sup>33</sup>Baxter, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>34</sup>"The Gods of Modernism," *Lectures*, 1958, pp. 144-145.

<sup>35</sup>Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), pp. 544-545.

<sup>36</sup>Barton, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>37</sup>"God's Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Omnipotence," *Lectures*, 1958, p. 55.

<sup>38</sup>Showalter, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

<sup>39</sup>Chaddick, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup>*Lectures*, 1942, pp. 79-80.

<sup>41</sup>"Our Abiding Sources of Strength," *Lectures*, 1942, pp. 44.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>43</sup>Kelcy, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 53-58.

<sup>45</sup>"God Is Love," *Lectures*, 1958, p. 29.

<sup>46</sup>Sewell, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-78.

<sup>47</sup>Baxter, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>48</sup>"The Three Witnesses," *Lectures*, 1926-1927, p. 114.

<sup>49</sup>"How to Become a Citizen of the Kingdom," *Lectures*, 1940, p. 115.

<sup>50</sup>Sewell, *op. cit.*, p. 48, 49.

<sup>51</sup>*Lectures*, 1925-1926.

<sup>52</sup>"The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit," *Lectures*, 1957, p. 62.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 71.



## The Savior and the Plan of Salvation

There was no emphasis more central to the Abilene speechmaking than the divinity and kingship and saviorhood of Jesus, the Christ. Professor Charles H. Roberson gave stirring expression to the theme which was at the very heart of the Lectureship:

The life of Jesus is the knot in which all the threads of previous history are gathered up, and from which the threads of succeeding events again diverge. Men may ridicule this or inveigh against that, but the main facts are undeniable and are not denied. Jesus remade the evolution of history. He stands forth, even in the estimation of unsympathetic opponents, as the one perfect embodiment of the divine spirit in human nature. The conclusion to which all our lines of thought point is that the belief in a divine will ruling in and directing the course of history logically and inevitably involves the belief that the historical Jesus is the eternal Christ.<sup>1</sup>

This—despite all other differences, whether many or few, major or minor—this, the men at Abilene believed.

From first to last, from the eloquent to the halting and inarticulate, through five decades Jesus Christ was reverently featured by each of 349 different speakers as the one impelling reason for his being there; the Purpose of his preparation, the Person of his presentation, the one, awful Judge of how well his day's work at Abilene had been done.

"Christianity, the Revelation of Christ," was more than the title of a short and simple sermon preached by an inauspicious little man named Oscar Smith in the platform's early hour.<sup>2</sup> Much more! It was the throbbing theme of the platform's every hour. In 1923, a preacher named McMillan reduced the movement's many sides to a succinct purpose: "Christ in Action!"<sup>3</sup> And in 1960, another one named Mullen continued to see the same purpose: "Christianity is the religion of a Person. What is Christianity? The answer is obvious, 'Christianity is Christ.'"<sup>4</sup> Oh, there were the occasional and short-lived distractions. But the lasting lecture which the listeners loved and leaned forward to hear year by year was "nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." February after February, when the "good ole days" were thinnest and the winter snows were thickest, the movement's small and great gathered to shout for joy again that "the foundations of Christian hope rest squarely on Jesus, the crucified but risen Savior."<sup>5</sup>

### *And the Word Became Flesh*

Jesus was presented as the bread of life, the water of life, the way, the truth and the life, the good shepherd, the door, the resurrection, the light of the world and a great deal more. But that multitude of men who quoted from the first verses of John's gospel captured the characteristic with which eternity's love story began: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."<sup>6</sup>

The Word—*Logos*—was a philosophical term long immersed in the rich traditions of Greek thought. But when the Spirit selected it as the chief calling-card for Christ, curious and restless minds suddenly had many questions to ask: What was the mysterious nature of this *Logos*? When was he born—in the beginning, or in Bethlehem? Where is he now—in Joseph's tomb or on his Father's throne? Why did he come to earth? How, indeed, was he both God and man? Were there two Gods—the Father and the Son? What did He have in mind?—"He who hath seen me, hath seen the Father." The Lectureship's unwavering answer to these ageless christological questions can be simply put: Although the finite mind cannot fully grasp the infinite nature of Christ, he was at once both completely human and completely divine, hence completely qualified to be the sacrifice and the intercessor and the savior of all men.

In 1940, John T. Smithson spoke of "The Divine Nature." "The Son of God," he reasoned, "being both divine and human in nature, reveals perfectly to the human nature the divine nature."<sup>7</sup> "This theme that Jesus is the Son of God," Roy H. Lanier had said two years prior, "God manifested in the flesh, is the very heart of the Gospel, it is the foundation upon which everything else rests."<sup>8</sup> And even earlier, the whole point of John T. Hind's 1925 speech had been that Christ was eternally God, and hence, the key to the redemption plan set before the world was formed. Hinds contended:

Just how the only begotten son of God could be with the father before He was made flesh and dwelt among men is, of course, beyond human wisdom to explain; but that does not render the fact less true. If man could solve all the secrets of divinity, he would become God himself.<sup>9</sup>

The most competent treatment of the christological problem was LeMoine Lewis' 1955 speech, "The Word Became Flesh." Lewis traced the historical disputations sur-

rounding the nature of Christ: The Ebionites who sought to preserve monotheism by asserting that Jesus was not God, the Docetists who solved the problem by denying the humanity of Christ, the Gnostics who made Christ but one of an almost endless succession of aeons. Many of the strange names immortalized by involvement with the christological controversy were introduced by Lewis: the Adoptionistic and Modalistic Monarchians, Irenaeus and the Theory of Recapitulation, Tertullian, Origen, Arius, Alexander, Marcellus, Sebellias, Apollinaris, Nestorius, Eutyches, and the Monophysites. It was the historian Gibbon who over-simplified the issue for which these names are remembered, suggesting that the Christian world split in an argument over a single "i." But on the vital difference between "homoiousios" and "homo-ousios" hinged the answer as to whether Christ was to be regarded as only God, or only man, or fully both.

In Lewis' judgment the endless philosophical speculations had accomplished little except division and confusion. He also warned that any interpretation of Christ's nature which could not be expressed in the language of scripture should not be trusted. "Nicea," he suggested, "was doomed to fail from the first because 'homo-ousian' was a philosophical, rather than a scriptural term . . . ." Pointing to the pitfalls of vain christological speculation, Lewis commented:

It was almost impossible to walk the line of orthodoxy. It was so easy to fall into subordinationism or Patripassionism, or in trying to stay out of Apollinarianism or Eutychianism to fall into Nestorianism . . . These early controversies played a big part in the rise of the hierarchy that characterizes the medieval church. In order to carry their point many stooped to political tricks utterly foreign to Christianity. The Church in controversy sunk to a very low moral level. In trying to define the nature of Christ they lost the spirit of Christ.<sup>19</sup>

Concluding that the gospel was never intended to be the subject of philosophy, Lewis said: "Let us not forget the lessons of the past . . . . Let us be content with the simple faith, 'The word became flesh and dwelt among us.'" Harrison Mathews' 1956 words were also apt:

Mr. Oppenheimer, the atomic scientist, one time said, "The best way to export an idea is to wrap it up in a person and send the person." That is just exactly what God did when He revealed Himself. He wrapped up the idea of Himself in the person of His Son and sent His own Son to this old world.<sup>11</sup>

### *The Divinity of Christ*

In the capacity to challenge and blaspheme the deity of Christ, even the warped legalism of Judaism and the blood-stained skepticism of first century paganism must take a back seat to the empirical pride of twentieth century man. James F. Cox shared with his 1923 Abilene audience a smug section from Dr. Percy S. Grant's "edification" of his New York Episcopal Church:

Very few clergymen today who have been educated in the large universities, by which I mean places where science as well as the classics and mathematics are taught—accept the idea that Jesus had the power of God . . . . We may accept the spiritual teachings of Christ as the basis of our religion, but we need not believe that He has ascended and is seated on the right hand of God.<sup>12</sup>

As in the debate concerning God's nature, the questions raised about Christ were not to decide if he were divine so much as to determine the nature or measure of that divinity. Was Christ fully God incarnate, or mere man with a phenomenal capacity for "God consciousness? "Divine and human were truly one," answered the liberal McGiffert, explaining: "Christ, therefore, if human must be divine, as all men are," but essentially he "is no more divine than



we are or than nature is.”<sup>13</sup> To the modernists, the divinity of Christ was an anticipation of what all humanity, in the course of the evolutionary process, might one day become. But Fundamentalists, and multitudes of less bizarre believers, would have none of it. Four of their famous “Five points”—the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the atonement, the resurrection and return—were designed to offset the slashing attack on the Godness of Christ.

The men at Abilene addressed Christ as a profound fact of faith rather than an accidental act of history. They saw in him the pre-existent Word, the incarnation of God in the flesh, conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, slain for human sin, resurrected from the grave, and ascended into Heaven to one day come again to judge the world. The burden of Lectureship discussion of Christ was designed to affirm his sonship. “What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?” was a question which more than fifty speeches eagerly answered. The 1938 program, with the special theme, “Jesus Christ the Savior,” provided particularly significant testimony in reply to the question. At Abilene there was no middle ground; Christ was either all or nothing at all. In 1923, E. W. McMillan summarized the claims of Christ:

Nine times He claimed to have the authority of God. Ninety times it is said that He affirmed to be the Son of God. Thirty-three times He declared that He was sent forth from God. Thirty-one times He said He was the Messiah of whom the prophets wrote. Five times He claimed He will be judge of the nations when the ages shall have been consummated.<sup>14</sup>

C. R. Nichol, a veteran Texas preacher measured these claims and announced that Christ was either God or “the greatest deceiver ever among men. If He was not the Son of God,” Nichol concluded, “He was a colossal fraud. He was not a ‘good man’ if He was not what He claimed. Liars are not good men.”<sup>15</sup> J. P. Sander’s 1943 speech, “What Kind of

Christ is the Hope of the World," described the modernistic method which rendered Christ's death impotent.

The essential elements of Christianity — that which makes it distinctly Christian — have been neglected for a religious Liberalism which is distinctly unchristian . . . . God no longer holds the central place. The central place . . . lies in the individual's religious experience which is quite difficult often for him to define . . . . In a sense every man becomes a law unto himself . . . . Consequently, there is no need for redemption, there is no need for a Savior, there is no need for a sacrifice, there is no need for a death on the cross reconciling man to God."<sup>16</sup>

Several Abilene speakers reacted to liberal attacks more in bombasticism and ridicule than in cautious reason. In 1925, Silas E. Templeton summarily dismissed the issue with the charge that it rejected "God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Apostles, and both the Old and New Testaments; and it will finally damn the soul of the one that believes and teaches it."<sup>17</sup> Two years later John T. Smithson disdained "that brutal, beastly, bloody theory" as "downright infidelity" avowing that he had "neither time nor respect for such a theory, but denounce it with all the powers of my being."<sup>18</sup>

Other denunciations, however, were buttressed by more thoughtful evidence. Although the lecturers who sought to prove God's existence had relied mostly on philosophical and moral arguments, the preponderance of evidence advanced to demonstrate the deity of Christ was based upon direct statements of scripture. Charles H. Roberson's 1938 lecture, "Historic Evidences of Jesus Christ," was one of the few exceptions. After acknowledging that "practically the only sources of our knowledge of Jesus Christ are the canonical records of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John," Roberson sought to establish His divinity on secular evidence. The writings of the Talmud, Tacitus, Pliny, Seutonius, and Hegesippus, "all so far as they go confirm the facts

given in the New Covenant." The Apostolic fathers and early apologists were also summoned by Roberson as witnesses "to the great features of Christ's life."<sup>19</sup>

On the program with Roberson, Melvin J. Wise employed the more typical Lectureship approach. Assuming the inerrancy of the Bible, Wise used it as the basis for demonstrating Christ's deity. Of the Old Testament scriptures Wise said, "I take it that you accept them unreservedly; but my work shall be to show that Jesus perfectly fulfilled what was written in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms concerning Him."<sup>20</sup>

The means of proof most frequently used were rooted in the character of Christ's life. In 1923, Oscar Smith called him "the most lovable character the world has ever seen," and in 1936, Horace W. Busby appealed to the "pureness of His life," as proof of divinity. Two years later, Paul Southern's lecture, "The Mind of Christ," named obedience, prayer, humility, forgiveness, and love as the enduring virtues of Christ's character. During the same series of lectures, W. D. Bills spoke of "The Incomparable Christ," and W. W. Otey declared that "for nearly two thousand years enemies have been critically examining the life of Jesus," yet, "He stands before every known standard of law known to man, not only not condemned, but sinless." Other speakers focused upon the uniqueness and influence of Christ's teachings. In 1925, Elmer Lee Nichols stated that Christ's ethical teachings make him the chief character of all history, and that if his lessons on the value of human life and the universal brotherhood of mankind were adopted, they would bring permanent peace. "Mr. H. G. Wells," reported Nichols, "places Jesus as the greatest of the six foremost characters of history."<sup>21</sup>

Several speakers exalted Jesus as the "master teacher." In 1938, Hulen L. Jackson pictured Jesus as the head of an "educational movement," and later, Leonard Mullens used

the words of John Stuart Mill: "Who among his disciples or their proselytes were capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus or imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospel." Mullens added the sweeping praise: "During the nineteen hundred years of Christianity in the world, with all out progress of human thought and life, not a single new ethical idea has been discovered outside the teaching of our Lord."<sup>22</sup>

### *The Virgin Birth and the Resurrection*

Jesus came not merely as a good man with a good message, but as Clarence C. Morgan expressed it in 1938: "He brought with Him Heaven's credentials—miracles—and by His mighty works proved that He was the Son of God."<sup>23</sup> From the catalogue of supernatural events, Christ's virgin birth and resurrection became the major battleground between liberals and conservatives. And on this field of combat the conservatives were, interestingly enough, aided by many worshippers who did not share the view of biblical infallibility. "Many a Christian," wrote E. C. Vanderlaan, "who finds it necessary to treat the book of Jonah as an allegory, and who is not quite sure about the conversational powers of Balaam's ass, grows frightened when it is proposed to treat these supposed events in the life of Jesus, the virgin birth and the bodily resurrection, as legendary."<sup>24</sup>

Fundamentalism was ready to stake its whole case on the validity of the virgin birth and the resurrection. The very heart of Christ's claims, if these miracles were disproved a major overhaul in orthodox Christianity would be unavoidable. But if demonstrated as true, every other supernatural feat on biblical record would be undergirded and rendered more believable. William Jennings Bryan regarded the virgin birth as "the pivotal point," naming the lucid accounts of Matthew and Luke as solid supportive evidence. Benjamin B. Warfield added that Christ's sinless-

ness and supernatural works could not be explained apart from a distinctively supernatural birth. John Roach Straton, in his debates with Unitarian Charles F. Potter, called the miracle one point "upon which Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Greek Catholics all stand together."<sup>25</sup>

There were many, however, who would not so "stand." Modernism made much mileage of the fact that two of the gospels contained no reference whatsoever to the virgin birth. One writer charged that the absence of the miracle in the Pauline and Johannine writings meant that it should not be regarded as a tenet central to apostolic thinking. Others, who could not have cared less for apostolic thinking, cast aspersions upon the historical truthfulness of the testimony in Matthew and Luke. The scientific method, contended the modernists, simply made no provision for the notion that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary without benefit of an earthly father. In a notable sermon, Dr. Fosdick consented that God specially influenced Christ's birth, but hastened to explain that the first-century mind had phrased the birth of Christ "in terms of a biological miracle that our modern minds cannot accept."<sup>26</sup> And George A. Gordon also offered his opinion as proof: "The nearer to Christ that men and women in their homes come, the less acceptable becomes that miracle, the less compatible with their own life and hope. Besides, it strikes them as an awkward miracle."<sup>27</sup>

The resurrection of Christ from the grave is, in biblical Christianity, the supreme hope for all dying men. Appealing to the text, "If Christ be not risen, then is our faith vain," billions of words were invested by conservatives in the venture of the 1920's to prove what actually became of the Christ's body. E. Y. Mullens, long-time president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, summed the conservative case: "Christianity stands or falls with the resurrection of Jesus. The issue may as well be squarely faced. Other miracles of Christ are easy to accept if this one took

place. Our hope is built on it."<sup>28</sup> The modernists did not subscribe to, nor would they even grant the necessity of the resurrection. Ascribing to Jesus only a continued spiritual existence in the lives of his followers, Dean Rashdall postulated that his appearance to the disciples was, perhaps, a "supernormal psychological event, but which involved nothing which can properly be spoken of as a suspension of natural law."<sup>29</sup>

In keeping with the larger national struggle, the two miracles which figured most prominently in Abilene evidence for the divinity of Christ were also the virgin birth and the resurrection. The latter, however, received far greater Lectureship attention than the former. The Abilene speakers were completely silent on the question of the virgin birth during the tense 1920's and throughout the first twenty years of the platform's history. Glenn L. Wallace became the first speaker, in 1938, to devote an entire speech to the miracle:

One of the foundation stones that helps to prove Jesus to be the Son of God is His virgin birth . . . . The Christian believes that Jesus was born as the Scriptures teach. He believes that Jesus had an earthly mother but that His father was God the father of the universe. He believes that if Christ was not born of a virgin, then He was but a man and deserves respect only as a man. He believes that if Christ was not born of a virgin then the whole of the Bible is unworthy of the consideration of man as an inspired Book . . . .<sup>30</sup>

In 1943, J. P. Sanders challenged those denying the virgin birth to explain a sinless life on the part of a human person. After stating that Harry Emerson Fosdick regarded the miracle "as a biological miracle our minds cannot accept" Sanders countered: "A sinless man is as much a miracle in the moral world as a virgin birth in the physical world."<sup>31</sup>

Of much greater interest to the Lectureship speakers was the miracle of the resurrection. E. W. McMillan set the tone in 1923 for subsequent discussions: "There is too much internal evidence to admit of reasonable doubt." McMillan pointed to the "beautiful harmony of testimony in the four Gospels," the many post-resurrection eye witnesses, and the faith and devotion of the early disciples as giving veracity to the resurrection.<sup>32</sup> John T. Smith's 1938 address, "The Resurrection of the Christ," was, however, the only lecture devoted exclusively to this miracle. He pointed to the vital position of the resurrection in the Christian faith:

The outstanding event of world history is the resurrection of Jesus. All that went before it pointed forward to it. All things since point backward to it, and have been moulded by it. His resurrection is the power which transforms the world, and forms the only ground for the Christian's hope of another life.<sup>33</sup>

"The resurrection of Jesus Christ," Paul Southern added in 1940, "is the central triumph of His life." J. P. Sanders echoed this emphasis three programs later: "The revivification of the crucified body of Jesus is the foundation on which Christianity rests . . . . Believe it and all other miracles are easy. Deny it and all the others make no difference." "Now either human hands removed that body," reasoned Leonard Mullens, "or superhuman power raised up Jesus from the dead." In answering this question, Mullens and others discussed the various "skeptical hypotheses" produced to explain away the resurrection: Christ was not dead but merely unconscious; his body was taken by authorities or stolen by disciples; the apostles were merely excited, or the story is only a myth. "Then what did become of the body?" asked John T. Smith. He replied: "And a mighty chorus of voices breaks forth in thunderous roar, challenging the tempest's loudest shock, and resounding to earth's remotest bounds, 'He arose from the dead. He is alive.'"<sup>34</sup>

*The Scheme of Redemption*

To this evidence advanced in support of Christ's resurrection, the modernistic response amounted to little more than a condescending, "so what." "His death," quipped Walter Rauschenbusch, "is a matter almost negligible in the work of salvation."<sup>35</sup> The atonement, he taunted, is not a supernatural act of God through Christ but a natural achievement for all men who develop Christ's awareness of God. Christ, he believed, is not man's savior, but rather his example.

But conservatives across the country again rose to give rebuttal. "The scheme of redemption by substitutionary suffering," claimed their popular spokesman William Jennings Bryan, "is not only believable but natural." Employing the phrase, "the plan of salvation," Bryan held that no Bible truth had been more clearly stated and yet none more "hotly contested to-day" than the doctrine of atonement through the blood of Christ.<sup>36</sup>

The Abilene lecturers clearly interpreted salvation in terms of a supernatural scheme of redemption, devised by God before the world was made and executed by Christ's life and death among men. They believed that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." This act of reconciliation was made possible through the expression of God's most dominant characteristic — love. The Abilene crescendo—the most abundantly cited passage of scripture in the more than seven hundred lectures—was John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son; that whosoever should believe in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Quoted verbatim more than one hundred times, this sentence formed the textual basis for more than a dozen addresses.

Some of the men featured love as the most adequate synonym through which the finite mind might grasp God.



E. W. McMillan said in 1924 that "what men call the power, the law, the beauty and the harmony of God are only the fruits of His love. Knowing this, the Apostle John said, 'God is love.'"<sup>37</sup> Thirty-six years later Roy Osborne echoed "that the outstanding characteristic of God is love. Not love that He has, or love that He exhibits, but love that He is."<sup>38</sup>

Other speakers became more specific, naming the gift of Christ as the highest of expression of Divine love. "John 3:16," said Silas E. Templeton in 1925, "covers all of God's dealing with man since the fall in the Garden of Eden to this present time." In 1938, A. DeWitt Chaddick called the verse the "little Bible," since "it seems to enfold what the rest of the Bible seems to unfold." Four years later W. B. West described it as "the most wonderful sentence ever written" and "the theme of the entire Bible expressed in one verse." And in 1958, H. A. Dixon termed it "an epitome of the extent of God's love. He so loved the world that He gave His son to die in our stead."<sup>39</sup>

The lecturers regarded God's love to be essential in human salvation, because of man's inclination toward evil and the resulting insoluble guilt "Man has received a two-fold nature from the Creator," explained Roy Osborne. "The physical nature is incidental and of no importance except as it must be dealt with to prevent it from becoming dominant. The spiritual nature is a reflection of the nature of God."<sup>40</sup> Though born righteous and spiritual, man had voluntarily despised his spiritual nature preferring both the pleasures and consequences of the flesh. Since Adam turned his back on Eden, all succeeding generations have contaminated themselves with the evil about them. A free moral individual with the right to select between good and evil—the spirit or the flesh—man's guilt is not inherited but is the consequence of his own unfortunate choices. His nature is not inherently corrupt, but is corrupted through his unavoidable inclination toward sin.

*The Wages of Sin*

Since "God is love," and since man is created in his image, man is designed to respond to God's love by loving him in return. God has granted absolute freedom to man to determine what the object of his love and affection will be. But in the very nature and design of creation, God has decreed that every man must love something. This freedom, man's great opportunity for dignity, has become his greatest curse. For it has provided unlimited occasion for the love-need to be fulfilled, or more realistically, prostituted in illegitimate ways. Spurning the love of God, mankind has lavished its affection on things limited, finite, and fleshly. Accordingly, human fulfillment has been partial and passing; human frustration deep and unrelenting.

*Sin* is the theological term used by the speakers to denote the condition by which the physical nature dominates the spiritual. Incredibly little Lectureship attention was devoted to the problem of the origin of sin. Perhaps R. C. Bell's lectures in 1943 and 1946 were most helpful of all toward an understanding of the problem of evil and its source. While all of the speakers apparently acknowledged the existence of Satan, Bell was most explicit: "Satan is only a creature," he said, "but he is no joke. Throughout the Bible he is taken most seriously as a capable, powerful, dangerous adversary . . . ." <sup>41</sup>

Through Satan's deceit, man was encouraged to seek fulfillment for his craving to love by displacing God and placing his affections on other persons or even things. "Psychologically, sin is selfishness," declared Cecil E. Hill. "Every form of sin has its roots in selfishness." <sup>42</sup> Hence, sin ultimately becomes love of self rather than love of God. "We have all sinned," said J. P. Sanders. "Every one of us has alienated himself from God . . . . And the Bible informs us that the wages of sin is death." <sup>43</sup>

Through the years, numerous other speakers stressed that sin and self-seeking would eventually lead man to eternal damnation. In 1929, J. L. Hines said:

Sin defied God, hated purity, wrecked a home and sent the human family on a journey through the blackness of a night, to be thrown and tossed against the rocks of greed, pride and jealousy, and to be torn by the thorns of hate, envy, strife and selfishness. It is a serpent that lurks in the darkness, to bite the feet of the tired and weary pilgrim. It bites and stings, it blackens and blurs, it disgraces and degrades. It brings to shame and destruction and at last causes one to writhe in agony and pain in the lake of fire and brimstone, where the worm dieth not, and where the fire is not quenched.<sup>44</sup>

A decade later, Cecil E. Hill reasoned: "To speak of salvation implies that a man is lost. The whole revelation of God assumes this. It is fundamental. This is the very first thing we must make the world realize." He continued:

Frankly, let me tell you that with many the sense of sin is declining. The Christian Scientist is trying to explain it away . . . . There are many who look upon sin as a misfortune and not a fault. With them the sinner is a victim and not an offender. He has not done wrong but has suffered wrong. He does not owe God repentance, but humanity owes him an apology . . . . the fact of sin still remains. It has not been eradicated from our nature. The voice of conscience cannot be hushed. Sin is still the most frightful fact in the world and writes its ruin in a thousand ways. It is the awful tragedy of the universe and only fools mock at it. God cannot overlook sin and be a just and respectable God. It is still an eternal law that "the wages of sin is death."<sup>45</sup>

The speakers, therefore, believed that the question of salvation could not be raised separate and apart from the problem of sin. They saw the whole gospel story as written against this dark background of despair. For them, the

scheme of redemption grew out of the fact of sin and its eternal consequences. A. Hugh Clark explained in 1944 that "the only reason men do not generally acknowledge the honor of Christ and apply at once to Him for deliverance, is because they have no adequate conception of the evil of sin." He illustrated: "One must know the malignity and insidiousness of the disease before he can or will properly appreciate either the physician or the remedy."<sup>46</sup>

These remarks contrasted strikingly with modern theology which had left little room for the biblical doctrine of sin and its wages. The theory of evolution had made of sin merely a necessary stage in mankind's development toward naturalistic perfection. In addition, the depersonalization of God had reduced the seriousness of sin and removed man's personal guilt.

But the Abilene speakers insisted that sin created deep personal guilt eventuating enmity between man and God. The corrupting character of sin would require more of a remedy than mere social reformation or humanistic improvement. The price of reconciliation was the cross. The ugliness and guilt of sin could be blotted out only in an act of supernatural regeneration made possible by the atoning death of Christ.

### *By Grace Are Ye Saved*

"Men teach that our salvation depends entirely upon God's predestination," asserted A. DeWitt Chaddick in 1938, "but the Bible specifically declares that our salvation rests utterly with our own volition."<sup>47</sup> All other speakers concurred that just as man was not inherently depraved but his nature had been allowed to choose the evil, even so was his will made free to elect God's grace as the means for removing the evil. But a number of speakers took issue with Chaddick's emphasis that "our salvation rests utterly with our own volition."

G. C. Brewer, whose preaching championed the doctrine of salvation by God's grace, said in 1938: "Let us not think for a moment that our Lord expects us to save ourselves. Let us see that we have a savior. A savior is one who saves . . . . we do not achieve salvation by right doing. That would be works and not faith. We would then have saved ourselves and made useless a savior."<sup>48</sup> Brewer lectured on the subject, "Grace and Salvation," in 1952 and stated the same proposition: "Our salvation from sin and our hope of eternal life comes as a free gift from God and doesn't depend upon human worth. "God is love," added Elbridge Linn in 1958, "and grace is that love in action. Grace is always unmerited. To be sure, it is man's demerit that makes grace possible and necessary."<sup>49</sup> Other speakers agreed that the doctrine of God's free grace is inconsistent with the idea of human merit. Man does not deserve salvation as a reward for accomplishment, and God does not provide salvation as though He were paying a debt for righteous deeds. "Oh, friend, I don't know anybody that is going to come 'close' to paying God for his salvation," said Linn.<sup>50</sup>

Brewer, correcting what he felt was an improper brotherhood emphasis, summarized the efficacy of grace as he understood it:

Therefore, our salvation does not depend upon our perfect adherence to the requirements of law. It does not depend upon our being good enough by our own achievement to merit salvation. By making our salvation dependent upon our own perfection, we make void the grace of God. And to make our perfection a matter of legal requirements fully met would make Christ's death useless.<sup>51</sup>

Other speakers observed how perfectly Christ fulfilled the two essential requirements—justice and mercy—which had to be met in man's salvation and justification from sin. "On the one hand," declared A. Hugh Clark, "there was law, sin, guilt, penalty and death; on the other, there was

love, mercy, clemency, justification, and life. Between these antipodal alternatives, God, out of his love for man, interposed the death of his son."<sup>51</sup> J. P. Sanders recounted the familiar legend of Zaleucus, the Locrean law-giver and ruler:

He found it necessary to make a law that those who committed a certain crime should have both eyes put out. The very first violator of that law was one very near and dear to him, his own son. Naturally all eyes were turned to the king to see whether justice or love would triumph . . . . The king's wisdom devised a scheme which satisfied both justice and mercy. He had one of the offender's eyes put out, and one of his own.<sup>53</sup>

As early as 1924 Roy H. Lanier was also emphasizing that God's grace in Christ wondrously satisfied the twin demands of justice and mercy in the scheme of redemption. His remarks help to demonstrate that the doctrine of salvation by grace was a cardinal tenet which ran the chronological gamut of the Abilene series:

Man was lost, separated from God, and wholly unable to bring himself back. He was guilty of a crime, the penalty of which was death, and it is evident that he could not pay that penalty and still enjoy life with God. There was only one way to solve the problem, and God sent His son to die for man, the just for the unjust, the sinless for the sinful, and the holy for the unholy, that he might redeem man from his fallen condition, and rescue the world from the rule and dominion of Satan . . . .<sup>54</sup>

With the crisis created by the world's worst war for his dreadful backdrop, W. B. West could say in 1942 what others had long been saying in more placid days, and what scores more would repeat as the world grew even more explosive: "I submit to you that the only hope of the world tonight is the love of God, which was manifested in the coming of Jesus Christ to the world." "I do not hesitate to

say and with emphasis," chimed J. L. Hines, "no sin was ever remitted, except through the blood shed on calvary." "Our greatest need," added Cecil E. Hill, "is . . . salvation . . . many offices and titles are ascribed to Christ, but these are all included when we speak of Him as the savior." And perhaps G. C. Brewer deserves the final word on the theme which was such a prominent part of his life-work: "Salvation is by the grace of God. It is a free gift depending not upon man's deserving or man's worth."<sup>55</sup>

### *The Human-side of Salvation*

Though not all of them gave it the same emphasis, all of the lecturers were agreed that the grace of God which brings salvation is conditional. They held that the redemptive blood is conditional in its application. "There is a human as well as a divine side to God's plan of salvation," declared W. D. Campbell in 1923, "and if we are finally lost . . . it will be because we did not work out our own salvation with fear and trembling."<sup>56</sup>

Hall L. Calhoun raised the matter of human conditions with these words in 1929: "Thus, it is clear that it is God's part to furnish the cleansing blood and ours to make use of it . . . God and men working together, each one doing his proper part."<sup>57</sup> Later, J. P. Sanders was more specific in suggesting that *faith* is the basic condition upon which God's grace is made available: "Only those who have accepted it by faith and have obeyed the Gospel of our Lord have benefited thereby. It is thus limited by the will of man and not by the will of God. God provides it for all, but we must accept it as the result of our own choice."<sup>58</sup> James Baird also came to the same point tersely: "Jesus came to make possible for us the abundant life. But the reaching out—the stretching for it, if you please—is our responsibility!"<sup>59</sup>

Upon what condition is the grace of God hinged? What is involved in man's "reaching out" for salvation? R.

C. Bell responded with the primary part of the answer: "God came to men in love," Bell said simply, "and it must be by loving Him back that men go to God." He told of the lawyer in the scriptures who asked of Christ, "Which is the first commandment?" The Abilene professor then cited the Master's answer: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Bell concluded: "This is the great and first commandment."<sup>60</sup>

Man's response to God's grace, then, starts with loving him back. Love is the common lifeline through which the human-divine relationship is born. Yet just as God's love found dynamic expression in Christ's death, even so man's love must find some medium of tangible expression. "If ye love me," Christ had said, "ye will keep my commandments." Calhoun lectured on the subject of "Faith" in 1929 and touched the very basis for the man-to-God covenant relationship. "All of this simply means," he summarized, "that a sinner is justified by that faith which leads him to obey the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation."<sup>61</sup> Brewer added that "salvation has already been brought to man and is offered upon the terms of the Gospel, which terms are embraced in one word, 'believe.'" He further simplified the heart of human responsibility: "The whole story of human redemption is comprehended in two words: 'grace' and 'faith.' It is grace on God's part and faith on man's part."<sup>62</sup>

Faith, therefore, is an act of complete submission encompassing every detail of obedience upon which the "free gift" of salvation has been offered. And following initial salvation, faith also supplies the mainspring for the complete spiritual life. But God and his people are reconciled only in the communion of a shared love—extended and returned—each to the other. As grace is God's love "made flesh," so faith is man's love in action. As love is expressed by God to man through saving grace, so love must be re-



turned by man to God through obedient faith—"faith working through love."

Within this context, Abilene speakers occasionally referred to the "five steps" involved in the so-called "plan of salvation." As named, they were: hearing of the gospel, faith in Christ as God's son, repentance of sins, confession of the name of Christ, and baptism into Christ for the remission of sins.

### *The Plan of Salvation*

The revealed word preached to receptive men provides the enlightenment upon which all rational faith is based. R. L. Whiteside discounted the idea that men can learn of God by means of "an inner light," "the voice of conscience," "our own natural powers," or "nature itself." He contended that in the Bible, "the Holy Spirit searched out the deep things of God and revealed . . . God's forgiveness and the rich provisions He has made for us."<sup>63</sup> Several years earlier, Calhoun had similarly emphasized man's need of hearing the gospel:

In Romans 10:17, he says: "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." That is, I hear God's Word, I believe God's Word and this is the way I get faith; and it may be said in absolute confidence that this is the only way the Bible teaches that faith comes. There is not a line in the Bible from the first of Genesis to the last of Revelation which teaches that faith comes in any other way than from hearing the Word of God.<sup>64</sup>

Agreeing that "faith cometh by hearing," Chaddick next listed belief in Christ as a vital step toward complete obedience. He also observed that the arguments over the efficacy of "faith only" were rooted in ignorance of the two crucially different uses of the term by biblical writers. He

concluded that "saving faith" is that trust which connotes absolute surrender to God and his will.

Why must men come to ramblings or why must we even quibble over the efficacy of faith . . . . In one sense to "believe" means to purely accept the veracity of given testimony. In the other sense, to "believe" comprehends the whole duty of man—a complete submission to the will of God. Whenever it is coupled alone with salvation or its equivalent, "belief" or "faith" means complete obedience to divine commands.<sup>65</sup>

Other speakers stressed the importance of repentance and confession in the scheme of redemption. In 1933, W. M. Davis spoke on "How to Get into The Church: Repentance." He said: "While repentance is neither Godly sorrow for sin on the one hand, nor reformation of life on the other, it is inseparably connected with each. The value of repentance lies more in what it does, than what it is." Davis continued: "Literally, repentance is a reversion of mind with respect to purpose. He who sincerely repents, no longer purposes to sin."<sup>66</sup>

Although more strongly stressed in the early programs, baptism for the remission of sins was consistently a featured theme. Early Arceneaux underscored the necessity of that kind of faith which totally surrenders. He stated that the "New Testament writers frequently used the words believers and believe when they distinctly meant a baptized believer, or believe in the comprehensive sense of obedient belief or faith."<sup>67</sup> The same year Batsell Baxter reported that "the Scripture plainly says baptism saves us. Of course," he elaborated, "we understand that baptism alone will not save anybody; but baptism will save from past sins him who is a proper subject for baptism." He described the spiritual significance involved in this culminating act of primary obedience:

Baptism, then, gives men a symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Every time someone is baptized, those who witness the act have their minds brought afresh to the sacrifice and triumph of our Lord.<sup>68</sup>

Several lecturers supported the premise, held by all churches of Christ, that legitimate baptism must be in the form of immersion in water and for the express purpose of "remission of sins." Explaining the inadequacy of sprinkling or pouring, Baxter added: "Immersion of the penitent in water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit unto remission of sins puts the believer into Christ in whom is hope of eternal life, and without whom there is the certainty of eternal darkness and despair"<sup>69</sup> J. L. Hines discounted the idea that baptism, with a purely symbolic importance, is for persons who have already been saved by faith. "If you would reach the blood of Christ," he postulated, "it is necessary to hear God, believe God, repent of your sins, confess Christ and obey Him in baptism." He then explained that "baptism to a believing penitent who has confessed Christ, is 'for the remission of sins' for it brings that one to the blood which is in Christ which washes away his sins."<sup>70</sup>

G. C. Brewer, continuing his contention that "salvation is by the grace of God, a free gift not depending upon man's worth," summarized the human side of salvation:

We come into the enjoyment of this salvation by faith, and this faith is expressed, actualized or made perfect by obeying Christ or by complying with the terms named by Christ and the Holy Spirit as conditions of salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 16:30-34).

When we have, through faith, surrendered to Christ, submitted to His will, we have then purified our souls in obeying the truth (I Peter 1:22) and thus the same apostle says our hearts are purified by faith (Acts 15:9).<sup>71</sup>

Commitment to the resurrected King—on his terms—is man's hope of glory. That same commitment to the same King is also the life-giving force which has annually drawn thousands to the gathering in Abilene. Down through the years, the meaningful lyrics of a moving hymn have captured the spirit of allegiance to Christ upon which the Lectureship has been built and perpetuated. A song sung, without exception, every February, a hymn so moving that it found its way into the printed texts of dozens of the lectures. And lyrics so meaningful that in 1938 alone three major speakers quoted them as the conclusion of their public remarks:

All hail the power of Jesus' name!  
 Let angels prostrate fall,  
 Bring forth the royal diadem,  
 And crown Him Lord of all!

Let every kindred, every tribe  
 On this terrestrial ball,  
 To Him all majesty ascribe,  
 And crown Him Lord of all!

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Historic Evidences of Jesus Christ," *Lectures*, 1938, p. 138.

<sup>2</sup>"Christianity, the Revelation of Christ," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, pp. 314-324.

<sup>3</sup>"The Christ of Calvary," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, p. 241.

<sup>4</sup>"Basis for Faith," *Lectures*, 1960, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup>J. P. Sanders, "The Foundation of Christian Hope," *Lectures*, 1943, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup>LeMoine Lewis, "The Word Became Flesh," *Lectures*, 1955, p. 21.

<sup>7</sup>*Lectures*, 1926-1927, p. 224.

<sup>8</sup>"Jesus, the Manifestation of God in the Flesh," *Lectures*, 1938, p. 102.

<sup>9</sup>"Christ Before the Cross," *Lectures*, 1924-1925, p. 166.

<sup>10</sup>Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>11</sup>"Opportunities on Sunday Morning," *Lectures*, 1956, pp. 109-110.

<sup>12</sup>"The Authority of Christ," *Lectures*, 1924-1925, pp. 302-303.

<sup>13</sup>John Horsch, *Modern Religious Liberalism* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Menonite Publishing House, 1920), p. 207.

<sup>14</sup>McMillan, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

<sup>15</sup>"Jesus Christ, the Son of God," *Lectures*, 1946, p. 93.

<sup>16</sup>*Lectures*, 1943, pp. 2-3.

<sup>17</sup>"God's Love for the World," *Lectures*, 1924-1925, p. 35.

<sup>18</sup>Smithson, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

<sup>19</sup>Roberson, *op. cit.*, p. 126. Roberson was co-author with A. N. Trice of the book, *Bible versus Modernism. A Compendium of Sundry Critical Hypotheses and Their Refutation* (Nashville: McQuiddy, 1935). Norman F. Furniss describes it as an "example of moderate Fundamentalist propaganda." *The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931*, p. 187.

<sup>20</sup>"Christ, the Fulfillment of Prophecy," *Lectures*, 1938, p. 29.

<sup>21</sup>References in this paragraph were taken from Oscar Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 316, Horace W. Busby, "These Things Are Written That Ye Might Believe," *Lectures*, 1936, p. 132, Paul Southern, "The Mind of Christ," *Lectures*, 1938, pp. 70-85, W. W. Otey, "The Sinlessness of Christ," *Lectures*, 1938, pp. 105-106, and Elmer Lee Nichols, "The Man of Galilee," *Lectures*, 1924-1925, p. 45.

<sup>22</sup>These two citations from Hulen L. Jackson, "Christ, a Teacher Come From God," *Lectures*, 1938, pp. 60-61, and Leonard Mullens, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>23</sup>C. C. Morgan, "Proof that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," *Lectures*, 1938, p. 164.

<sup>24</sup>*Fundamentalism versus Modernism*, (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1925), pp. 9-10.

<sup>25</sup>As cited in "The Fundamentals," *Forum*, July, 1923, p. 1668, *American Journal of Theology*, January, 1906, p. 25, and *The Famous New York Fundamentalist-Modernist Debates* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1924), p. 169.

<sup>26</sup>In addition to Fosdick, as quoted in Bryan, *Seven Questions in Dispute*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1924), p. 49-50, other references in this paragraph from Rush Rhees, *American Journal of Theology*, January, 1906, p. 19, and B. W. Bacon, *American Journal of Theology*, January, 1906, pp. 9-10.

<sup>27</sup>*Religion and Miracle* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909), p. 99.

<sup>28</sup>*Why Is Christianity True?* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publishing Society, 1921), p. 312.

<sup>29</sup>Kirsopp Lake, *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (New York: Putnam Company, 1907), p. 269.

<sup>30</sup>"The Virgin Birth," *Lectures*, 1938, pp. 44-45.

<sup>31</sup>"What Kind of Christ is the Hope of the World," *Lectures*, 1943, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup>McMillan, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

<sup>33</sup>"The Resurrection of the Christ," *Lectures*, 1938, p. 189.

<sup>34</sup>Quotations in this paragraph from Southern, "The Triumph of the King," *Lectures*, 1940, p. 264, Sanders, "What Kind of Christ is the Hope of the World," *Lectures*, 1943, p. 15, Mullens, *op. cit.*, p. 16, and Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

<sup>35</sup>*A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), p. 260.

<sup>36</sup>*Seven Questions in Dispute*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>37</sup>"God is Love," *Lectures*, 1924-25, p. 138.

<sup>38</sup>"The Nature of Man," *Lectures*, 1960, pp. 190-191.

<sup>39</sup>These four quotations from Templeton, *op. cit.*, p. 30, A. DeWitt Chaddick, "Jesus of Nazareth, God's Gift to Humanity," *Lectures*, 1938, p. 1, West, "God's Love Through Jesus Christ His Son," *Lectures*, 1942, p. 56, and Dixon, "God is Love," *Lectures*, 1958, p. 31.

<sup>40</sup>Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

<sup>41</sup>"Steadfastness," *Lectures*, 1946, p. 25. Also see Bell, "The Great Physician," *Lectures*, 1943.

<sup>42</sup>"Christ Our Savior," *Lectures*, 1938, p. 25.

<sup>43</sup>"The Foundation of Christian Hope," p. 24.

<sup>44</sup>"Power in the Blood," *Lectures*, 1928-1929, pp. 139-140.

<sup>45</sup>Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-23.

<sup>46</sup>"Jesus Christ, the Savior," *Lectures*, 1944, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup>Chaddick, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>48</sup>"Christ Today, Our Mediator and High Priest," *Lectures*, 1938, p. 208.

<sup>49</sup>"Grace and Salvation," *Lectures*, 1952, pp. 104-105.

<sup>50</sup>"God's Grace," *Lectures*, 1958, p. 89.

<sup>51</sup>"Grace and Salvation." p. 115.

<sup>52</sup>Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>53</sup>"The Foundation of Christian Hope," pp. 24-25.

<sup>54</sup>"Christ, the Unique Sacrifice," *Lectures*, 1924-1925, pp. 320-321.

<sup>55</sup>These four notes taken from West, *op. cit.*, p. 73, J. L. Hines, "Power in the Blood." *Lectures*, 1928-1929, p. 140, Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18, and Brewer, "Grace and Salvation," p. 122.

<sup>56</sup>"The Gospel, the Power of God unto Salvation." *Lectures*, 1922-1923, p. 214.

<sup>57</sup>"The Human Heart." *Lectures*, 1928-1929, p. 332.

<sup>58</sup>"The Foundation of Christian Hope," p. 29.

<sup>59</sup>"The Abundant Life As One of Spiritual Maturity." *Lectures*, 1961, p. 21.

<sup>60</sup>"The Great Physician," pp. 179, 183.

<sup>61</sup>"Faith," *Lectures*, 1928-1929, p. 277.

<sup>62</sup>"Grace and Salvation," pp. 104-105.

<sup>63</sup>"How to Get into the Church: Hearing," *Lectures*, 1933, pp. 58-59.

<sup>64</sup>"Faith," p. 247.

<sup>65</sup>Chaddick, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>66</sup>"How to Get into the Church: Repentance," *Lectures*, 1933, p. 74.

<sup>67</sup>"How to Get into the Church: Faith," *Lectures*, 1933, p. 66.

<sup>68</sup>"How to Get into the Church: Baptism," *Lectures*, 1933, pp. 84, 88.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>70</sup>Hines. *op. cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>71</sup>"Grace and Salvation," p. 122.

# 9

## The New Testament Church

The importance of the church in the story of the Abilene Lectureship cannot be overdrawn. Although characterized by a calculated informality, the west Texas meeting was fundamentally a church meeting. A church-brotherhood was the common denominator which provided the basis for the February fellowship. The speakers were church-men. The audience came as church members. Ideas were presented to strengthen and challenge the church. It is not surprising that more than one-fifth of the Lectureship speechmaking concerned the doctrine and work of the church.

### *The Nature of the Church*

From the report of the second World Conference on Faith and Order held at Edinburgh in 1937, "it seemed to many that probably the most divisive features in the theological controversies of modern Christendom were rooted in differences about the nature of the church."<sup>1</sup> Fifteen



years later, as over two hundred and fifty delegates from various communions met at Lund for the third World Conference, sharp disagreement over the nature of the church still occupied the prominent position. The Abilene lecturers deplored this confusion, resolutely maintaining that the nature of Christ's church inhered in a fixed and clear biblical pattern. Addressing themselves, from first to last, to the New Testament church, their purpose was to present to all mankind its apostolic, non-sectarian character. It was their conviction that the only hope for uniting a divided Christendom rested in the restoration in every detail of the primitive church as set forth by Christ and the apostles.

In the Greek New Testament, the idea of the church is designated more than 100 times by the term *ecclesia*. M. C. Kurfees, lecturing in 1920 on "The Church Revealed in the New Testament," said that the term, "literally means 'called out.'" He also explained that the church consists of the children of God "who become such by virtue of their obedience to the gospel of Christ," and concluded: "Hence, God's people in Christ being called out of the world and placed under the solemn obligation to maintain their separation therefrom, are, with preeminent appropriateness, called an *ecclesia* or a called-out-people—the church."<sup>2</sup>

Other religious leaders questioned such an exclusive use of the term *ecclesia*. As F. J. A. Hort points out, on the basis of strict etymology such a limited interpretation of the term is unwarranted.<sup>3</sup> Bruner's *The Misunderstanding of the Church* even criticizes the use of the term "institution" to describe the church.<sup>4</sup> The Abilene speakers, however, thought of the church as an institution and equated the term *ecclesia* with Christ's visible body on earth. In his important study, George Johnston explained that the notion that "as *ecclesia*, the church is a community called out of the world by God" is one that "may legitimately be deduced from passages in the New Testament, according as the 'word' is defined, but it is

not present in the word itself."<sup>5</sup> The term was not, therefore, etymologically restricted to a religious meaning, referring to any assembly of citizens summoned by a herald to gather for specific business at an appointed place. But Abilene lecturers were impressed with the biblical usage of the term and saw great significance in the special spiritual purpose of the assembled community. In 1922, Jesse P. Sewell declared:

The word "church" in the New Testament is translated from *ecclesia* and means "called out," "assembly," etc. It might refer to any kind of "called out," "meeting," or "assembly," or "congregation." The *ecclesia* of the Lord would be the "called out," the "assembly," the "congregation" of the Lord, and refers to those people who have been called by the Lord through the gospel out of the service of Satan and sin into the service of God and righteousness . . . . God's church, *ecclesia*, consists of those chosen out of the world, all of them, without exception of one single one.<sup>6</sup>

In 1944, G. C. Brewer strengthened the rationale that the church is composed of those who have been "called by the gospel," explaining that the term was "compound-ed of the two Greek words *ek*, which means out, and *kaleo*, which means to call out. When it refers to the body of Christ," Brewer continued, "it means those who have been called by the gospel of Christ out of the service of Satan and into the liberty of the Lord."<sup>7</sup>

Other speakers added that the "called out" by the gospel were those who had rendered obedience to Christ's plan of salvation; hence, redemption from sin and incorporation into the church are acts which occur simultaneously. "There is no such thing in the New Testament," asserted Wilbur H. White in 1925, "as one process to be saved and another to get into the church. The process that saves me makes me a member of His church. The church is the medium through which salvation is to be received."<sup>8</sup> Early

Arceneaux continued in 1933 by saying that the law of pardon was "the law of induction into the church. That was the church of Christ, all Christians were members of it. When men today obey the same commands, that same law of pardon makes them Christians; and God adds them to the same institution."<sup>9</sup> In 1939, Robert C. Jones drew the inevitable conclusion, that since all of the saved are added to the church, the church equals the saved, and "membership in the Lord's church is essential to the salvation of the soul. The church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1: 22, 23; Col. 1:18-24). Christ is the Savior of the body (Eph. 5:23). The Lord adds to the church those that should be saved (Acts 2:27)." Jones terminated, "a man cannot obey the Lord, and he cannot do that for which he was created without being a member of the Lord's church."<sup>10</sup>

By the term *ecclesia*, therefore, the Abilene speakers referred to the universal body of baptized believers or to one of the local communities of such believers comprising a congregation. In their judgment, Christ had been painstakingly precise in describing his church. Geddes MacGregor's respected volume on the nature of the church concurs that if the New Testament were to be taken as the sole court of appeal, much of the ecclesiological controversy would vanish. The Episcopalian scholar used language familiar to Lectureship listeners in saying:

The New Israel consists of those who have been incorporated into Christ by baptism. It would not have occurred to any New Testament writer to suppose that a man might be "in Christ" yet not "in the church"; it would have seemed a logical impossibility, somewhat like saying of a man that he has parents, yet is not a member of a family.<sup>11</sup>

### *The Church and The Kingdom*

What, then, is the relationship between the visible church and the biblical term *kingdom*? A. C. McGiffert's lib-

eral statement of 1915, *The Rise of Modern Religious Ideas*, observed the "extraordinary prominence, "in present-day Christian thought and speech, of the term *kingdom*." The kingdom, according to McGiffert, should not be reduced to any identifiable church body, but should refer to the broader, general reign of Christ's spirit on earth.<sup>12</sup> "What the Kingdom of Heaven Is," was the pointed title of Charles Roberson's 1940 Abilene lecture which tended to comfort McGiffert's theory. Implying that the kingdom is conceptually more comprehensive than the "visible church," Roberson clearly envisioned the two terms as describing two separate, if overlapping, realms.

The church is the divinely appointed means to a divinely ordained end. The function of the church is to extend and upbuild the Kingdom; to execute the will of the reigning sovereign. The Kingdom relates to a purpose to be achieved; the church is the means by which that purpose is realized. Men get into the church by what they profess; they get into the Kingdom of God only as they hunger and thirst after righteousness.<sup>13</sup>

Roberson concluded that the kingdom of heaven is "not a separate enclosure, not a bounded kingdom, but a pervasive spirit. The Kingdom of God is goodness made natural, vital, submissive, and dynamic in the lives of men."<sup>14</sup> The majority of the Abilene speakers were much more decisive in identifying the kingdom as totally synonymous with the "visible church." Reuel Lemmons spoke later on that same 1940 program in language which contrasts strikingly with Roberson's discussion:

Thus far we have shown that the Kingdom and the church are in actual existence now; that Christ is the head of both of them; that he received the positions at the same instant, by the same process, and that the Kingdom and the church began simultaneously, at the same spot, and by the same process.

To be in the kingdom is to be in the church, and to be in the church is to be in the kingdom. Show me any man in the New Testament age, and prove to me that he was in the kingdom, and I will prove by the same process that he was in the church. Show me one man in the New Testament church, and prove him to be a member thereof, and I will by the same process show that he is a citizen of the kingdom.<sup>15</sup>

The question of the kingdom was an important ingredient in the recipe of premillennialism, an eschatological doctrine arguing that the true kingdom of heaven is yet to be established on earth at Christ's return. It was one of the most lively of the issues which occupied the attention of the pre-1950 lecturers. J. B. Nelson in 1920, John T. Hinds in 1953, John H. Banister, Athens Clay Pullias, and Lemmons in 1940, and Luther G. Roberts in 1941 were among the many who spoke to discredit the millennial doctrine.<sup>16</sup> Many conservative religious groups, including some members of churches of Christ, subscribed to the doctrine. Most of the liberal, social gospel denominations led in the rejection of premillennialism. By the same token, most postmillenarian bodies were intensely interested in social improvement. Interestingly, churches of Christ, conservative and very little impressed by the sermons of the social gospel, were nonetheless vigorously opposed to premillennialism. Accepting the terms *kingdom* and *church* as biblical synonyms, the Abilene speakers denied that Christ will return to the earth at some future date to establish a literal thousand-year reign. Emphasizing that millennial prophets had plagued the church since the second century, Athens Clay Pullias rebuked their modern descendants:

In recent years, such teachers have been especially active. As a consequence, in some places the body of Christ has been seriously disturbed. The whole brotherhood has been adversely affected and handicapped in its work of preaching the gospel to the whole creation by the disputes, divisions, and misunderstandings which the teaching of the premillennial doctrines have oc-

casioned. Whatever may be the attendant aggravating circumstances, the primary blame must fall upon those who insist upon teaching their speculative theories just as those who brought in the instruments are responsible for that division.<sup>17</sup>

### *The Church and Catholicism*

The restoration unity plea was predicated upon a return to the divineness, oneness, and non-denominational nature of the apostolic church. The lecturers communicated these qualities of the church in the biblical term, *body of Christ*. "The world must be taught that the church is not a denomination or a church among churches," said M. C. Cuthbertson in 1925, "but that it is the one body spiritual of the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>18</sup> In 1922, Jesse P. Sewell lectured on "Undenominational Christianity":

My brethren are Christians only. They have joined nothing of any kind. They have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and in Him they worship God and serve their fellows. In this position they are entirely free from any responsibility for the divisions that exist. There is no denominational wall around us. All Christians on earth, all who have believed and obeyed Christ, are our brethren . . . . We are separated from all denominational believers by the walls which they have erected about themselves. They are separated from each other by these same walls. Our plea is for these walls to be torn down, for all who believe in Christ to be left free under God in their local congregations to study, understand and practice the word of God, without the intervention of denominational authority or consideration for denominational creeds or confessions. It is this freedom that constitutes the greatness of our plea.<sup>19</sup>

Addresses on the origin and historical development of the church were frequently used to demonstrate the perpetuation of its unity and undenominational character down through the centuries. Scores of speakers pointed

to the record in the second chapter of Acts and maintained that the one true church was established in Jerusalem on the first Jewish Pentecost day following Christ's resurrection and ascension. Others added that the church's divine character was preserved throughout the first century despite intense internal problems and fierce overt persecutions.

This "one, true church" claim brought the lecturers into unavoidable conflict with the universal and apostolic claims of Catholicism. The lecturers demonstrated that Catholicism was simply Christendom's first denomination—the apostate product of a series of human innovations that challenged the authority of the revealed Word and changed the purity and simplicity of the New Testament church. Homer Hailey, speaking in 1934 on "The Church in the Anti-Nicene Period," charged that in "this period of history . . . we see the bright light of a pure simple faith, in its conquest, becoming contaminated and defiled by the world it is conquering; to supplant in later years with 'Papal' Rome, what it was conquering in 'Pagan' Rome."<sup>20</sup> Speaking on the same series, John T. Smith said, "we have seen the primitive church, which had its beginning at Jerusalem, corrupted by a succession of departures and innovations until it completely lost its original simplicity and purity." Taking the Pope as the "man of sin," Smith added: "He claimed to be the successor of Peter, the vicar of Christ; set up by God to govern the church and the world."<sup>21</sup>

For the Catholic-controlled Middle Ages, adequate historical data proving the continuing existence of apostolic Christianity is unavailable. It is not unlikely that individual believers, in remote and unknown quarters, could have perpetuated and faithfully followed the New Testament blueprint. A documented knowledge of the church through the centuries, however, is really not germane to the question of the authenticity of the Restoration plea.

"You ask me if I can trace the church of which I am a member back to Jerusalem," queried W. D. Campbell in 1923, "and I answer *no*. There is no unbroken line of succession . . . . The only true succession, is the *seed*, the word of God."<sup>22</sup> A. O. Colley agreed in 1934:

We do not have to trace an unbroken chain of human succession from the apostles until now to have the church; but we can find the principles of the New Testament, as the "Seed of the Kingdom" or the word of God (Luke 8:13), will reproduce the kingdom in human hearts today, when heard, believed and obeyed, just as it did the first time it was presented.<sup>23</sup>

### *The Church and Protestantism*

Contemplation of the Protestant Reformation's contribution to the development of the church left the lecturers with mixed feelings of appreciation and regret. "After a thousand years of corruption, superstition, and spiritual darkness," declared John T. Smith, "the clouds lifted and the sun broke through once more."<sup>24</sup> Though eulogized as brave souls who regained the freedom of Bible study and worship for the individual believer, the reformers were also interpreted as but an imperfect transition from the ebony blackness of Romanism to the purer light of the nineteenth century Restoration movement. In 1923, principal speaker, W. D. Campbell both commended and criticized the work of Wycliffe, Huss, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Zwinglie, and Wesley. "That they did good we are glad to concede, but they did not conceive the idea of a restoration of the faith and practice of apostolic times—in an effort to lead the people back to Jerusalem."<sup>25</sup> In a second address on the 1923 program, Campbell saw the difference between success and failure in Luther's work in the differing concepts of reformation and restoration.

... Martin Luther was a great and good man, and did a grand work. It would be more than human



to expect, that he after the spiritual darkness of the dark ages at one stride could step from Rome back to Jerusalem—We thank God for what he did—But if he had preached just what the Apostles preached, the word—no more—no less—and led the people to believe and obey the word, no more, no less; he would have produced the church described in the word; no more, no less . . . . The Church which Jesus built does not need to be *reformed*—As a divine organization it was never deformed—It was divinely given and perfect, but through the great apostasy was lost to the world. What is needed is a restoration of the New Testament church.<sup>26</sup>

Denominationalism was, therefore, regarded as the tragic fruit of a misguided reformation purpose. “Martin Luther undertook to reform the Catholic church, but his labors resulted in the establishment of Protestantism,” said C. M. Stubblefield in 1926. “John Wesley undertook to reform the English church, and his work resulted in the establishment of Methodism.” He then drew the important contrast: “The Campbells and their co-laborers undertook neither to establish another denomination nor to reform any existing one. They sought . . . to restore the church to the world as it was in the beginning.”<sup>27</sup>

The divisions fostered and condoned in the principle of denominationalism were considered to be incompatible with the apostolic plan of unity. C. R. Nichol pointed to the 265 religious divisions within the United States and concluded that it was “a far cry from the unity which existed when the church of Christ began.”<sup>28</sup> “There was but one church in the absolute sense,” said W. D. Campbell. “They recognized but one leader—Christ as head over all things to His church: They were bound to Him, by no law but the law of the Lord, as revealed in the New Testament. Their creed was the word itself—they represented *one* family—all children of God: One brotherhood in which all were brethren.”<sup>29</sup>

Within this context, John T. Hinds' 1924 address sharply challenged the "denominational notion" that it makes no difference "which church you join:"

What is the fact in the matter of the way to Heaven? Two or more roads or just one? This is very definitely fixed by Christ himself in His contrast of the two destinations, and the two ways leading to them. He says, "The way leading to life is narrow and few find it, but the way leading to destruction is broad and many go that way." See Matthew 7:13. By no sort of juggling of words or logical scheming can this passage be made to say that there are many ways to Heaven.<sup>30</sup>

"Therefore," charged A. Hugh Clark, "the only relationship which can possibly obtain between the church of which we read in the New Testament and in denominationalism, either in the church or out of it, is one of unalterable opposition."<sup>31</sup> C. M. Stubblefield reminded his audience that one of the basic goals of the restorers was "the destruction of denominationalism from the earth."<sup>32</sup> And Guy N. Woods stressed the need to preserve their attitude of unrelenting attack:

Denominationalism is the curse and bane of the age. So long as it remains to mislead and deceive the people, our work will not be finished. It is our duty fearlessly to unsheath the sword of the spirit, boldly go forth to battle, and plunge it into the very heart of sectarianism, until, mangled and bleeding, it is left to die in its own shame.<sup>33</sup>

Concluding his 1934 lecture, "The Church and Protestantism," Clark summarized the attitude of churches of Christ toward both Catholicism and Protestantism:

First, we have learned that the Catholic Church is not the church of Christ. It may be said to be an institution which grew out of certain departures from the faith on the part of the church of our Lord in the early centuries.

Second, we have seen that because of the extravagancies and abuses of the Catholic Church in the medieval age there grew up from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries a movement in opposition to Catholicism known as the Great Reformation; the adherents of which . . . became known as Protestants . . . .

Thirdly, it is evident, therefore, that the church of Christ, is neither Catholic nor Protestant, but it antedates not only the cause of Protestantism, but as well that mighty ecclesiasticism the evils of which gave birth to Protestantism.

And lastly, that Christians, members of the Body of Christ, are neither Catholics nor Protestants, but only Christians.<sup>34</sup>

### *Sectarianism Within the Church*

Early lectures on the unity of the church were largely aimed at the evils of organized denominationalism. But in the 1930's the target began to shift. The brotherhood itself was by no means immune to the divisive tendencies which had manufactured Protestantism and destroyed the unity of the church. Though they also used the terms interchangeably, the lecturers often termed divisions outside the body, *denominationalism*, and those within the body, *sectarianism*. Clark woefully prophesied in 1934 that "we have in the church today certain well-defined contentions which, if they have not already done so, only lack sufficient time to develop into full-fledged denominations"<sup>35</sup> And an outsider, historian Stewart G. Cole, charged that a "controversial psychology," "the debating spirit," and "a disputational attitude" permitted the movement's preachers to go "to such extremes in personal attack and divisive action, such as have not been experienced in other denominations."<sup>36</sup> An insider, Joseph W. White, attempted to encourage his colleagues in 1952 by reminding them that dissension had always plagued the brotherhood and by presenting an intriguing line-up of

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issues gleaned from "the files of religious journals of forty-five or fifty years ago."<sup>37</sup> That would have been, then, just a few years before Dr. Hall L. Calhoun admitted that most observers, viewing the church from the outside in, could likely see little other than a somewhat unsavory, belligerent denomination. He said of the movement:

It has sometimes been named "Fundamentalism," "Mossbackism," "Phariseeism," "Sectarianism," "Non-Progressive-ism," "Literalism," "Legalism," "Anti-ism," "A Book Religion." It has sometimes been described as static, antiquated, fossilized, crystallized, hidebound, ossified, narrow, individualistic. Some have said that it was begotten by egotism, conceived in bibliolatry, brought forth in ignorance, propagated in bigotry, and its progeny the narrowest and bitterest of all sectarians. Outsiders have sometimes described us as preachers of union, but practicers of division; holding the form of godliness, but not having the power; sticklers for the letter, but ignorant of the spirit; tithers of mint, anise and cummin, but neglecters of justice, mercy and faith; wranglers over non-essentials, but careless about fundamentals; loving ourselves, but despising others; professing Christianity, practicing Phariseeism; anxious to proselyte, careless to convert; skillful theorists, but bungling practicers; great debaters, but little doers.<sup>38</sup>

As the 1950's dawned, enormous tensions over questions of benevolent and missionary practices were besetting the brotherhood. These tensions, to be discussed in detail in a later chapter, were reviewed by Delmar Owens in his 1953 speech, "Striving for Unity Among Brethren." "The full benefits of the religion of our Lord," he concluded, "cannot be had in a brotherhood torn asunder with strife and discord."<sup>39</sup> H. A. Dixon's 1957 address, "Unity of Christ," re-stated the embarrassing dilemma:

The most disturbing thought today is not that denominationalism exists, but that serious division and discord prevail within the church of the Lord. Sermons once preached in which we pleaded with honest souls

to come out of sectarian bodies into the marvelous unity of the church of the living God seem to have lost force and power. Debates and strife are reported on every hand among our own brethren! Brethren who together waged the fight against division a few years ago now are divided among themselves.<sup>40</sup>

The lectures charged that much of the brotherhood's strife was to be blamed on those brethren who sought to bind their opinions into rigid law. E. W. McMillan warned in 1934 of an "ultra-conservative" extreme in the brotherhood, characterized by what he termed a sectarian bigotry, and "encased with wilful lethargy, stifling the spiritual atmosphere."<sup>41</sup> He pointed a finger toward his audience:

Let us know that not all sectarian dogmas are bound within the lids of books. Let us know that not all human creeds were formed in public councils. Let us know that the men who published human creeds were not by nature, of necessity, more given to dogmatism or religious dictatorship than we. Let us know that we are susceptible to all errors religious thinkers have made from the death of John the Apostle to the close of the reformation.<sup>42</sup>

G. C. Brewer, speaking on the same program with McMillan, observed that it was characteristic of creed-makers to be void of the spirit of love. He described the factionalist's rationale:

Of course, those who are involved in a division always claim that some vital point is in question. They strive to justify the condition that exists by citing some doctrinal disloyalty, or some unfaithfulness to the word of God. Frequently, however, it is only our opinion or our judgment that has been disregarded and not the word of God . . . . Even if he teaches error, this error would have to be very heinous if it is as great a sin as the sin of division.<sup>43</sup>

Reuel Lemmons agreed in 1956 that much of the grief among brethren had resulted from "taking the word of man as if it were the word of God." He illustrated his point,

Occasionally one of us, in his zeal to see the church be exactly as he has the opinion it ought to be, sets himself to correct all abuses and to purify the church according to his standard of purification. He may be against most anything—tobacco, coffee, short hair, Bible classes, or orphans homes—and his zeal may drive him to sectarianism. When one of us establishes his own code of faith and requires others to subscribe to it, he is guilty of producing a sect.<sup>44</sup>

### *The Scope of Church Fellowship*

In 1957, John C. Stevens extended the discussion of law-making, asserting that one is not a mature Christian until he is "able to accept his fellows without having to rearrange every detail of their lives to suit his opinions . . . too often we allow our convictions to protrude too far into the realm of opinion and expediency."<sup>45</sup> But just where do the boundaries of faith and opinion stop and start? Advocating a philosophy of fellowship somewhat broader than that to which most of his brethren subscribed, Ernest Beam contended: "It is true that in the church we do have a harmony of differences as well as likenesses. It is true! We are different while we are one." Beam boldly proceeded: "Whether you like it or not, whoever accepts Christ as Lord and gives every evidence he is as anxious to obey Him as anyone can be, that man is your brother in Christ (if you are in) and happy are you if you have the Holy Spirit and its first fruit which is love and exercise it toward that brother."<sup>46</sup>

While most speakers' circle of fellowship was not so inclusive as to encompass every man who is "anxious to obey" Christ with a sincere heart, many of them agreed

with Beam that the church must be kept big enough for a "harmony of differences." As early as 1919, F. L. Young expressed grave concern over the abandon with which some preachers were indicting the soundness and censoring the work of their preaching brethren. "I have resolved," he told the Abilene audience, "never to make anything a test of fellowship which the Holy Spirit has not made a condition of salvation." He then explained the reason for his hesitation to make laws and to draw lines:

What is sound or what is unsound is sometimes hard to determine. Then the question arises, "Who made him a judge? Where did he get his authority to pass on the soundness or unsoundness of another's teaching?" Does not the Apostle teach, "to his own master he stands or falls?" Too often the man who differs from us, because he has learned more than we have, is pronounced a heretic, while the man who thinks as we do is sound in the faith, though he never spent a moment in the examination of the foundations of the faith.<sup>47</sup>

Many years later, Reuel Lemmons was equally as quick to condemn those of his brethren who were drawing the lines of fellowship snugly around their own opinions.

The sin of "drawing away disciples" is the curse of the church today. There is no point in condemning the course of apostasy in the early centuries, nor the sinful practice of sectarian division in denominational circles today, when the only church for which my Lord died is cursed with sectarianism of the rankest sort. From time to time there have risen among us teachers who have drawn away disciples after them. Some have staggered not at carving the body of our blessed Lord into ribbons to satisfy an indomitable ego. It is necessary that we stress the exceeding sinful spirit of a man who would split the church in order to be a big duck in a little pond!<sup>48</sup>

Other speakers considered the problem of fellowship boundaries, not so much from the strained relationships



within the brotherhood, but from the stand point of the brotherhood's attitude toward the members of denominational bodies. "We claim to be Christians only," C. M. Stubblefield reminded his 1926 hearers, "but we do not claim to be the only Christians." He then suggested that the arms of fellowship could not be openly extended to denominational believers, even though they were technically "Christians": "While we believe that many identified with the denominations have become Christians, they have taken on much that is neither Christianity nor anything akin to it. Such people are more than Christians, and have become less than what Christians should be."<sup>49</sup> G. C. Brewer, however, was most decisive in explaining that immersed believers were "in the true church":

When people come from the so-called "Christian Church" do they have to obey the gospel—hear, believe, repent, and be baptized? No they have already done that. Then, of course, they are already in the true church . . . . We should not speak of them as having left one church to be members of another.<sup>50</sup>

Several speakers warned that in the sectarian spirit, a fellowship-limiting "party title" was rapidly being accepted as an official and God-given name of the church. "The Name of the Church" was Cled E. Wallace's 1933 lecture in which he concluded that "the various groups of first century believers were known by no party names distinguishing them as to faith and order from any of the other people of God."<sup>51</sup>

As early as 1920, M. C. Kurfees had similarly warned of "the growing tendency to sectarianize even the term 'Church of Christ.'" He insisted that the scriptural phrase taken as a description of the conservative wing after the 1906 split should not be allowed to crystallize into a name or be regarded as the exclusive designation of the New Testament church. "That is invariably the case," he charged, "when it is used, as it frequently is nowadays, to mean merely those people of God who do not work through

missionary societies and do not use instrumental music." Implying that his borders of fellowship were big enough to include conservative Christian Church believers, Kurfees plead that churches of Christ should not "exclude other children of God who make a mistake in worshipping and working."<sup>52</sup>

G. C. Brewer, who for three decades warned of growing sectarianism within the body, reviewed in 1934 the circumstances in the split with the disciples which had led to the assigning of names to the divided wings.

These two groups are in these last days usually distinguished by the name "Christian Church" for the one and "church of Christ" for the other, which names alone clearly announce that here are two sects and both claiming to be the church Christ founded. What a shameful situation! Of course, these are not two different churches but factions of the same church—therefore sects.<sup>53</sup>

"We have, in spite of ourselves, become a sect whose special purpose is to contend against sectarianism," slapped Brewer. "The word 'Campbellite' has about disappeared from the vocabulary of our neighbors. Why? Because they are willing for us to have a scriptural name if we will give it sectarian limitations. They are ready to concede us the right to form a sect and to call it whatever we choose."<sup>54</sup> Brewer continued: "I repeat, the church is nowhere named in the New Testament. All our talk about scriptural names for the church is simply unscriptural jargon." After approving of such descriptions as the "church of Christ," and the "church of God," Brewer argued:

. . . but to repeat what has been said before, to exalt anyone of these into the patented name of the church is to sectarianize that expression. If we have not done that very thing with the expression "church of Christ," then why do we not vary our terms in speaking of the church. Why is every deed made to the church of Christ? Why is "church of Christ" put upon every

cornerstone or in front of every meeting house. Why does the "church of Christ" have a literature series. So fixed and uniform is this designation that if we should insert the name "Jesus" in the expression, it would cause confusion . . . . To use the term "church of Christ" to include any limited number of saints or to make it the name of the church is to sectarianize the expression.

Brethren, I do not expect you to get this point without some suffering. But if you will endure the necessary pain caused by forcing the needle through the skin by which you get the anti-sectarian serum, your suffering will then be over and your spiritual condition will soon be better.<sup>55</sup>

### *The Organization of the Church*

"The church then, being a kingdom, is not a democracy and cannot be subject to the legislation of men," Foy Wallace, Sr. maintained in 1926. "It is an absolute monarchy with Christ as its king and the New Testament as its constitution."<sup>56</sup> No provision was made in the Bible for an organized legislative unit beyond the sphere of the local congregation. Charles H. Roberson explained that the church possesses, "strictly speaking, no church government, since the church has no legislative authority, and no right to enforce her own will upon Christ's free men."<sup>57</sup> In the New Testament era, Christ was the head of the church, the apostles were its founding fathers, and each local congregation of the universal kingdom was governed by a plural body of elders.

As the church moved out of its infancy, those mature men who fulfilled definite scriptural qualifications were to be ordained as elders and granted the power of ultimate, executive oversight within each local congregation. Special responsibilities were also to be delegated to men called deacons, or servants, who were specially qualified to work under the

direction of the elders. Evangelists and teachers were to fulfill the ministry of the word. In his 1941 lecture, L. R. Wilson summarized this chain of local church government:

You can now understand what I mean by the organization of the citizens of the Kingdom. Christ is the head; the apostles are his plenipotentiary representatives; the elders in each congregation are the servants especially chosen to look after material needs of the local body; the evangelists are those who preach the word . . . the membership of any congregation comprehends the entire body, regardless of the work each does.<sup>58</sup>

### *The Work of Elders*

Contrasting sharply with Catholicism, the lecturers contended that the office of apostle was permanently vacated at the conclusion of the service of the original twelve. "The apostles had no official successors," said Melvin J. Wise. "Thus, the apostolic office ceased as a visible body on earth at the death of the apostle John, and the evangelists and pastors became the permanent teachers and superintendents of the church."<sup>59</sup> The office in which executive leadership was vested following the apostolic period was designated in scripture by three Greek terms: *presbuteros*, meaning presbyter or elder, *episkopos*, meaning bishop or overseer, and *poimeen*, meaning pastor or shepherd. E. W. McMillan described the scope of the elders' authority:

. . . in the local group, all authority is vested in the men called elders. They are limited by the New Testament law of their King; but within the prescriptions of that law there is no man with the right to discredit or reject or otherwise hinder the peaceful work of the church under them. When their final decision has been prayerfully reached and announced, unless it is entirely out of harmony with plain Bible teaching, the

other members of the congregation are commanded to cooperate with that judgement.<sup>60</sup>

Several speakers listed the qualifications for the office of elder as recorded in I Timothy 3:7 and Titus 1:6-9: "blameless," "the husband of one wife," "vigilant," "sober," "of good behavior," "given to hospitality," "apt to teach," "not given to wine," "no striker," "not greedy of filthy lucre," "patient," "not a brawler," "not covetous," "one that ruleth well his own house," "not a novice," "a good report of them that are without," "having faithful children," "not self-willed," "not soon angry," "a lover of good men," "just," "temperate," "holding fast the faithful word." "Sometimes men are elders in name only," warned E. H. Ijams. He lamented:

Sometimes, though elders in name, they are not apt to teach, or they fail to command highest respect and confidence of the people within and without the congregation. Sometimes we find men listed as elders who seem to be content with "holding office." They think of the eldership as an office to be held rather than a service to be rendered. It happens, therefore, sometimes that we have the rule of the unworthy and incompetent instead of the humblest and best men in the congregation. Thus, it comes about that instead of leadership of the best, according to the first century standard, we occasionally have the leadership of the usurper or the childish weakling.<sup>61</sup>

While some addresses featured the need for more truly qualified elders, others highlighted specific problems or challenges which the office must embrace. In 1939, Sewell singled out the failure of many leaders to actually function as shepherds or spiritual pastors of the flock.

On the basis of more than forty years of active and rather widespread observation of and participation in the affairs of our Lord's churches, my deliberate judgment is that the greatest danger in the eldership in these churches at this time is at the point of their stewardship for souls . . . . I am fully persuaded

that the good elders of the Lord's churches experience their weakest point and face their gravest danger as stewards of souls.<sup>62</sup>

Other speakers charged that a lack of vision and industrious leadership was a major weakness of practicing elders. In 1946, Eldon A. Sanders reported: "The church needs leaders who lead and show the way of righteousness by their deeds rather than merely to tell of the way. Perhaps too many who serve as bishops are like the parent who commands his child as he says and not as he does."<sup>63</sup> In 1953, Clifton Rogers continued: "It is to be regretted that often a congregation of people eager to be at work, must actually try to prod the elders into some semblance of industrious leadership."<sup>64</sup>

M. Norvel Young introduced his 1956 address, "Church Leadership and Vision," by stating: "...there is no greater need in the church of our Lord today than greater vision on the part of elders and preachers. The Bible said a long time ago, 'without vision the people perish' (Proverbs 29:18). As the leaders go, so go the people." Later in his speech, Young challenged his hearers:

All too frequently, churches of the Lord are run with little or no planning. Very little time is given by many of the Lord's bishops to praying and thinking about what can be done today to bear fruit in the conversion of souls one year from now and ten years from now. Many elders' meetings are occupied with minute details concerning fixing the roof or mimeographing the bulletin instead of looking ahead.<sup>65</sup>

Lectureship speechmaking yielded very little information relating to the function of the deacons. A few speakers suggested that the very nature of the office is characterized by the Greek term translated "deacon" and meaning "servant." Others mentioned that the deacons' general area of responsibility pertained to the physical or financial matters of the church. "The first job," said L. R.

Wilson, "is to plan the finances . . . . we usually speak of this as preparing a budget."<sup>66</sup> Perhaps Roberson's observation of the church's failure to properly employ the service of the deacons also explains the Lectureship's silence on the subject: "The scriptural recognition of the office of deacon, and the requisites for it, lift it up to a dignity and lofty plane of usefulness . . . far beyond any present attainment."<sup>67</sup>

### *The Office of Evangelist*

More speechmaking was devoted to the office of evangelist, minister, or preacher than any other aspect of church government. In 1919, H. E. Speck challenged the gathering of preachers: "There never was an age, perhaps, when there was a greater need for men sent from God; men who know the message, believe the message, love the message . . . ."<sup>68</sup> Some most interesting and drastic shifts of brotherhood custom are to be observed in the chronologically changing attitudes toward the place of the preacher in the church's organization and the nature of his work.

What is the preacher's place in the government of the church? Although most speakers named the elder's office as the position of ultimate derived authority, Charles H. Roberson was among those who believed that "the evangelist is the first permanent officer in the kingdom or church of God, and his claim rests on firmer ground than that of the elder or presbyter." He explained:

From the apostles the authority of Christ descends to the evangelists. They are the next link in the chain of derived authority in the church. The evangelist is the minister by whom men believe, and it is his duty to care for the converts until he can leave them under proper care and leadership. In an orderly administration, the evangelist's office is first in time and in authority.<sup>69</sup>

Several years later, Glenn L. Wallace took sharp issue with the position assumed by Roberson:

There are only two classes of officers in the New Testament church. These are elders and deacons. The evangelist is simply a preacher of the gospel, a minister of the Word of God and a teacher of good things. Call him what he is. He is an "evangelist," a "preacher," yea, even a "minister," but certainly not the only minister in the congregation . . . .<sup>70</sup>

The taproot of this disagreement regarding the role of the preacher in the structure of the church can be traced to the very earliest of the lectures at Abilene. F. L. Young's 1919 address, "Some Present Day Problems and Perils," discussed what he termed the "preacher problem".

One of the most important phases of this problem is the attitude of the church toward the preacher and the relation of the preacher to the church. Should the church take charge of the preacher, or the preacher the church? What is their relationship? Should a preacher hold membership and be in fellowship with a local assembly like other folk? . . . Are preachers amenable to the bishops or the bishops to them?<sup>71</sup>

During the first one hundred years of restoration activity in America, the disciples' preachers primarily functioned itinerately, holding protracted evangelistic campaigns and moving about the circuit from congregation to congregation. Almost concurrent with the founding of the Abilene Lectureship, a few preachers for churches of Christ began to contend for the right to locate and labor as hired ministers of local congregations. The division of feeling which this transition engendered was vividly reflected at Abilene. After Young had raised the question in 1919, W.G. Malcomson rose to give answer in 1921. The printed text of his tedious, carefully-prepared lecture on "Mutual Edification of the Church of Christ," consumed forty pages of the 1920-1921 published volume. Malcomson's address presented an extensive, scripture-filled attack upon the "located preacher system." Featuring the evils



of the growing practice of congregations hiring "full-time" preachers, he insisted: "It places the 'resident minister' in the un-Scriptural position of appearing to distinguish himself from his brethren by gratuitously assuming a pre-eminence and a fixed, personal factor in the meeting of the church every first day of the week." After elaborate and impressive argument, Malcomson concluded:

Careful consideration of the various Scriptures setting forth the worship of the church in apostolic times fails to disclose provision for any one person with or without title assuming the practice of doing all the formal teaching and exhorting in the principal assembly on the first day of the week. Such practice is, thus, manifestly out of accord with divinely-revealed precedent.<sup>72</sup>

But Malcomson's view did not prevail. The "located preacher" custom of protestantism was gradually accepted by the brotherhood until, by 1930, the residual opposition was so minute it had ceased to appear in the Abilene addresses at all. In fact the custom was so widespread that speakers, ironically, were becoming greatly exercised over a so-called "pastor system"—the tendency of the located preacher to assume, either by usurpation or practical necessity, the authority of the elders and hence, to direct the affairs of the church.

Indirectly complimenting Malcomson's powers as a prophet, many subsequent lecturers lamented the rapid swing of the pendulum away from the itinerant evangelist practice, past the located preacher custom, and on to the extreme of the pastor system. "Perhaps there is no greater tendency toward professionalism in the ministry," declared Paul Southern, "than that of developing a pastor system. Good men in their enthusiasm to see the church grow may assume dictatorial authority."<sup>73</sup> "We must get away from looking upon the evangelist as 'The Minister,'"

added James B. Willeford. "The members will not serve well if they live under the delusion that a hired servant can be brought in to do their work for them."<sup>74</sup> Paul L. Wallace continued the lament: "It is taken for granted in most congregations that the preacher is responsible for the conversion of the unsaved and for the building up of the church."<sup>75</sup> Guy N. Woods summed up the indictment against the pastor system:

It will not be seriously denied that there is an arrangement in operation in the church of Christ which bears suspicious similarity to the pastor system of the denominations. It is idle to deny this. Elders have, in many instances, employed an evangelist to feed the flock, and take the oversight thereof, to the utter neglect of the work themselves. It is not surprising that, where this is done, the elders are, too often, regarded as but mere figure-heads, without authority and influence in the congregation.<sup>76</sup>

### *The Work of Preaching*

After discussing the preacher's relationship to the total organization of the church, the speakers turned their attention to his special sphere of work. Although expressing a variety of opinions, they discovered grounds for general agreement in F. B. Shepherd's statement: "Primarily, the work of the preacher is to preach the word . . . ."<sup>77</sup> L. R. Wilson, making this same point in his 1941 lecture, reminded his hearers that it is as equally unscriptural for the preacher to function as "the priest," as it is for him to be regarded as "the pastor":

The primary job of an evangelist is to "preach the word." No greater work was ever given to any man than this. We need to keep on our guard lest we make the preaching of the gospel a secondary matter. Ringing doorbells, making goodwill speeches to women's clubs, and directing young people's social activities may be important, but they should never overshadow

the preaching of the gospel. Whatever else an evangelist may be, he should make his preaching first and foremost.<sup>78</sup>

Leslie G. Thomas reminded his audience of the original work of the evangelists during the apostolic era:

Thus, without attempting to specify every individual duty, we note that in a general way, evangelists were to teach and baptize people; gather the converts into convenient assemblies or congregations for their edification, improvement, and worship; see that elders and deacons were duly chosen and appointed to their respective offices; and labor earnestly for the general welfare of the churches.<sup>79</sup>

Agreeing that the distinctive work of the preacher was public preaching, the speakers offered several homiletic suggestions in the realm of sermonizing. During the second Lectureship program, H. E. Speck spoke on "The Preacher, His Task and Opportunity." He featured the indispensable importance of careful study in the preparation of sermons:

It is quite probable that you may, yes, it is likely, that some of you will stand in the way of the message; you will lessen its power, you will stifle its influence through a lack of preparation. The continued and growing responsibility of preaching must be met with service that involves all of the resources at your command . . . . Time must be made for reading, for serious thinking, for painstaking sermon preparation and for seasons of real prayer. These are dangerous days for the man who is fluent in speech and can easily get away with public address. Almost anyone can consume the time set apart for the sermon in the order of public worship. Too few men can really preach a clarifying, moving and convincing sermon that shall set confused minds straight and bring them to great decisions.<sup>80</sup>

Twenty years later Homer Hailey introduced a similarly sensitive exhortation in his lecture, "The Stewardship of

Time." He urged the preachers present to budget their schedules and reserve much time for study and preparation.

There is no group of individuals today with greater advantages and opportunities than the preachers, but at the same time there is no group with greater temptation to waste time than they. Engaged by the congregation to preach and teach . . . then "turned loose" to do this work, not feeling responsible to an "employer" as men of common occupations, the preacher dangerously drifts into the habit of wasting time.<sup>81</sup>

During the 1943 series, Shepherd listed some "don'ts" which related to the preacher's personal life as well as to his habits in the preparation and delivery of sermons. He concluded that the preacher's character will be the foundation upon which all else rises or falls.

Don't study without prayer. Don't pray without studying. Don't feed people with unbaked dough. Don't miss an opportunity to speak in the honor of God. Don't tell all you know in one sermon. Don't put the hay too high in the racks. Don't mistake philosophy for Christianity . . . noise for profundity; nor crowds for success. Don't scold. Don't lash the back of the sinner instead of the sin. Don't offer other people manna which you haven't tasted yourself. Don't imagine your sermons to be the revelation of anything you are the first to discover. Don't shout . . . It is the lightning that kills; the thunder only makes one uncomfortable. Avoid all entangling alliances such as "Ministerial Alliances," "Service Clubs." Know your own weaknesses. Stay out of debt. Renounce all self-seeking.<sup>82</sup>

Speck's 1919 Abilene address also pointed to the preacher's need for sincerity and conviction in the presentation of his message:

A firm persuasion of the absolute truth of their messages is another characteristic of the preacher . . . .

The world wants such assurance. The preacher must be confident of the infallible certainty of his message. Multitudes are weary and sick of speculations, of barren idealities, and hollow formalism. They want realities, not hypotheses; food, not husks nor stone. The preacher should have precisely such a message, his faith in his message must be unwavering.<sup>83</sup>

To the Abilene spokesmen, the Bible was the preacher's message—his only message. A preacher had earned the right to preach only when he believed God's book completely and unequivocally. In 1944, G. H. P. Showalter charged: "A preacher who does not believe the Bible—all of it—is thereby disqualified for acceptable service . . . ." <sup>84</sup> L. S. White attested to the importance of Bible centered preaching in his 1926 speech, "The Pulpit of Power is the Pulpit of the Gospel."<sup>85</sup>

In 1935, Oscar Smith warned the preacher students to beware of the pitfalls of modern theology: "The truth which needs to be preached is not theology. Theology is the word of God diluted by human opinion."<sup>86</sup> A few years earlier, U. R. Forrest had been even more specific in his advice to the young men at Abilene Christian College: "For the first two years, don't you preach on anything but first principles — a hint to the wise is sufficient."<sup>87</sup> The call went forth for preachers with a biblical message, inspired by man's need of salvation and charged with the confident preface, "God hath spoken." Granting the primary need of doctrinal preaching, Alonzo Welch vividly announced the companion need of balance and proportion in the church's pulpit productions.

The great question before the church today is not so much whether the sermons we hear are doctrinal preaching, but whether the Gospel we receive is a balanced Gospel. Partial, fractional preaching of the Gospel of Christ has done more to warp the minds of man and to promote sectarianism than any other influence we know. It has left a spectacle of retard-

ed Christians, dead churches, and hobby riders in its wake. Some congregations have been so poorly fed that they present a misleading caricature of Christianity—a bulging stomach of love and a withered arm of discipline—a box car head of spiritual knowledge and a dwarfed heart of compassion—a broad-shouldered program of work at home and short-legged, knee-pants mission program.<sup>88</sup>

The men at Abilene announced to those both inside and outside the church, that the concept of a fully restored New Testament church must be clearly understood and tenaciously respected. They denied that the church should become an ever-changing institution, adapting itself to the unique environmental dynamics of every age. They believed that Christ conceived of himself as the founder of an immovable church, an institution which studiously fulfilled the expectations of the Old Covenant. Constituted of baptized believers in whom the Spirit dwells, the church was, to the lecturers, the saved body of Christ. In spite of acknowledged difficulties in living up personally to the pattern, they considered their own movement to be living proof that undenominational Christianity is possible in the midst of sectarian chaos. While conceding that human limitations frequently marred the ideal, Jesse P. Sewell's 1920 lecture, "Our Plea Stated," admirably phrased the nature of the plea for an undenominational church:

Ours is a plea for progress in the discovery and practice of divine truth. The importance of our plea and our safety in making it do not consist in the particular truth we have accepted and which we now practice, but rather in our attitude toward all truth in Christ. If we ever allow ourselves to become satisfied with our achievements in the realm of spiritual knowledge and practice, our usefulness will be ended. It is not the truth we know and practice that is important, but all truth revealed in Christ Jesus. Our minds must ever be kept open and our hearts must warm as we continue to search the scriptures.<sup>89</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Geddes MacGregor, *Corpus Christi* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), p. 4. Also see R. Newton Flew (ed), *The Nature of the Church* (London: SCM Press, 1951).

<sup>2</sup>"The Church Revealed in the New Testament," *Lectures*, 1920-1921, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup>F. J. A. Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia* (London: Macmillan Company, 1888), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, trans. H. Knight (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952).

<sup>5</sup>George Johnston, *The Doctrine of the Church in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943), p. 35.

<sup>6</sup>"Undenominational Christianity," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, p. 130.

<sup>7</sup>"The Church," *Lectures*, 1944, p. 74.

<sup>8</sup>"The Church of Tomorrow," *Lectures*, 1924-1925, p. 133.

<sup>9</sup>"The Identity of the Church," *Lectures*, 1933, p. 93.

<sup>10</sup>"The Influence of the Church in the Life of the Individual," *Lectures*, 1953, pp. 14-15.

<sup>11</sup>MacGregor, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup>*The Rise of Modern Religious Ideas* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915), p. 275.

<sup>13</sup>"What the Kingdom of Heaven Is," *Lectures*, 1940, pp. 4-5.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup>"The Kingdom and the Church," *Lectures*, 1940, pp. 45, 47-48.

<sup>16</sup>"The Throne of David or the Reign of Christ," *Lectures*, 1920. "Christ in His Kingdom," *Lectures*, 1924-1925, p. 187. "The final conclusion of the matter is that Christ has been reigning as King on David's throne since he made the offering for sin, and will continue to reign until the final judgment." "The Keys of the Kingdom," *Lectures*, 1940. "Citizenship in an Established Kingdom," *Lectures*, 1941, p. 83. "There are many, some who claim to be members of the churches of Christ, who deny the existence of the Kingdom of Christ. In fact, there are vague theories advanced by those who deny that the kingdom is in existence now, that at some future age the kingdom will be set up on earth, and Jesus will reign a literal thousand years on earth in a millennial age."

<sup>17</sup>"The King and His Throne," *Lectures*, 1940, pp. 247-248. As can be clearly observed, the premillennial controversies were particularly intense during the 1940 series. The program's theme, "The Kingdom of Heaven," was obviously designed to deal with the issue. Charles H. Roberson, the

respected Abilene professor, was one of the "suspects under fire" in the lecture week caucus rooms. In fact, a handful of visiting preachers charged that Roberson openly fostered the premillennial theories in his book, *What Jesus Taught*. A special meeting—perhaps the most bitter page in the entire Lectureship history—was called to air the controversy. Although his opponents publicly quoted from his book as evidence, Roberson capably defended himself in the minds of the large majority of listeners. It was, however, an unfortunate incident in the career of one of the Lectureship's most able spokesmen. Probably as a result of the meeting, Roberson prepared a reassuring explanation of the controversial pages of his book, which has been included in all subsequent printings.

<sup>18</sup>"Exalting the Church," *Lectures*, 1924-1925, p. 106. On page 100, Cuthbertson defined the church: "I mean by the word 'church' that one universal body or kingdom over which Jesus Christ rules as King and Lord."

<sup>19</sup>*Lectures*, 1922-1923, p. 140.

<sup>20</sup>*Lectures*, 1934, p. 30.

<sup>21</sup>"The Church and Clerical Authority," *Lectures*, 1934, p. 53.

<sup>22</sup>"The Church Which Was Built by Jesus the Christ," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, p. 191.

<sup>23</sup>A. O. Colley, "The Church during the Dark Ages," *Lectures*, 1934, pp. 69-70.

<sup>24</sup>John T. Smith, "The Church in Conflict With Pagan Philosophies," *Lectures*, 1934, p. 42.

<sup>25</sup>"Today's New Testament Message to Mankind," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, p. 201. Contrasting Luther's approach with that of Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone, Campbell stated, on pages 202-203: "In doing this they went with an open Bible back of Oxford—and London—back of Geneva, and Wittenberg, back of Rome, back, back to Jerusalem, to discover the original survey made by the inspired apostles sent out by the authority of Christ."

<sup>26</sup>Campbell, "The Church Which Was Built by Jesus Christ," p. 191.

<sup>27</sup>"Plea and Principles of Disciples," *Lectures*, 1926-1927, p. 159.

<sup>28</sup>"Back to the Old Paths," *Lectures*, 1952, p. 87.

<sup>29</sup>Campbell, "The Church Which Was Built by Jesus Christ," p. 190.

<sup>30</sup>"Coming to God," *Lectures*, 1924-1925, p. 202.

<sup>31</sup>Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.

<sup>32</sup>Stubblefield, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>33</sup>"Christianity in a Changing World," *Lectures*, 1939, p. 57.

<sup>34</sup>*Lectures*, 1934, pp. 102-103.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 118.



<sup>38</sup>Stewart G. Cole, *History of Fundamentalism* (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), p. 160.

<sup>37</sup>"The Progress We Have Made," *Lectures*, 1952, pp. 33-34. "Two acts of worship simultaneously, whether an invitation song was scriptural, ordaining elders by the laying on of hands, preaching for a stipulated salary, rebaptism, the order of worship, participation in civil government, life insurance (I would like to have your views on life insurance. It is becoming very popular in Texas. Some of our best preachers are holding policies. Some have got so deep into it they hardly have time to preach!), the use of a chart in a sermon, contribution during, or after, the public worship, passing a basket, (instead of laying it on the table), building a meeting house (it was all right to use one already built), shaking hands (instead of a holy kiss), the name of the church (the Pearl and Bryan congregation was known as the First Christian Church until nearly 1920)."

<sup>38</sup>"Our Religion," *Lectures*, 1928-1929, pp. 339-340.

<sup>39</sup>*Lectures*, 1953, p. 141.

<sup>40</sup>*Lectures*, 1957, p. 311.

<sup>41</sup>"The Protestant Reformation and the Church," *Lectures*, 1934, p. 85.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>"A Plea for Unity," *Lectures*, 1934, p. 180. Also, on page 182, Brewer stated: "If our manner of contending for the truth keeps people from believing the truth . . . then we are ourselves enemies of the truth . . . . What good end is served if we destroy peace and harmony among thousands of people in our effort to correct a small error which probably would reach only a few people in one locality?"

<sup>44</sup>"Christian Fellowship," *Lectures*, 1956, pp. 349-350. Also, on page 356, Lemmons stated: "While we fight the idea of a diocesan religion, we are producing it at a rapid rate."

<sup>45</sup>"Maturity in Christ," *Lectures*, 1957, p. 85.

<sup>46</sup>"The Church in Its Ideas and Ideals of Unity," *Lectures*, 1935, pp. 106, 108.

<sup>47</sup>"Some Present-Day Perils and Problems," *Lectures*, 1919, pp. 133-134.

<sup>48</sup>"Christian Fellowship," pp. 344, 352.

<sup>49</sup>Stubblefield, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>50</sup>"The Modern Schism Within the Church," *Lectures*, 1934, pp. 160-161.

<sup>51</sup>*Lectures*, 1933, pp. 22-23.

<sup>52</sup>"The Church Revealed in the New Testament," *Lectures*, 1920-1921, p. 29.

- <sup>53</sup>"The Modern Schism in the Church," pp. 160-161.
- <sup>54</sup>"The Church and Sectarianism," *Lectures*, 1934.
- <sup>55</sup>Brewer, *op. cit.*, pp. 124, 138-139.
- <sup>56</sup>"The Church," *Lectures*, 1926-1927, pp. 143-144.
- <sup>57</sup>"The Organization of the Church," *Lectures*, 1933, p. 30.
- <sup>58</sup>"The Citizens of the Kingdom Organized for Work," *Lectures*, 1941, p. 112.
- <sup>59</sup>"The Organization of the Church," *Lectures*, 1951, p. 8. Also see T. B. Thompson, "The Ambassadors of the Kingdom," *Lectures*, 1941.
- <sup>60</sup>"The Kingdom That Cannot Be Shaken," *Lectures*, 1946, p. 101.
- <sup>61</sup>"The Church in Its Organization," *Lectures*, 1935, pp. 9-10.
- <sup>62</sup>"Elders or Bishops As Stewards," *Lectures*, 1939, p. 88.
- <sup>63</sup>"The Elders and Their Work," *Lectures*, 1946, pp. 177-178.
- <sup>64</sup>"Planning the work of the Church," *Lectures*, 1953, p. 77.
- <sup>65</sup>*Lectures*, 1956, pp. 319, 323-324.
- <sup>66</sup>Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
- <sup>67</sup>Roberson, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- <sup>68</sup>"The Preacher, His Task and Opportunity," *Lectures*, 1919, p. 33.
- <sup>69</sup>Roberson, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37. Also see Melvin J. Wise, "The Organization of the Church," *Lectures*, 1951, p. 11. "From the evangelists the authority in the church passes to the pastors or elders in the local church."
- <sup>70</sup>"Evangelists," *Lectures*, 1954, pp. 176-177.
- <sup>71</sup>F. L. Young, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
- <sup>72</sup>*Lectures*, 1920-1921, pp. 90-91.
- <sup>73</sup>"Overcoming Professionalism in the Ministry," *Lectures*, 1954, p. 78.
- <sup>74</sup>"Every Member at Work," *Lectures*, 1954, p. 172.
- <sup>75</sup>"Unto Him Be the Glory in the Church," *Lectures*, 1953, p. 122.
- <sup>76</sup>"Christianity in a Changing World," *Lectures*, 1938, p. 54.
- <sup>77</sup>"The Preacher and His Work," *Lectures*, 1946, p. 184.
- <sup>78</sup>"The Citizens of the Kingdom Organized for Work," *Lectures*, 1941, 1941, pp. 109-110.

<sup>79</sup>"Evangelists As Stewards," *Lectures*, 1939, p. 63.

<sup>80</sup>*Lectures*, 1919, pp. 26-27.

<sup>81</sup>*Lectures*, 1939, p. 38.

<sup>82</sup>"The Father of Success," *Lectures*, 1943, pp. 86-87.

<sup>83</sup>Speck, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>84</sup>"Some Qualifications of a Gospel Preacher," *Lectures*, 1944, p. 128.

<sup>85</sup>*Lectures*, 1926-1927.

<sup>86</sup>"The Church in Its Preaching and Teaching," *Lectures*, 1935, p. 71.

<sup>87</sup>"Standing by the Cross." *Lectures*, 1926-1927.

<sup>88</sup>"Abiding in the Doctrine of Christ," *Lectures*, 1957, p. 146.

<sup>89</sup>*Lectures*, 1920-1921, p. 187.

# 10

## The Edification of the Church

The Pearl and Bryan Streets congregation in Dallas was one of the first churches of Christ to secure the services of a full-time located preacher. L. S. White, who began serving the Dallas church around the turn of the century, later said at the Lectureship in Abilene: "The New Testament Church has the right to live because there is no other institution in the world in which people can be saved or that is putting forth any effort to save the lost."<sup>1</sup>

This sentence embodies the Restoration movement's understanding of the primary mission of the church—to save the spiritually lost. But as local congregations came to accept the precedent of retaining the services of full-time ministers, and as they organized programs of community work, this overall mission was divided into three areas of practical activity: edification, evangelism, and benevolence. Abilene speaker, Glenn L. Wallace, explained: "First, each congregation should seek to keep the local membership edified, strong, and loyal. Second, the church should reach out to other communities and lands where the gospel is unknown. Third, the distressed

should be given help and provisions, especially those who are of the 'household of faith.'"<sup>2</sup> This chapter deals with that phase of the church's mission known as edification.

### *Edification Through Discipline*

While evangelism and edification are usually directed at different audiences—one to the alien the other to the Christian—many of their methods are overlapping. Leroy Brownlow's 1951 speech, "The Edification of the Church," named preaching, classroom teaching, personal visitation, cottage meetings, books, bulletins, and tracts as means of strengthening and edifying the brethren.<sup>3</sup> These are basic evangelistic tools as well. But Brownlow, and others of his Abilene colleagues, featured one method which was peculiarly edificational—discipline of the wayward member.

Only three lectures, those of A. O. Colley in 1920, E. H. Ijams in 1935, and Gus Nichols in 1955 were basically planned to deal with the question of church discipline. Many others brushed pass the subject in less detail. The one major point made by all was that effective discipline was being neglected by the church. Colley charged that churches of Christ were particularly hesitant "to apply the part of God's law that relates to the withdrawal from members who walk disorderly." He lamented the great stress upon "the special features of how to get men into the church," but the complete failure "to consider very seriously how to get them out." Colley was sharply critical in 1920 of the church's hesitation to discipline members who violated God's law of marriage and divorce:

Fornication, at least one form of it, is looked at lightly in many churches today. The New Testament does not recognize but one real cause for divorce, and that is for a married man or a married woman to act unfaithful to the marriage vows with others. I do not contend that even that separates, but when committed it gives the innocent one the right to be separated from the guilty. Many today are living in open violation to God's

law and do not know it. All preachers and elders should teach that everyone that puts away his or her companion and marries another while the first is still living is violating the law of God. To those who have already ignorantly gone into this unfortunate state, I want to express my sympathy. And, to you boys and girls who are yet single, I raise this as a voice of warning. The following scriptures are given with a request that all turn to them and read what the Lord has said on the subject: I Cor. 5; Matt. 5:32; 19:8-9; Rom. 7:1-4; Matt. 19:9. There is only one exception to this rule and that is held in doubt by many able men. For my own idea, I believe the Lord makes only one exception. There will continue to be many innocent victims until preachers, mothers and fathers teach the law of God on divorce, both in homes and in public assemblies, and until the church exercises more discipline in regard to it.<sup>4</sup>

Ijams, as alarmed as Colley at the dearth of discipline, cited the adverse influence of permissiveness and laxity upon the purity of the church. "Misconduct on the part of Church members and poor discipline in dealing with those guilty of misconduct have done great harm to the reputation and influence of the church." Ijams added that "the failure of Church officers to discipline guilty parties has brought reproach upon the name of Christ and hindered the spread of the Gospel."<sup>5</sup> In 1955, Gus Nichols was more explicit in urging elders to withdraw from impenitent members guilty of immorality or false doctrine. He outlined the scriptural procedure to be used in cases demanding severe discipline:

Of course the elders are to take the lead in all such matters. They are the God-appointed overseers of the church (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-6). They are to investigate any case, and when they have quietly gathered all the facts and find the report true, they are to set about to restore the guilty brother, and if they fail, they may ask the church if any one knows any scriptural reason why the fellowship should not be withdrawn from the guilty brother until he repents and confesses his sins. If no scriptural reason is given against it, they should announce that the church must not fellowship the excluded brother any further. This should be done in a public as-

sembly "When you be gathered together" (I Cor. 5:1-13). Of course, all things are to be done in gentleness and according to the golden rule. No good surgeon having to perform an operation to remove a limb from the body would want to be cruel, or as painful as possible. Let us be kind to all men, even the disorderly.<sup>6</sup>

The veteran evangelist Nichols also believed that entire congregations could conceivably require the discipline and disfellowship of sister congregations. "Now, if a congregation should depart from the truth so far as to cease to be a church of the Lord, no other congregation should fellowship it any further, anymore than it would a denominational congregation." A plan of reproof was also recommended for immoral or doctrinally digressive elders. "If an elder goes wrong," charged Nichols, "he should be dealt with just like any other brother, except that he is not to be rebuked. The other elders should take the lead in excluding him from the fellowship of the church."<sup>7</sup> In his 1954 lecture on special eldership problems, Dr. John G. Young decisively denied that elders should be made immune from discipline:

This thing of "once an elder, always an elder" is as foreign to the truth as "once saved always saved." When he ceases to have the qualifications of an elder, when he ceases to function as an elder, he may be corrected and disciplined the same as any other member. Being an elder does not make him immune from the discipline of the church. Paul says in I Timothy 5:19, "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses."<sup>8</sup>

The lecturers were agreed that the purpose of discipline was restorative rather than destructive. It should not be imposed punitively, that is as an end within itself, but pastorally, as a means of preserving the church's purity and salvaging the offender. Brownlow named two concrete reasons for discipline: "The Bible teaches that we should exercise discipline for the good of the guilty party, and for the good and edification of the church."<sup>9</sup> Thirty-one years earlier, Colley had pined that he looked "forward to a better day, when the church

can, in an unpartisan way, carry out the Lord's will in discipline with as much interest and zeal as we do other parts of his divine law." But he added,

*Mark you!* The very best disciplinarians are not the ones who withdraw from the greatest number, but the ones who can take the Lord's word and sit down quietly by the side of the one who has gone wrong and get him to correct the wrong.<sup>10</sup>

### *Edification Through Bible Study*

While long granting that one of the most vital sources of edification was through the systematic study of the Bible, churches of Christ were very slow to organize Sunday Schools in their local congregations. In 1786, just three years after Great Britain declared the thirteen colonies to be a free and independent nation, the first Sunday School was started on this side of the Atlantic. It was organized in the Virginia home of William Elliott, who arranged to have "white boys and girls instructed in the Bible every Sabbath afternoon."<sup>11</sup> Since that time, the Sunday School movement has helped to shape the very growth and development of Protestantism in America. On October 3, 1832, the First National Sunday School Convention was held in New York, with two hundred and twenty delegates representing fourteen of the twenty-four states. Through the years these official assemblies, bringing together the thousands engaged in a common task, have been an important factor in the remarkable advance of the Sunday School movement. "The Bible and the Bible alone" was the slogan of these early meetings. It is significant that from the very first, theological conservatives have given the Sunday School movement its basic thrust.

In 1860 Dr. John H. Vincent, who was just beginning his notable career of recognized leadership in Sunday School circles, issued this challenge: "Why cannot we have a teacher's institute, similar to that of the public schools, in every district?" In answer to this need, Vincent and Lewis Miller instituted



in 1874 a summer school for teachers on the shores of Lake Chautauqua, New York.<sup>12</sup> Soon "little Chautauquas" sprang up like dandelions across the country. Church leaders quickly became aware of the need for better methods of teacher training in these schools. In 1872, the International Uniform Lesson system was launched, and by 1905 more than seventeen million students were committed to these lessons.<sup>13</sup>

The Sunday School got off to a belated start among the disciples. In its first years the Restoration movement was nurtured almost exclusively by evangelistic preaching. No need for a Sunday School was felt. Later, convictions prohibiting conference assemblies denied the movement the ideas and stimulation to be gained through participation in the National Sunday School Conventions. Because of the close ties between the Sunday School movement and denominationalism, the disciples assumed an early posture of belligerent opposition. "I have for some time," wrote Alexander Campbell in 1824, "viewed both 'Bible societies' and 'Sunday Schools,' as sort of recruiting establishments to fill up the ranks of those sects which take the lead in them."<sup>14</sup> Although he held this position for some years, in time Campbell changed his mind. In 1847 a representative of the American Sunday School Union wrote to Campbell at Bethany College and received this reply:

I never had but one objection to the administration of the system—never one to the system itself. That objection was simply to the sectarian abuse . . . .

Our brethren, as the burned child dreads the fire, dread sectarianism. But this is, I doubt not, carried too far—especially when it prevents them from cooperating in teaching, or sending their children to teach, or to be taught, in Sunday Schools. I doubt not that our brethren in all places will see it a duty they owe to themselves, to the Church, and to the world, either to have in every Church a Sunday School of their own, or to unite with the Sunday School Union in their truly benevolent and catholic institution.<sup>15</sup>

Like Campbell, Barton W. Stone also first opposed, then later approved the Sunday School. It was his ultimate judgment that the school was a legitimate work of the church, not an "outside institution." Although the Sunday School was never a prominent issue in the dissension leading to the disciples' division, the conservative elements of the brotherhood were most hesitant to so readily dismiss their suspicions. By 1850, however, the Sunday Schools had gained a strong foothold among the more progressive congregations.<sup>16</sup> And while refusing to align themselves with the Sunday School Union, the conservatives also slowly followed suit. By 1900, a great majority of the congregations had made provisions for at least a crude system of Sunday morning Bible study—though in most instances, very crude indeed.

Even after the 1906 division, however, a loud minority group among churches of Christ still harbored deep misgivings regarding the scripturalness of the Sunday School system. The same congregations were also opposed to women Bible class teachers. Some militant segments of the brotherhood are yet convicted against the use of separate, graded classes for purposes of Bible study.

### *Lectureship Sunday School Pioneers*

President Jesse P. Sewell and Dean Henry Eli Speck of Abilene Christian College were the pioneers of the church in the field of religious education at the congregational level. In 1933, they published a significant book, *The Church and Her Ideal Educational Program*. This volume, the product of their many years of practical experience, was the very first comprehensive statement of educational programs and practices among churches of Christ. Introducing the book, James H. Childress predicted that it eventually would enjoy "even more far-reaching effects than their sacrificial labors in the halls of a Christian college."<sup>17</sup>

Ideas contained in this volume were used by Sewell and Speck to lead the team of early Abilene lecturers who en-

deavored to convince the brotherhood that the church was not only privileged, but obligated by demand of expediency, to establish Sunday Schools in every congregation. In his 1919 lecture, Sewell introduced a threefold rationale to support his premise that the church is essentially an educational institution. He reasoned that Christianity is pre-eminently a teaching religion, that the extension of the church depends entirely upon teaching, and that Christians are at liberty to teach the word of God at any time or place.<sup>18</sup> Batsell Baxter later added: "Let us remember that the growth of the kingdom of God depends upon teaching. People will largely be what they are taught to be."<sup>19</sup>

From this broad foundation, a few early speakers launched an attack against the idea that the Sunday School system was inherently unscriptural. In answer to the residual brotherhood feeling against dividing students into classes according to age and interest, O. E. Phillips argued in 1920:

A mixed audience of young and old, learned and unlearned, could hardly be expected to need the same instruction from the Bible.

Why should it be sinful to divide this audience and give the lesson needed?

If only one competent instructor be present, he should teach one class, then another, as he may see fit. If more than one competent instructor be present, they should be divided according to age or need of instruction. What is there sinful about this so long as the thing taught is the scriptures?<sup>20</sup>

Phillips' speech, a solid statement for the scripturalness of the Bible class system, suggested that five distinct stages of life demand separate instruction: the imaginative age, the adventurous and inquisitive age, the solemn fact age, the sympathetic age, and old age. Speaking of the young children, he forcefully argued:

A discourse to them on the final perseverance of the saints, validity of baptism, gift of the Holy Spirit,

and so on, would be like feeding a suckling baby fresh pork. Why should it be thought a thing incompatible with the divine will for one capable (let it be man or woman) to take these little tots into one corner of the church building, different room or other place, and tell them of Jesus as a little baby, His travel with mother on a donkey to Egypt, and how He loved little children when He became a man?<sup>21</sup>

Phillips' appeal for the Sunday School system concluded: "Show me a church that is not doing it and I will show you one that is inactive and has no influence upon the young of their community . . . ." Thirty-six years later, Harrison A. Mathew's lecture revealed the almost total victory which the Lectureship helped to win for the concept of separate, graded classes for Bible Study. Mathews depicted the closely graded class system as an ideal educational situation:

The Bible class provides an ideal learning situation. First, there is the grouping together of boys and girls of like age, characteristics, desires and needs. Then a teacher has been selected who knows the problems of that particular age group. Materials have been selected to meet the issues that arise in the lives of that age group. Thus, from the standpoint of teacher, materials and pupils, an ideal learning situation is to be found.<sup>22</sup>

As the Lectureship progressed through the 1920's opposition to the Sunday School system grew so faint that subsequent speakers did not address themselves to its defense. As late as 1926, however, Foy Wallace, Sr. criticized the use of the term "Sunday School." Attributing to the term a denominational origin and equating its use with such expressions as "Reverend" and "Pastor" to describe the preacher, Wallace insisted that "these tendencies should be avoided. Bible speech should be maintained."<sup>23</sup>

From the very first, however, speakers had referred to the Lord's day congregational teaching program as the "Sunday School." And in recent years, aside from the expression

"Bible School," this description has come to be employed almost exclusively. In 1922, James F. Cox insisted that "modern sermonizing" was failing to reach and teach children. "The modern Sunday School or Bible School is but a way or method—an effort if you please of parents to meet the obligations to train their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."<sup>24</sup> Speechmaking devoted to the Sunday School can be assembled into four areas of emphasis: its purpose, its supervision, its faculty, and its equipment and facilities.

Cox's 1922 lecture contained some interesting observations about the limitations of the brotherhood's Sunday Schools in all four of these areas. He pessimistically reported that "of all the sorry teaching that may be found in this world, the sorriest may be found in the modern Sunday School."<sup>11</sup>

The pity of it is that many parents believe that they have performed their duty toward their children in this respect when they send them to a Bible Sunday School, not knowing nor little caring in some instances, about the perils that lurk in this way. Of all the sorry teaching that may be found in this world the sorriest may be found in the modern Sunday School. The following reasons may be given for this statement: a. Poorly prepared and poorly trained teachers, b. The short time devoted to actual teaching, c. The long time intervening between lessons, d. General lack of proper classrooms and equipment, e. A general lack of seriousness of purpose.<sup>25</sup>

Speakers challenged the church to evaluate more carefully the purpose of its Bible School program. In 1929, Sewell contended that "the great need of the church today is the development of each congregation into an effective educational unit." He claimed that the church had not properly evaluated the purpose of its program, and hence was failing to take its educational work seriously. "She depends almost entirely for the accomplishment of this, her most important work, on one hour session one day in the week. And usually this is with untrained supervision and instruction," Sewell lamented. "We would not depend upon such procedure to teach any-

thing else to which we attach the slightest importance."<sup>26</sup> Years later, Harrison A. Mathews stated that the purpose of the Sunday School was precisely the same as that for all phases of religious education.

Perhaps the greatest fault in our Bible Class program today is our lack of a well-defined aim. Too many teachers have been led to believe that the end of their teaching is just to teach the Bible. Subject matter has never been an end within itself, and it certainly is no end in God's plan for man. Until we see that the great aim is winning souls to Christ, perfecting the body of Christ, developing the Christ-like character, we cannot hope to be successful.<sup>27</sup>

C. A. Norred, whose pioneering efforts merit him a seat alongside Sewell and Speck, was the first lecturer to offer concrete proposals for the supervision of the Sunday School. He observed in 1929 that with but one-fourth of the professed Christians participating, and while utilizing barely two percent of the total funds contributed to the church, the Bible school was directly responsible for 85 percent of the church's increase.<sup>28</sup> Twenty-three years later, M. Norvel Young gave the similar report that "the average church spends about 10 percent of its energy and money on its Bible school, and yet one study showed that 75 percent of new members come through the Bible school, 85 percent of the workers in the Church, and 90 percent of the preachers, elders, and missionaries."<sup>29</sup> Norred insisted that to be effective the Sunday School must be operated along the lines of standard educational administration. "I fear that I would be justified in saying that in the Bible schools in the churches of the New Testament order, not more than one worker in five hundred ever made any definite study of Bible school administration." Norred concluded his lecture with this especially significant appeal:

Let me address myself particularly to the gospel preachers who are here. Let me remind you that for the next twenty-five years you will have a large influence among the churches. Let me appeal to you to

make yourselves specialists in Bible school work. Master the principles of Bible school administration. Then, as you go among the churches, put the Bible schools first. See that the schools are correctly organized. Fill the schools with real teachers. Give the churches the privilege of seeing what successful Bible schools are. To be sure, such a program would greatly increase your duties but it would also increase your usefulness.<sup>30</sup>

### *The Educational Director*

The twenty-five year period to which Norred addressed his challenge saw his fondest dreams reach fruition. That quarter-century witnessed an unparalleled growth in the Sunday School programs among churches of Christ. During those years, local preachers became much more informed in the area of school supervision. And in fulfillment of Norred's hope, many preachers even became Sunday School specialists and were employed as educational directors in the churches.

The first full-time, full-fledged educational director among churches of Christ was Alan M. Bryan, hired by the Broadway Church of Lubbock, Texas in 1952. Bryan was also the first full-time educational worker to speak at the Lecture-ship. In his 1955 address he contended that a congregation's Bible school program must be evangelistic in scope and missionary in spirit. As specific methods for increasing Bible school attendance and gaining new converts, Bryan urged congregations to maintain accurate enrollment records, to conduct a religious census at regular intervals, to stimulate non-attenders within the church, and to provide special classes for those outside the church.<sup>31</sup>

The speakers agreed with M. I. Summerlin that "the real secret of a successful Bible school is found in its teachers."<sup>32</sup> Norred recommended in 1929 that every congregation should regularly conduct its own training class. Expressing regret that virtually all previous efforts to train teachers had di-

gressed into mere classes of Bible study, he commented: "Certainly we need teachers who know the Bible but we also need persons who know how to teach and how to direct a school."<sup>33</sup> On the same program, Sewell found still more grounds for regret:

There are few teacher training classes and my brethren have produced no teacher training literature, or at least very little. We conduct protracted meetings to lead people to Christ, but no meetings or schools to train the Church for more efficient Christian teaching. We conduct singing schools to teach the people to better sing—but no schools to teach them to better teach.<sup>34</sup>

In 1941 Byron Fullerton made the point that "certain materials are necessary if the teaching is to be done effectively. But, the main factor is the teacher. It will always be the teacher."<sup>35</sup> In listing the necessary qualifications, he described the Sunday School teacher as one who is a genuine Christian, who possesses a sound knowledge of the Bible in general, who has a detailed knowledge of each particular lesson, who knows and understands the nature of each student, and who is acquainted with the basic methods for successful teaching. Although Norred and Sewell raised the first complaints in 1929, as late as 1955 Alan Bryan revealed that the perennial problem of selecting and training adequate teachers was not being adequately solved among the brotherhood's congregations:

There is far too great a contrast between the efficiency of our secular institutions and our Bible classes. To have an efficient educational program the teaching staff must be able, active, and willing to serve God to the utmost of its ability. We have stressed *what* to teach, *when* to teach, sometimes *where* to teach; rarely have we stressed *how* to teach. It is a sin to teach God's word poorly.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, the lecturers stressed the fact that to enjoy optimum effectiveness, the Bible school must be properly equipped. Norred, who once again initiated the discussion, reported that



most of the Bible schools he had observed up until 1929 were expected "to make brick without straw." He exhorted elders and preachers to begin building toward the following physical arrangement:

First, in the matter of equipment comes the question of quarters. The ideal arrangement is for the Bible school to have its own building which was specially designed for Bible school work. If such a building is not available, certainly separate rooms should be provided. And certainly all rooms and buildings should be well lighted and well ventilated, should be kept scrupulously clean, and should be made attractive. Further, such maps, charts, books, cards, and other equipment as can be used to advantage should be supplied.<sup>37</sup>

In his 1955 speech, "Congregational Teaching," Bryan maintained that very few congregations had provided even enough Sunday School rooms. He further reported that most of the schools were hampered by classes crowded well beyond the maximum number of students recommended for top efficiency. To maintain efficiency, Bryan proposed that the maximum number in preschool classes should be ten; in primary grades, twelve; in junior grades, fourteen; in intermediate grades, sixteen; in high school classes, twenty or twenty-two; in adult classes, thirty-five should be the maximum before starting a new class. Adequate library materials and books also should be provided for the teachers.<sup>38</sup>

Fully concurring in the opinion that better Bible school facilities were desperately needed, a few speakers nonetheless charged that the church was failing to employ adequately the equipment and facilities already available. They urged a program of daily rather than weekly Bible study, appealing to the apostolic example: "And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42). In 1929, Sewell was critical of the situation which found "few churches conducting any week day Bible classes." Twenty-three programs later, M. Norvel Young

echoed Sewell's indictment and advocated a much more vigorous use of church buildings by initiating accelerated programs of Bible study.

Our church buildings should be used seven days a week. There should be daily classes for preschool children taught by volunteer teachers that have sacrificed to train for such work. Our Roman Catholic neighbors are teaching such children by tens of thousands. There is no reason why we cannot teach these children the Bible effectively with the use of story hours, workbooks, visual aids, etc. Then we can follow them up with daily Bible classes for all ages of school children after school hours. In some communities it is possible to get released time from school for such a program. In the evenings various classes for young married couples, for new converts, for the training of elders and deacons, and preachers can be conducted. We are not touching the hem of the garment.<sup>39</sup>

Although functioning for many years under the handicap of a critical shortage of quality brotherhood publications in the field of Christian education, the Lectureship speechmaking has contributed much momentum and many creative ideas to the church's Sunday School programs. In recent years, speakers have expressed the suspicion that churches of Christ still trail most large American denominations by at least two decades in the work of religious education at the congregational level. Despite the Lectureship's valiant efforts to rally the brotherhood to the forefront, these gloomy calculations are at least partially accurate. Although the three-decade interval brought tremendous gains—a keener educational purpose, improved organization and supervision, better trained teachers, and more adequate facilities—the 1929 exclamations of harbinger Norred can still find timely application in the brotherhood of the 1960's.

Consider the Bible schools in the New Testament churches! Consider those schools! Poorly equipped! Conducted by workers that are largely untrained! Receiving the support of a miserable one-fourth of

the people! Granted the disgraceful appropriation of two cents out of the dollar!—And yet, those schools are the hope of the Church!<sup>40</sup>

### *Edification Through Worship*

Christian worship is perhaps the most vital means of edification. It is at once the most blessed, yet overwhelming privilege to confront the believer. The system and symbols of worship both determine the character and shape the form of a religious movement. Worship is the main source for inculcating the faith; and one of the primary instruments for transmitting that faith. At the Lectureship, worship was both experienced and explained. More than two dozen major addresses were designed to expound the depths of the public worship of the church, or one of its various channels. But beyond this, the scintillating thrill of corporate worship with the thousands of brethren was a rare privilege which came around but once a year—each last full week of February.

The speakers started with definitions. Early Arceneaux asked in 1941, "What do we mean by worship? I think if we could sum up, put into one word, all of our ideas of respect, admiration, adoration, reverence, love, recognition of authority, we would have a pretty good idea."<sup>41</sup> E. W. McMillan shared these thoughts at the 1964 meeting:

Worshipping God is a principle of heart. It is an experience of heart which relates directly to God. It is the pious, reverent feeling of devotion in the soul to its God. It includes a profound sense of appreciation for salvation from God; it contains the yearning of heart for close communion with God; it carries a homesick feeling of desire to feel the most tender touches of his love and heart.<sup>42</sup>

John H. Banister gave this definition of worship in his 1951 lecture:

One of the main purposes of worship is to draw nigh unto God. In worship, we are to commune with God, and meditate upon the majesty, power, and

mercy of God. We are to thank him for his blessings; we are to praise, adore, honor, exalt, magnify, and eulogize him . . . . If religion is personal fellowship with God, then worship is personal communion with God.<sup>43</sup>

The following year, Trine Starnes' address on worship contained these significant statements:

Worship is not an accidental effort made, nor an occasional, incidental period spent, but on the contrary is a spiritual attainment in soul culture and intimate communion with God.

There is an unvarying law of life that decrees that a man has a tendency to grow into what he believes himself to be, and into a likeness of that which he venerates . . . . In true worship, we assimilate into our spiritual nature the likeness of him whom we honor. As Peter expresses it, "That by these ye might become partakers of the divine nature . . . ." <sup>44</sup>

Abilene Professor Frank Pack introduced his 1954 lecture with the following definition of worship:

"When Thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, O Lord, will I seek" (Psalms 27:8). In that remarkable verse, I believe we have the very essence of true worship expressed. It is the call of God to the heart of man, and the response of a believing heart seeking God who is drawing near. Worship is the greatest privilege that God has ever granted to mankind. It is a privilege that we share with angels. It is a privilege that is not limited to this world but will also be the joy and the glory of that which is to come. Worship is the call of God to your heart and mine as his children as we draw near to him and as he draws near to us. It is the fellowship of our spirit with him as a loving heavenly Father.

. . . . We are coming into the presence of God. The literal meaning of the word "worship" is "to kiss the ground toward" or "to kiss the hand toward." When I worship God, I "kiss the ground toward" him and it is with a profound sense of reverence that I approach my heavenly Father.<sup>45</sup>

### *Five Channels of Worship*

The churches of Christ are non-liturgical congregations in which public worship centers around praise and thanksgiving to God. The Lectureship named five channels, or acts, through which such public praise and adoration may be properly offered. The authority for these forms was based upon divine pattern. No specific order of the acts of worship was given. Banister summarized these component parts of worship:

The worship of the apostolic church consisted of five distinct acts or items of worship on the Lord's Day. First, they observed the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7); second, they sang songs, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19); third, they prayed (Acts 2:42); fourth, they preached and taught (Acts 2:42); and fifth, they gave of their money as they had been prospered (I Cor. 16:1, 2). To be scriptural, our Lord's Day worship must contain all of these five required items.<sup>46</sup>

"To accommodate a worship to all sorts of people," reasoned John Allen Hudson, "required the wisdom of Jehovah. He has given that wise worship that embraces but a few items that can be practiced the world over and he has forbidden any to add to or take from it."<sup>47</sup> In his 1920 address, M. C. Kurfes also stressed the importance of the biblical pattern:

We have seen, from the rule laid down by Jesus himself, that any act of worship which rests on the mere will of man is vain worship. Hence, no matter what may suggest itself as proper in the worship of God, we must first of all, settle the question whether it be something God himself has appointed. If it is not, that fact alone should at once place it under the ban that would bar it from our worship. The act itself might be perfectly sinless and harmless, yet it cannot be lawfully done as worship to God if he himself did not appoint it.<sup>48</sup>

Of the five items, worship by means of *a capella* singing and through the financial offering received greatest attention. Strong emphasis upon the collection is perhaps self-explana-

tory. But that worship through singing attracted as much attention as all of the other items of public worship combined is an arresting fact deserving of special explanation.

"The story of music is the story of worship," wrote George Hedley, "entirely in its origins and importantly at every point in its history."<sup>49</sup> Music is perhaps the most instinctive and refined expression of human feeling. As George Walter Fiske aptly put it, "Religion must sing or die."<sup>50</sup> One of the famous theses that Martin Luther nailed to the door of the Wittenburg church was a plea for congregational singing, the demand that laymen be given the right to sing hymns as a part of worship. His own great hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is our God," was called "The Marseillaise of the Reformation." Frowning upon the use of a choir and special performance groups, churches of Christ favor congregational singing. Each member is encouraged to be an active participant rather than a mere spectator; a worshipper, rather than a watcher.

The church's unique stand against the use of mechanical instruments of accompaniment drew much Lectureship attention. Significantly, almost as much was said in Abilene against instrumental music as was said in favor of all of the other items of worship combined. Several addresses devoted themselves totally to the music question. Many others touched upon it. "It seems that we have labored so long and hard over 'What's wrong with instrumental music?' that many of us have yet to learn what is right with singing," observed Vernon Moody. "We are satisfied that as long as no instrument is played, surely all is well with our singing."<sup>51</sup>

The first complete lecture on "Instrumental Music in Worship," was delivered by A. O. Colley in 1923. He phrased the chief argument against its use: "It is universally admitted by those competent to judge, that there is not the slightest indication in the New Testament of divine authority for the use of instrumental music in the Christian worship."<sup>52</sup> Other speakers made the point that the scriptures explicitly authorized only *a capella* singing. "The Lord not only authorizes

music in the church, but tells us the kind of music we should have," explained E. M. Borden. "The Lord has not left it with us to select the kind of music we should have. The Bible is not silent on this question as some people think."<sup>53</sup>

F. B. Shepherd added that biblical scholars were universally agreed that the worship of the apostolic church did not employ an instrument:

After all, the controversy is not upon the question of interpretation, for no scholar has ever risen to claim to find warrant for it in the New Testament churches. The matter is purely one of the authority. And the sole authority for it now is that of councils, synods, boards, conventions, or the pope and the church.<sup>54</sup>

Early Arceneaux continued Shepherd's line of argument pointing out that,

The word "sing" is a specific, not a generic term. There is no authority for instrumental music in the command to sing. It excludes it. The New Testament and Church history for nearly seven centuries are silent on the subject of instrumental music in the Christian worship. Why was it not mentioned? Evidently because it was not used.<sup>55</sup>

The standard arguments of the opposition were also reviewed: the linguistic implications of the Greek word *psallo*, the fact that instruments were used in the Old Testament, the prophecy that harps will be played in heaven, the claim that pitchforks and song books are in the same class with instruments, and the uncontested use of instruments in the home. But the chief argument in favor of instruments was that the Bible did not specifically prohibit its use in worship. The lecturers met this objection by contending that the clear approval of *a capella* music, coupled with the significant silence of the scriptures concerning instruments of music, prohibited such use by the "law of exclusion." In 1961, Hershel Dyer insisted that the real question concerned the authority of Christ. "If we

would obey Christ, we must not only start with what he commanded, but we must also stop where he has given no command."<sup>56</sup>

E. M. Borden's 1926 speech singled out the passage: "By Him therefore let us offer these sacrifices of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." He reasoned that music in worship is "the fruit of our lips," and that its purpose is to edify, praise, teach, admonish, pray, and express thanksgiving. He argued that an instrument cannot fulfill any of these purposes. "While instrumental music is fine, and its tunes are beautiful, but give me the words that express to me the sentiment of a wonderful truth." Borden also called for an improved song service.

With our contention, we should take a great interest in learning how to sing, so as to bring out the sentiment of the song. In order to be consistent, we should patronize our singing teachers more than we do . . . . We are not consistent if we condemn instrumental music and then do not try to learn to sing.<sup>57</sup>

### *Stewardship As Worship*

Several guidelines governing worship through the offering were established. It should be taken each first day of the week; it alone should provide all of the funds for the support of the church's program of work; it should be given cheerfully and liberally; and it should accurately reflect the giver's level of prosperity. Worship by means of financial giving involves the dual principle of divine ownership and human stewardship. In 1939, Yater Tant spoke of "The Steward's Accountability to God":

Mankind refuses to acknowledge that he is accountable to anything or anybody for what he thinks or says or does. The whole moral tone of our generation is that "it's every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost." Instead of looking upon life as



a sacred entrustment, for which an account must ultimately be given, the modern man is inclined to consider himself the Lord of life. He glories in his own power of soul and mind and body, and defies the whole universe to call him to account for anything.<sup>58</sup>

On the same program with Tant, P. D. Wilmeth defined the principle of stewardship as "the responsibility for administering our whole life, personality, time, talents, influence, material substance, everything—in accordance with the purpose of God." While most speakers preferred to discuss broad principles and guidelines rather than render specific recommendations concerning dollars and cents, a few of them raised the practical question, "How much should I give?" Dallas businessman Robert S. Bell pictured Christianity as a "giving religion," and that the Christian's obligation to God can have no limitations for it will never be fully repaid.<sup>59</sup> As a rule the speakers did not recommend the practice of tithing, contending that giving under the law of grace should not be restricted to the legalistic Jewish tenth. L. S. White's 1920 speech, however, was an interesting exception to this rule. Speaking on "Church Finance," he maintained that the Old Testament principle of the tithe had never actually been abolished:

How much should Christians give? For more than twenty-five years I have carefully studied this question and am fully convinced that the Bible teaches Christians to give to the Lord at least one-tenth of their gross income. I believe it is as certainly taught as baptism for remission of sins. . . . This doctrine of tithing was taught to and practiced by God's people many centuries before the Law of Moses was ever given, and I want to show you that both Christ and Paul taught it and that it is now binding on Christians.<sup>60</sup>

Other speakers saw stewardship as the principle through which the mission of the church should be subsidized. Denouncing all fund-raising drives, gimmicks, and techniques as violating the concept of voluntary giving in proportion to prosperity, Leonard Mullens declared in 1953:

The Lord's church is engaged in performing the greatest task under heaven. To fulfill this mission, the getting and the spending of money is necessary . . . . Now the church is made up of individuals. Each one is to "lay by in store." What the church receives to spend in doing the work of Christ will be contributed by individuals. This is God's will for us. The Lord has not instructed us to have raffles, drawings, dinners, pie suppers, and rummage sales to raise money for his work. Through his great love for us, God has appealed to our love for him. Jehovah expects us to love him enough to give of our means, simply, cheerfully, as he has taught in his word.<sup>61</sup>

Challenging church leaders to undertake more vigorous programs of work, Jack Hardcastle's 1955 lecture suggested that the amount of the contribution usually depends upon the incentive placed before the givers by the elders. He urged elders to plan in faith with the assurance that the necessary means would be supplied:

The congregation that plans to grow must plan also to spend money—not just the bare minimum necessary to carry on the worship and hold services, but the maximum that can be invested wisely to help bring to fruition our plans and purpose . . . . It is true that we must have money in order to spend money, but there is no lack of money for the things we really want. Let members of the Lord's church be shown a goal which to them seems worth sacrificing for, and they will support the planned efforts to reach that goal.<sup>62</sup>

### *In Spirit And In Truth*

The crowning summit of Christian worship—that act in which believers partake of the visible symbols of Christ's redeeming love and commemorate his agonizing death—is called the Lord's Supper. Considering the Lord's Supper as the moment of special primacy in the worship period, the Abilene speakers were strangely quiet about its meaning and function.

Only one speech, Early Arceneaux's 1933 lecture on "The Worship of the Church: Communion and Fellowship," was designed to deal primarily with the Lord's Supper. Although he briefly suggested the proper attitudes which ought to accompany the partaking of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine, the essential contribution of his lecture related to the regularity of the communion observance. Arceneaux advanced six sequential reasons for his premise: "We believe the New Testament clearly teaches that Christians are required to observe the Lord's Supper upon the first day of the week."<sup>63</sup> Churches of Christ around the world believe and practice this premise.

But the what, when, and how of worship eventually raises the even more important question of why—the worshipper's motive and spiritual attitude. In his 1956 speech, "Teaching in Worship," Cleon Lyles warned: "It is possible for one to go through the acts of worship and still not worship God." He would point out that the act alone does not constitute true worship to God. Lyles maintained that purity of life must be preliminary to true communion with God. He said:

Then there are those who substitute orthodoxy for worship, and also there are those that worship orthodoxy. We all recognize the necessity of being right in what we do, but of what value is it to be right in teaching a doctrine if the doctrine does not make us right? If one is sound in the facts he presents, but unsound in the life which he lives, his soundness in teaching will not erase unsoundness in living. It is unfortunate that some men who have cried the loudest for sound teaching have constantly practiced unsound living.<sup>64</sup>

John Banister also warned that mere external observance of the items of worship and true internal worship of God were not necessarily simultaneous processes. Describing worship as an inward, spiritual consecration channeled toward God through the observance of correct forms, Banister concluded:

Let us be certain that we, in worship, neither neglect the scriptural form nor the reverent spirit of worship. They who corrupt the worship with unscriptural innovations sin no greater than those brethren who, while holding strenuously to the correct form of worship, go through the worship without any real and vital communion with God! Let us today restore the spirit of quietness and reverence that characterized the worship of the apostolic church. Let us restore the true meaning of worship.<sup>65</sup>

Howard Horton's 1961 lecture also featured the worshipper's need to transform the formal items of worship into genuine experiences of communion with God. "Cold and formal truth is as vain as warm, ecstatic error. God will have neither. One assumes that God is a stone with no feeling; the other, that He is an ecstatic sprite with no authority nor power." Horton continued:

How may we transform the scriptural "items of worship" into living experiences of fellowship? Even in the corporate worship of the congregation it is individually achieved. It helps me to think of each item or element as involving four stages: (1) the objective presence of the specific element of worship, (2) the conscious entrance of the worshipper into the purpose and meaning of the particular element, (3) the moment when the worshipper is completely absorbed in loving adoration of and communion with God, the objective element being lost to view, (4) the return to the objective element of worship at its completion. Unless the worshipper goes beyond mere participation in the objective element he is only a *performer*, not a worshipper, and there is no *Christian* fellowship involved, because Christ has not really entered the event.<sup>66</sup>

Frank Pack suggested in 1954 that a true appreciation for the deep spiritual significance of worship would eliminate the high absentee figures at worship assemblies. "If a man realizes that in worship he is approaching the Lord and that there is fellowship, communion, and companionship between his own

spirit and God, then he should not have to be reminded of the need for worship wherever he is and of the importance of it in his own life. He would long and yearn for it!"<sup>67</sup>

Dan F. Fogarty's 1955 speech, "Not Forsaking the Assembly," was much sharper in commenting on the problem of absenteeism. "In most quarters, the church assembles twice on the first day of the week and on Wednesday nights. Somewhere down the line someone has handed us the idea that the assembly is on Sunday morning," Fogarty observed. Raising the question, "who has the right to be absent?" he continued: "As it stands now, about one-half of the membership does not attend. When one fails to attend, that one is forsaking the assembly. There is no escape. If the church is meeting for worship, or for edification or for work, then it is important enough for all to be there and if it is not that important, then it is going beyond its instructions and no one should attend."<sup>68</sup>

To worship and adore Jehovah through the mediatorship of Christ, then, is the supreme and sacred privilege of the Christian. A meager homage indeed to be laid at the feet of one so worthy. Alternations between self-abasement and holy exaltation invoke the assistance of the worshipper's emotions as well as the involvement of a profound and reasoned faith. Whatever external activities are necessary for the exercise of worship, its reality and its deep meaning reside in the communion or blending of the Spirit of God with the heart and spirit of man. And that communion supplies the "inward man" with its seminal source of edification—nourishment to the undying soul.

#### FOOTNOTES

"The Right of the Church to Live," *Lectures*, 1933, p. 131. This chief aim of the church is also emphasized in Liff Sanders, "The Family, State, and the Church," *Lectures*, 1920-1921; and W. S. Long, "The Church in Its War Against Sin," *Lectures*, 1935.

<sup>67</sup>"The Church and the Community," *Lectures*, 1953, p. 3.

<sup>68</sup>"The Edification of the Church," *Lectures*, 1951, pp. 32-46.

"Discipline of the Church," *Lectures*, 1920-1921, pp. 97, 101.

<sup>5</sup>"The Church in Its Discipline," *Lectures*, 1935, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup>"Withdraw Yourselves from Those That Walk Disorderly," *Lectures*, 1955, pp. 87-88.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 90, 91.

<sup>8</sup>"Overcoming Eldership Problems," *Lectures*, 1954, pp. 198-199.

<sup>9</sup>Brownlow, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>10</sup>Colley, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-108.

<sup>11</sup>James DeForest Murch, *Christian Education and the Local Church* (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1943), p. 75.

<sup>12</sup>Clarence H. Benson, *A Popular History of Christian Education* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1943), p. 199. Benson observed: "For the first three years this promising movement confined itself to the purpose for which it was organized; then unfortunately, some well-meaning leaders proposed to broaden the program to include general culture and make the gatherings more popular by introducing lectures on popular themes."

<sup>13</sup>J. M. Price, *et. al.*, *A Survey of Religious Education* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1940), pp. 159-160.

<sup>14</sup>Alexander Campbell, *The Christian Baptist*, II, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup>Alexander Campbell, *The Millennial Harbinger*, 1847, pp. 200ff.

<sup>16</sup>William Clayton Bower and Roy George Ross, *The Disciples and Religious Education* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publications, 1936), p. 35.

<sup>17</sup>*The Church and Her Ideal Educational Situation* (Austin, Texas: Firm Foundation, 1933), "Forward."

<sup>18</sup>Jesse P. Sewell, "Christian Education," *Lectures*, 1919, pp. 7-9.

<sup>19</sup>"The Great Mission of the Church: Teaching God's Word," *Lectures*, 1933, p. 56.

<sup>20</sup>"Our Young People," *Lectures*, 1920-1921, p. 143.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 143, 147.

<sup>22</sup>"Opportunities on Sunday Morning," *Lectures*, 1956, p. 116.

<sup>23</sup>"The Church," *Lectures*, 1926-1927, p. 150.

<sup>24</sup>James F. Cox, "The Perils of the Child," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, p. 60.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>Jesse P. Sewell, "Christian Education," *Lectures*, 1928-1929, p. 44.

<sup>27</sup>Mathews, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>28</sup>"The Bible School," *Lectures*, 1929, pp. 128-129. Norred's influence and use of the term was one of the key reasons that churches of Christ came to prefer the expression, "Bible School," rather than "Sunday School."

<sup>29</sup>M. Norvel Young, "Restoring God to Education," *Lectures*, 1952, p. 186.

<sup>30</sup>Norred, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131, 134.

<sup>31</sup>"Congregational Teaching," *Lectures*, 1955, p. 220.

<sup>32</sup>"Developing Spirituality in the Local Church," *Lectures*, 1957, p. 104.

<sup>33</sup>Norred, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>34</sup>Sewell, "Christian Education," 1929, p. 44.

<sup>35</sup>"Every Christian Citizen a Teacher," *Lectures*, 1941, p. 133.

<sup>36</sup>Bryan, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

<sup>37</sup>Norred, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>38</sup>Bryan, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

<sup>39</sup>Young, "Restoring God to Education," 1952, pp. 64-65.

<sup>40</sup>Norred, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>41</sup>"Worship in the Program of the Christian Citizen," *Lectures*, 1941, p. 62.

<sup>42</sup>"The Kingdom That Cannot Be Shaken," *Lectures*, 1946, p. 105.

<sup>43</sup>"The Worship of the Church," *Lectures*, 1951, p. 145.

<sup>44</sup>"Worship," *Lectures*, 1952, pp. 131, 152-153.

<sup>45</sup>"Overcoming Problems in Worship," *Lectures*, 1954, pp. 114, 116.

<sup>46</sup>Banister, *op. cit.*, p. 146. The only Lectureship listing of the items of worship to contain more, or less, than five acts was M. C. Kurfees, "The New Testament Law of Worship," *Lectures*, 1920, p. 45. He arrived at the number of six by separating teaching into "reading the word of God" and "exhortation."

<sup>47</sup>"The Church in Its Worship," *Lectures*, 1935, p. 101.

<sup>48</sup>M. C. Kurfees, "The New Testament Law of Worship," p. 47.

<sup>49</sup>*Christian Worship: Some Meanings and Means* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953), 102.

<sup>50</sup>*The Recovery of Worship: A Study of the Crucial Problem of the Protestant Churches* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931), p. 130.

<sup>51</sup>"Worship in Song," *Lectures*, 1961, p. 166.

- <sup>52</sup>"Instrumental Music in Worship," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, p. 335.
- <sup>53</sup>"Music in the Church," *Lectures*, 1926-1927, p. 210.
- <sup>54</sup>"The Integrity of the New Testament Worship," *Lectures*, 1928-1929, p. 155.
- <sup>55</sup>"The Worship of the Church: Prayer and Praise," *Lectures*, 1933, p. 107.
- <sup>56</sup>"A Life of Obedience," *Lectures*, 1961, pp. 60-61.
- <sup>57</sup>Borden, *op. cit.*, pp. 222, 212.
- <sup>58</sup>"The Steward's Accountability to God," *Lectures*, 1933, p. 132.
- <sup>59</sup>"Christian Stewardship," *Lectures*, 1961, p. 137.
- <sup>60</sup>"Church Finance," *Lectures*, 1920-1921, p. 123.
- <sup>61</sup>"The Church and Money," *Lectures*, 1953, pp. 95-96.
- <sup>62</sup>"The Church As It Can Be," *Lectures*, 1953, pp. 230-231.
- <sup>63</sup>"The Worship of the Church: Communion and Fellowship," *Lectures*, 1933, p. 99. Arceneaux's speech was intended to answer the arguments of those who worship on Saturday as well as those who observe the supper less frequently than weekly.
- <sup>64</sup>"Teaching in Worship," *Lectures*, 1956, p. 175.
- <sup>65</sup>Banister, *op. cit.*, p. 148.
- <sup>66</sup>"The More Abundant Life As One of High Fellowship Values," *Lectures*, 1961, p. 96.
- <sup>67</sup>Pack, *op. cit.*, p. 126.
- <sup>68</sup>"Not Forsaking the Assembly," *Lectures*, 1955, p. 70.



# 11

## The Mission of the Church

The Abilene Lectureship's most obvious contributions to the twentieth century development of churches of Christ can be assembled under three distinct categories of growth: an improved level of congregational leadership and programs of work; an increased appreciation of the need for more and stronger Christian schools and colleges; and a stimulation of the will and a presentation of the ways to take the gospel of Christ to the entire world. So astounding and widespread has been the Lectureship's leadership in these areas that one shudders to imagine what the present position of the church might be if the influence of the last fifty Februarys were suddenly erased from the record.

The most dramatic impact has been made in the third of the categories. The Lectureship has been the very vanguard of the post-World War II missionary explosion among churches of Christ. Sample the intensity of this typical paragraph:

There is probably concentrated upon this campus this week more potential for bringing mankind to Christ than has ever assembled in one place since the

church was born. I can hardly bear to meet this awful challenge, for the gaunt and formidable intensity of a lost humanity, the claim of unsaved millions weigh heavily upon this moment, and this opportunity to inspire you on their behalf will mean paradise lost to some. Yet, I dare not face my God without saying these things which must be said. For even at this moment a man known only to his Creator moves in the garb of humanity somewhere in the great marsh that lies along the Tigris River in Iran. Tomorrow this man will die nameless to you and to me. But I fear this man, for he may stand as my accuser in that day when my Lord asks for the return of his talents. These myriads of nameless, hopeless lost are the mute judges of the church of the 20th century. Ravaged by sin, entangled in chains of darkness and ignorance, they grope through this darkness into endless night.<sup>1</sup>

Taken from Guy Caskey's 1961 address, this passage captures the combination of divine mission and terrifying urgency which was, more than anything else, the very soul of the February assemblies. Conceived out of a sense of universal obligation, born in response to the cries of lost mankind, the Lectureship haunted the brotherhood with the echo of the Great Commission: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

### *Creating the Evangelistic Spirit*

The national mood of religious suspicion and spiritual unrest, which by 1910 had saturated virtually every vestige of orthodox Christianity, shrouded the field of evangelism in the august appearance in 1932 of *Re-Thinking Missions*. The product of an inter-denominational committee chaired by the scholarly William Ernest Hocking, this volume reinterpreted the motive and methods of missionary activity so as to be consonant with the posture of theological liberalism. The Christian message of salvation had previously stood in judgment upon all other claims of religious revelation. Arthur Judson Brown, the esteemed protestant missionary theorist, had

stated shortly after the century's turn that every man must be taught of Christ, because only Christ can "save his soul and prepare him for eternal companionship with God. 'Neither is there salvation in any other.' Therefore, we must convey this gospel to the world."<sup>2</sup>

But to Hocking and the other liberal members of the *Rethinking* committee, this traditional position was too radically exclusive of other world religions and irreconcilable with the ideas of general revelation and relativity. Perplexing questions were quickly raised concerning the relationship of Christianity to other forms of religion—or even non-religion. Hocking proposed that the Christian missionary should be a co-worker with the native religion, rather than its competitor. He should "aid or encourage" rather than displace the truth within every religion.<sup>3</sup> So widespread was the impact of this 1932 publication that one liberal reported, "most of the major Protestant denominations began to retool their missionary programs around more liberal and tolerant principles so as to show greater concern for human well-being and to foster social service."<sup>4</sup>

As protestantism retooled its missionary programs, the evangelistic outlook of churches of Christ remained close to the orthodox or biblical tradition. And the Abilene Lectureship emerged as the vital stimulus for world evangelism. A meeting place for missionaries, the Lectureship was a natural for this assignment. Each year veterans from afar scheduled furloughs to coincide with the festive February dates. Each year fresh mission workers were born amidst the stirring evangelist sessions. Aside from the speeches on the church, the subject of evangelism received more attention than any other theme. Never was Christ's commission more often quoted. Never was it more gravely received. And besides this, reports of victories won and opportunities lost; stories of exciting rendezvous in remote places and ordinary, unmet challenges just next door; testimonies of the thrill of going and the desperate need for sending—all of this, and more, was fashioned together to form the Lectureship heartbeat.

Manuscripts are replete with personal testimonies to the platform's electrifying influence as a missionary stimulus. In 1954, for instance, a missionary to Italy declared:

I am sure that Abilene Christian College is not aware of the great amount of good that is accomplished here each year. I personally know of some who are absent this morning who were present upon other occasions and whose absence this morning is traceable to the fact that they were here on other occasions and received their inspiration to go into distant lands with the gospel of Christ. It is my prayer that before this meeting of this series of lectures has come to an end that others may resolve to go into a place yet strange to them to carry the gospel of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

A missionary to Germany testified: "Just seven years ago I sat where you are now sitting, listening to reports from the mission fields . . . I became more and more aware that I was not exempt from the commandment to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."<sup>6</sup>

Another said that "the constant stimulus of Bible classes here and the inspiration of the yearly Lectureship were prime influences which took me to Africa for four years."<sup>7</sup> The same year, another speaker added: "I feel certain it is the prayer of everyone here at Abilene Christian College that, as a result of these Lectures, many of you will return to your homes with a burning desire to create greater missionary zeal within your own congregation and, if possible, become a sponsoring church."<sup>8</sup>

### *The World Without Christ*

The 1932 appearance of *Re-Thinking Missions* objectified a theological transition which directly affected missionary motives. As attention was drawn away from the fear of God's punitive justice in the everlasting torment of the unsaved, the classical concept of hell was abandoned. Less preoccupied with

“other worldly” issues, missionaries increasingly addressed themselves to the problems of sin and suffering in the present life. The tolerance quotient of liberalism allowed all ethnic religions to join Christianity in comprising man’s corporate quest for God. Speaking specifically of the role of the missionary, the *Re-Thinking* committee said that “there is little disposition to believe that sincere and aspiring seekers after God in other religions are to be damned.” Hence, he should be “less concerned in any land to save men from eternal punishment than from the danger of losing the supreme good.”<sup>9</sup> The missionary’s message was seen as but one, partial flash of light in mankind’s groping for truth.

Eight years after his work with the Committee of Appraisal, philosopher Hocking came forth with an even more modernistic statement, *Living Religions and a World Faith*. Attacking the concept of “radical displacement”—a term Hocking used to ridicule the idea of special revelation—he argued that Christianity must be content to take its place alongside the other great religious traditions of the world in an attitude of truth-sharing. Chiding the advocates of the so-called “Only Way” theory, Hocking contended that “savedness is discernible outside of Christianity.” He said of the “Only Way” doctrine:

It was once a form of religious intensification, an emotional and dogmatic postulate pragmatically valuable, so long as it could be realistically believed. It has now become a perverse and injurious instrument for guiding the contact of religions, inflicting pain beyond the meaning of the occasion, intolerable in its intolerance. It is increasingly ineffective in winning souls who have learned that religion cannot be based on fear; but it is chiefly obnoxious to the ultimate sense of truth in the hearts of those who try to believe it.<sup>10</sup>

At this juncture, the emphasis at Abilene sharply departed from the course of contemporary missionary movements. The direction of the Lectureship was definitely evangelistic.

Calling for the priority of biblical faith as the normative standard for evaluating all religious truth, the lectures drew their evangelistic motive from the plight of a world condemned without Christ. With little confidence in education and socialization as instruments for bringing about the salvation of the human race, the missionary plea called for universal conversion to Jesus Christ. Risking the brand of bigotry, the lecturers answered the growing attitude that "the day of private and local religions is over,"<sup>11</sup> by stressing the universality of Christianity. Refusing to fraternize with alien faiths, they reminded their brethren that the original charter of Christianity stipulated that the entire world should be brought under its sway. To surrender an inch of that objective, they maintained, was to corrupt the charter and sever the life-giving nerve of the mission motive.

In his 1919 lecture, "Missions," Shepherd asserted that the need for world evangelism "is self-evident" in view of the "spread of falsehood, our high claims to apostolicity, which makes it incumbent upon us to evangelize unto the uttermost parts," and that "the salvation of man depends upon acceptance of the Gospel, and our salvation depends largely upon the effort we make to preach it!"<sup>12</sup> The statistical urgency of Caskey's 1955 speech was also common parlance: "If your heart cannot weep for two hundred million souls who are poised on the brink of eternity without knowing that Christ died to save them, then their last hope is gone."<sup>13</sup> In 1925, John T. Hinds spoke of "The Universal Nature of Christianity." He explained that all men "must accept Christianity and render honest service to God or be lost. There is no other alternative." Hinds elucidated his position:

This rigid demand of Christianity must be understood, of course, as being applicable only to those responsible. The infant and the mentally incompetent are not gospel subjects. As the gospel is not addressed to them, they are not included in the demands for obedience. Christianity applies only to those who have lived or will live since its establishment and are capa-

ble of rendering intelligent obedience to its requirements. To all such, Christianity offers the only hope.<sup>14</sup>

In 1937, a very significant series of lectures was delivered on the theme: "The Church and Its Great Mission: To Preach the Gospel to the Whole Creation." George S. Benson's address that year contained these sentences:

We should also be urged forward in the exertion of our every effort through our love for lost souls. Every individual has a never-dying spirit. Each one shall be judged according to the works done in the flesh. There are only two destinies for the souls of men. Only the Gospel can save and we are the sole stewards of the Gospel. Therefore, no one can be saved except in proportion as we respond to our duty in declaring the message of life.<sup>15</sup>

Speaking on the same series with Benson, Paul Southern considered the ascending theory that the "heathens are not responsible for their conduct." He gave rebuttal:

Are the heathens in a state of safety until they hear and disobey the Gospel? If so, we must conclude that the Gospel makes sinners instead of saving them. It is impossible to save that which is already safe. The truth of the matter is that the heathens are lost because they are in sin, and not because they have not been baptized.<sup>16</sup>

Charles H. Roberson's address, "The Bible for all Peoples," expressed concern for the souls of multitudes who speak languages in which the Bible has not even been translated. C. A. Norred added that greater missionary zeal in sharing the Bible with these multitudes would come only with a realistic appraisal of the tragedy of eternal damnation. He exclaimed:

They are lost — lost now, and to the future. I mean by this that they are now under condemnation and separated from the consolations and delights of true religion, and furthermore, they have no assurance of the salvation ready to be revealed at the last time. I

am afraid we just fail to realize what it means to be lost. And I am constrained to believe that just in proportion as we realize the horrors of damnation we shall find ourselves driven to save the lost.<sup>17</sup>

Years later, George W. Bailey tersely stated the same appeal: "We think so little about souls being saved because we think so little about souls being lost!"<sup>18</sup> In 1959, Stanley Lockheart solemnly summarized "The World's Need for Christ":

There are millions lost today; how disturbed are we about them? Where are these people? Everywhere! Take a look at our own cities; the village shopping center where we buy our groceries; walk down main street and you will pass many of them; look at your next door neighbor. How much sleep have we lost over this problem? Who are these people? Your friends, relatives, acquaintances — and mine. There are the prominent and the obscure; the gay and the sad; the known and the unknown; but each one has a soul more valuable than all the world.<sup>19</sup>

### *The Apostolic Example*

Continuing the effort to raise the brotherhood's evangelistic temperature, several speakers eulogized the zeal of the apostolic church. In 1923, Carl L. Etter, an early missionary to the Orient, described the first-century church as "a soul saving institution" whose message was "the Gospel of Christ as the power of God to save." Etter concluded his address with the words: "Brethren, the church of yesterday had a passion for souls. Do we, the church of today, measure up to the standard?"<sup>20</sup>

C. M. Pullias' 1928 speech, "In All Judea and Samaria," reminded the audience of the Jerusalem Christians' zeal in preaching the gospel while being scattered through persecution. He posed the question: "Suppose the church of the present time in this town, or any other in your community, should be scattered abroad . . . ?" Pullias pressed the embarrassing



conclusion that the lack of zeal and scant biblical knowledge of many modern disciples would render them impotent as teachers of others. Seven years later, W. S. Long made the same point:

They were wholly converted to the Lord and ready to forsake all for His Name. Their love for Christ inspired them to tell everyone they met the wonderful story of Christ who died for them. We take our vacations and go everywhere seeking pleasure; they went everywhere preaching the Word. Salvation meant so much to them that they wanted to save everyone else. Moreover, they did not believe they could be saved unless they gave their lives in saving others.<sup>21</sup>

In his 1952 lecture, "World Evangelism," Claude A. Guild named faith, sacrifice, and love of lost souls as explanation for the amazing apostolic record:

The church in its first glory had one congregation, three thousand members and twelve preachers! In forty years, every creature under heaven had heard the Gospel. This is the question: How did they do it? The answer is simple: the brethren sacrificed, they had faith in God and a deep passion for the lost. Today, we have one million members, seven thousand congregations, three thousand preachers, and maybe ten per cent of the world has heard the Gospel. We should be ashamed.<sup>22</sup>

Against the apostolic backdrop, the incriminating inconsistencies of the contemporary church were contrasted in bold relief. "From the Straits of Magellan to the pillars of Hercules and from Tijuana to Timbuktu, one finds on every hand modern denominations but not the church of the Lord," lamented a concerned speaker. "If the world is not lost in its present condition," began another, "our religion is vain. If it is lost, we had better get busy or it will be vain anyway." These typical quotations suggest a favorite technique for stimulating evangelistic activity—through appeal to the limi-

tations and failures of the status quo. "I am not a morbid pessimist," insisted Paul Southern, "neither am I a blind optimist. And I would not minimize the great work which has been and is being done by the Lord's people. At the same time, a casual glance at our evangelistic program shows that lethargy reigns."<sup>23</sup>

In 1919, F. B. Shepherd reported that of 9,000 congregations of the church, fewer than five hundred had ever contributed financially to any mission work, while less than one hundred of them were helping to support the nine American missionaries then in foreign lands. The numerical figures grew larger at each Lectureship, but speakers never ceased to stress the church's shortcomings. Forty-two years after Shepherd's indictment, Guy V. Caskey asked:

Can this be the church for which Jesus gave his precious life, whose servants on fields afar number but one hundred and seventy-five and whose supporters in America must reach the fantastic figure of 11,429 to put just one man in a country beyond the seas? Just one Gospel preacher to every 24,000,000 people . . . . My brethren gave six American cents per person per month, or \$.72 a year to the preaching of the Gospel beyond our borders. In Texas there is one Gospel preacher to every 1,600 people, sixty-two times as many as in the rest of the world outside, and yet Texas comprises but .38 of 1% of the world population.<sup>24</sup>

Olan L. Hicks pinpointed the embarrassing implications of missionary apathy in a movement which had been born in evangelistic fervor. He charged:

Now as a people we have been glib at quoting the Great Commission. We have used it perhaps more than any other religious group; but our use of it has been faulty. We quoted it, but we say only that part of it dealing with baptism. This we used powerfully to discomfit the gainsayer. But while we were lampooning him for ignoring the command regarding

baptism, we were laying ourselves open to an even sterner condemnation by ignoring the part which commands us to preach the gospel to the whole world. It comes with poor grace to claim that we have the only true teaching, and then to sit idly with it and not urge it upon the hearts of all the world. In the hearts of thinking men there must be some doubt of our complete sincerity.<sup>25</sup>

Much of the blame for missionary indifference was laid at the feet of the brotherhood's located preachers. In 1921, C. G. Vincent stressed the integral role of the preacher in exhorting his congregation to world-wide evangelism, adding:

I regret to say it, but a fact it is just the same, namely, the reason why so many preachers are silent on this greatest of Bible themes is, they fear their support may be cut short. But this is near-sighted selfishness. The joy and enthusiasm that come to a missionary church always intensifies its self-sacrificing spirit, and thus the church takes good care of the preacher and at the same time reaches out into fields beyond.<sup>26</sup>

Years later, Owen Aikin repeated Vincent's accusation against "located preachers." "Men are dying without Christ every second while preachers here in the states are competing in many instances for higher salaries, bigger preachers' homes, bigger expense accounts, and a 'position.' Oh, my brethren," continued Aikin, "what will you say when the millions of the earth who have never heard the Gospel once, accuse you in that day."<sup>27</sup> And J. Harold Thomas scolded his preaching colleagues with these poignant words in 1955:

And finally, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into the harvest." Pray, but—I warn you—not too earnestly. Don't pray too often. Be very general in your prayers. Don't let the needs of any one place become too acute in your thoughts. Remember to keep your prayers in the third person and your exhortations in the second person. Always put this in your prayers—don't forget this—"Help us to send them, Lord." Otherwise, you might get into this business yourself!<sup>28</sup>

Often credited with stimulating more evangelistic spirit than any other man, Otis Gatewood, the first American missionary of any faith to enter Germany following the war, delivered four addresses at Abilene. He frequently chastized his preaching brethren for their lack of missionary zeal:

Is it because we love the salaries we get here in America too much? Yes, it is very nice to have \$100 or \$150 per week with a house furnished and utilities paid and then sometimes with car expenses and insurance and taxes paid on top of that . . . . And if we do evangelistic work, the salary is even better. An evangelist can hold three and sometimes four meetings per month if he schedules them right. And what does he receive? From \$200 to \$400 per meeting, and this means that he averages from \$600 to \$1,200 or maybe \$1,600 per month. Don't deny that this is true . . . . We preachers are often milking the churches to death financially while we preach mostly to members of the church who have heard our message time and again. How, brethren, can we face God in the day of judgment and do things like this while at the same time we allow millions of the earth to go before God in the day of judgment without having heard the Gospel even once?<sup>29</sup>

In 1959, Leon C. Burns charged that complacency was the major hindrance to the church's program of evangelism. He exhorted his listeners:

We must find some way to experience a revival of Christian zeal, greater than anything the world has ever seen, if we can ever hope to take the world for Christ. We must find some way to shock our brethren out of their complacent and indifferent attitude toward mission work. We must find some way to impress upon our people that interest in the souls of others is just as essential to our own salvation as faith, repentance, and baptism . . . . The one big job that remains is that of persuading us to send them. We may dream all we please of crossing distant horizons with the Gospel of Christ, and we may continue to create missionary zeal in the hearts of young men

and women, but until we are able to train congregations here at home to send them into the foreign lands, our cause is lost.<sup>30</sup>

### *Unlimited Missionary Opportunities*

Some lecturers used a more positive approach, featuring the unparalleled potentialities of the twentieth century. Ira Lee Winterrowd's 1922 speech, "Our Measure of Responsibilities," was among the first of this type. He contended that responsibility is commensurate with opportunity:

Today the church of the living God has within its numbers more men and women prepared in a special way to lead and instruct in the ways of righteousness than ever before. Those who have these blessings are responsible in the greatest measure, no doubt. Much learning brings greater obligations. And yet these trained ones cannot do their best if the entire body of Christians will not stand behind them or send them into this field of endeavor. Every dollar, every material possession must be utilized in accomplishing this task. They represent talents. And woe is unto the one who does not answer for the ability he enjoys! Then what is our measure? It is world-wide!<sup>31</sup>

In 1937, George S. Benson insisted that the church was more materially equipped for evangelism than at any other time in its history. "We today have adequate money to evangelize the world. We are the sole watchmen on the wall. The Lord is depending upon us alone to accomplish this great task . . . ."<sup>32</sup> In addition to financial and numerical readiness, several speakers maintained that the post-World War II climate provided a unique evangelistic opportunity. In the early 1950's several fields were described as so spiritually destitute as to create a favorable vacuum which the gospel could fill. The Orient was frequently used to illustrate this asset in timing. In 1948, E. W. McMillan reported that General Douglas Mac-

Arthur and other leaders in Japan had revealed to him two fundamental facts:

First, they all said that the heart of the Orient was empty spiritually, and that Christianity affords the only anchorage needed to stabilize and fill these lives.

They all said, as with one voice, that if Christian people did not bring Christian hope to fill the vacuum in the heart of Orientals, Communism, with its many devices, deceptions, and glamorous promises would win the major portion of those desolate peoples within the next twenty years.<sup>33</sup>

Harry Robert Fox, Jr. later contrasted the ideal situation in Japan with the post-war missionary efforts. He concluded:

Such response to the Gospel is phenomenal, and is especially so when compared with the pre-war response. Back in those days if an evangelist could baptize as many as five in one year he thought he had headlines news. There were times when a worker might not baptize even one person in several years. Yet today I do not know of a single town, village, or city in all of Japan where an evangelist might not go and, after a year or so of preaching, baptize many people and establish a congregation. Thus is removed one of the chief objections against sending workers to Japan which was raised in pre-war days: that the results achieved over there were not worth the dollars invested.<sup>34</sup>

Howard Horton characterized the young nation of Nigeria as a "boiling cauldron in which every conceivable element of civilization and savagery are together."

Just what the future will dip out of this confused mixture, boiling at a furious rate, is not clear yet. One thing is certain: Nigeria is not, nor will she be for several decades, static. She is going somewhere—just where nobody can predict—and no force can turn the tide back even to the point of three years ago.

Into this seething confusion God saw fit to inject his word, the one force which could stabilize the young and violently energetic country . . . .<sup>35</sup>

In 1951, Leonard Mullins observed that the Nigerian situation typified the entire dark continent:

In the opinion of competent authorities, the native religions of Africa will gradually be superseded by either Christianity or Mohammedanism. At the present time, these two theistic missionary faiths are contending for the hearts of the people of Africa. Which shall it be for them—Christ or Mohammed, the Bible or the Koran, the truth or error? To a large degree, the answer depends upon us in the church of Jesus Christ in America.<sup>36</sup>

Coupled with the iconoclastic impact of World War II, the outpouring of American military personnel into the disillusioned corners of the earth provided a very tangible evangelistic asset. A half-dozen speakers mentioned this advantage. Don Finto described the work in Germany:

As terrible as the last war was, it had done much to further world evangelism. American Christians have been placed all over the world, and have been largely responsible for much of the evangelistic work that has been done. Practically every congregation in South Germany, as well as in other parts of Europe, was encouraged by American servicemen who began worshiping regularly. In many cases these men promoted work in new cities faster than the limited supply of preachers could go to help them. They often have interested their home congregations in foreign countries. They have given generously to begin work in new cities.<sup>37</sup>

Otis Gatewood agreed with Finto's observations regarding American military personnel, adding that the war had served to elevate the prestige of Americans in general. Gatewood declared:

. . . even before he begins to speak, the people of other countries want to hear what he has to say. Many people of the different nations consider it a great honor to have an American as a friend. He is therefore welcomed into homes wherever he goes. The people of the world want to know what he believes and thinks. They are even more receptive when he speaks their native language. American preachers are therefore often able to accomplish more than native preachers.<sup>38</sup>

“There has never been a time since the first century,” continued Richard Walker, “that equals our day in opportunities abroad.” He then explained, “American ideas, ideals, products and army personnel are scattered everywhere. May God give the church the courage and strength to go in through the doors which he has opened.” A. R. Holton’s 1959 lecture, “Missionaries on Their Own,” revealed that American armed services were located in seventy-two of the nations of the world. Speaking on the same program, Gatewood reported that “these servicemen are able to make work possible, to get visas and permits, to purchase property and to do many other things that would be impossible without them.”<sup>39</sup> The following year, Haskell Chessir especially commended the servicemen in Korea:

Some of the great foreign workers today are found in churches of Christ established on military bases on foreign soil. Many military men said in Korea that they thought they had come to the end of the earth when they came to Korea, but before their tour of duty was over they were proclaiming Korea the greatest experience in their lives.<sup>40</sup>

Along with the genius of timing, a strange paradox developed in the lectures on evangelism. A few missionaries reported severe reaction and opposition, but exclaimed that even attempted persecutions had boomeranged into victories. Instances of intense opposition were cited first by speakers from Italian mission fronts. Beginning in mid-January of 1950, the Associated Press, the United Press, and the International News Service carried detailed stories of conflicts between the Cath-



olic Church and the churches of Christ in Italy. Jimmy Wood, 1950 Abilene speaker, recorded the first of many responses to this source of persecution:

One of our representatives asked us while we were in Washington last month, why the church of Christ missionaries are being persecuted so much more in Italy than many protestant missionaries. Of course, it would be impossible to explain to a man who is not a member of the church why the Catholics are persecuting us more than other missionaries, but you and I know the reason. The gospel of our Lord is the only thing in the world today that can offer any real threat to Catholicism today. The only formidable threat that Catholicism has had or ever will have is undenominational Christianity. Our brethren have preached and taught the gospel of Christ in Italy, and this is the reason they have been persecuted.<sup>41</sup>

In 1953, Carl Mitchell returned from Italy to tell of continuous resistance from the Catholic Church. He reported four major attempts to drive American missionaries from the country. "The only reason we have not been put to death," he added, "is because they are afraid of the rest of the world; and if it suited their purposes, they would be willing to persecute you or put you to death in order to establish their ends." Five years later, Mitchell returned from a second tour, saying of the opposition:

Satan has never learned that the more the church is persecuted the more it will thrive and grow . . . . The more the Catholic church asks people to ignore us, the more they seem to desire information about us. Today, largely because of persecution, we are known throughout Italy, and can be sure of good audiences almost any place we go with the Gospel.<sup>42</sup>

### *Who Should Go?*

The absence of an organized missionary society among churches of Christ created several unique handicaps in selection and preparation of qualified missionary workers. Since

no official board existed, congregations were free to select and send. Speaking on the 1937 program, Abilene professor Homer Hailey urged churches to reverse the prevailing practice of sending young and inexperienced workers into difficult fields. He charged:

. . . . it is a reflection on the church for keeping the best "at home" and sending out the young "to get experience." The best place for young men to get training is under the supervision of an older man who has been over the ground many times . . . .<sup>43</sup>

J. Harold Thomas, a worker in the northeastern section of the United States, also contended that gifted and proven preachers ought to be the first to volunteer for the most trying missionary assignments. He was especially concerned about the church's inclination to send the inadequate and unskilled to the obscure but needy mission fronts. "I oppose a policy of evangelism," said Thomas, "that mans the neediest fields with the culls and rejects of our preachers."

We wait for impulsive, inexperienced, untrained men to volunteer. They come around and solicit us and we support them. God bless them; if it weren't for them almost nothing would be going on! Those who fail we berate, those who succeed we call back to preach for a strong church or to teach in a Christian college! It's wrong—all wrong. It's unscriptural.<sup>44</sup>

"But if we cannot have all the men we need in mission fields," responded Leslie Diestlekamp, "give us more boys. As long as I can remember, the young men have carried the burden of mission work." Diestlekamp concluded: "Of all the men I know who are now in America's mission fields, the vast majority went into such work as very young men."<sup>45</sup>

All speakers in recent years were agreed that no one, young or old, should go until he can speak the foreign language. Frank Pack said:

The language barrier stands between the worker and those whom he desires to reach and that barrier must be overcome through learning to speak and write well the language of the country. Words are the missionary's tools and if he is a poor workman, he will be ineffective in his work for Christ. He may feel that the time spent in language preparation is wasted but he cannot communicate with others unless he has the medium of communication mastered. I think one of the mistaken ideas on the part of many brethren has been that it is best to wait until the worker gets on the field and then get his language start. A number of missionaries have pointed out the mistake of this procedure.<sup>46</sup>

R. C. Cannon, a missionary to Japan, recommended that Christian colleges should take the lead in training future workers at the college level. He charged:

Foreign mission fields need more than personnel. They need trained personnel. Christians throughout our land should supply our Christian schools, such as Abilene Christian College, with funds which enable them to set up special courses designed to fulfill the needs of each particular field. Men and women with on-the-field experience should teach these courses in cultural, religious and language backgrounds. This would increase our fruits one hundred fold.<sup>47</sup>

The speakers, however, laid the chief responsibility for inspiring and preparing missionaries at the feet of the church. "If there is a shortage of well-prepared gospel preachers and missionaries," concluded Frank Pack, "the blame falls ultimately upon the local church. It has failed to encourage and inspire enough young people to seek such service for Christ."<sup>48</sup> In answer to Pack's question, "What are you doing in your home congregation to send out laborers unto these fields 'white unto harvest,'" Leon C. Burns proposed the following plan for churches to better equip missionaries:

I think that many of our young men coming out of college should be considered by the elderships of

the larger congregations, who have in mind increasing their missionary work. Why not train the man at home in the congregation? Observe his character and his habits; train by proper working habits. Then when both the congregation and the young man are ready to do greater work, you have your man. You know the kind of man you are sending. I believe that we can help cure a certain ill among us by properly training the young men out of college, placing them as associates and co-workers among the large and strong congregations, rather than sending inexperienced men to difficult fields. It is absolutely ridiculous to think some great business firm would take an inexperienced man to open up new territory. Until we recognize the need of training, the need of supervision in molding the character and work habits of young preachers, we will not have success in these fields that we could have if we trained and supervised more closely.<sup>49</sup>

The first lecturer to be concerned with the matter of specific qualifications was C. G. Vincent. His 1921 speech produced the following list:

The missionary must be "rooted and grounded" in the faith, must have a good knowledge of the Bible, must be honorable and conscientious, must have good financial judgment. He should be able to speak well, to sing well. He should be thoroughly educated. He should have a good personality, be of a cheerful and happy disposition. He must be physically fit in every respect. He should be free from "hobbyisms." Some people think that if a man cannot do much at home in the way of preaching, etc., he might be able to do a good work among the heathen! There was never a greater mistake made! We need high-grade and able workers for the foreign fields, and it is not fair to anybody involved to send inferior workers!<sup>50</sup>

Vincent's lecture anticipated virtually all qualifications suggested by subsequent speakers. The next to introduce the subject was C. J. Robinson in 1922. He added a special acquaintance with the Bible and with "the needs of the people

to whom we go," as important facets of the missionary's preparation, and stressed that "the character of life that the missionary lives has much to do with the effect of the message that he brings."<sup>51</sup>

The 1937 program on evangelism yielded more qualifications than all other series combined. J. Dow Merritt contributed these to the list: "A missionary to Africa must be a converted man, must have a message, must be willing to go. He ought to be not over thirty, a practical man, patient, apt to teach, honest, apt to learn the language, and, let me add, not a user of tobacco." George S. Benson added that workers in the Orient should possess physical strength, ability to adjust, courage, and a knowledge of the language, the country, and its history. To these he attached "a deep concern for the salvation of souls," and "the ability to rely upon God in difficult and trying times," as the two most basic qualities.<sup>52</sup>

James F. Cox described the missionary as one who is well acquainted with the Bible to be taught, the methods of teaching, and the students who are to learn. R. C. Bell's 1937 lecture, "Motives for Missionaries," urged foreign workers to follow Paul who was "jealous of God's rights and interests with a selfish, holy jealousy; he was truly an understanding, sympathetic lover of men."<sup>53</sup>

Closely related to qualifications was discussion of the duration of a worker's service in the field. The recommended length of stay ranged from three months to lifelong service, depending upon such variables as health, conditions of the field, and the nature of the program of evangelism. A few speakers were convinced that effective missionary service could be rendered in a brief length of time. T. H. Tarbet of Australia suggested that men of high qualifications might make a valuable contribution through an evangelistic campaign or temporary mission tour. He reasoned:

Let me say, even if a brother is not able to spend a long period in that country, he is still needed. If a

man of ability can only go for six months or for three months, it would be wise judgment to send him. It might not be wise to move his family there and back; but let him fly over for that period, and fly him back home. Remember the good that Paul did in the places where he was only able to stay a short time.<sup>54</sup>

Gatewood was among those recommending an abbreviated period of foreign service. He recalled his experiences in Germany:

When we first went to Germany, most of us agreed that we would stay there five years before returning to America, but we have learned by experience that this is too long. During this period of time, a person loses contact with the brotherhood. The brethren here in America forget him, and the person gets greatly discouraged and often times his health is impaired by staying in a climate to which he is not accustomed for such a long period of time. A person need not, therefore, think that he is under obligation to spend the rest of his life away from America if he goes to a foreign land to preach.<sup>55</sup>

A majority of the speakers, however, encouraged missionaries to dedicate their entire lives to the work, and named brief tours of duty as a weakness of the evangelistic program. Reuel Lemmons cast his influence for the concept of lifelong missionary service:

The more I have to do with work in new fields, the more I am convinced that churches are not built by people who do not live there. We make the mistake of sending a preacher into a new community and expect him to do in two or three years what several hundred of us put together have not done in many years down here in Texas—we expect him to create a self-supporting congregation. Usually the preacher is considered transient by the community the entire length of his stay there. It seems to me that the people who build churches are the people who move into new fields and fix the towns-people's shoes and sell them groceries. If I were to point out what I consid-

ered the key to successful work, that would be it. Transient people seldom produce lasting work, though naturally there are exceptions.<sup>56</sup>

In 1951, J. W. Treat specifically described "the ever-shifting personnel" as the major deterrent to the establishment of a permanent church in the Panama Canal Zone. At the 1958 Lectureship, veteran missionary J. Dow Merritt eulogized the evangelistic influence of John Sherrif who spent his life in Africa working as a stone mason. "There is the pattern," contended Merritt. "I have been with the work in Northern Rhodesia since 1926 . . . I believe a missionary should go for life. It is a true principle. Professional men make their work their life's work or they fail." In tones reminiscent of Merritt's plea for African workers, Charles McPhee traveled to Abilene from Canada urging "well-qualified preachers and teachers to move into strategic points, and there love and preach the gospel. The work cannot be done in a few months. It is a lifetime job. The ground has to be plowed, harrowed and sown, before a harvest can be gathered."<sup>57</sup>

### *The Indigenous Method*

Missionaries were sent forth to establish Christ's church as a permanent expression of their message and as the visible organ and instrument of its transmission. Difficulty was often confronted, however, in the attempt to transplant the fixed habits and finished structure of an American church in the unpredictable soil of new racial conditions and divergent customs of thought and life. The Abilene audience was occasionally reminded that their task was to Christianize, not Americanize, the world. In his 1951 lecture, J. W. Treat brought the issue into sharp focus. Early in the message he declared:

In no wise would I imply that only where some English-speaking preacher (or one thoroughly indoctrinated by such) has gone is there a church. Whenever the seed of the Kingdom has produced its fruit, there the church is. I cry out against the idea, in whatever quar-

ters it may be found, that Christianity must wear a U. S. or Yankee brand: three songs, a reading and prayer, another song and a sermon; anti-this and anti-that. We are to preach Christ and not the American way of life.<sup>58</sup>

Englishman Leonard Channing requested in 1950 that cultural differences between Abilene and London be respected. He specifically mentioned the English congregations' practice of closed communion and their emphasis upon mutual ministry as the two major points of difference between British and American brethren. He added another interesting point:

Another thing, brethren, and I would pray that you would use every influence that you can to check this in Britain, that the British churches and the British faith is rapidly becoming the dumping ground—and I am going to be colloquial in this—rapidly becoming the dumping ground for the literature of every hobbyist in America. Unfortunately, probably those brethren in America have been well summed up and their field is limited here, and therefore for that reason, they will go over and place their perverse doctrines in Britain. Undoubtedly, this has led to further misunderstanding. The British brethren turn up some gospel paper, which is indeed extreme, and look at it and say, "Look, the American brethren for you."<sup>59</sup>

From the days of William Carey, it has been granted that the churches born on mission fields must be freed as quickly as possible from the jurisdiction of the mother church. The Abilene men agreed with this concept and called it the *indigenous method*. They strongly favored native control, and where possible even native finance, of the mission effort. They opposed trends toward interminable domination and subsidy by American congregations. They did not, however, mean by "indigenous" a license for any doctrinal variations to harmonize with peculiar cultural patterns around the world. The birth of the one unchanging church was their prime missionary aim. "This is where the greatest resistance can be encoun-



tered throughout the Far East," warned Harry Robert Fox, Jr., "for the Oriental spirit finds it impossible to accept the idea of churches. Over and over again the cry goes up, 'Give us Christ but not the church!'"<sup>60</sup> But missionaries at Abilene were prepared to answer, "Without His church, we cannot give you Christ!"

F. B. Shepherd was actually the earliest speaker to tell the brotherhood of the advantages of the indigenous method. "Are we in this country," he asked in 1919, "to carry one, two or a dozen native congregations indefinitely? Is it possible that they will never become self-supporting? . . . the best way to assist . . . is to teach and encourage them to help themselves . . . ." Eventually lecturers came to regard the indigenous method as the only scriptural approach to missionary work. In 1953, Mack Kercheville tied it to the principle of local congregational autonomy saying, "it is not our purpose to establish 'missions,' but autonomous, independent churches which will stand on their own feet and do their own work." He added: "I assure you, my brethren, that all the peoples of the world we can reach with the gospel will have enough sense to do any and every work God assigns them. We don't need to make any improvements on the Lord's plan at all."<sup>61</sup>

Reflecting upon the failure of other methods in Africa, Wendell Broom endorsed the indigenous approach:

In Nigeria, several denominational missions have chosen the quickest way. They have imported equipment, institutions, European workers, European funds—all alien factors to the Nigerian people, and they have made a good showing—hospitals, schools, clinics—but all supported from outside the country and attached to the people. Should the political picture change and these foreign workers and factors be excluded, it is very doubtful that this work could survive . . . . This is what happened in China—the generations of mission work there were external and alien in nature, not partaking of the elements of the native population. Out of this grew resentments and shallowness which made a natural invitation for the

Communistic infiltration which was a "people's movement." . . . In Nigeria, the workers envision instead a Nigerian work among Nigerian churches, manned by Nigerians, governed by Nigerian elders, supported by Nigerian brethren, spreading by its own regenerative power, receiving its spiritual strength from God directly, without the necessity of American missionaries to mediate God's grace to the people.<sup>62</sup>

In 1960, Rees Bryant, another Nigerian worker, echoed Broom's sentiments:

It isn't our purpose in Nigeria to develop "missions" dependent forever on American preachers, support, and leadership; but, rather, we want to develop independent churches, capable of self-government, self-support, self-perpetuation, and self-discipline. To this end, we encourage them to settle their own problems, and to develop men within each church qualified for the oversight. We encourage them to support their own preachers and to send such evangelists out to establish other churches.<sup>63</sup>

George S. Benson's experience as a missionary to China made him one of the most ardent advocates of the indigenous method. He vigorously criticized the customary practice of paying native preachers and constructing buildings with American money. "We have on foreign shores today some congregations where American money constructed the building and where for ten years American dollars have paid the foreign leader and where there has been little growth in these ten years and where the same amount of help is needed now as was needed ten years ago." Charging that this approach "makes it practically impossible to develop real churches," Benson appealed to Paul's evangelistic methods:

Paul didn't buy any land for the local churches in the different cities, and he didn't become a superintendent of real estate. Likewise, Paul did not hire native preachers in these different cities and pay them on foreign salaries. These two things that Paul did not do are the things that current missionaries

nearly always do, and the things that appear to create the greatest obstacles to the actual development of indigenous churches and the long-range progress of the gospel.<sup>64</sup>

### *The Training of Native Preachers*

The lecturers believed that a trained native leadership was preliminary to the creation of an indigenous church. Scores of missionaries testified that a well trained native evangelist could accomplish more among his own people than a foreign American worker. "Native preachers do not just happen," Reiner Kallus reminded his 1960 audience, "but it takes a systematic method in organized planning to find and train them."<sup>65</sup> Three means of training native evangelists emerged from the Lectureship messages: they could be transported to American schools, trained in mission Bible schools, or educated in a liberal arts college established on the mission field.

"I have always held the position," declared F. L. Rowe in 1936, "that the greatest way to do mission work is to bring the foreigners here and educate them and send them back to their own people."<sup>66</sup> While only a handful of speakers shared Rowe's admitted enthusiasm for this method of preacher education, many others practiced it. John T. Hardin, a missionary to South Africa, said in 1954: "... we now have five young men in this country studying to better equip themselves to preach."<sup>67</sup> F. T. Hamilton, a missionary to the Philippines observed:

Another vital need is professional training in the states for some young Filipino Christians. If these young men could come here and study agriculture, medicine, and other vocations in schools like ACC, where they could get further study in the Bible at the same time, then they could return to the Islands and support themselves while preaching the gospel.<sup>68</sup>

Some, however, strongly opposed the practice of sending native preachers to American schools for training. "I can train

fifteen boys at Ibaraki Christian College," maintained Logan J. Fox, "for the cost of bringing one to this country for training." Fox added a second practical objection to this method:

Furthermore, after all this money has been spent on one person, we have no way of knowing how it will turn out. In some cases, the student who comes over likes America mighty well and has no desire to return to his country. Or, if he does return, his own people may not accept him, because he is "different." The Japanese say he is "bata kusai," which means he smells like butter . . . . Many great changes take place in people between the ages of eighteen and thirty, and it is simply a fact that none of us can say with much certainty what a young person will be four years later.<sup>69</sup>

A more popular plan was the establishment of a Bible school on the mission field. Guy Caskey's description of the African program was duplicated on many other missionary fronts:

The role of the white gospel preacher in Africa is to make this goal live in the hearts of a few hundred natives, who, in turn, can reach a few thousand and so on until salvation's ringing message has resounded in the last dark corner. We know it would be impossible for a few white men to reach two hundred million people who speak hundreds of languages and dialects and whose customs and ways of life are so different from our own. If we ever save Africa, we must train the African in Bible schools to teach his own people.<sup>70</sup>

At the 1961 Lectureship, J. W. Nicks reported that a total of two hundred and fifty preachers had been graduated from two Nigerian schools. Thirty-eight continued to preach after finishing school, with thirty of them performing what Nicks termed "good work." Seven of the graduates had completely left the church.<sup>71</sup>

A vivid example of the effectiveness of these Nigerian Bible schools was seen in the life and work of C. A. O. Essien.

A professional policeman of the Efik tribe, Essien was first a student in a denominational mission school. After being converted to Christ through a correspondence course sent out from the Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ in Nashville, Essien was trained in the school conducted by missionaries from churches of Christ. He became a dynamic leader among the indigenous congregations of Nigeria. His unique leadership qualities, coupled with his zeal for the New Testament cause, set in motion an amazing movement reminiscent of the early Restoration movement in America. Eldred Echols in 1949 and 1952, Leonard Mullens in 1951, Leonard M. Gray in 1953, Guy V. Caskey in 1955, Howard Horton in 1956, Tommy Kelton in 1957, Wendell Broom in 1958, Rees Bryant in 1960 and J. W. Nicks in 1961 were among the Abilene speakers who said the Nigerian work was like a "legend from a book of fairy tales." Broom's report typified the tone of the testimony about Essien and the work of the Bible schools:

Within two years he and his co-workers had established about 20 congregations. In answer to their pleas for American workers to assist them, Boyd Reese and Eldred Echols came in 1950 and spent a short time teaching and training them. In 1952, Howard Horton and Jimmie Johnson arrived to spend two years working with them. In the five following years other workers came and went. Presently their work stands in this condition: in a radius of fifty miles there are over 250 congregations. Monthly we see reports of baptisms numbering anywhere from 100 to 400 souls . . . .<sup>72</sup>

Missionaries from other fields, however, found the strictly Bible school an ineffective method of training native evangelists. Logan Fox termed the strictly Bible school "woefully wanting as a method." He reasoned that such tuition-free Bible programs tend to draw the incapable and irresponsible, while more superior students are attracted to accredited academic institutions. Fox was president of such an institution in Japan, Ibaraki Christian College. He favored, then, neither bringing students to America nor establishing strictly Bible schools, but described the third alternative:

It seems much better to teach Bible to many boys and girls as they pursue regular courses of study, and let preachers emerge from this large process . . . can mature, balanced preachers be mass-produced, ground out of a two year Bible course. In America we know the answer to that question . . . Would it be sufficient in America to take junior and senior high school graduates and put them through a special two year Bible course, then turn them out to preach for the churches?<sup>73</sup>

Fox emphasized that "if Japanese people are to be reached with the gospel, Japanese preachers must do the job. But this leaves us with the problem, 'How can we train capable Japanese preachers of the gospel?' " He answered his question by urging the establishment and maintenance of fully-accredited Christian colleges on mission fields:

We can best train preachers when men who have dedicated their lives to evangelism attempt to provide a program of well-balanced, Christian education for as many qualified boys and girls as possible. A school of this kind acts as a giant net thrown out into life, and from among those brought in each year, there will always be a goodly number who will go on to make qualified elders, preachers and teachers in the various congregations of the Church. Such a school will attract the highest quality of young people, and it provides a wonderful sifting process in which the real character of boys and girls is both formed and revealed.<sup>74</sup>

Gottfried Reichel concurred with Fox's rationale for a liberal arts mission college. Stressing the need for well-educated church leaders in Germany, he said that if "they are able not only to reach the average people, but also the intellectuals, the growth of the cause will be faster. At least, this is the principle which German history has taught about many new movements."<sup>75</sup>

### *Every Member A Missionary*

The Great Commission was given to persons. It is an exceedingly personal command. Exclaiming that no man can

"preach the gospel with his purse," Reuel Lemmons said: "You cannot pay me to do your gospel preaching for you. There is no possible way for you to shirk your individual responsibility as a proclaimer of the gospel."<sup>76</sup>

While the lecturers believed, therefore, that only specially qualified persons should give themselves to full-time foreign missionary service, they held that every redeemed person had been commissioned to share his Redeemer with others. From the very first, Abilene speakers charged that Christ's commission was as yet unfulfilled because many disciples had failed to regard it as a personal responsibility.

In 1919, A. R. Holton attacked the notion that, "outside of public worship and benevolence church members have no sphere of activity."<sup>77</sup> As early as 1923, F. B. Shepherd spoke of personal teaching as "The Vital Factor." Of the various methods of evangelism, he termed "personal witnesses to kindred and friends, the most difficult yet the most fruitful," and recommended the motto of his contemporary, Billy Sunday: "Make a definite effort, to persuade a definite person, to accept a definite Christ at a definite time, and that time is now."<sup>78</sup> In 1937, E. C. Coffman attacked the tendency of the church to regard its full-time preachers and missionaries as the "hired professionals" to whom the work of evangelism had been committed:

No wholesale house could ever be run on such a program, and no more can the church of the living God! Suppose it should be considered the duty of the sales manager, in harmony with that program, to go out and do all of the selling, with a little help, perhaps, from a few officers of the company or members of the firm, while the salesmen support him by their encouragement and their faithful attendance on his weekly lectures on the quality and value of their goods. And suppose the salesmen simply go out into the territory through the week to try to persuade a few prospective customers to come to those weekly lectures in the hope that they will decide to buy, while they themselves make little or no attempt to

sell any goods, but simply seek to interest possible customers in the fine lectures of the sales manager. How long do you think that house would last? Just about long enough to exhaust the capital!<sup>79</sup>

In 1941, Byron Fullerton continued Coffman's rationale: "The use of personal evangelism is one that we have allowed the sects to take away from us entirely too long. God did not intend that the generals and commissioned officers in his army should be the only ones to do the fighting. He intended that his whole army should carry on the fight."<sup>80</sup>

As personal evangelism came into its own as a teaching method—both at home and abroad—L. L. Geiger discussed in 1952 the physical, mental, and spiritual qualifications of the personal worker. In 1956 Paul Southern lectured on "Teaching Through Personal Counselling," contending that the method should "rank high in a preacher's responsibilities because his chief business is with persons." A. J. Kerr discussed in 1959 a relatively new, highly successful method, "The Cottage Meeting." Alvin Jennings underscored the same point the same year and discounted "the impression that the way to convert the lost is not to seek them out, but to rent a hall, put an announcement in the newspaper, and wait for the lost to flock to the place of assembly." "You do not convert these people by inviting them to the services and preaching the gospel to them," added Dan F. Fogarty, "but by means of personal work."<sup>81</sup> Leroy Brownlow was even more forceful in his argument for the indispensability of personal work:

There was a time in which we could announce a gospel meeting or preaching on the Lord's day, and crowds would gather in to hear. Many came because they had no other place to go. That day is gone and gone forever! There is everything else in the world to attract them now. If we preach to them in this age, we must "go" with the gospel. Many of our gospel meetings in empty church buildings are producing little more than a holy echo! Why? Because in such instances very little individual soul-winning on the part of the church is done.<sup>82</sup>



The theme of personal evangelism logically led to an increased awareness of missionary opportunities in communities and states of America. In 1958, Otis Gatewood spoke of "Mission Challenges Not Yet Met." He said: "There are six times as many places in the U. S. where there are no churches of Christ as there are where there are congregations. So if you have the conception that a preacher must cross the ocean in order to get to the mission field, you are mistaken."<sup>83</sup> Burton Coffman spoke of unique mission opportunities in America's largest city:

Does it make any sense at all, let me ask you, to build church buildings in Monterey, Tokyo, Frankfurt, and so forth, and not build one in the world's first and greatest city, which happens to be our own? . . . Churches of Christ have never built a church house on Manhattan Island, the capital of the United Nations, permanent home of two million people, and the economic heart of the New World! It just doesn't make sense that it has been so long neglected.<sup>84</sup>

By following the chronological unfolding of the missionary speeches, one can note the intriguing, expanding circle of concern among churches of Christ. Starting in 1919, Dr. Klingman's challenge was designed to stir his audience to begin at Abilene and take the gospel throughout all of Texas. He emphasized the fortunate location of Abilene for the accomplishment of this task:

. . . Abilene is the gate-way North and South, East and West, for a large territory. On account of recent developments in oil and other industries, the eyes of the country are turned toward Abilene. This is a great country and no one is able to forecast the extent of its awakening and development . . . We have the same message, the same advantages of situation, and with the same spirit of devotion and love of human souls, Abilene will become an Ephesus—a "great door and effectual."<sup>85</sup>

The statewide scope of mission activity in 1919 was reflected in Klingman's concluding hope that Texas might one

day enjoy "regular preaching, if only once a month, in every community where there is a congregation." "Home Missionary Work," was the title of C. A. Buchanan's 1926 lecture which reviewed the work in Johnson County, Texas, and reiterated Klingman's appeal: "It is better to furnish every mission with preaching at least one Sunday in the month and a regular mid-week service, either a Bible class, a prayer meeting, or a sermon."<sup>86</sup>

As the years passed, the scope of missionary concern graduated from Taylor County into Texas, throughout the entire United States, and eventually around the world. With an ever-increasing crescendo, the programs were annually embellished with first-hand reports from fields near and far. These challenging and adventure-packed accounts from Tanganyika to Saskatchewan provided still another means of creating the evangelistic spirit.

More than one hundred lectures were designed to announce the progress or describe the possibilities of specific mission fields. A chronological alignment of these speeches provides within itself a dramatic example of the post-World War II missionary boom in the brotherhood. Only five of them were delivered in the twenty-eight year period prior to 1946: C. G. Vincent told of the work in Japan in 1925; W. N. Short spoke of African missions in 1929; in 1937, John Wolfe and George S. Benson discussed missionary progress in the Orient, the Near East, and Latin America; and in 1940, Colin Smith traveled to Abilene to tell of possibilities for evangelizing Australia.

By way of contrast, an avalanche of speechmaking about specific fields was delivered between 1946 and 1965. Of this number, a total of nineteen concerned Oriental fields, with particular stress upon the work in Japan. Running a close second were seventeen addresses dealing with Africa, especially the Nigerian field. Fourteen lecturers discussed the work in Germany and Europe, twelve were devoted to Mexico and the Latin American countries, and ten concerned the progress of

missionary efforts in Italy. The remaining speeches were scattered from west Texas to Soviet Russia.

Thus the circle of concern which sprang from the early seeds sown in Taylor County, Texas, soon spread around the globe. "We alone are the society of the concerned and already we have lived too long in the lee of the wind," hearers were constantly reminded. "It is time for us to lay down our lotus blossom and pick up the cross if it is to be the whole gospel to the whole world by the whole church."<sup>87</sup> Men spoke in the confident assurance that seeds in the February planting would bear fruit around the world—and in the endless world to come. And other men listened in the conviction that God himself was somehow extraordinarily interested in the outcome of the west Texas proceedings.

The missionary movement among churches of Christ in this century cannot be understood apart from the impact of the Abilene Christian College Lectureship. The event served annually to remind the church that its mission in the world was inherently evangelistic. The advance from a disheartened handful of missionaries in 1900 to more than 250 families on foreign soil in 1965 is, more than to any other human agent, directly attributable to the evangelistic mood of a half-century of addresses in Abilene—addresses which served notice to the movement that the fate of all mankind was hinged upon its response to the Great Commission. "Do we stand tonight on the brink of World War III with its devastation," asked Willard Collins in 1953, "or a period of great growth for the Church? I like to think that those in this room can help frame the answer."<sup>88</sup> And those in the room thought that he was right.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Guy Caskey, "The More Abundant Life Is One That Goes and Teaches," *Lectures*, 1961, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup>*The Foreign Missionary: An Incarnation of a World Movement* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1907), pp. 14-15.

<sup>3</sup>William Ernest Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1932), p. 40.

<sup>4</sup>J. Wesley Robb, "Hendrik Kraemer versus William Ernest Hocking," *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, XXIX (April, 1961), p. 93.

<sup>5</sup>Cline R. Paden, "The Church in Italy," *Lectures*, 1954, pp. 131-132.

<sup>6</sup>Don Finto, "The Church in Germany," *Lectures*, 1957, p. 211.

<sup>7</sup>Don Gardner, "Methods for Missions," *Lectures*, 1959, pp. 169-170.

<sup>8</sup>Leon C. Burns, "Except They Be Sent," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 147.

<sup>9</sup>Hocking, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>10</sup>*Living Religions and a World Faith* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1940), pp. 172-173.

This charge made by William Ernest Hocking in *The Coming World Civilization* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 80. For an interesting contrast in attitudes toward other religions see Robb's "Hendrik Kraemer versus William Ernest Hocking." Kraemer, a Continental theologian assumes a stance regarding the "exclusiveness of Christianity" which lends support to the position of churches of Christ. One of his important works is *Religion and the Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956). He asserts that "Jesus Christ alone is truth," p. 322, and "the least surrender on this point means in principle the total surrender of the whole Biblical truth." p. 373.

<sup>12</sup>*Lectures*, 1919, p. 176. Churches of Christ shared this point of view with a host of other conservative communions. Such works as William Owen Carver, *Missions in the Plan of the Ages* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1909); Stephen J. Corey, *The Preacher and the Missionary Message* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1931); J. O. Dobson, *Why Christian Missions?* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1930); W. D. Shaw (ed.), *Missionary Motivation* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1931); and H. E. Wark, *New Era in Missions* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1929) reflect the evangelistic attitude embodied in the Abilene lectures.

<sup>13</sup>"The African Field," *Lectures*, 1955, p. 165.

<sup>14</sup>*Lectures*, 1924-1925, pp. 144-145.

<sup>15</sup>"Workable Plans," *Lectures*, 1937, p. 61.

<sup>16</sup>"They All with One Consent Began to Make Excuse," *Lectures*, 1937, pp. 47-48.

<sup>17</sup>"The Perfected Church—For What Purpose," *Lectures*, 1937, p. 7. Roberson's lecture was, *Lectures*, 1946. He said "there are 300,000 Sulu Moros in the Philippines who have only one Gospel; likewise, 280,000 Quiche Indians in Guatemala; 295,000 Dioula on the Ivory Coast. There are only two Gospels for 1,300,000 Shilluk in the Sudan; for 1,800,000 Balinese in the Dutch East Indies." p. 77.

<sup>18</sup>"World Vision for Christ," *Lectures*, 1961, p. 192.

<sup>19</sup>*Lectures*, 1959, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup>"The Church of Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, pp. 260, 262.

<sup>21</sup>These two references, "In All Judea and Samaria," *Lectures*, 1928, p. 212, and "The Church in Spreading the Gospel," *Lectures*, 1935.

<sup>22</sup>*Lectures*, 1953, p. 249. Although Guild's speech was given in 1952, it was inadvertently omitted from the published volume of that year and not printed until 1953. Personal letter from Don H. Morris to Guild, May 4, 1952.

<sup>23</sup>The three quotations in this paragraph from Caskey, "The African Field," p. 165, Bailey, "World Vision for Christ," p. 188, and Southern, "They All with One Consent Began to Make Excuse," p. 47.

<sup>24</sup>See Shepherd, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-177, and Caskey, "The More Abundant Life Is One That Goes and Teaches," p. 173.

<sup>25</sup>"Beyond the Western Hemisphere," *Lectures*, 1946, p. 196.

<sup>26</sup>"World Evangelism," *Lectures*, 1920-1921, p. 154.

<sup>27</sup>"Their Sound Went Out into All the Earth," *Lectures*, 1954, pp. 160-161.

<sup>28</sup>"The Challenge of the Northeast," *Lectures*, 1955, p. 186.

<sup>29</sup>"Mission Challenges Not Yet Met," *Lectures*, 1958, p. 163.

<sup>30</sup>Burns, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-144.

<sup>31</sup>*Lectures*, 1921-1922, p. 118.

<sup>32</sup>Benson, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>33</sup>"The Work at Ibaraki," *Lectures*, 1956, p. 286.

<sup>34</sup>"The Work of the Church in Japan," *Lectures*, 1951, p. 86.

<sup>35</sup>"The Work in Nigeria," *Lectures*, 1956, p. 267.

<sup>36</sup>"The Work of the Church in Africa," *Lectures*, 1951, p. 134.

<sup>37</sup>Finto, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

<sup>38</sup>Gatewood, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>39</sup>The three references in this paragraph are from "Germany," *Lectures*, 1954, pp. 217-218, "Missionaries on their Own," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 294, and "White Unto Harvest," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 51.

<sup>40</sup>"Teaching the Word of God in Korea," *Lectures*, 1960, p. 265.

<sup>41</sup>"The Church in Italy," *Lectures*, 1950, p. 240.

<sup>42</sup>"The Church at Work in Italy," *Lectures*, 1953, p. 32.

<sup>43</sup>"How They Went in the First Century," *Lectures*, 1937, p. 10-11.

<sup>44</sup>Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

<sup>45</sup>"American Missions," *Lectures*, 1954, p. 235.

<sup>46</sup>"Preparing the Missionary," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 132.

<sup>47</sup>"The Work of the Church in Japan," *Lectures*, 1952, p. 271.

<sup>48</sup>Pack, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>49</sup>Burns, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

<sup>50</sup>Vincent, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-159.

<sup>51</sup>Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 84. "When a gospel preacher goes to a place to do missionary work," said Robinson, "he should be a man with a good report from the church which sends him; if he does not keep himself unspotted from the world, the effect of his message will not do the good that it will when the world cannot class him as an evil-doer . . . ."

<sup>52</sup>Notes in this paragraph from, Merritt, "Characteristics of the Workers," *Lectures*, 1937, p. 76, and Benson, "Qualifications of Workers and Methods of Work in Oriental Fields," *Lectures*, 1937, p. 88.

<sup>53</sup>Notes in this paragraph from, Cox, "A Message for the Workers," *Lectures*, 1937, p. 94, and Bell, "Training the Workers," *Lectures*, 1937, p. 79. The 1937 program which was a real milestone in missionary progress among churches of Christ, was planned by two Abilene faculty members, H. L. Schug and R. B. Sweet.

<sup>54</sup>"Christ in Australia," *Lectures*, 1961, p. 286.

<sup>55</sup>"The Work in Germany and Europe," *Lectures*, 1955, p. 153.

<sup>56</sup>"The Work in New Fields," *Lectures*, 1946, pp. 129-130.

<sup>57</sup>Quotations in this paragraph from Treat, "The Latin American Field," *Lectures*, 1951, p. 138, Merritt, "The Church in Africa," *Lectures*, 1958, pp. 266-267, and McPhee, "Canada, the Land of Opportunity," *Lectures*, 1953, p. 66.

<sup>58</sup>Treat, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

<sup>59</sup>"The Church in England," *Lectures*, 1950, pp. 201-202.

<sup>60</sup>"The Work of the Church in Japan," p. 87.

Notes in this paragraph from Shepherd, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-179, and Kercheville, "The Work Among the Latin Americans," *Lectures*, 1953, p. 47.

<sup>62</sup>"The Church in Nigeria," *Lectures*, 1958, p. 257.

<sup>63</sup>"The Work in Nigeria," *Lectures*, 1960, p. 325.

- <sup>64</sup>"The Well-Adjusted Missionary," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 230.
- <sup>65</sup>"The Training of Evangelists in Foreign Fields," *Lectures*, 1960, p. 333.
- <sup>66</sup>"The Bible Must Be Taught to Those in Regions Beyond," *Lectures*, 1936, p. 100.
- <sup>67</sup>"The Union of South Africa," *Lectures*, 1954, p. 187.
- <sup>68</sup>"Opportunities in the Philippines," *Lectures*, 1957, p. 172.
- <sup>69</sup>"Training Gospel Preachers for Japan," *Lectures*, 1957, pp. 172-173.
- <sup>70</sup>Caskey, "The African Field," p. 170.
- <sup>71</sup>"Nigeria for Christ," *Lectures*, 1961, p. 257.
- <sup>72</sup>Broom, *op. cit.*, pp. 255-256.
- <sup>73</sup>Fox, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-175.
- <sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>75</sup>"The Church at Work in Germany," *Lectures*, 1953, p. 166.
- <sup>76</sup>"Evangelism," *Lectures*, 1951, p. 23.
- <sup>77</sup>"The World as the Subject of Redemption," *Lectures*, 1919, p. 58.
- <sup>78</sup>"A Vital Factor," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, pp. 290, 292.
- <sup>79</sup>"The Responsibility of the Local Congregation in Preaching the Gospel," *Lectures*, 1937, p. 39.
- <sup>80</sup>"Every Christian Citizen a Teacher," *Lectures*, 1941, p. 146.
- <sup>81</sup>Notes for this paragraph are, Geiger, "Personal Evangelism," *Lectures*, 1952, p. 244, Southern, "Teaching Through Personal Counselling," *Lectures*, 1956, p. 63, Jennings, "Personal Work," *Lectures*, 1959, pp. 265-266, and Forgarty, "Opportunities in New Fields," *Lectures*, 1953, pp. 136-137.
- <sup>82</sup>"Go . . . Teach," *Lectures*, 1956, pp. 209-210.
- <sup>83</sup>Gatewood. *op. cit.*, pp. 163-164.
- <sup>84</sup>"The Work in the Northeast," *Lectures*, 1956, p. 300.
- <sup>85</sup>"A Great Door is Opened," *Lectures*, 1919, p. 16.
- <sup>86</sup>"Home Missionary Work," *Lectures*, 1926-1927, p. 206.
- <sup>87</sup>Pat Harrell, "The Expansion of Christianity," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 212.
- "Examples of Working Churches I Have Known," *Lectures*, 1953, pp. 160-161.





PART III

THE MEANING

OF THE LECTURESHIP

*There is nothing more powerful  
than an idea whose time has come.*

—Victor Hugo



# 12

## Evangelism and the Cooperation Controversy

Progress always has its price—especially spiritual progress. When men get excited about God, it alarms and brings into full ferocity the “prince and god of this world.” Hence, the ascending spirit of world evangelism among churches of Christ threw into the very teeth of the “roaring lion” his greatest contemporary dare. The challenge evoked an open, fierce confrontation. And as a tribute to Satan’s deceit and tenacity, churches of Christ were to suffer, over issues growing from evangelistic means and methods, their most severe schism of the century.

As the Abilene lecturers spread the fever of world evangelism, the quickened concern for souls exacted its expected, unavoidable price—in surrender, sacrifice, and slow sweaty work. But Satan’s panic-prompted reaction collected another kind of toll. “More subtle than any beast of the field,” the Serpent will never be driven to the dust on his belly without taking a host of deluded with him “east of the garden of Eden.” He does not capitulate as easily as we suppose. How simply we submit to the sifting when we ignore his presence

and underrate the wrath of his jealousy. He will brook no rival—not even God. Long ago he chose to leave heaven and live in hell rather than to be second-in-line behind anyone—even God.

Satan has weapons much more sophisticated and potent than a proverbial pitchfork. When the sleeping conscience of the giant of Zion was aroused at Abilene, and when it began to see with great grief and renewed determination its awesome, unfinished purpose on earth, Satan's memory was pricked. He had known only once before such a potential threat to his world sovereignty. To one who has been here before time was, 1900 years is not long. His memories were fresh and frightening. What if the massive modern church actually were to restore its apostolic urgency and action? Too much was at stake to take any risks. Every force of hell was focused on the project. From the arch-deceiver himself came the orders: the personal concern must be cut, the evangelistic urgency crippled at any cost. And to the lieutenants along the front line was passed word of the time-proven battle strategy—"divide and conquer!"

### *The Sins of Organization*

Visionary leaders in the missionary awakening among churches of Christ very early knew that if the reviving blood of concern were to supply permanent life to the body, it would have to be channeled into arteries and veins of system and structure. But at this point, in the realm of things practical, those leaders encountered a very real dilemma. Opposition to the unauthorized ecclesiasticisms of denominationalism, compounded by the ugly scars of the missionary society excision within their own movement, had left most of the brethren deeply suspicious of any elaborate or highly organized activity or program. In his encyclopedic work, *Religious Bodies in America*, E. F. Mayer described the movement as "the most extreme form of congregationalism among churches."<sup>1</sup>

In the reaction against organizational sins, churches of Christ had come by 1930 to approve—by their practice if not by their theory—only such exercises as could be motivated and managed in connection with the meeting of a congregation for public worship services. As a result, the work program of the church was often reduced to such thrust as could be tidily contained within the four walls of a church building. And church members themselves frequently found their roles in the *remnant* idea of Judaism rather than the *leaven* principle incumbent in the covenant with Christ.

The foremost American historian of the expansion of Christianity, Kenneth Scott Latourette, has concluded that the explanation for the protestant evangelistic advances of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries could best be found in the rise of missionary organizations. Large-scale protestant missionary activity is popularly dated from British shoemaker William Carey's 1792 publication, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. Carey's phrase, "to use means," revealed more than his doctrinal opposition to the theory of predestination. It also suggested his conviction that organized action was vitally needed in the approach to foreign mission work. As a result of Carey's *Enquiry*, and similar subsequent efforts, an organization later called the Baptist Missionary Society was formed in 1793. Within fifty years, every major denomination in America and on the European continent had developed its own missionary organization.<sup>2</sup> Latourette summarized this phenomenal awakening of missionary spirit and societies: "Never had any other set of ideas, religious or secular, been propagated over so wide an area by so many progressional agents maintained by the unconstrained donations of so many millions of individuals . . . . For sheer magnitude it has been without parallel in human history."<sup>3</sup>

Missionary societies did not rise, however, without considerable opposition from the conservative elements within protestantism. When William Carey first made his proposal for a mission organization, the president of a Baptist confer-

ence reported that when it pleased God to convert the heathen he would do it without Carey's help.<sup>4</sup> By 1840, opposition to the society movement had grown especially intense among the more conservative proponents of the American restoration plea. Although later to share the battlefield with its counterpart, the instrumental music question, the missionary society issue was the first major crisis to disturb the progress and mar the appeal of the disciples' unity theme.

The first attempt at organized missionary effort among the disciples came with the 1849 formation of the American Missionary Society. Its activities were so slight, however, that Garrison termed the experiment more of "an embarrassment to its friends than an excitement to its enemies."<sup>5</sup> Following the Civil War, however, Isaac Errett, editor of the influential *Christian Standard*, revived the issue and became the champion of the missionary society movement among the disciples. In 1875 he became president of the Foreign Christian Missionary Society. By the time of his death in 1888, the lines for the major split within the restoration ranks had crystallized.

As co-editors of the *Gospel Advocate*, Tolbert Fanning and David Lipscomb led in the opinion that the society was an unscriptural type of sending agency. It sought to do the right work, they charged, but in the wrong way. The conservatives categorically rejected the society as a doctrinal assault on the autonomy of the local congregation. As an institution separate and apart from the church, it was also accused of pre-empting the evangelistic burden for which the church was divinely prepared. Moreover, as an ecclesiastical composition of many churches, it was charged with usurping the independent self-rule of local congregations.

Sharp tremors from the divisive society debates were still being felt when the subject of evangelism was opened in the earliest Abilene lectures. The lecturers believed that the local congregation must be its own missionary society, as Burton Coffman put it, "the indispensable unit in effective mission work." F. B. Shepherd spoke of the issues as early as 1919:

“Undoubtedly, the local congregation is the one God-ordained missionary society to send evangelists into all parts of the earth preaching the Gospel to every creature.” The following year, M. C. Kurfees added that “while the specific method of operation is not given in the New Testament, yet the one unvarying organization in direct control of the work was the local church through its divinely appointed board of overseers or managers.” And in 1919, C. G. Vincent continued the rationale: “The divine organization for evangelism is simple but effective. So simple that some fail to discover it. The Church itself is the organization to serve the bread of life to the hungry multitudes of the earth.”<sup>6</sup>

Foy Wallace, Sr., questioned in 1926 the financial practicality of building “gigantic human societies at the expense of the churches, squandering the Lord’s money in enormous sums, oiling the machinery and greasing the wheels of these unscriptural organizations.”<sup>7</sup> Another speaker on the same program, C. A. Buchanan, contrasted the society arrangement with the apostolic pattern:

The local church is the organization which sent the missionaries in the days of the apostles. There was no separate organization known as a Missionary Society of any kind, home or foreign. Every congregation was a complete missionary society within itself. There was no general assembly, synod, conference, association, or convention—district, national or otherwise—among the early Christians. In fact the New Testament reveals nothing in the way of a religious organization among them except the local church. Elders were appointed in every church and every church was independent. Any religious organization, therefore, other than the local church is unauthorized in the Scriptures. With no organization other than this the greatest missionary programme on record was carried out by the early church.<sup>8</sup>

### *The Sins of Disorganization*

If the lecturers unanimously contended that the church was divinely designed to be its own missionary society, they

were equally as frank to confess that the brotherhood was achieving neither practical efficiency nor actual success in the execution of this divine plan. Condemning the sin of organized mission societies, they confessed guilt to the sin of disorganized mission work. While steering clear of the pitfall of ecclesiastical structure, they admitted that the church had charted no certain missionary course whatsoever. As a result, it had fallen into inept mission habits devoid of systematic purpose and definite design.

As early as 1919, F. B. Shepherd exclaimed the "urgent need for a definite policy for the doing of Missionary Work at home and abroad." That same year, George A. Klingman lamented the "slipshod, slovenly, niggardly way in which some congregations carry on their work," urging the enactment of a more "definite purpose and plan." Several years later, E. C. Coffman rather succinctly stated the evangelistic dilemma facing the anti-society churches of Christ: "Business six days a week and no religion in it, and then religion one day a week and no business in it will never evangelize the world."<sup>9</sup> Pat Harrell later summarized the brotherhood's early missionary failures, saying:

In the past the attitude of the Church has been a negative one in which we have been overly concerned with what not to do. This historically can be explained but hardly excused. Too often in the past when we lighted the lamp of missions it was not to give light, but to fill the room with smoke.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, while defending the principle of independent congregational initiative and control, the speakers asserted that congregational programs were suffering woefully from lack of organization and co-ordination. With a sharp edge of specificity, they spoke of flagrant flaws at the local level. Since the congregational system placed ultimate direction in the hands of the local leadership, much of the criticism was aimed at eldership inertness. Claiming that "the loss of nerve on the part of church leaders" was the major malady, Harrell observed that missions have "been ground to powder when caught be-



tween the upper millstone of inert elders and the nether millstone of the indifferent masses."<sup>11</sup>

One charge leveled at the local congregation was its failure to take adequate initiative in selecting and sending missionaries. Shepherd's 1919 speech pin-pointed this shortcoming:

We have seen the failure of self-appointed missionaries amenable to no one, dependent for financial support upon no one in particular, but the brotherhood in general. For years one man has devoted himself to an almost endless fruitless effort to find men with the qualifications who are willing to go overseas to the work, and then to get their support assured. There is little more apostolic precedent for either course than for the Free Missionary Society and with less practical results. Where, then, shall we turn? What provision has the divine mind made to meet the need? The greatest missionary in the Christian dispensation, the Apostle Paul, was SENT by the church at Antioch to the work . . . . Were such a course followed today and missionaries SENT by local bodies, those bodies would have a definite missionary policy.<sup>12</sup>

"Although there is nothing to prohibit any faithful servant of the Lord who so desires from going into the field, either home or foreign, at his own charges," declared C. A. Buchanan in 1926, "he should be answerable for his conduct to some local congregation where he is known, and he should have their endorsement."<sup>13</sup> Recently returned from China, George S. Benson, added that "there is no scripture to justify churches in so completely failing to send workers to foreign fields, that almost our entire force of foreign workers have been compelled to voluntarily raise their own travel fund and seek their own support with very limited encouragement from the churches."<sup>14</sup> On the same program, J. Dow Merritt, a veteran missionary to Africa, ridiculed the brotherhood's system of sending missionaries:

Let us assume that the leaders of the church, elders, deacons, preachers, teachers, are awake to the duties and

responsibilities that they have . . . . one morning an elder announces that word has come of need for workers in some mission point; the next day is to be set aside as a day for fasting and prayer; volunteers are to be asked for that field.

No! We have assumed too much! It is not done that way. There has not a missionary gone to the field but has had to beg the churches to send him, or else someone has done the begging for him. Then when he gets to the field he has to keep a continual flow of "pet letters" coming back home lest he and his work be forgotten. When he comes home he has to beg folks to let him tell them of the condition he has found and under which he has to work, and of the joys, sorrows, victories, and failures that have been his.<sup>15</sup>

Even the post-war surge in mission activity was more attributable to the zeal and initiative of individual missionaries than to vigorous leadership at the congregational level. In 1951, Otis Gatewood reminded his listeners of the shortcomings of the past:

Brethren, we are just recovering from a period of time when an evangelist went away from our shore to preach the gospel when, to a great extent, he had to go at the risk of being starved to death and then forgotten. It hasn't been too long that churches have been interested in shouldering the responsibility and staying behind the men who went and supported them, but not only supporting them, but yea, advising them.<sup>16</sup>

A few years later, Cline Paden was even less complimentary than Gatewood:

Not only is our planning too small, it is usually poorly done. There are probably not more than a half dozen men overseas now who were sent there by a church who first decided to send someone and then got busy and found them and sent them. Most of these men today are men who decided to go and spent some months trying to interest someone in sending them. Many times the final arrangements were made just in time for him to catch the boat, and he went to the field without know-

ing or being known by the church sending him. This arrangement gives rise to the impression held by so many supporting churches that they are doing the man a favor.<sup>17</sup>

Closely related to the lack of initiative were charges involving sporadic and unpredictable methods of oversight and support. Since churches of Christ are composed of relatively small congregations, many are financially unable to fully support and sponsor a complete mission program. This has led them to contribute small, irregular amounts to several fields simultaneously. Harrell sounded the need as late as 1959 for more truly sponsoring congregations:

... the temptation is for a congregation to make a token contribution to some field to serve as a slave for its conscience. It also serves as a tactful way to reject all other calls for help. In short, it is the means by which we congeal into a comfortable state of self-satisfaction. The ten dollars here or the twenty dollars there that should only be stepping stones to a greater work become pedestals which maroon us in the present state of mediocrity. We must be very careful that we are not inoculated with such a mild form of missions that we become immune from the real thing.<sup>18</sup>

Leon C. Burns, speaking the same year on the same point, could see some signs of improvement. He observed the increase of sponsoring congregations:

We are now beginning to realize that it is folly to scatter our funds over a wide area with never enough in any one place to accomplish lasting good. Such efforts have largely been motivated by fear on the part of elders to accept full responsibility for work in any particular place. It seems we have felt that by sending a small amount to many places, we would be justified in pulling out at any time we pleased. Such fear is unworthy of officers in the Lord's church, and is a constant hindrance to the cause of Christ.<sup>19</sup>

Burns also suggested a positive plan for more systematic missionary work by the congregation:

The first step for any group of elders desiring to enter into a broad program of mission work should be to carry the congregation with them into a session of earnest and sincere prayer that God may give them the wisdom, faith, and the courage needed to meet their full responsibility. The next step would be to decide upon a field of labor, and then take a thorough study of this field as to its possibilities, its needs, and the type work required; anticipating, if possible, the difficulties that might arise, and the amount of money needed to do an effective work. To send a capable man into this field to gather this information would be time and money well spent. Having decided upon a place, or field of labor, it is then necessary to select a man well qualified for the work required.<sup>20</sup>

### *False Standards of Evaluation*

In addition to the shortage of sponsoring churches, congregations were accused of applying superficial measurements to determine whether any progress was being made on the field. In 1922, C. J. Robinson declared: "My hardest work in the mission field is to get the co-operation of all the members of the churches . . . ." Explaining that churches often failed to understand the nature of the missionary's work, Robinson charged: ". . . when he does not baptize a great number they cry out, 'Waste of time and money.' But the word of God is the seed of the Kingdom and when sown into good and honest hearts and allowed to remain there it will bring forth good fruit."<sup>21</sup>

In 1937, Paul Southern also discussed the "tendency to put religion on a competitive basis and demand so many visible results for so many dollars invested. But it is impossible to determine the cost per capita of converting heathens anywhere, and it is downright sinful to reduce Christianity to such a statistical formula."<sup>22</sup> Several years later, L. D. Webb added that such false standards had even resulted in the sudden discontinuation of financial support for some workers. He explained:

He preaches a few sermons, baptizes a few people and maybe the congregation will even go so far as to make a down payment on a building. Then the sponsors withdraw their support and send it elsewhere, thus leaving a little struggling group of Christians without an evangelist, without elders and deacons. Oh, that makes the situation difficult.<sup>23</sup>

Don Gardner further urged congregations to be prepared for small beginnings and to count beforehand the costs of seeing a work to its full fruition: "You may know of cases," he suggested, "where churches becoming discouraged with the snail pace of a new work, have pulled their preachers back home leaving the fruit on the vine."<sup>24</sup> Gerald Paden joined Gardner in the plea for a re-evaluation of the criteria of missionary effectiveness. He described the typical procedure:

But we send out our men and determine their effectiveness by the number of baptisms they report and even decide the fruitfulness of the field on that basis. We have heard several brethren say: "We can get more out of our money in another field. So they withdraw their support, possibly just as the field is ready for harvest. According to many brethren Paul was a failure—he worked in Corinth for almost two years and could count on both hands his baptisms. If they had been there they would have discouraged Apollos from going to Corinth—the field is unfruitful—we get better results elsewhere. But Paul was not a reaper, and his baptisms were no index to the fruitfulness of his field. And Apollos had a fruitful labor there because Paul had sown the seed extensively before him."<sup>25</sup>

Speaking on the same program with Paden, George W. Bailey continued the point:

One great mistake the church has made has been lack of faith in the sowing. The harvest will come. We are not told to baptize every creature, but to preach the gospel to every creature (I Corinthians 1:17; Mark 16:15.) If we don't reap (or baptize) right away, we begin to lose faith in the sowing. We must be content to let

others reap the harvest for which we have sown. We must be willing to sow for the harvest we may never see, believing the seed will eventually grow, and the harvest be yielded. "One sows, and another reaps."<sup>26</sup>

Elders were also blamed for injudicious and inconsistent reactions to problems arising on the mission field. One problem frequently mentioned concerned reports of doctrinal or moral weakness of missionaries. In 1921, lecturer C. G. Vincent expressed the opinion that "the missionary is surrounded by more temptations and by fewer restraining influences than the average preacher in the homeland." When a missionary is suspected of doctrinal error Vincent recommended that the sponsoring church continue to fully support him while making investigation and attempting restoration. "If the effort at restoration fails, the appointing church should recall the missionary, pay his way back to the home church, discipline him, and set about to find and appoint another missionary and send him out without delay."<sup>27</sup>

Vincent also recommended a procedure for investigating a missionary's mistake in the administration of funds. He advised the church "to write him a letter of sympathy (for it hurts him more than it does anyone at home) and ask him to be more cautious (and he will for experience is a wonderful teacher) and continue to support him and pray for him." Vincent added: "It might be well to advise him to consult his fellow workers, both native and American, before he involves himself again in some big undertaking!" Vincent then made his primary point: "But to abandon the field simply because a missionary goes wrong or maladministers some money, and so let the heathen remain to live and die in darkness, without hope, is bad logic and worse Christianity!"<sup>28</sup>

In 1937, Paul Southern continued the discussion of missionaries who had left the faith. Shifting the burden of blame from those who go to those who send, he named inferior congregational oversight and inadequate financial support as contributing causes to a missionary's unfaithfulness on the field.

He also cited poor congregational judgment in sending unprepared workers as an open invitation to subsequent difficulty.

We understand readily why a few missionaries have deserted to the denominations. In the first place, poor judgment was used in sending them out. Some were physical weaklings, some were professional beggars, and some were poisoned with doctrinal defections long before they left the shores of America. No person should be sent to another land until he has first proved himself at home. Furthermore, our responsibility does not end when the evangelist reaches his destination. Failing to support him financially and to look after him spiritually may be as big a sin as desertion. Unless they have repented, it is probable that some churches in America have the blood of a few missionaries on their hands.<sup>29</sup>

In short, the lectures approved the theory they were preaching but criticized the programs they were practicing. Defending the principle of local autonomous action, they lamented the congregations' insipid success in application. While honoring the evangelistic techniques of apostolic times, they charged that the modern church had failed to mold those principles into a successful program. The very significant concluding paragraph of George A. Klingman's 1919 address set the tone for dramatic missionary development four decades later:

The apostolic ways and methods of doing God's work have not been adopted and followed and for that reason more efficient work has not been done. The world has not been evangelized and the suffering mass of humanity has not been ministered unto because we have not been LOYAL to New Testament ideals and plans. The same never-changing principles of Christianity must be applied to present-day conditions. With the church organized after the New Testament pattern, recognizing no other head but Jesus Christ, we must systematize our work and arrange for definite work in a definite way. Let us not be afraid of doing the right thing because someone else does right; neither let us refrain from doing God's work because someone else may do it in the wrong way . . . .<sup>30</sup>

*The Principle of Congregational Cooperation*

Two evangelistic emphases, then, were sustained at Abilene in considerable tension, the one against the other. On the one hand was the historic total disdain for a missionary society and resolute respect for the principle of congregational autonomy. But on the other hand emerged a growing awareness of failure and an insistence upon greater efficiency and co-ordination.

It should be noted here that relatively small congregations of 150 members or less—the very type of which much of the brotherhood is composed—have been especially victimized by the shortcomings of previous mission methods. While all congregations large and small, were obligated to practice missionary work, many were simply unable to function capably in a fully sponsoring or overseeing capacity. What, then, have the multitude of churches in this category done? They have either created much disappointment and confusion, for both themselves and the missionaries involved, by attempting to oversee a work and ending in frustration and failure. Or, they have participated on a marginal basis by scattering token contributions hither and yon. Or, they have seen both horns of the dilemma and have decided to do nothing. “I firmly believe,” charged Otis Gatewood, “that the large number of small congregations is responsible for a lack of world-wide evangelism more than any other factor in our midst.”<sup>31</sup>

Though it was never expressed in so many words, implicit in the Abilene lecturers' plea for improved mission methods was a recognition of the important concept of *varying congregational responsibility*. Responsibility is, after all, simply the ability to respond. While all congregations are obligated to participate in mission work, they are not equally obligated to participate at the same level, in the same measure, or in the same manner. The point in the parable of the talents applies to corporate groups of Christians as well as to individual Christians.



The lecturers came to desire a missionary procedure which would more effectively involve the hundreds of small congregations. But they also sought a program whose scope would be more far-reaching than even the best, but isolated, efforts of any one large congregation. They could not resist the temptation to shop about and contrast their plight with the obvious strong points in denominational machinery. Thus, they sought for some practical, scriptural means of brotherhood-wide co-ordination without creating an agency for brotherhood-wide control. To put it still another way, they steadfastly refused to endorse planting of the denominational mis- of its fruits.

At the Abilene Lectureship, a momentous biblical principle governing missionary methods was articulated and recommended as a remedy for this brotherhood predicament. The principle was described as *intercongregational cooperation without ecclesiastical organization*. It greatly expanded the scope of the church's evangelistic opportunities and led logically to recognition of the special role of the sponsoring congregation as compared with the part to be played by the smaller participating churches.

In 1919, George A. Klingman became the first speaker to voice approval of the cooperation principle. He described the protestant program of evangelism as floundering on the rocky crags of "the Scylla of Ecclesiasticism on the one side and the Charybdis of neglected duty on the other." Recommending intercongregational cooperation as the safe course between these two evil extremes, Klingman added:

... smaller congregations can co-operate in the spread of the gospel message in the home community, and the same plan works admirably for preaching the gospel in the foreign field . . . and just as it may be necessary for several congregations to co-operate for the purpose of evangelizing a county, so let any number of churches co-operate in sending out a missionary, the element of mileage being the only difference.<sup>32</sup>

But speaking on the 1919 program with Klingman, F. B. Shepherd appeared to represent a segment of brotherhood thinking which would ultimately come to reject the principle of intercongregational missionary cooperation. Shepherd asked:

Shall the church in the aggregate send out missionaries? If so, it needs some official board and the Bible makes no provision for such. Is it not the God-ordained appointment of the local institution? This course would also remove the possibility of unscriptural institutions growing out of a combination of churches to support one man . . . ?<sup>33</sup>

In 1920, M. C. Kurfees cited several apostolic examples to establish his premise that "two or more churches, if need be, may co-operate in the work." But he, too, was exceedingly cautious, suggesting that congregational independence be protected by sending all contributions directly to the mission field, rather than to channel them through a sponsoring congregation. Kurfees stated that "the fact that one church is contributing to sustain a missionary is no reason why another church or other churches may not do so if one is too poor financially to sustain the work." But he then added, "and in such a case, each church maintains its own independence and sends directly to the support of the missionary in the field."<sup>34</sup>

In 1926, C. A. Buchanan, like Kurfees, was also cautious but nonetheless clear in his advocacy of the principle of cooperation. He approved the policy of cooperation without organization:

Every congregation that is strong enough to do so should carry on an independent program of missionary work. There is less complication and less chance for embarrassment when this can be done. Any number of congregations, however, may cooperate in the support of any Scriptural work, without the creation of any other organization, by placing the work under the direction of one congregation. An arbitrary control should not be exercised over the work, but all who are interested should advise together.<sup>35</sup>

J. N. Armstrong's 1935 address, "The Larger Vision and Need of the Hour," was the epoch-making message in the development of the cooperation principle. He contended that an abusive, exaggerated presentation of the autonomous nature of the local congregation had robbed the brotherhood of its power and influence as a united institution. Maintaining that this warped emphasis upon the independence of the local church had tended to make separate denominations of each congregation, Armstrong declared:

I believe there is an over stressing, an exaggerating of the local body that is leading the churches to lose sight of the broader vision and therefore retarding the cause of our Master on the earth. It occurs to me that we are fast making the local church an end of effort, rather than a preparation for a great job, the real service for which the local church, the training campus, exists.<sup>36</sup>

In speaking of what he termed a "bigger and broader service than the local work," Armstrong argued that apostolic congregations often "combined their strength and resources in accomplishing a work that no congregation could do alone." As God's churches, each congregation keeping its own identity, they cooperated with one another in the performing of big tasks. Particularly deploring the inactivity of the hundreds of small, subsistent congregations, he concluded that "it is good, wise, and of divine approval to stir churches to join other churches in accomplishing the jobs committed to the church."<sup>37</sup>

### *Another Kind of German War*

Although Armstrong's bold message had equal impact upon the evangelistic and benevolent programs of congregations within the United States, the ascending attitude which it pioneered literally revolutionized foreign missionary activity among churches of Christ. Two years after its delivery, the planners of the Abilene Lectureship devoted the week, for the

first time in its history, to the challenge of world evangelism. The contention that the only realistic means of evangelizing the world was through intercongregational cooperation gradually began to crystallize into a positive affirmation. Paul Southern's 1937 remarks are representative of the prevailing attitude:

But it sometimes becomes expedient for congregations to cooperate in order to support a man while he is preaching in a virgin field. It was done during the apostolic age. We do it in the homeland and nothing is said about it. Why does it become sinful if ten or a thousand Christians pool their money and send it to a laborer across the seas? . . . While we guard against an unscriptural plan on the one hand, we neglect to fulfill the great commission on the other.

Which is the greater sin? to refuse to do anything for fear of going beyond that which is written, or to let millions go to the judgment unprepared to meet their God? Tardiness in entering the mission fields was responsible for the first missionary boards and societies of the digressive church. We can obviate this evil within our own ranks by rallying to the support of the work in a scriptural way.<sup>38</sup>

During the mid-1940's, however, the dormant division of opinion which had from the beginning accompanied the question of intercongregational cooperation was sharply awakened. Though actually rooted in a basic difference in attitude and spirit, the division of opinion came visibly to the surface in controversy surrounding an intensive program of German mission work after the war.

Under the direction of the Broadway Church of Lubbock, Texas, Otis Gatewood and several colleagues became the first American missionaries of any faith to enter the land of the enemy following the Nazi fall. M. Norvel Young, the Broadway minister, and Paul Sherrod, an elder of the Lubbock church, delivered along with Gatewood a combined total of six Abilene addresses from 1947 to 1949 on the German work.

With these speeches was launched the most extensive and ambitious missionary project to be undertaken by churches of Christ in modern history. It called for the Broadway congregation, the largest of the brotherhood, to serve as the sponsoring church in a highly co-ordinated, carefully planned program involving the financial support and fellowship of scores of smaller sister congregations. No one's autonomy was surrendered. No ecclesiasticism was created.

The program met with tremendous success on the German field, attracting the admiration of religious and governmental leaders on both continents. Several German congregations were established. Hundreds of the citizens of our once-enemy nation were baptized into Christ, and most significantly, the program provided the spark and the practical pattern for many subsequent advances into scores of other unevangelized nations of the world.

As has already been noted, however, progress always has its price. And the amount of the price tag is usually commensurate with the size of the advancement. Some church leaders, placing most stringent limitations upon the latitude for congregational interaction, draped the German program with hues and cries of apostasy. Fearing the evolution of ecclesiastical control, they opposed both the principle of cooperation in general and the sponsoring church idea in particular. They branded their cooperation-minded brethren as the direct descendants of the liberal digressives of the late nineteenth century. Furthermore, they regarded the sponsoring church arrangement to be fully analagous in purpose and structure, if not in name, to the full-blown missionary society. H. A. Dixon stated at Abilene the position of the so-called "anti-cooperation" brethren: "It is contended that the church through which the funds are sent becomes a controlling power, and destroys the autonomy of the local church which submits its funds for such use."<sup>39</sup>

*Press, Radio, and Television Tensions*

Following closely on the heels of the controversy over methods of foreign mission work came a related conflict concerning the use of national news and communication media for preaching the gospel. Lecturers had long recognized the powerful influence of the printing press on the history of thought. "No art," asserted Frank Winters, "has affected the human race as has the art of printing." And in "no field has this God-given power been more effective than in the Christian religion."<sup>40</sup> Athens Clay Pullias added that in three ways the written word "is the most powerful weapon for good or evil that man can wield." It preserves ideas permanently, it appeals to the most thoughtful people, and it is accessible for further study.<sup>41</sup>

In the early 1950's interest began to mount in a plan for employing the pages of the national press as an evangelistic avenue. The "Gospel Press" was established to prepare and finance teaching advertisements. Lecturer T. E. Millholland explained that "after a great deal of prayer and discussion, in March of 1955, the decision was made to carry the gospel to the millions by use of the pages of national magazines. A non-profit foundation was organized."<sup>42</sup> Though violently opposed by brotherhood reactionaries from its inception, within four years the organization's president, Alan Bryan, reported that,

A total of over 23,000,000 individual magazines have contained an article telling readers about the Church. Responses have come from almost every town and village in America and from scores of foreign nations. It is difficult to think of even a foreign nation where at least one response has not come. Baptisms have been reported from Florida to the state of Washington and California to Maine. Eternity alone can measure the impact these ads already placed have had on the millions who walk the face of this earth.<sup>43</sup>

If measured by the rancor and dissension which it evoked, the "Gospel Press" undertaking was eclipsed by the objections

surrounding the launching of the national radio and television program, the "Herald of Truth." Earliest Lectureship references to the use of radio as an evangelistic medium were made in 1936 by George H. Stephenson:

Within recent years the radio has been having a very important place in our life. It is found in the majority of American homes today from the most humble to the richest. Sects which have used the press very extensively are now turning to radio . . . . Perhaps the greatest program of radio work among the churches of Christ is that of the Central Church in Nashville, Tennessee which broadcasts ten services each week . . . . We have other brethren broadcasting regularly, including Bro. W. L. Oliphant and Bro. Roy Cogdill, who broadcast a splendid program each week over KRLD in Dallas. The regular morning services of the Church at Hot Springs, Arkansas, of which Verna E. Howard is minister, are broadcast once each month.<sup>44</sup>

Three decades later, James D. Willeford revealed the enormous progress which the church had achieved in the use of broadcast facilities. "Since the first broadcast of a gospel sermon on March 2, 1922 in Montgomery, Alabama," said Willeford, "there have been more than two thousand programs and a series of programs presented on a sustaining basis. During these thirty-six years the Church has made its greatest strides since the first century."<sup>45</sup> Stephenson had reported in 1936 that "some of our brethren at the present time are trying to create interest in a nation-wide 'hook-up' broadcast of the gospel of Christ." Although it required sixteen years for those plans to reach fruition, such a program was finally engaged in 1952. That year, James W. Nichols told the Lectureship audience that the Highland Church in Abilene had undertaken the responsibility of enlarging its area broadcast into a nation-wide radio program to be called, the "Herald of Truth." "As a result of these efforts and due to the fact that the brotherhood has long dreamed of such an opportunity, some \$265,000 has been raised to make possible the preaching of the gospel in word and in song each week through the facilities of the American Broadcasting Co. It will be interesting

to note," added Nichols, "that some 647 churches and individuals from 40 states have been willing to have fellowship in the sponsoring of this work."<sup>46</sup>

But once again, the activities of the co-ordinating Highland congregation, and the participating fellowship of "some 647 churches and individuals from 40 states"—not to mention the spectrum of one congregation deploying a staggering sum of \$265,000—sent an ample number of the brethren into ecclesiastical hysteria. In 1955, a series of two pivotal public debates were held in Lufkin and Abilene between two former Lectureship speakers who embraced mutually exclusive opinions on the cooperation problems. E. R. Harper defended cooperative radio evangelism as conducted by the Highland Church and Fanning Yater Tant spoke for the opposition party. By the time the last rebuttal had been delivered, deep incisions for the first significant division among churches of Christ since their departure from the disciples had been carved into the heart of the brotherhood.

The Lectureship speechmaking itself does not fully reveal the tension and strife surrounding the many public debates, heated journalistic exchanges, and split churches. The speakers' silence was not due to the platform's disdain for controversy, but resulted from the college's policy of avoiding entanglement in the issue during the bitter 1940's.

The great majority of the men who appeared at Abilene, however, were silently sympathetic with the principle of cooperation without organization. And in 1954, after the lines of division were sharply drawn, lecturer John H. Banister was assigned the obviously important topic, "Ways and Means of Doing Mission Work." Banister referred to the unfortunate schism which the issue had already occasioned:

Most of the controversy on this question is over the issue of congregational cooperation. We all agree that each congregation can and should do mission work. We also agree that each congregation certainly can plan its own program and act independently of any and all con-



gregations. This is admitted. The issue is this: can a group of congregations cooperate in preaching the gospel in a given field? If so, how? And to what extent? So far as is known, no one contends that congregations must cooperate or else. The issue is, are congregations at liberty to cooperate, if they so choose, and desire? Do congregations have the right to work together in preaching the gospel in a given field?<sup>47</sup>

Also speaking in 1954, H. A. Dixon accused certain of the brethren of manufacturing laws and tests of fellowship which had stifled the evangelistic spirit and created the division within the church. He was particularly critical of those whose self-made laws demanded that "world evangelism must be done by sending funds direct to the evangelist in the field." He regretted that "each man's plan becomes law to all in his eyes."<sup>48</sup>

Banister's speech listed several guidelines which should govern cooperation among churches: cooperation must be voluntary; it must respect the autonomy of each local church; congregations can cooperate in exchanging advice, in solving doctrinal and moral problems in the church, in teaching and indoctrinating one another, in benevolent activity, in selecting and sending out men, and in doing corporate mission work. After declaring himself in favor of cooperation, Banister lodged a caution:

There is a danger of brethren reaching the conclusion that "the end justifies the means" and coming to believe that any way of doing missionary work is all right just so it is done. This is probably a danger more real and threatening than we realize. This philosophy, if carried to its logical conclusion, would result in the formation of a Missionary Society . . . . There is also the danger of smaller congregations turning their mission work over to a few large and prominent congregations and allowing them to become the unofficial directors and promoters of brotherhood mission activities.<sup>49</sup>

In 1959, J. W. Roberts presented a more detailed defense of the cooperation principle. His lecture, "Keeping Missions

Scriptural," was designed to prove that the missionary society was not analagous to the cooperation practices beginning to take hold among congregations all across the brotherhood. Using primary sources from the early Restoration movement, he documented his premise that "the cooperation which has been the basis of our success in the last few years is the historic position of the valiant soldiers who fought the encroachment of the Missionary Society."<sup>50</sup>

### *Unto All the World*

As a result of the Abilene articulation and defense of the cooperation principle, it soon came to be widely applied in the churches. It was blessed with outstanding success. Hundreds of congregations sharply accelerated the size and efficiency of their missionary programs. Within a few years the Highland Church added to its outreach a nation-wide television broadcast. Batsell Barrett Baxter, one of the television speakers, emphasized the significance of this medium: "It is my conviction that were the Apostle Paul living now he would be using radio and television morning, noon and night to tell unsaved millions of Christ and his salvation. He would be as well known as Arthur Godfrey or Dave Garroway—and for a much higher purpose."<sup>51</sup> While it has drawn heavy bombardment from the "anti-cooperation" segment of the church, the "Herald of Truth" series has developed into a two-million dollar a year radio and television tool for communicating the restoration plea throughout the English speaking world. James D. Willeford, another of the early television speakers, stressed the value of the program:

By broadcasting the gospel across our land, the Church can go far toward developing a nation-wide religious atmosphere in which local preaching and personal work will be more effective. In such a climate more congregations will spring up, and grow faster. There will be an almost universal awareness that the Church exists and that it has a message which men need.<sup>52</sup>

In 1961, C. E. McGaughey's address on "The Brazil Plan" served as an official herald of the practical victory which advocates of the cooperation principle had achieved. He recalled the events which had led seventeen families, supported by scores of congregations, to undertake a highly co-ordinated missionary effort in Latin America.

The idea of group evangelism caught on and the number grew until there are now 33 workers planning to work in Brazil . . . . There are sixteen full-time preachers and a medical doctor if circumstances of the medical profession in Brazil permit his going. Reservations have been made to sail from the port of Houston on the *Del Norte* next June 1st. We believe this date will mark the beginning of one of the greatest missionary undertakings since the days of the apostles. It is hoped that the illustrations of this excellent group of young people will serve to stimulate others and that it will contribute toward making us all see the necessity of sending out a similar group every year until this great world is evangelized.<sup>53</sup>

When the *Del Norte* sailed from the Houston harbor on June 1, 1961, its cargo of well-prepared and eager young missionaries was a commendation of the expediency and efficiency of the cooperative principle. It was also a tribute to the brotherhood's progress in the co-ordination and refinement of its mission methods. To some of the brethren, however, it marked a new zenith in organizational apostasy. But whether as a tribute to progress or a symbol of digression, the sailing of the ship was a major milestone in the bitter debate over cooperative methods of benevolence and evangelism. It was also, unfortunately, a mute reminder of still another fractioning of the restoration body.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>E. F. Mayer, *Religious Bodies in America* (3rd ed.; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), p. 216.

<sup>2</sup>An exhaustive history of the modern missionary movement is to be found in Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity: The Great Century*, IV-VII (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941, 1943, 1944, 1954).

Also see, Willis Church Lamott, *Revolution in Mission* (New York : The Macmillan Company, 1954).

Kenneth Scott Latourette, *Anno Domini* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940), p. 169.

John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, *Protestant Christianity* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 170.

Winfred Ernest Garrison, *Religion Follows the Frontier* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931), p. 239.

The three references in this paragraph are, Coffman, "The Established Congregations," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 300, Shepherd, "Missions," *Lectures*, 1919, p. 177, and Vincent, "Missionary Work in New Testament Churches," *Lectures*, 1920-1921, p. 51.

"The Church," *Lectures*, 1926-1927, p. 152.

"Home Missionary Work," *Lectures*, 1926-1927, p. 196.

These three references are from, Shepherd, "Missions," *Lectures*, 1919, p. 176, Klingman, "A Great Door is Opened," *Lectures*, 1919, p. 16, and Coffman, "The Responsibility of the Local Congregation in Preaching the Gospel," *Lectures*, 1937, p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> "The Expansion of Christianity," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 209.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>12</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>13</sup> Buchanan, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>14</sup> "Workable Plans," *Lectures*, 1937, p. 59.

<sup>15</sup> "Characteristics of the Workers," *Lectures*, 1937, p. 76.

<sup>16</sup> "Preaching the Gospel in Germany," *Lectures*, 1951, p. 114.

<sup>17</sup> "Evangelizing the World," *Lectures*, 1956, p. 312.

<sup>18</sup> Harrell, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

<sup>19</sup> "Except They Be Sent," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 147.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>21</sup> "Effective Missionary Work," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, p. 89.

<sup>22</sup> "They All With One Consent Began to Make Excuse," *Lectures*, 1937, p. 50.

<sup>22</sup> "The Church in the Northwest," *Lectures*, 1950, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> "Methods for Missions," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 174.

<sup>25</sup> "Italy for Christ," *Lectures*, 1961, pp. 202-203.

<sup>26</sup> "World Vision for Christ," *Lectures*, 1961, p. 191.

<sup>27</sup> Vincent, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-152.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>29</sup> Southern, *op. cit.*, p. 25. On page 50 Southern also addressed his remarks to the missionary's handling of funds: "...we sometimes hear the excuse that our missionaries spend too much. Forsooth! We ought to be ashamed of the way we have treated some of them!... Some carping critics have even accused our missionaries of misappropriation of the brotherhood's funds. Others have said that Brother J. M. McCaleb became rich in Japan. Perhaps he has become rich, but his is an intangible wealth which cannot be measured in terms of silver and gold. The best cure for such unfounded criticism is for the critics to journey to some outpost of Christianity and see how economical our evangelists are forced to be."

<sup>30</sup> Klingman, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>31</sup> "The Work in Germany and Europe," *Lectures*, 1955, p. 157.

<sup>32</sup> Klingman, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>33</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>34</sup> "Missionary Work in New Testament Churches," *Lectures*, 1920-1921, pp. 54-55.

<sup>35</sup> Buchanan, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

<sup>36</sup> "The Larger Vision and Need of the Hour," *Lectures*, 1935, p. 125.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127-130.

<sup>38</sup> Southern, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>39</sup> "Overcoming Denominational Tendencies," *Lectures*, 1954, p. 38.

<sup>40</sup> "The Power of the Press," *Lectures*, 1952, p. 247.

<sup>41</sup> "Effective Christian Journalism," *Lectures*, 1956, pp. 194-195.

<sup>42</sup> "The Gospel Press," *Lectures*, 1956, p. 244.

<sup>43</sup> "The Press," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 277.

- <sup>44</sup> "The Status of Bible Teaching Today," *Lectures*, 1926, p. 85.
- <sup>45</sup> "Radio and Television," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 282.
- <sup>46</sup> "The Power of Radio," *Lectures*, 1952, pp. 208-209.
- <sup>47</sup> "Ways and Means of Doing Mission Work," *Lectures*, 1954, p. 4.
- <sup>48</sup> Dixon, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
- <sup>49</sup> Banister, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.
- <sup>50</sup> "Keeping Missions Scriptural," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 249.
- <sup>51</sup> "Using Television and Radio," *Lectures*, 1956, p. 125.
- <sup>52</sup> Willeford, *op. cit.*, p. 285.
- <sup>53</sup> "The Brazil Plan," *Lectures*, 1961, p. 249.

# 13

## The Battle Over Benevolence

The costly conflict concerning methods and means of evangelism was accompanied by an equally bitter battle over methods and means of benevolence. So tightly were the issues interwoven that it is difficult, and perhaps inaccurate, even to attempt a separation which would delineate them as two controversies. They were really one. They were fought at the same time, on the same battlefield, and by the same combatants. The men who took the offensive in the drive for increased effort and more system in evangelizing the world were the ones who led out in contending for more concern and initiative in fulfilling the church's benevolent mission. And the men who leaped to the defense to hold the line against cooperative programs of evangelism were the ones who came forth to oppose many of the arrangements being made to care for the homeless and the aged.

### *The Social Gospel and the Church*

The benevolent phase of the controversy, however, had a dimension of conflict which the evangelistic debates did

not share. That added dimension of division concerned differing opinions as to the scope of the church's responsibility in the benevolent field. All churches of Christ agreed that the great mission of the church was to evangelize the world. That debate did not concern the measure of responsibility but the means which might legitimately be employed to discharge it. All churches of Christ were also agreed that the benevolent burden of the church was essentially a servant of the evangelistic mission. But clashing opinions came into sharp focus under the keen microscope used to determine the extent of benevolent responsibility and the initiative and means which should be employed to fulfill it.

The benevolent battle among churches of Christ, then, was very definitely, if indirectly, related to the social gospel war being waged within contemporary protestantism. The question concerning the legitimate mission of the church was being raised on lecture platforms other than the one in Abilene.

"Two conceptions of the church are in conflict today in modern protestantism," wrote Harry Emerson Fosdick in 1922, "and one of the most crucial problems of America's religious life in this next generation is the decision as to which of these two ideas of the church shall triumph."<sup>1</sup> A year later Fosdick's formidable opponent, J. Gresham Machen, wrote an article in the *Homiletic Review* on the nature of the church and its mission in the world. "Two mutually exclusive religions are being propagated," he said. "One is the great redemptive religion known as Christianity; the other is the naturalistic or agnostic modernism represented by Dr. Fosdick. If one of these is true the other is false."<sup>2</sup>

Just a few scant months before the first Abilene Lectureship audience assembled during a mid-winter Texas blizzard, Walter Rauschenbusch circulated in 1917 his explosive, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*. In doing so, he became the social gospel's leading theological voice and brought to full fruition the revolutionary labors of Washington Glad-



den, called "the Father of the Social Gospel," and Josiah Strong, Richard T. Ely, David Jayne Hill, E. Benjamin Andrews, Edward Bellamy, George D. Herron, Orello Cone, Shailer Matthews, Francis G. Peabody and a host of lesser known prophets of social Christianity. Beginning in the decade following the Civil War, their corporate effort quickened Christendom's compassion for human misery and forced a re-examination of the very nature of the religious experience itself. "When we submit to God we submit to the supremacy of the common good," Rauschenbusch postulated. "Salvation is the voluntary socializing of the soul."<sup>3</sup>

Was salvation the socialization of the soul? Or the redemption of the soul? Was the gospel for the group, or was it for the individual? Was the mission of the church to be interpreted in programs of human betterment or in the preaching of the Word? In large measure, fundamentalism's sharp rejoinder to modernism was in condemnation of a socially-saturated presentation of man's spiritual predicament. In 1908, the Federal Council of Churches of Christ gave formal recognition to the social doctrine, adopting a "Social Creed of the Churches" which came to be protestantism's official position. By 1920, most religious bodies had established elaborate social service commissions of their own. Publishing houses unleashed an avalanche of books and pamphlets in the interest of a socially-sensitive church. In 1927, Shailer Matthews wrote that when "one compares this situation with that of the decade following 1895, one is convinced that the old individualism of evangelicalism is being supplemented by the social evangelism."<sup>4</sup>

As the social gospelers sought to make protestantism relevant to the pungent wrongs of the new industrial age and its slum-ridden, congested suburbia, the conservatives responded with a chorus of anathemas. The will of God, they protested, was being prostituted in favor of the mundane welfare of physical man. "Religion is held to be nothing more than a plan of social well-being," wrote one disturbed critic. "It is reduced to humanitarianism . . . . Education and

sanitation take the place of personal regeneration and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>5</sup> While the roots of the social gospel were complex—both religiously and politically—the movement was blessed by the concurrent rise of theological liberalism and the concept of evolutionary progress in history. The Baptists’ *Watchman-Examiner* screamed: “What, then, is the social gospel ideal in its final analysis. It is briefly this: surround the individual or community with a good environment and salvation will result. No greater or more insidious heresy ever issued from hell.”<sup>6</sup> A lectureship assembly at the Moody Bible Institute concluded that modern Christians were as harlots flirting with the world by “substituting pitiful social service for the power of the blood.”<sup>7</sup>

As the torrents raged within America’s mainstream, the Abilene tributary left little doubt as to the direction in which its influence would flow. While less than a half dozen speakers made reference with specificity and in name to the “social gospel,” the very weight of the Lectureship lodged the standard conservative objection: that the socially-conscious liberals had forsaken the one great purpose of the church, namely, the salvation of individual souls. The speakers made virtually no reference to such questions as labor-management relations, capitalistic control, mass unemployment, bread lines, slum clearance, political reform, racial discrimination, or education for the handicapped and underprivileged. Furthermore, any interest they manifested in such social or benevolent programs as prohibition, eradication of gambling and prostitution, initiation of youth camps and recreational programs, support for orphans, widows and aged, clothing, counseling and feeding of the destitute and poverty-stricken was justified as a part of individual salvation and tied directly to the genius of spiritual rebirth. The Abilene Lectureship was not a social gospel sounding board.

### *The Benevolent Mission of the Church*

Although not directly involved with the social gospel tensions in the mainstream of national thought, some of the

basic questions of the larger debate were essentially the ones at stake in the Abilene tributary: What is the extent of the church's social responsibility? How can efforts at social betterment be related to the problem of individual salvation? Will the church forsake its spiritual purposes by becoming inordinately encumbered with social services? Among churches of Christ, these infectious questions gathered, festered, and erupted into one bitter, benevolent issue: In what way can the church scripturally provide for the needs of widows and orphans?

While the Abilene lectures paint an adequate picture of this controversy and its salient issues, they by no means capture the full intensity of the disagreement. Although containing addresses on both sides of the question, the Lectureship made no effort to stage a direct exchange or to perpetuate any division of feeling. As a matter of fact, the battle was virtually over and lines of practical fellowship sharply drawn before the college administrators felt they could comfortably allow the disagreement to be formalized. Records of widely attended public debates, pages of caustic journalistic cross-fire, heated "church-steps" exchanges, the thousands of disillusioned disciples, and the scores of split congregations must be perused before the deep bitterness of the controversy can be fully tasted.

The Abilene speechmaking's most valuable contribution to a better understanding of the benevolent controversy lies in the realm of historical perspective. The story begins with the basic differences of opinion concerning the church's responsibility in supplying man's physical and social needs. Lecturer Glenn L. Wallace surveyed the extremities of the disagreement concerning the church's social obligations:

There are two extremes that are held by members of the church on the relationship of the church to the community. One group says that the church, being a scriptural institution, belongs to God and that there can be no connection between the Christian and the world . . . . Another view held by some Christians, is that the

church is a service organization; a vessel of community action; that Christians are members of a semi-religious order and that a Chamber of Commerce attitude should prevail in all that is done . . . . The truth is between these two extremes. The church does have a definite relationship to sustain to the community, and yet there is a line that should be drawn between the relation of the church and the service rendered by the members to the community life.<sup>8</sup>

The two extremes which Wallace detected among his brethren were readily observable within the texts of the lectures at Abilene. Several speakers stressed that the church was not designed to shoulder responsibility for the correction of society's moral, social, and domestic evils. F. B. Shepherd stated in 1943: "Christianity has to do primarily with the soul and its salvation rather than the body and its preservation." He explained his thesis:

A . . . misconception of the divinely ordained function of the church Christ built is that it should assume the burden of supplying the physical and material needs of the world today. Certainly the Lord Jesus never spoke truer words than when he said, "The poor you always have with you." But in that very expression and that very time he quite clearly indicated that primarily the church was not instituted as a benevolent or eleemosynary society to be burdened with the obligation to assume responsibility for the eating, wearing, and housing of the world . . . . I am not opposing the giving to the relief of the needy, child or adult. Such is the natural expression of a heart warmed with the love of God. It is Christianity. What I have in mind is that the New Testament nowhere teaches, either by precept or approved precedent, that the church or churches shall be committed to the dispensation of "charity" promiscuously. That the church should go into the business.<sup>9</sup>

Other speakers concurred with Shepherd's emphasis, particularly in the platform's early programs. In 1927, G. F. Mickey spoke of the purpose of the church. He clearly announced what the church was not designed to do:

Neither are we here to build up an exclusive social order for pleasure, or diversion; nor do we seek to establish novel fraternal societies for physical protection. The field for these temporal benefits is already well occupied. We consider that it is not the business of churches to stress the protection of the perishable body to the neglect of imperishable souls.<sup>10</sup>

Other lecturers, while agreeing that the primary purpose of the church was spiritual in nature, maintained that a prudent social consciousness could serve to fulfill eternal ends. The speeches of these men made no reference to the classical writings of the social cause in America, and their remarks were characteristically more moderate than the proposals of that movement's leaders. It is interesting, however, to notice the social gospel overtones no matter how indirect. For instance, John Allen Hudson said in 1935: "Christ did preach a Social Gospel and He undertook to relieve all sorts of distress; but to take the position on the subject of the Social Gospel that the primary ends of the religion of Christ are temporal, will be to reverse the fundamentals of the teachings of Christ."<sup>11</sup> In 1956, George S. Benson performed an even closer marriage between the spiritual and physical missions of the church:

In the Bible God has taken more space to discuss man's welfare in this life than to describe his life in the world to come. It isn't thinkable that God should love us enough to give his Son to redeem us and enough to build those mansions for us in the skies and then be unconcerned about our welfare here. . . . The teaching of sound doctrine involves man's welfare here and now and eternal welfare.<sup>12</sup>

### *A First Home for Orphans*

Speakers urging the brotherhood to shoulder a greater social responsibility translated their convictions into practical recommendations for more vigorous programs to care for the needs of widows and orphans. As the social gospel reached

its peak, the Abilene platform was also beginning to show greater benevolent concern. In 1923, W. L. Swinney, a speaker who characterized himself as a "visionary dreamer," reported the activities of the first orphans' home which the church had established in Texas:

On the first day of March, 1921, in the little city of Canadian, away out on the upper reaches of the Canadian River, on the wind-swept prairies of the great panhandle, we formally opened the orphans' home with songs and prayers and took God into partnership with us. We commended the home to Him who is the husband to the widow and the father to the fatherless.<sup>13</sup>

Lamenting the ineptitude of existing programs of orphan care, Swinney reported that the record of 200,000 church members in the south caring for less than two hundred homeless children produced a sad ratio of one thousand to one. Pointing to the superior work of other religious bodies, he said:

The Presbyterians have a home at Albany; the Methodists have one at Waco; the Baptists one at Dallas, and perhaps the largest one in the South; the Catholics have several in Texas alone. . . . But where is the home that we can point to as a great home and say, "this is our home for children." Brethren, is it still true that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light? . . . Week after week, children come to our door and with weak and feeble hands knock for admittance, and I turn them away because "there is no room," and with tear-stained faces I see them go back into the night of cheerless world. O brethren, my brethren! What will the recording angel write just here? What will the record be? . . . How can we claim to be "the light of the world," and "the salt of the earth" and leave the care of His little ones to others.<sup>14</sup>

Swinney's pioneering plea assumes even greater stature because of the long interval of silence before he was joined by similar voices. As the platform matured, however, scores of

speakers sounded the same alarm over the church's apathy and unpreparedness in caring for the homeless. In 1951, A. R. Holton warned of the danger of vacating the social field in favor of secular organizations. He observed: "The benevolent program of the local congregation is growing weaker and weaker. We are depending more and more upon secular institutions. . . . May the day never come when we shall wholly separate human life on this earth from God and his cause."<sup>15</sup> M. Norvel Young agreed with Holton:

A study of the budget of many congregations will reveal an amazing lack of concern of the physical needs of those round about us . . . . Shall the church turn over all benevolent work to the state or to some community charity or some national agency? How shall the church be magnified? How shall Christ be honored?<sup>16</sup>

The church's hesitation to establish and maintain homes for the care of widows and orphans largely resulted from doubts and suspicions about the scripturalness of such institutions. Swinney's 1923 lecture reflected the contentions over methodology which stifled vigorous benevolent action:

That religious organization that is growing faster than all others is one that holds no religious revivals, holds no debates, engages in no street corner discussions, but it is one that has outstripped all others in the matter of caring for the homeless and dependent children . . . . They have been busy for years and years taking children and educating them in their own peculiar tenets of faith and practice, while we, with all our boasted scripturalness, have been content to discuss ways and means of running a home.

O my brethren, have we not done little things long enough. We have thought little things, and done little things so long that it is with difficulty that we can get away from little things. The doing of big things are for others to do, not for us, so they seem to think.<sup>17</sup>

"The vision I have of such a home," Swinney courageously continued, "might well be called an 'Institution-

al Home' . . . ." It may have been due to his rather unfortunate choice of terms, but in any event, many of Swinney's contemporaries considered his proposal for a "benevolent institution," separate and apart from the church, yet established to fulfill the mission of the church, totally unacceptable. The Lectureship objection to such an arrangement appears to have been quite substantial during the 1920's.

### *Where There Is No Pattern*

In his 1925 address regarding the nature of the church, W. D. Black asserted: "It is the only charitable institution known to the Bible."<sup>18</sup> On those grounds Foy Wallace, Sr., opposed the establishment of an orphan's home in a lecture delivered the following year:

The church also has a benevolent mission in the world . . . . No group in the church should create funds apart from the church and operate through an arrangement of their own in doing the work of the church. Our benevolences should be done through the church, giving glory to Christ . . . .<sup>19</sup>

In 1927, G. F. Mickey likened the establishment of an orphans' home to the organization of a missionary society. Speaking of the evangelistic and benevolent procedures of the church in his day, Mickey stated: "In their service to others, these workers preach the gospel at home, and abroad, without organized missionary societies, and take care of the needy without establishing benevolent institutions."<sup>20</sup>

Lectureship opposition to the right of the church to establish orphans' homes was beginning to subside by the 1930's. Differences of opinion as to how such homes should be organized, however, were just getting under way. Some speakers contended that a home for children or the aged could be scripturally established only as the project of a local congregation, with the eldership of the congregation serving as the home's board of trustees. In 1939, Guy N.



Woods warned of the "tendency toward institutionalism." He explained that he could not "appreciate the logic of those who affect to see grave danger in Missionary Societies, but scruple not to form a similar organization for the purpose of caring for orphans and teaching young men to be gospel preachers." His language seems to make clear his 1939 position:

On the theory that the end justifies the means, brethren have not scrupled to form organizations in the church to do work the church itself was designed to do . . . . Of course, it is right for the church to care for the "fatherless and widows in their affliction," but this work should be done by and through the church, with the elders having the oversight thereof, and not through boards and conclaves unknown to the New Testament. In this connection it is a pleasure to commend to the brotherhood Tipton Orphans' Home, Tipton, Oklahoma. The work there is entirely Scriptural, being managed and conducted by the church in Tipton, Oklahoma, aided by funds sent to them by the elders of other congregations round about. We here and now declare our protest against any other method or arrangement for accomplishing this work.<sup>21</sup>

In his 1953 address, "The Church and the Community," Glenn L. Wallace appeared to agree with Woods' approval of the Tipton arrangement as contrasted with the organizational features of other homes.

James teaches that orphan children should be cared for by Christians (James 1:27). This work cannot be handed to benevolent organizations that have no connections with the elders of a local congregation. The church cannot have any organic connection with worldly institutions who claim to do what the church is commanded to do. Our relationship to such orders is very clear.<sup>22</sup>

But neither Woods nor Wallace was opposed to children's homes as such. And from the very first, other speakers found positive approval in the silence of the Bible regarding

the methodology or pattern for orphan care. They maintained that in the absence of a definite scriptural procedure, the church was free to exercise expediency in the realm of methodology. Once again, Swinney was the first to announce that: "Since the church of God should do this work, I here and now lay down the proposition, from which none will dissent, that the command of the Lord, either by precept, example, or necessary inference, carries with it the authority to employ all needed helps in its execution."<sup>23</sup> Ten years after Swinney's lecture, W. L. Oliphant spoke of "The Work of the Church in Ministering to the Sick, the Needy, and the Unfortunate." "We are not given many details as to methods," he contended. "The New Testament is a book of principles, rather than a detailed catalogue of methods. Much that has to do with methods is left to the judgment of the churches and the men who have the oversight."<sup>24</sup> R. B. Sweet continued in 1935 the argument that no specific benevolent pattern had been given by God. Speaking of the first instance of social action in the apostolic church, relief for the grumbling Grecian widows in Acts, chapter 6, Sweet maintained:

Something of very great interest is seen here in that these deacons were not given detailed instructions about how they were to care for these widows. If all the Grecian widows were lodged together in some house, or if they were given homes with Christian families, one or two here, and another one or two there, we are not told. At least, if the deacons were given their instructions in detail, those details are not preserved for us, for the details of what was done in Jerusalem in the first century would not fit into other centuries in distant countries with respect to the financial and business procedures. That we need not follow exactly their setup seems implicit in the fact that the details of their administration are not given to us.<sup>25</sup>

George H. Stephenson also stressed the absence of a pattern in his 1954 speech, "Caring for Widows and Orphans":

Having seen that the Bible teaches our obligation to care for the fatherless and widows, we now want to con-

sider this question, "How can we scripturally care for them?" In answer to this question, I would say that we do not have definite instructions in the Bible concerning the method or methods of doing this work. The New Testament is not a book of detailed instructions telling us how to do the work of the Lord; it is a book setting forth general principles which should guide us in all we do in religion . . . . It does furnish us unto every good work we are to do, but I would remind you it does not always tell us *how* we are to do every good work.<sup>26</sup>

After citing several New Testament examples of congregations which "co-operated together in raising funds to send to another congregation to help with its benevolent work," Stephenson said: "There are needs to be met today, and it is scriptural for congregations to contribute to the same need . . . and they do not surrender their autonomy or independence any more than the churches of Macedonia and Achaia surrendered theirs." Of homes for the homeless, Stephenson said: "I believe it is scriptural and right for the church to build and maintain homes which especially care for needy children or for widows . . . . I believe it is also scriptural and right for any number of congregations who so desire to make contributions to such a work."<sup>27</sup>

Although Abilene recommendations for increased benevolent activity primarily centered in charitable relief to destitute individuals and better care of orphans and widows, hope was also expressed that the church might one day provide more elaborate benefits such as medical and hospital services for the sick and needy. In 1935, John Allen Hudson contended:

One would reason lamely who would argue it is all right to have orphans' homes, the widows' colony I mentioned, the clinical service, and the girls' home in Nashville, who then would object to the founding of a hospital that should be maintained on exactly the same basis as other fields of work not specifically mentioned as the exact program of the New Testament church. In other words, one would have the right to object to the maintaining of a college whose business it is to care for the minds and ideals of boys and girls, or to the founding of

a hospital on exactly the same basis. The clinic is but a forerunner of an effort at hospitalization perhaps in the churches of Christ. I am looking for the day, even in my life, when the churches of Christ will have some hospitals scattered over the land here and there.<sup>28</sup>

For Hudson's life that day never came. He died twenty-seven years after his Abilene lecture without seeing his wish for a hospital come true. But by the time of his death in 1962 churches of Christ were steadily progressing toward more extensive programs of benevolent activity. Scores of homes for homeless children had been founded, some as "institutions" serving many congregations, others operating within the sphere of one local church. In addition, homes for widows and the aged had been established across the brotherhood. Service centers and rescue missions had been organized in several large metropolitan areas. In Lubbock, Texas, a home for un-wed mothers had been established with a nationwide scope of service to families of the church.

Such benevolent progress but served to intensify the two key questions of contention in the hard-fought controversy. These questions were: what is the scriptural extent of the church's benevolent mission, and does the Bible prescribe any definite pattern for fulfilling that responsibility?

Churches of Christ had solidly opposed the missionary society because they regarded the local congregation to be God's only organism for evangelism. They contended, virtually without exception, that the Bible contained not only the command to preach the gospel to the entire world but the institutional pattern for meeting that command as well. The question of benevolent activity, however, evoked a different reaction.

While every congregation was willing to accept, at least in theory, a benevolent obligation bound upon it by the commands of scripture, sharp disagreement arose over the extent of the obligation implicit within the scripture. A num-

ber of the congregations insisted that the church had no right to accept the full measure of responsibility nor to exercise the kind of benevolent initiative reflected in the Abilene speeches. In a position at least mechanically consistent with the missionary stand, they vehemently opposed the establishment of any benevolent home. They contended that the church was also designed to be its own benevolent society and that no institutional home could be scripturally founded and supported. Benevolent work should be discharged by individuals at the congregational level and only as local specific needs might arise.

The Abilene speakers, however, and the great body of the brotherhood as well, denied that a children's home was equivalent to a missionary society. They maintained that the church could not remain inactive, meeting only that benevolent burden which could not be otherwise avoided, anymore than it could wait and preach the gospel only to those who might happen to come and hear. In both phases of the church's mission the command was to "go." The Bible, they reasoned, had defined "pure and undefiled religion" itself in terms of an aggressive program of concern and care for the "fatherless and the widows in their affliction."

They found, however, one crucial difference between the benevolent and evangelistic commands of the scriptures. Unlike the evangelistic mission, the silence of the scriptures regarding patterns or methods had left congregations free to exercise expediency and judgment in discharging the benevolent obligations facing the church. Feeling that those obligations were manifold and had not been faithfully met, they urged the exercise of great initiative, careful planning, and intercongregational cooperation toward their fulfillment. And since there was no scriptural pattern, they held that a congregation could elect to partially discharge its responsibilities by establishing or supporting a home designed to care for orphans or widows.

It is also significant that the controversy concerning the benevolent mission of the church—so much a part of the so-

cial gospel turbulence in America's mainstream—was also the most bitter brotherhood controversy to be aired at Abilene. The overtones of the social gospel movement endowed the more sequestered conflict with a flavor of national relevancy. There is ample evidence that the Lectureship was the brotherhood's most forceful and continuing voice urging a broader conception of the church's social responsibility. The Lectureship can in no wise, however, be construed as a sounding board for the widespread social gospel. While the lecturers stressed the brotherhood of man, social responsibility was cast against the broader backdrop of substitutionary atonement and rebirth at the level of the individual heart. Granting the social nature of human existence, they clung to the conviction that *one* was the ultimate unit of religion.

Furthermore, they denied that men were united in sin merely through common involvement in social injustices. Individual redemption is an act of God's grace, occurring separate and apart from service to society. Men will never find escape from collective sin by means of social solidarity. There can be no salvation by committee, or congregation, or community, or nation. The active discharge of benevolent responsibility is not man's redeemer but simply the natural fruit of his personal redemption.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>*Christianity and Progress* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1922), pp. 232-233.

<sup>2</sup>"The Battle Within the Churches," *Homiletic Review*, September, 1923, p. 186.

<sup>3</sup>Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), p. 96. "The social gospel," claimed Rauschenbusch, "is no longer a prophetic and occasional note. It is a novelty only in backward social or religious communities. The social gospel has become orthodox." p. 2. From the best literature which tells the story of the social gospel, a penetrating, definitive study is C. H. Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940).

<sup>4</sup>"The Development of Social Christianity in America," *Religious Thought in the Last Quarter Century*, ed., Gerald Birney Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), pp. 238-239.

<sup>5</sup>John Horsch, *Modern Religious Liberalism* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Fundamental Truth Depot, 1921), p. 134.

<sup>6</sup>Stewart G. Cole, *History of Fundamentalism* (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), p. 83. Paul A. Carter describes several other sources of opposition to the social gospel which were "by no means Fundamentalist in temper." *The Decline and Revival of the Social Gospel* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1954), p. 60.

<sup>7</sup>James M. Gray, *The Coming and Kingdom of God* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1914), p. 10.

<sup>8</sup>"The Church and the Community," *Lectures*, 1953, pp. 1-2.

<sup>9</sup>"Theory in Practice," *Lectures*, 1943, p. 95.

<sup>10</sup>"We Are Here, Why?" *Lectures*, 1926-1927, p. 249.

<sup>11</sup>"The Church in Its Care for the Poor and Sick," *Lectures*, 1935, p. 19. Washington Gladden's "O Master, Let Me Walk With Thee," a hymn written specifically to celebrate and popularize the social gospel cause, was a favorite at the annual Lectureship. The audience was apparently unaware of its historical significance.

<sup>12</sup>"Teaching Sound Doctrine," *Lectures*, 1956, p. 226.

<sup>13</sup>"Of All That Jesus Began, Both to Do and to Teach," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, p. 275.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 268-269.

<sup>15</sup>"Church Benevolence," *Lectures*, 1951, p. 101.

<sup>16</sup>"The Congregation at Work," *Lectures*, 1946, p. 158.

<sup>17</sup>Swinney, *op. cit.*, pp. 267, 274-275.

<sup>18</sup>"The Grandeur of the Church," *Lectures*, 1924-1925, p. 90.

<sup>19</sup>"The Church," *Lectures*, 1926-1927, p. 151.

<sup>20</sup>Mickey, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

<sup>21</sup>*Lectures*, 1939, pp. 53-54.

<sup>22</sup>Glenn L. Wallace, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup>Swinney, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

<sup>24</sup>"The Work of the Church in Ministering to the Sick, the Needy, and the Unfortunate," *Lectures*, 1933, p. 114.

<sup>25</sup>"The Church in Its Care of Widows and Orphans," *Lectures*, 1935, p. 31. On page 41, Sweet reported: "So far as the speaker knows there are no widows' homes, established for caring for widows only. They have not become a very serious problem, we suppose because widows have, as a rule, families, or relatives to care for them. In the exceptional cases, however, where widows indeed may be found, that is, widows who have no near relatives upon whom the responsibility falls, they should be taken care of by the church, in the manner that is most effective and efficient."

<sup>26</sup>"Caring for Widows and Orphans," *Lectures*, 1954, p. 48.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 54, 58-59.

<sup>28</sup>Hudson, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

# 14

## \_\_\_\_\_ Christian Schools \_\_\_\_\_ and Colleges

“The prime movers in the nineteenth century effort in behalf of Christian unity,” wrote the respected disciples’ historian, James H. Garrison, “were educated men.”<sup>1</sup> Both Thomas and Alexander Campbell studied at the University of Glasgow. Barton W. Stone was a graduate of Guilford Academy and taught in a Methodist school in Georgia and a private college in Lexington, Kentucky. In 1840, Campbell established Bethany College in Virginia, which he described not as a theological school but as a “literary and scientific institution, founded upon the Bible as the basis of all true science and true learning.”<sup>2</sup> Consistent with his plea for unity, Campbell prescribed that the College Hall would be used every Sunday for worship services and instruction “to be performed by respectable ministers of various denominations.”<sup>3</sup>

The historic interest of churches of Christ in educational affairs was quickened by the theological tensions accompanying the disciples’ split and the Fundamentalist controversy. In 1891, James A. Harding and David Lipscomb found-



ed the Nashville Bible School, which later became David Lipscomb College. Its avowed purpose was to provide an atmosphere "under safe and competent teachers in which the Bible, excluding all human opinions and philosophy, as the only rule of faith and practice . . . will be earnestly taught."<sup>4</sup> Fifteen years later a similar school was founded in Abilene, in which "the Holy Scriptures shall always be taught. . . ."<sup>5</sup> From 1900 to 1925, during the years of most bitter conflict between religious conservatives and liberals in the American mainstream, members of churches of Christ established other Bible schools in Henderson, Tennessee; Bowling Green, Kentucky; Cordell, Oklahoma; Harper, Kansas; and in Texas at Thorp Spring, Cleburne, Lockney, Gunter, Sabinal, and Denton.

The subject of Christian education is exceedingly relevant to an understanding of the impact of the Abilene Lectureship. The assembly emerged at the hands of concerned conservatives who were compelled to answer the ascending charge that primitive Christianity and scholastic respectability were mutually exclusive. Sixty-nine of the more than seven hundred addresses were exclusively concerned with some aspect of private religious education.

### *The Nature of Christian Education*

More than one half of the thirty-one pre-1935 lectures on Christian education were delivered by the four pioneer administrators at Abilene Christian College—Jesse P. Sewell, H. E. Speck, Sr., James F. Cox, and Batsell Baxter. These early educators used the February meeting to acquaint their constituents with the nature of and the need for private liberal arts colleges supported and controlled by members of churches of Christ. The keynote address was delivered in 1918 by the Abilene Dean, H. E. Speck. He defined his subject:

Christian education sets the perfect man Jesus as its ideal. Paul declares that he and his associates labored, "teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Feeding upon Christ we grow in the likeness of God—that is we develop—we are educated. Christian education then consists in so presenting Christ to the immature souls that they shall be by Him enlightened, inspired and fed according to their gradually increasing capacity, and thus made to grow continually within the courts of the Lord's house.<sup>6</sup>

President Jesse P. Sewell's definition of Christian education the following year extended Speck's concept of complete education.

By Christian education I mean the training . . . where not only the body and mind may be trained but the heart also. This is the only way in which man may be equipped for the highest, broadest, fullest, richest, noblest living and happiness.

I care not how perfectly you may develop and train the body and the mind, if you fail to plant in the heart an unwavering faith in the justice and power of an eternal God, and a strong moral character to guide, direct, support and restrain that body and mind in the activities of life, you fail to fully educate; and the man becomes a greater injury and hindrance to society than he would be with no training at all.<sup>7</sup>

Batsell Baxter also spoke on the subject of "Christian Education" at the 1919 assembly. Like Cox and Sewell, his description of academic training with a Christian emphasis dwelt on the concept of perfection and completeness.

It must build Christian manhood, or character, impart high ideals, and train for effective and righteous service. No education that leaves out the Bible and God and Christ can do this. Other kinds of education can fill the memory and stimulate the ambitions, but only Christian education can guide the heart and brain along the

right paths of life. . . . There is no genuine education without some connection with the religion of the Bible.<sup>8</sup>

In his 1904 book, *Education in Religion and Morals*, George Albert Coe charged that most of the traditional denominational colleges had forfeited this distinctiveness by losing consciousness of any special religious function. They preferred, he concluded, to be known as educational institutions in the "so-called general sense." "So true is this," he wrote, "that friends of religious education have felt it incumbent upon them to start an agitation for the teaching of the Bible in Christian colleges."<sup>9</sup> Harvard, the first American college, had been founded in 1638 to provide religious training for young men entering the ministry. Likewise Yale in 1716, Princeton in 1747, King's College in 1754, and Rutgers in 1764 were established by denominational organizations. Their purpose, as the Yale charter expressed it, was to "fit young men for public employment in Church and State." Many other colleges were founded after the important 1819 Supreme Court decision in the famous *Dartmouth College* case unquestionably established the right of institutions to remain privately controlled. Of the 247 colleges in the land in 1860, only 17 were state institutions.<sup>10</sup> An advertisement in the New York papers announcing the opening of King's College revealed the religious ends which these early institutions were originally designed to serve:

The chief thing that is arrived at in this college is to teach and engage children to know God in Christ Jesus, and to love and serve Him in all sobriety, godliness, and richness of life with a pure heart and willing mind, and to train them up in virtuous habits and all such useful knowledge as may render them credible to their families and friends, ornaments to their country, and useful to the public weal in our generation.<sup>11</sup>

By 1900 the great host of these church-established colleges no longer interpreted their functions in primarily

religious terms. And many had altogether ceased to appeal to such reasons as justification of their existence. It is significant that members of the churches of Christ began their agitation to found Christian colleges just as American education in general was undergoing a basic shift toward secularism. While the majority of the nation's religious schools were founded prior to 1900, virtually all of the schools supported by members of the churches of Christ were established, contrary to the trend, after 1900.

A second national trend which the Abilene lecturers resisted is also worthy of notice. The denominational institutions founded prior to 1900 became the twentieth century battlefields upon which modernists tested their strength and the Fundamentalists fought for the preservation of the status quo. As the conservatives gradually lost control, they countered with the production of a rash of new Bible schools and seminaries. But they were more ecclesiastic than academic in nature. And in most instances scholastic requirements for matriculation, promotion, and graduation were not exacted as professionally as in the fully-accredited religious schools. In the struggle for denominational control, quality was sacrificed in favor of quantity. "Thousands of youths," wrote Cole, "who desired to achieve spiritual stimulation at a small cost and in secure surroundings frequented such training schools."<sup>12</sup>

In sharp contrast to these strictly Bible schools, the Abilene educators advocated fully-accredited liberal arts colleges. The Lectureship speakers believed Christian education should make an equally significant contribution to the career of the doctor or housewife as to the preacher. The Fundamentalists' schools were established to provide only that religious training necessary for their professional clergy. Nichols reports that the Northern Baptists developed the deliberate policy of putting a "Bible school beside each of the chief liberal seminaries of the denomination. Hence, a larger number of ministers could be produced by a shorter, less rigorous, and strictly fundamentalist training."<sup>13</sup>

On the contrary, the Abilene speakers recommended Christian education "not merely for those of your boys who are going to make preachers, but as well for those who are to be farmers, mechanics, doctors, lawyers—for all."<sup>14</sup> The Fundamentalists sought short-cut educational methods for mass producing an army of combatants to offset the influence of progressive universities and seminaries. The speakers at the Abilene assembly were equally as alarmed at the inroads of modernism. But their dreams for Christian education were more influenced by the truly great private religious universities of America than by such schools as the Moody Bible Institute. Their concept of private religious education would have been much more closely akin to the original purposes of Southern Methodist University than to the structure of the Evangelical Theological College, two prominent but radically dissimilar institutions in nearby Dallas.

The Abilene lecturers, therefore, found themselves opposing two rather general trends. They were distressed at the mass secularization of state and denominational education and sought the establishment of that very type of religious college which was rapidly waning. And yet, in practice, they were not sympathetic with the efforts of panicky conservatives who sought to solve the problem by founding academically unaccredited, strictly Bible schools. With Jesus as its ideal, they maintained that ideal education should give equal emphasis to the training of the intellect, the development of the body, and the maturation of the soul. "The great aim of Christian education," declared Harrison A. Mathews, "is to develop within people the personality of Jesus Christ. By that we mean developing within people the mind of Christ, the will of Christ, and the character of Christ."<sup>15</sup> Speaking at the opposite end of the Lectureship from Sewell, Speck, Baxter, and Cox, the Dean of Pepperdine College in Los Angeles, J. P. Sanders, echoed their pioneering philosophy:

The abundant life is realized as the result of a program of training that gives emphasis to the devel-

opment of the whole person. Luke tells us that Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52). To develop the complete life, complete education is necessary. Christian education is complete education, since it seeks to help the individual grow in all ways that Jesus grew—physically, socially, intellectually, and spiritually. Any educative process that fails to provide development in each of these areas will result in something short of the abundant life.<sup>16</sup>

The lecturers contended that the responsibility for providing this complete education rested with the church, but should begin in the home and should be shouldered by parents through the medium of Christian schools. In 1920, O. E. Phillips introduced his lecture, "Our Young People," by asserting: "In no age of the world has God ever granted His people the right or privilege to have their children educated by aliens or foreigners: unless for a special purpose."<sup>17</sup> Thirty-seven years later, F. W. Mattox criticized the trend "of many modern parents to turn over the training of their children to the state. This is a totalitarian idea. It is not the public's duty to train my child."<sup>18</sup>

### *The Need for Christian Education*

Since the first religious colleges were founded in America, Christian educators have been required to establish justification for such institutions. And with the development of elaborate systems of state education, private religious schools have been especially obligated to demonstrate their distinctiveness and valid mission in the field of higher learning. The Abilene lecturers met this obligation. Along with other conservatives, their justifying reasons pointed in two directions—to the unique strength of Christian education and to alleged inadequacies or incompleteness of secular or tax-supported education. In 1957 Rex F. Johnston, first president of a newly-founded college in Philadelphia, posed the familiar question: "Why

the great need for Christian education in the Northeast?" His answer serves as an accurate representative of the total Abilene speechmaking in behalf of Christian education.

Because these colleges do not relate the skills and proficiencies which they teach to Christian service as taught in the Bible. In these colleges and universities in the study of literature, the Bible is often considered "just one" of the great literary works. In history, the "Christian period" is presented as just another phase in man's thinking. In science, the concept of the creation of the universe by God is considered a myth and the miracle of Christ's virgin birth a sheer nonsense.<sup>19</sup>

At the close of the first war a veritable wave of criticism against higher education swept across the country. The concept of man's evolutionary progress toward social perfection, which had encouraged the optimistic doctrine of salvation by education, was no longer in vogue. Many felt that something was vastly wrong with the educational methods of a world in which the so-called enlightened nations had viciously raped one another with the most devastating weapons known to mankind. The conservatives recalled that they had sought in vain to warn the citizenry of rampant rationalism in higher education. At the first Abilene program in 1918, H. E. Speck observed that such rationalism had not only encouraged the world's worst war, but had fathered a malignant "new spirit" in America. Claiming that gross materialism, greed, sensualism, and a loss of respect for the dignity of human personality were "signs of degeneration forcing themselves upon us," Speck asked "Why":

The answer is patent. For two or three generations the young have been educated in our schools in which the name of God is practically forbidden and from which the dogmas and precepts of religion have been driven. Are we not inviting disaster by shutting God out of schools?<sup>20</sup>

Speck charged that "complete education" could never be produced by a system of public instruction entirely void of the spiritual dimension. He prophesied that no matter how devout the home environment, students would irresistibly come to scoff at religious principles which were outlawed at school "during the best and brighter hours of the day, through the tenderest and most impressionable years of life." Speck concluded: "The door is perhaps forever shut against Christianity in the public schools. What are we going to do?"<sup>21</sup>

Sewell continued to argue that it was inconsistent to properly train children in the church and the home only to "place them in schools where every spiritual influence and all religious training are calculated to counteract and destroy our work." And Baxter reminded his hearers that in the light of such conditions, church members must acknowledge a financial obligation toward the cause of Christian education. Granting that all citizens of Texas were obligated to help pay the state's bill for free non-religious education, he maintained that Christians were primarily responsible for the maintenance of private religious schools. He placed the validity of his position on the value on one soul, and remarked rather personally:

When I look into the clear, innocent blue eyes of my little boy and hear him say, "God is up in Heaven, bad men killed Jesus, Jesus loves us, He wants us to be good," I am filled with trembling at my responsibility. I will give him over someday to other teachers to complete his training. I had rather someone steal into my home and destroy his young life in its innocence and purity than that some man deliberately—under the cover of education—wreck his faith and damn his soul.<sup>22</sup>

Five years later, in his first address as president of Abilene Christian College, Baxter parabolically pictured the disillusioning impact which experiences at a state university might conceivably have upon the faith of a young person.



You don't always have to pour water on a fire to put it out. If you can get that fire into a small room or in a house you can put it out with a fire extinguisher. It simply pours out an atmosphere in which fire will not—cannot burn. The modern idea of education is not always to throw water on the fire and fervor of Christian faith. The modern idea is to educate the mind and keep out all religious teaching. The very atmosphere provided is one in which it is difficult for the forces of faith to burn. In too many cases the flame goes out, and in many others it comes back home flickering.<sup>23</sup>

In 1929, Sewell stressed his earlier opposition to a system of public education which designedly ignored any need for religious instruction. Dwelling upon lurid social and moral atrocities of the "roaring twenties," he made application: "The crime wave is due to the absence of an adequate program of moral and religious education for the children and youth of the nation." Sewell was not only alarmed at unsavory conditions on university campuses, but said of the public high schools of the 1920's:

Beginning even with the high school, the spirit of the average modern school is the spirit of ragtime and jazz. The atmosphere is that of slang, profanity, coarseness, vulgarity, frivolity, extravagance, and self-indulgence. Reverence and piety, the conventions and virtues, are laughed to scorn as babyish and utterly out of date, and the students who maintain them are pushed aside as "nobody" in the social life of the institutions.<sup>24</sup>

At this juncture, Sewell launched the strongest single volley ever fired at Abilene against secular higher education. In an explosive, sixty-three word sentence, the Lectureship's founder charged:

I do not miss the facts when I say to you that, with the exception of a few individual institutions, the colleges of America have so far compromised with the forces of materialistic philosophy, irreverent unbelief, self-in-

dulgence, and extravagance, as to become a menace not only to the Church and the American home, but to the American ideal of government as well.<sup>25</sup>

Hence, the justification for private religious schools, their *raison d'être*, was rooted in the refusal of public education to deal with the spiritual dimension. After years of observation, the veteran Batsell Baxter charged in 1944 that increasing inability of the public school curriculum to accentuate spiritual values rendered it increasingly inadequate to educate the brotherhood's young people. Complimenting the elaborate facilities and enviable faculties of public institutions, Baxter observed that millions of dollars were annually dedicated to the intellectual development of the nation's youth. He added, "But wait—there is no outlay for religious training, no provision in either the high school or the tax-supported college to teach these young men how to carry on in their relation to God. That is all left out."<sup>26</sup>

### *Separation of Church and State*

The most thorough analysis of the inadequacies, or perhaps more accurately the incompleteness of public education, was included in M. Norvel Young's 1952 address, "Restoring God to Education." Taking precaution to make it clear that he did not advocate the abolition of America's vast system of public education, he expressed unreserved opposition "to the efforts of secular and materialistic forces which are seeking to employ our public schools for their unworthy goals!" Tendencies toward centralization and federal intervention, he felt, made it increasingly difficult to retain public education as a servant of the children and their parents.

Our major criticism of the job being done by and large by our public schools is that we have mistaken freedom *of* religion for freedom *from* religion. We are strongly opposed to the dominance of our

schools by any sectarian church, but we believe that it is equally dangerous for the irreligious, naturalistic philosophy of life to be inculcated at public expense.

Let us hasten to remind . . . that it is not the powerful system which we criticize, but the abuse of that system by those leaders who have denied the supernatural, Christian view of life and who seek to impose their philosophy upon our children through public education. Our vast educational system is but a tool to be used for enlightenment, freedom, and virtuous character development, or to be used by designing men for the enslavement, and moral degradation of our country's youth.<sup>27</sup>

Six years later Young delivered a second lecture on the identical topic, "Restoring God to Education." With new materials and supporting proofs he pursued the same point of view. Reminding his audience that most colleges born prior to the twentieth century emerged from the zeal of parents to train young people for a life of service to God, Young regretted that times had changed so drastically. While conceding that the state was in no position to assume full responsibility for Bible instruction, he registered disapproval at the sequence of affairs gradually uprooting all spiritual emphasis from public education.

We all know why the state cannot teach the Bible or religion. We realize that there are so many different denominations and such wide diversities of faith that it has been impossible to get an agreement on what a public institution could or should teach. In the state of California it has been ruled unconstitutional for the Bible to be read in the public schools . . . . Think of it! A nation that has been so blessed by God, spending billions of dollars for educational systems and turning over its young people to that system in which it is illegal to read the Bible. Have we not mistaken freedom of religion to mean freedom from religion.<sup>28</sup>

Although agreeing in essence with the many speakers which had preceded him, Jack Pope rose to question the

implications of the terms and arguments advanced by Sewell, Baxter, Cox, Young and others. He saluted the United States Constitution and urged his brethren to avoid lending unwitting encouragement to forces seeking to undermine the concept of a separation between Church and State. Honoring the idea that public schools should remain entirely aloof from the field of religion, he pointedly clashed with Young's words:

I repeatedly hear and read where my brethren declare that freedom *of* religion has been construed to mean freedom *from* religion. If, by that play upon oppositions, they imply that there are some persons in public schools who scoff at religion, we must agree with the statement. If, however, they imply that public schools should assume the task of religious training, then they argue that there is no need for private Christian schools and colleges and that they should be replaced or absorbed by public education. In my opinion, in a democracy, if enough people decide that public schools should teach religion, it can be achieved. In my opinion, such a step would destroy the greatest opportunity for Christian education by private institutions that any people at any time in history ever possessed.<sup>29</sup>

Next, Pope a Justice of the Texas Supreme Court, reviewed events in the histories of several religious bodies which had caused them to develop an intolerance along with their acquisition of power and the achievement of a position of dominance over the state. He implied that the same unfortunate conditions would result if churches of Christ were suddenly to seize control of all public education. Expressing regret that the First Amendment was frequently subjected to attacks in benign disguises, he credited it with keeping "more than 11,000 local school districts of our nation from becoming local ecclesiastics." Pope concluded his impelling argument, which in some respects amounted to a mild rebuttal to his predecessors, with the persuasive point: "Those of us who are neither Catholic, Protestant, nor Jew would be the last to expect any benefits to our faith from state religious education."<sup>30</sup>

But Pope was not in essential disagreement with the position of other speakers. All of the men who introduced the public schools issue advocated the rigid separation of church and state. That is, they all concurred that the government should not be dominated by the dogmas of any particular faith. Many of the speakers joined Pope's high admiration for America's system of state education. "It is one of the most significant achievements of our time," agreed M. Norvel Young, "and nothing which we say by way of constructive criticism should be construed to mean that we join those of certain faiths who would seek to destroy it."<sup>31</sup> Others urged Christians to become actively engaged in public education as members of parent-teachers groups and as teachers in the schools.

Most of the lecturers, however, deeply resented the calculated neglect of any spiritual emphasis in public institutions. A chronological reading of their remarks reveals intermittent disapproval of the steadily-evolving state laws prohibiting religious discussions, sacred songs, prayers, and Bible readings. In his 1918 keynote speech, Speck reported that it was against the law in one state for a teacher to conduct any classroom religious activities. The following year, Professor Yarborough revealed that in a 1904 survey of 1,098 cities of more than 4,000 population, 818 encouraged Bible reading in the classrooms of their schools while 162 of them strictly prohibited it. He added that in 915 of the cities, sacred songs were regularly sung by the pupils. Although the 1904 figures were generally optimistic, Yarborough reasoned: "In most of these cities where the Bible is read and prayer is made and sacred songs are sung, the teacher is not permitted to comment on the scripture read." He added: "Statistics show that about one-half of the children of public school age in our states are ignorant of the Bible, while only a few of the remaining half are really familiar with it."<sup>32</sup> In 1936, George H. Stephenson reported that while the laws of twelve states required daily Bible readings, the statute books of ten states then contained laws specifically prohibiting such practices.

He concluded that under "our present system of sectarianism and denominationalism it would be next to impossible to teach the Bible in our schools."<sup>33</sup>

As more and more states outlawed classroom religious activities in deference to the divergent beliefs of students, the lecturers charged that a weird injustice was being perpetrated in the name of freedom. They decried the enigma which found the vast academic system of the so-called Christian nation owing its very existence to the desire of parents to train their children for service to God yet completely stripped of prayers, Bible readings, and non-sectarian devotions. A sound principle had been distorted into a ridiculous and abusive extreme. The constitutional framers' "freedom of religion" had indeed been misconstrued to mean "freedom from religion.

Although Justice Pope was unreserved in his endorsement of the need for private religious education, he spoke from a different vantage point. He urged that the distinctive spheres of private and public education be recognized and mutually respected. Agreeing with the laws which withheld public institutions from participation in spiritual affairs, he insisted that state schools and governmental agencies must remain completely detached from the religious realm. Finally, he maintained that America provided an ideal political climate for the free and unmolested exercise of Christian education. And "we should not become a willing arm to any plan which would open the door to official proscription of our mission."<sup>34</sup>

### *The Bible Chair Arrangement*

The only practical plan which churches of Christ have proposed for co-ordinating state education with church supervised religious instruction is the Bible Chair system. Here again, the Abilene Lectureship performed the valuable service of urging the brotherhood to follow the lead of denominations which had

initiated such programs during the nineteenth century. Thomas Jefferson proposed the Bible Chair arrangement at the University of Virginia in 1822 by suggesting that the denominations "establish each for itself a professorship of their own tenets on the confines of the university—preserving, however, their independence."<sup>35</sup> The Baptists, through the Francis Wayland Foundation, and the Methodists, through the Wesley Foundation were quick to follow suit at a number of schools in the North. The liberal wing of the disciples' movement established a Bible Chair as early as 1893 at the University of Michigan, but the first such arrangement between a state school and members of the churches of Christ was initiated at the University of Texas in 1918 by Charles H. Roberson, frequent lecturer at Abilene.

In 1955, lecturer Mont Whitson pointed out that approximately ninety per cent of the church's young people entering college enroll in state institutions. He contended that the Bible Chair arrangement provided an ideal atmosphere of religious instruction and Christian guidance to these students without creating any dangerous tie between the church and the state school. Whitson, who directed the Bible Chair at Texas Technological College and later at Texas A and M, explained the procedure:

A Bible Chair is simply an arrangement in a state school where Bible is taught by instructors selected by the Church and recognized by the school. From six to eighteen hours in Bible can be counted toward a degree. Usually in connection with the Bible courses taught, there is a daily devotional held for all interested students and opportunities provided for Christian fellowship. Usually Bible Chair work is conducted from a Student Center building located adjacent to the college campus . . . . In many instances it amounts to something like a small Christian college adjacent to a state university. The work of a Bible Chair centers around five areas of work. These include Bible classes, daily devotionals, fellowship, counseling and administration.<sup>36</sup>

*Christian Elementary and High Schools*

Respect for the principle of church-state separation motivated several speakers to forthrightly discourage the establishment of Christian schools at the elementary and high school levels. As early as 1919, Joseph A. Yarborough contended that Christian colleges "should not be rivals of public schools, but should serve a specific function." Opposing the Catholic parochial pattern, Yarborough held that this "specific function" should be limited exclusively to the field of higher education. "We do not want such church schools," he affirmed, "but our program should call for more co-operative effort in our elementary education by the Church and the state."<sup>37</sup>

The same rationale, however, which gave justification to college level religious training encouraged more and more speakers to advocate the establishment of Christian elementary and high schools. And once again, members of churches of Christ not only entered the field of parochial education belatedly, but against the grain of the predominating national trend among most religious groups. The colonies had been settled by Hollanders, Moravians, Mennonites, German Lutherans, Quakers, Presbyterians, and Catholics who transplanted the continental European idea that all educational effort should be supervised by the church. The Roman Catholic Church early became most successful in the field of parochial education. With an estimated 2,500 high schools and academies instructing more than 700,000 students, and 10,000 elementary schools with 2,775,000 pupils, the motto has been "every Catholic child in a Catholic school." Among protestants, the Lutherans and Seventh Day Adventists have been leaders in parochial education.<sup>38</sup>

With rare exception, since the first war private education has yielded to the competition from public education.



Tax-supported institutions have secured more adequate buildings and facilities and have held a distinct advantage in the crucial areas of curriculum offerings, faculty acquisitions, and general academic excellence. Peter P. Person added a second explanation for the demise of parochial education—the transference of church interest to the field of higher education.

The tragedy seems to be that after academies have developed into accredited four-year colleges, the secondary education becomes delegated to the public high schools. The biography of a large number of our Christian colleges is that they were born as academies, added college courses year by year until they attained college stature, then continued to carry the academy as a sort of historical appendage sharing the same campus, until, finally, for financial as well as for college-expansion reasons, the academy was sloughed off.<sup>39</sup>

Churches of Christ are among that minority of religious bodies which have increased rather than decreased activity in the field of elementary and high school religious training during the twentieth century. In 1922, Abilene lecturer G. H. P. Showalter advocated that every local congregation should maintain its own parochial system at the elementary and secondary levels.

We may have enough of the larger schools or colleges, enough institutions, at least designed to provide "higher education." But I do not entertain so much satisfaction in regard to the provision that is being made for lower education. The Catholics are scrupulously careful to train the children while they are young, and tell us that if they can have the child until he is twelve years old, others may educate him then—he will always be a Catholic.<sup>40</sup>

The church has been slow to incorporate Showalter's optimistic suggestions. In fact, the limited parochial movement in the brotherhood has largely been a post-World

War II phenomenon. A paragraph from Bennie Lee Fudge's 1956 lecture provides a brief historical perspective for this phase of Christian education.

The Christian Education movement is not a new thing. David Lipscomb's High School is now in its sixty-fifth year. I believe high school work has been offered here at A. C. C. for its 50-year history. Pacific Christian Academy is thirty-eight years old. Yet thirteen of our eighteen schools are less than fourteen years old. This means that the great impetus in this movement had come about since the outbreak of World War II. Several new schools are now in the planning state . . . .<sup>41</sup>

### *Positive Advantages of Christian Education*

Allegations of inadequacy in secular institutions do not satisfy the burden of positive proof in the case for Christian education. After having diagnosed the problem, the lecturers set about to establish the efficacy of the remedy—to affirm positively the unique assets of private religious schools.

Undergirding the more specific advantages of religious education was the broad assumption that the Christian system creates an ideal atmosphere for integrating and synthesizing the isolated fragments of human knowledge. In 1943, J. P. Sanders framed the aim of Christian education in the words of Christ: "Ye therefore shall be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect." Contending that the integrating forces of Christianity are essential to remedying "the hopeless confusion of modern society," Sanders described the campus of the Christian college as providing balance and proportion for all knowledge gained in specialized areas of research.

When one starts with Christianity he views the universe from the center outward. Consequently he sees all parts of the circumference very well. But if one starts

with any other viewpoint he is looking toward the center from the circumference and he loses both proportion and perspective.<sup>42</sup>

Thirteen years later, Justice Pope featured the same premise in deeper detail. Reviewing the history of intellectual specialization since Francis Bacon's popularization of the inductive process, he asserted: "Out of the process we have a host of specialists, mental giants, and authorities about the isolated fragments of mankind's total affairs; but men, familiar with only their own intellectual cave, have been deluded by the belief that they have discovered all the ultimate answers." Maintaining that mass specialization and academic isolation are distractive of total development, Pope insisted that unifying principles are needed to synthesize man's extensive patches of knowledge. "The empty educational philosophies of the several decades during which we are just emerging have given us materialism, sensualism, relativism, mechanism, nihilism, and positivism as ways of thought; and cynics, materialists, and infidels as their children." He then came to the point:

To me it is significant that the solidifying factor is the product in which we deal . . . the principles of the Bible . . . . The time is at hand when Christian Colleges should cry out to all the world that we have and are practicing the method for which they search. Educators and scientists will one day lead their students to the doors of Christian colleges and say to them: "We have taught you science of all kinds, the arts, economics, higher mathematics . . . . Your education is as yet incomplete. We secular professors have gone as far as we can . . . to the doors of a Christian college. There you must learn about man's purpose on earth and of his hope for the future . . . . We have taught you," he will continue, "about the body and the mind, but here you must learn also about the soul and the spirit. Here you will learn about God, and His Son, Jesus, in whom all knowledge is unified."<sup>43</sup>

Sanders and Pope were agreed that the Christian academic synthesis was no end within itself. It should serve merely as

a tool in the pursuit of happiness and fulfillment. "The ideal of the secular school," observed Sanders, "may be truth for truth's sake, but that is not enough. We want to find the truth that we may make the world a better place in which to live."<sup>44</sup> Pope's lecture made the same point:

The solution of the educational dilemma is found in the teaching of the Bible, which alone, completely and satisfactorily closes the circle of knowledge for every specialist, every analyst, every expert. Study electrons? Of course! But the idea that human behavior may be interpreted in terms of electrons is an idea that is now discredited. The study of Aristotle produced fruitless results in many areas, just as the study of a mechanistic science has since proved equally fruitless in terms of human understanding.<sup>45</sup>

The lecturers then discussed specific assets of the Christian college under two broad headings: advantages to the student body, and contributions to the preservation and growth of the church. Four distinct spiritual advantages to students emerged from the speeches: systematic classroom instruction in the Bible, daily chapel, a Christian professor for every academic discipline, and a wholesome social atmosphere.

President Cox pin-pointed in 1943 the cornerstone of Christian education: "This institution gives the Bible the most prominent place in its curriculum." The opportunity to receive regular academic instruction in the Bible at the feet of men who believe it to be in a special sense the word of God was consistently featured as the prime advantage. Don H. Morris inherited the Abilene presidency from Cox and announced to the Lectureship audience: "The purpose of the Christian college is to provide a place where this teaching can be done in an organized, effective way in Bible courses, just as the teaching of literature or one of the arts may be done." Pepperdine's President Young partic-

ularly emphasized the advantage which such instruction accrues to the student: "If we really believe that the Bible is of divine origin and that God's Holy Spirit works through this instrument to the changing of our lives, then we cannot teach the Bible to young people in the formative years of their lives without expecting good results."<sup>46</sup>

The lecturers found a second advantage in the fact that all courses in the liberal arts curriculum are taught by Christian professors within the framework of the Christian philosophy of life. Cox was explicit about the importance of maintaining such a faculty.

Those who teach all the other branches of learning, as well as Bible, must be Christian men and women—those who believe the Bible to be the truth . . . . Every teacher on the faculty must be a Christian, a member of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and must be free from habits that are not consistent with Christian living.<sup>47</sup>

The speakers, therefore, urged the development and perpetuation of institutions in which the science laboratory would be equally as dynamic a center for the propagation of Christianity as the religion classroom. They considered it incumbent upon the instructors of each subject—whether history, biology, English, or animal husbandry—to relate the facts in their disciplines to the central purpose of God in Christ. "If God really is God, and Jesus Christ is the Son of God," reasoned Young, "then how can we have complete education if we rule out the most important persons in the universe."<sup>48</sup> Six years earlier he had put it in these words:

The Christian view of life is not an air-tight compartment which deals with a few moral or religious principles. If God is God, then no fact in the universe can be properly understood apart from Him. "In Him we live and move and have our being." How can we comprehend history, the study of nature, or the study

of man, without reference to God and Christ? . . . Modern college training does not consist merely of learning certain techniques such as how to spell, how to add and subtract, how to use a microscope, or play a violin. It also proposes to develop attitudes, to teach the meaning of the world about us, to cultivate personality. In this area it is so important to have teachers with the Christian point of view.<sup>49</sup>

Opportunity to attend daily chapel is a third advantage offered to Christian college students. The speakers contended that this experience of regular worship with "the expanded family," including faculty and fellow students, is of inestimable value to the cultivation of the soul. Joseph W. White described the chapel hour as the heart of the campus, the most vital single influence in the life of the college community. "Here," he explained, "spiritual values are taught, practiced and grasped. Here students, faculty, and visitors join in making worship fact of human experience."<sup>50</sup> Another speaker reminisced:

I can bear witness from personal experience at three of the colleges to the profound spiritual effect these daily worship experiences have. I have seen rough athletes who grouched at the idea of "having to go to chapel" become devoted leaders in the Church in their home community and give most of the credit to the influence of college chapel. I have seen students who began the school year trying to cram for tests during chapel end the year with a deepened spiritual love for God and Christ. We are all human, and our children are human. Daily worship to God in spirit and in truth in fellowship with hundreds of fellow-students builds us up in soul.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, the speakers stressed the advantage of a wholesome campus atmosphere in which associations and social functions "are in harmony with the godly life." Don H. Morris's 1942 lecture labeled the ability to attract students primarily from the homes of the brotherhood as "unusually desirable." He quoted a letter from an ex-student:

Thus through words, but chiefly example, the students imbibe the spirit of the teachers. Furthermore, in a four-year college the freshman comes into a society in which the rest of the student body, except other freshmen, have moved from one, two, or three years and have drunk deep of the spirit which, emanating from the faculty, permeates the society. They associate with many young men of powerful personality who not only are not ashamed of Christ, but who glory in the cross. They see that men can be scholarly, without renouncing religion as a thing of ignorance and superstition. They are inspired with the vision of service which makes foreign missionaries, faithful gospel preachers, well-qualified elders, and faithful fathers and mothers, who bear into the world the spirit of Christ handed down from godly men and women.<sup>52</sup>

A few lecturers rebutted the persistent criticism that the Christian college, because of the exclusive character of its student body and its controlled campus situation, provides an unrealistic shelter of over-protection from the pressing evils and vital issues of the age. Young confessed that "in days gone by there may have been some instances in which some schools were too isolated and created a hot-house type of environment." He insisted, however, that modern means of communication have largely corrected this condition. There should be a strong enough Christian influence on the campus to set the tone or the climate," he affirmed, "so that those students who are not in harmony with the ideals of the school or are not acquainted with them will be influenced dynamically and positively by the climate."<sup>53</sup>

Since college life brings together students during the years when they normally look for a mate, possibilities for marriage between young people of the same faith, sharing a common concept of the Christian home, are unusually high on the campus of a religious school. Morris proudly displayed in 1942 the record of Abilene Christian College: "Of the hundreds of couples that have met on the campus

and married, only one or two has ended in divorce." In 1952, Young reported that "whereas in the general public one marriage in three ends in divorce, marriages made through associations on Christian college campuses show less than one per cent ending in divorce." In 1961, Sanders added that on the basis of several studies, "young people that have graduated from the colleges supported by the brotherhood had fifty times the chance for success in marriage as the general population."<sup>54</sup>

### *Christian Education and The Church*

Interestingly, more speechmaking was directed toward the contribution of Christian education to the church's preservation and growth than to advantages accruing to the students themselves. Speck's keynote address stoutly postulated in 1918:

History bears irrefutable witness to the fact that education and the growth of Christianity are inseparably connected. Every great religious movement has been immediately followed by an educational revival, and the movement has been successful and permanent only in so far as it has taken the schools into its alliance.<sup>55</sup>

Speck then reviewed the activities of denominational schools in Scotland, and Jesuit colleges in Europe, and cited contributions which Baptist schools had made to that communion's growth in Canada. Appealing for "co-operation between the Church and schools," he argued:

The story is the same, no matter where you look. Will I be considered a heretic if I say that today if "we as a people" ever intend to come into our own and to make the influence of the religion of Jesus Christ felt through us, we must build, maintain, and perpetuate a system of schools in which Christianity in its beauty and simplicity may be taught in some way co-ordinate with the state schools . . . I am willing to go one step further,



and say that that individual who purposefully puts himself in the way of the progress of Christian education through the Christian college is either ignorant of the opportunity it affords, or he is a slacker in the army of Jesus Christ, and a traitor to His cause.<sup>56</sup>

The following year, Yarborough contended that through the preparation of an educated ministry, Christian colleges were making a dramatic contribution to the future development of the churches.

It is here that most of our preachers receive their early training. The Church today demands and deserves a trained minister. Statistics show that our educated ministers received their early training in Christian colleges. The age calls for great preachers, well trained. The ministers of the past, though largely untrained, did their work heroically. The preachers of the future must possess all the eloquence and evangelistic fervor of their predecessors, and to this they must add the learning, the social interest, the sympathy, and the teaching power which comes through college training.<sup>57</sup>

Other early lecturers were equally as optimistic in predicting the brotherhood impact which Christian education was destined to have. "We all admit the need of a trained ministry," said Speck. "What we need more is a generation of trained elders and deacons. The greatest service that colleges can render in the immediate future lies in the training of a new type of layman." Speck then added parenthetically: "(God hasten the day when our loved ones at home may enjoy the opportunity of a week like this.)" He then explained the need for men and women trained to teach, to lead singing, "men as leaders, men into whose hands the care of the Church can be placed."<sup>58</sup>

Sewell similarly prophesied in 1919 that even those Christian college graduates who did not preach would become key leaders in the local congregations. "Christian-

ity," he reasoned, "is not merely for those of your boys who are going to make preachers, but as well for those who are to be farmers, mechanics, doctors, lawyers."<sup>59</sup>

Ten years later, Sewell resumed the theme and urged churches to support Christian education as a direct means of securing the future of the brotherhood. "Christians must be made to see the Christian school," he declared, "not as a privilege, but as a necessity."<sup>60</sup> On the same program in 1929, W. F. Ledlow spoke of "Religious Education in Texas." Extensive research had led him to conclude that "Christian education is a prominent factor in church growth and development." Noticing particularly the histories of the schools which the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Disciples had supported in Texas, Ledlow speculated that if these denominations had not built colleges, "their numbers would not be nearly so great as they are. At least a thousand dead colleges in Texas, but a million Protestants inhabit the land." Speaking on the very eve of Abilene Christian College's near depression-disaster, Ledlow appealed for brethren to support the brotherhood's largest college.

The future demands that we build more wisely, and more carefully. We must center our forces and build one real college, and make its life secure. As I see it, the Abilene Christian College is the logical place to put our efforts, and is the one institution in Texas that demands our immediate attention. Several visits to the College have impressed me with the great work it does, and the promise the future holds for it. Within the next few years, I should like to see Abilene Christian College receive several million dollars and take its place among the truly great schools of the South.<sup>61</sup>

Years later J. C. Bailey saw a definite cause-effect relationship in the maintenance of schools and the future strength of the church.

Take a map and look over these United States and see where the Church is strong. Then see where

the schools and colleges are. You will find that they live side by side. Then do a little historic research and you will find that the parts of the country where the Church has opposed the use of the schools and colleges, operated by our brethren, that the Church has not grown, and in many cases has retrogressed in the last generation.<sup>62</sup>

L. D. Webb followed the same rationale in saluting especially the influence of David Lipscomb College and Abilene Christian College:

In 1864 all churches of Christ in Nashville were swept away by the digression except one little congregation. David Lipscomb and James A. Harding decided to start a school for the training of young men. Today there are over one hundred congregations of the Church in Davidson County. Abilene Christian College was started here in Abilene fifty years ago; today the Church can be found in just about every small village town in West Texas.<sup>63</sup>

Several addresses described the influence of the Christian College in mission areas. In 1955, Bailey, a Canadian missionary, presented the plight of a small school in Saskatchewan. "If there is a need of . . . schools where the Bible is taught every day under guidance of godly teachers; then, surely where members are few and preachers are scarce is the place where this need is most urgent." The following year, Harvey Childress reported that a completely equipped campus in York, Nebraska capable of accommodating more than two hundred students had been received as a gift. He predicted that the new school would mean not only that "small congregations will grow into self-supporting congregations much more rapidly, but that many more souls will be saved in the process. York College will help the entire area of the North central states."<sup>64</sup>

In 1959, Claude A. Guild came from Oregon to speak on the Christian school as a missionary method. He announced

that the history of each college established by the brotherhood in a mission field demonstrated that education is a direct means of building the Church. "In the past five years," he reported, "the largest church in the state of Oregon has developed in the neighborhood of Columbia Christian College, while other congregations in the state are more than sixty years old."<sup>65</sup>

Schools were also praised for their work in preparing workers for mission fields. As early as 1922, C. J. Robinson exclaimed: "I am glad we now have schools conducted by the churches to train the young for effective work in the Church as missionaries to the world." At the other end of the Lectureship, Leon C. Burns asserted that schools "like Abilene Christian College are doing more to create missionary zeal in the hearts of young men and women than any of us thought possible a few years ago." Frank Pack added that colleges are ideally equipped to provide such vital special preparation as language training for the prospective missionary.<sup>66</sup>

### *Two Divergent Dangers*

While much was being said about these great contributions, two potential dangers which the colleges portended for the brotherhood were also mentioned. Some feared that the schools would become organically tied to and eventually control the church, thus violating the scriptural pattern of church organization. In contradistinction, others feared that the schools would move in the opposite direction—away from the life of the church—and lead out in a theological departure from the simplicity of biblical principles. The Abilene speakers recommended a middle course between these two poles of apostasy. While opposing any organic coalition between the church and the schools they were forthright in urging that warm ties of institutional fellowship be preserved. James F. Cox stated in 1934 that the college was not an ec-

clesiasticism of the church, nor was it established to "do the work of the Church or to supplement the work of the Church," "It is rather," he reasoned, "an extension of the home."<sup>67</sup>

Other lecturers approved Cox's description of the college as an adjunct of the Christian home. F. W. Mattox was the first of three 1957 speakers to answer the arguments of a brotherhood minority who condemned the schools as anti-scriptural.

To those who have been critical of Christian schools, I would like to suggest that any two or three Christian parents have the right to create a school of their own, hire their own teacher, and see that their children are properly taught. If two or three parents can join forces and create a little school of their own, it is also right for other parents to join with them in helping pay the teacher's salary in order to include their children under correct teaching. If this is true, and it cannot be questioned, then, it is right for large numbers of Christian parents to join forces and create high schools and colleges. This points out clearly the fact that the Christian school is an adjunct to the home, rather than of the Church, and as such it has every right to exist and serve to save the faith of our children.<sup>68</sup>

Agreeing with Mattox, Joseph W. White nonetheless maintained that, for the benefit of both institutions, a spirit of close and cordial fellowship should be maintained between the college and the church. "There cannot be a wall of distrust or misunderstanding between the college and the church," he said. "Wise administrators are keenly aware of this common interest. They will seek in every possible way to discover the spirit and will of the brotherhood. It is their lifeline."<sup>69</sup> Speaking on the agenda with Mattox and White, Alonzo Welch added that the church should even take precautions to control the doctrinal position of the colleges. "Historically," he warned, "the academic precincts of the world have been the most fertile and effec-

tive breeding ground of error. While our schools are among our most precious assets," he added, "they can become our greatest liabilities. Any school that manifests indifference toward error deserves to die from neglect at the hands of the brethren."<sup>70</sup>

### *Keeping the College Christian*

Welch's warning introduces a dominant Lectureship theme. The secularization of state education in this century has helped to encourage the demise of the religious character of scores of traditional Christian colleges. Some schools, founded to foster denominational dogma, have ceased to make any spiritual pretense whatsoever. Others have succumbed less dramatically—but even more hypocritically—to the same siren calls. Most awkward of all are those institutions who yet pay lip service to religious purposes while having long since capitulated and conformed—"having a form of godliness, but denying the very power thereof."

Since chapel exercises lie at the very heart of the traditional Christian college personality, departures frequently were first objectified in this area. Many institutions have discontinued chapel, others have come to look upon it as simply a student assembly. In some schools the trappings of worship are burdensomely perpetuated, but the chapel hour has lost its thrust as a vital force in the college community. "The secularization of protestant higher education has meant," wrote Peter P. Person, "that, aside from a few highly diluted courses in Christianity (required but by no means popular) and weekly chapel services with some reference to religion, the program of the Christian colleges differs very little from that of the state college."<sup>71</sup> A survey of the opinions of various denominational boards of education found that a college should no longer be considered Christian merely because it was founded by Christians for spiritual purposes; nor because of its attachment to a

particular ecclesiastical organization; nor because of the theological position of the faculty; nor because the Bible is studied and read along with prayers and devotions each day. All of these characteristics may be true of a school, but they do not, within themselves, make it Christian. From the survey replies, a truly Christian college must possess the following traits: Christian objective, aim, purpose; a Christian faculty; a Christian viewpoint; a Christian spirit, atmosphere, life; a Christian program; a Christian product.<sup>72</sup>

The Lectureship's blue-ribbon address on the theme, *keeping the college Christian*, was delivered in 1922 by J. N. Armstrong, President of Harding College. To the question posed in his impelling title, "When Weighed in the Balance Are We Found Wanting?" Armstrong answered that the college's only justification was that it be totally Christian. "Every department, every course, and every school activity in which we engage. . . . And any school that cannot stand this test deserves to die." He applied what he called "this acid test" to all exhibitions of college spirit, athletics, societies, recreation and entertainment. His opinions as to those things which posed a threat to the Christian character of the campus were, in part, influenced by the customs and mores of the 1920's. In speaking of entertainment, for instance, he admitted that "all of our schools have been criticized for their 'shows and theatricals.'" He blamed a world "drunk with the lust for entertainment" as being responsible for the schools' undue emphasis upon recreational and social activities.

Several of the broad principles which Armstrong emphasized, however, were endorsed by many subsequent speakers at Abilene. "You will find an almost unyielding force eternally tugging at you for changes that, if made, will mean the forsaking of every justifying principle on which the work stands." He feared both "pressure from within and pressure from without." Armstrong stated:

If the Christian school is needed; and if it is justified only because it is Christianity, let us be content with the schools we can give to the world, while faithful to the hampers of Christianity. . . . No great departure comes in a day. Nor does it come up the front way and ask for entrance. It creeps in at the keyhole, under the door, through the crevices. Like a thief it steals in when we are unaware.<sup>73</sup>

Three years before Armstrong's message, Batsell Baxter spoke of a definite relationship between the size of an institution and its ability to remain thoroughly Christian. His 1919 understanding of the ideal campus arrangement is interesting.

I want to say right here that I am in favor of small colleges. Oh, I don't mean little schools of thirty or forty students. I think the ideal school in point of numbers should contain not less than two hundred students and not more than three hundred. That is about all one faculty can do justice to . . . Most of our great men have come from colleges whose enrollment was small enough that the teachers could come in personal touch with the students.<sup>74</sup>

The next voice to be raised was Sewell's, who warned in 1929 of the temptation to attempt to imitate the programs of large universities. He feared that such imitation would produce a faded carbon copy and result in forfeiture of a truly distinguishing educational role. Sewell then charged that in the inordinate desire for size, material excellence, and glorified reputation some Christian schools had already forgotten that they had been designed to serve the brotherhood. "To trustees, teachers, students, patrons, and supporters of Christian education, may I utter this warning? As the years go by, and our Christian . . . schools grow in age, influence, power, and wealth, as they will, we are going to find it far more difficult to maintain our faith, character, ideals, spirit and service than to obtain all of the necessary material equipment and academic training necessary."<sup>75</sup>



In 1934, James F. Cox resumed the discussion, advising Christian school to avoid frustrating competition in areas where they were hopelessly in arrears. He urged them to direct their labors toward preserving the spiritual dimension—a realm in which secular institutions were not equipped to compete. “It is the purpose,” he contended, “to offer something, however, that these state institutions do not and cannot offer . . . to stress spiritual development.”<sup>76</sup> Thirty-nine years after Armstrong’s first alert—years which saw some of the brotherhood’s schools languish and die and others flourish into national reputation—J. P. Sanders soberly echoed: “The problem of keeping it Christian is the perennial challenge to the administration and faculty.”<sup>77</sup> And Justice Pope, a member of the Abilene Christian College board of trustees, pledged that the exciting future’s first trust must be to keep faith with the past:

Our greatest opportunities also present our greatest dangers. The great universities of the East started as religious institutions, but through the decades, as they grew large and wealthy, one by one they became just another institution. We, too, should endeavor to serve more and more students, but with bigness will come dangers and allurements and pressures not present when we are small and largely unnoticed.<sup>78</sup>

### *Who Should Pay The Bill?*

If keeping it Christian has been Christian education’s most perennial problem, adequate financing has been its most practical one. From 1918 to 1944 every Lectureship program included one or more addresses designed to confront the visitors with the pressing material needs of Christian education. Morris’ 1942 plea is typical of many others:

In the days that are ahead, much will need to be done. Educational standards will have to be met; the remaining part of our debt must be paid; new build-

ings are needed now and will have to be built. Problems of a war-torn world will come in a special way to schools like ours. With appreciation for every dollar and every life that have been contributed and spent here and for every prayer that has been prayed that our work may continue and the righteous purposes for which it was founded, we ask that you, and all of the friends of youth and the Lord's way may continue to give, that Christian schools like ours may continue to live and serve.<sup>79</sup>

Neither eligible for nor desirous of subsidy from state or federal governments, Christian schools must depend entirely upon gifts from groups and individuals who appreciate their distinctive educational programs. In 1944, Batsell Baxter regretted that most schools founded by the brethren had perished. He asked:

Why? Why did they die? For lack of building and equipment, for lack of endowment to meet the demand of Educational Association Accreditors, for lack of money to pay living salaries to teachers; not because boys and girls did not want to go there. These colleges starved to death in the midst of wealth and plenty of it; good men and women hung on there, hoping for financial relief which never came, taught until dire necessity forced them to close the schools and seek places where they could get enough money to live and serve.<sup>80</sup>

"If we are going to light a candle in this darkened age," continued M. Norvel Young a decade later, "we must pay for the tallow and the string. One reason why Bible colleges have died is that their friends were under the misapprehension that once they were started, they could become self-supporting on tuition and fees." In 1958, Young emphasized that the primary source of revenue for Christian schools apart from tuition and fees must be the gifts of Christian individuals. Although some of the speakers were wary of dependence upon non-church sources for heavy support, Young contended that both large corporations and local businesses have a personal stake in the

fight to "keep alive our non-tax supported institution." He recognized, however, the wisdom of the old adage, "he who pays the fiddler will call the tune," and concluded that the ultimate responsibility for financing rests with the brotherhood. He outlined the potential dangers if the brotherhood fails in its responsibility:

It is still true, however, that unless Christians are willing to pick up the bill, the kind of schools that they want cannot be long maintained. . . . If we fail to support them when they are doing a good job and are remaining true to their high and holy aims, we court disaster. It will result in one of the following consequences: (1) It may result in their turning to outside sources of revenue and thus eventually being lost to the Cause of New Testament Christianity. (2) It may result in their lowering their standards and doing inferior work and thus attracting fewer capable students and gradually dying out.<sup>81</sup>

### *Financial Strength and Academic Excellence*

The most crippling criticism to be aimed at small, private religious schools is that they are academically inferior to state universities. Limited curriculums, inadequate facilities for advanced studies and research, and special difficulty in attracting and holding a superior faculty are persistent problems which Christian educators attribute directly to financial anemia. One respected writer interestingly observed this relationship between economic starvation and scholastic mediocrity:

When an institutional debt depresses the morale of the personnel, the work becomes inferior. Teachers who fail to draw enough salary to pay their own grocery bills can scarcely be expected to teach courses in economics in a calm, unbiased, and scholarly manner. When money solicited for educational purposes must be used to pay interest on old debts, it is difficult to

arouse the public to an appreciation of the glory of higher education.<sup>82</sup>

At the Abilene Lectureship, Joseph U. Yarborough charged in 1919 that "higher education in the Church has grown up in a chaotic way, hence that the various institutions are entirely lacking in correlation of purpose."<sup>83</sup> Representatives of the schools of other religious groups were also lamenting the lack of system used in the founding and locating of their denominational institutions.

Great sums of money have been expended in starting new educational enterprises, doomed to failure from their inception. It would have been better if it would have been spent in adequately strengthening existing institutions. As a result there are many small, weak, struggling schools and but a few strong ones.<sup>84</sup>

The early Abilene speakers similarly deplored the confusion, competition, and resulting low academic quality which had characterized the brotherhood's efforts at Christian education. Yarborough recommended an organized brotherhood plan for "small, compact colleges wisely distributed over the country with a few well-manned departments." In an effort to upgrade the quality and efficiency level of such schools, he urged "the selection of a number of well-prepared members from among us to attend to our educational business."<sup>85</sup> Yarborough's suggestion came at a time when most large denominations were organizing boards to which were committed educational policies and programs. No such board, however, was formed to attend to the educational business of churches of Christ.

Warning his listeners that academic excellence could not possibly be attained apart from strong financial support, Yarborough stated in 1919:

The first step in building such a college is to raise a large endowment fund. For higher institutions of learn-

ing are far more costly than some of us seem to think. Buildings are an important item of expense, but with them erected the continued expense begins. Equipment and laboratories for all the sciences are necessary; books must be bought for the library; a larger and better prepared and better paid faculty must be secured; scholarships, museums, printing establishments, and many other features must be provided. A Christian college cannot afford to fall behind in these respects. The fact that it is a Christian college is no excuse for its asking a worthy and self-sacrificing staff of instruction to teach for underpay. No faculty, however consecrated, can render the best service when the institution in which they labor faces a deficit year after year. For an institution to sound its trumpet before men and profess to be doing a standard of work far beyond its physical means, brings shame to the Church and eventually dishonor to itself.<sup>86</sup>

Another lecturer feared that in the hurried effort to provide the benefits of Christian education to as many people as possible, the curriculum offerings and class sessions had been geared to a level of mediocrity. Pope tersely summarized the brotherhood's lack of actual preparation by asserting that "if just one of the 11,000 independent school districts of our nation should vacate the field today and turn it over to us, we could not provide either adequate secular or Christian education in that single district." He was also the only speaker to report a weakness in library facilities. Insisting that college libraries should house a minimum of three quarter million volumes, he suggested that instead of sending our scholars to the libraries of our nation, those scholars should be coming to our library and to our campus."<sup>87</sup>

Granting the importance of adequate buildings and facilities, the lecturers were agreed that the classroom teacher actually held the key to real academic quality. J. N. Armstrong was a harbinger of the growing trend of teachers and preachers in the brotherhood to pursue doctoral studies. He challenged in 1922:

I close therefore with a call for heroes and heroines for this battlefield. Were I a young man in the vigor of life, nothing would satisfy me except a Ph.D. And the motivation in my toiling for it would be that I might give it with all it might be worth to the Christian school. I say give it, for hear me, young men, the Christian college can never buy it. Are your A.B.'s, M.A.'s, and Ph.D.'s too good for this humble work? Is your price prohibitive? I beg you tonight whose hearts move you toward this work, forget that your scholarship and your degree have a market value. Lay the best you have on the altar without money and without price. In no other way can the Christian school live forever.<sup>88</sup>

A few men expressed concern over the dearth of original research among faculties of Christian schools. Everett Ferguson maintained that "those recognized as scholars among us have been the men who have studied what others have done and have done a minimum of original work with the primary materials."<sup>89</sup> Pope added that the failure of the brotherhood to appropriately support research efforts of able men, partially explained the shortage of original work.

Publications take free time and publication money. Time and money must be placed at the disposal of our scholars if we expect them to contribute fresh and stimulating books and materials to the rest of the world. I am ashamed when I think of the great Bible and language scholars, the educators, psychologists, and scientists, the historians and writers whose mature thoughts of a lifetime are forever lost, just because people like you and me have not accorded them sabbatical leaves of absence to produce new and vital works.<sup>90</sup>

### *Campus Racial Integration*

Early Abilene speakers could not have predicted that schools their lectures were helping to found and strengthen would one day face complex racial problems. Of the

colleges established prior to World War II by members of churches of Christ, only Los Angeles' Pepperdine College was situated outside the deep South or Southwest. As might be expected, Pepperdine was the only one of the schools to be fully integrated. Administrators at the other institutions had no cause to ponder seriously such a move. But the celebrated 1956 Supreme Court decision created that cause.

When the racial issue first erupted in the American legislature and press, private schools enjoyed an early hour of immunity. Fierce public attention was first focused upon state-supported education. Even as the rising tide of racial unrest flooded the land with riots, walk-outs, and sit-downs, virtually all sentiment for educational equality was exerted through pressures and legislation aimed at the public school level. Most private educational institutions of the South—both large and small, religious and otherwise—quietly and nervously watched the conflict with much the same apprehension, and in some instances even the dread, of the next little boy in the vaccination line at the doctor's office.

With the crisis-ridden but rapid integration of public school systems and state universities of the South came the ascending national attitude, "it is inevitable." And at the very moment pressure from without began to focus upon private institutions, disturbed consciences from within began to agitate for complete integration of Christian schools and colleges. The stage was set for unprecedented drama at the Abilene Lectureship. H. L. Barber, president of a newly-founded college for Negroes at Terrell, Texas, was the first to introduce the issue. His 1954 remarks, though mild by subsequent standards, were the first of their kind to come from the Abilene series.

I doubt seriously today in the sight of our great Master that souls are tinted black, white, red, or yellow. When the day of judgment comes, I doubt seriously that our Father will say to those gathered before

Him, "You that are white approach my throne through the front gate, and you of other colors will be shown to the back door where you will be judged by some of my lesser helpers." A thousand times no! I do not believe that one soul is more important in the sight of God than another. Regardless of the color of the body in which that soul is temporarily housed.<sup>91</sup>

Two years later, Barber came back to repeat his plea for support of the Negro college, slightly increasing the temperature of his talk: "In this land of 150,000,000 people where at least five skin colors number in the millions, is there a master race? Think carefully, my Christian friends; the Nazis believed in the theory of master race. Do Christianity and Nazism go hand in hand?"<sup>92</sup>

Even before Barber's day, missionary speakers had charged that racial prejudice was hampering hopes for world evangelism. "It appropriates religion for political ends," said J. M. McCaleb as far back as 1920. "There are no political or racial borders to the Gospel."<sup>93</sup> Mack Kercheville later named "the elimination of racial prejudice" as "the first step" toward taking the message to Latin America. His remarks about the vangelistic inexpediency of prejudice carried strong overtones into the ethical and moral realm as well:

It is and always will be impossible for us to influence people as long as we feel superior to them. If there were nothing else wrong with our custom of racial discrimination but the fact that it hinders our efforts to preach the Gospel to the whole world, it would have enough to condemn it.<sup>94</sup>

While these early opinions were forthrightly stated, they did not openly encourage the integration of Christian schools and actually gave the Abilene listeners little grounds for disagreement.

Such was not the case with Carl Spain's 1960 address, "Modern Challenges to Christian Morals." If judged strictly



in terms of the immediacy and intensity of audience reaction, Spain's iconoclastic lecture must be viewed as the most spectacular speech ever delivered in Abilene. Although his published manuscript was an erudite statement of philosophical morality standards ranging from dialectical materialism to existentialism, Spain drew a sharp bead upon the obvious and more practical social injustices encompassed by his assignment. Charging that racial inequalities stemmed from a concept of political naturalism, he boldly challenged the leaders of the brotherhood's schools to justify the theory of racial supremacy which held sway on their campuses. The Associated Press described the impact of Spain's message.

A Professor of Bible and Religious Education said Wednesday that colleges operated by members of the church of Christ should admit the denomination's Negro preachers to graduate study. In discussing present-day challenges to Christian morals, Carl Spain said in his prepared text, "You drive one of your own preachers to denominational schools where he can get credit for his work and refuse to let him take Bible for credit in your own schools because the color of his skin is dark." He said colleges of other denominations and state universities and some public schools in Texas admit Negroes, and asked, "Are we moral cowards on this issue?"

"There are people with money who will back us in our last ditch stand for white supremacy in a world of pigmented people. God forbid that we shall be the last stronghold among religious schools where the politico-economic philosophy of naturalism determines our moral conduct."

In an interview Spain said that there had been some "instances when Negroes desired to enroll in Bible courses at Abilene Christian College's graduate school, but did not do so because of housing, eating, and other problems. He said faculty members had discussed the situation and that others shared his view that Negro preachers of the church of Christ who can qualify academically should be admitted to

the graduate school. Don H. Morris, ACC president said, "Like most schools we have had applications for admission from colored people, but our school has not provided for their registration."

Spain said he brought up the subject to stir up some thinking among church of Christ members attending the Lectureship and that his views would apply to the schools of any denomination practicing segregation. All other schools operated by the church of Christ in the South are operated as all-white schools. Those in the north and on the west coast are integrated.<sup>95</sup>

Spain told of the racial conflict in the town in which he had been reared. He recalled a bitter occasion when near violence resulted from white church leaders giving Negroes permission to attend white services and to use the baptistry of the church. "What right have we," he asked, "to talk about the two faces of Khrushchev, when we guard the ballot boxes with guns and pass laws that deny native Americans the right to vote on the basis of their color and social backgrounds." He continued:

God forbid that churches of Christ, and schools operated by Christians, shall be the last stronghold of refuge for socially sick people who have Nazi illusions about the Master Race. Political naturalism, in the cloak of the Christian priesthood, must not be the ethical code in the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

I feel certain that Jesus would say: "Ye hypocrites! You say you are the only true Christians, make up the only true church, and have the only Christian schools. Yet, you drive one of your own preachers to denominational schools where he can get credit for his work and refuse to let him take Bible for credit in your own schools because the color of his skin is dark!"<sup>96</sup>

The year following Spain's bombshell, Howard Horton, a professor at Pepperdine College, re-opened the question of racial equality. Expressing regret at prejudicial attitudes prevalent in both congregations and colleges, he said:

What does fellowship really mean to us when we harbor attitudes in our hearts that make us look askance, if there comes into our assembly for worship a consecrated Christian who, by accident of genetics, happens to have a black face? What is our real definition of fellowship and Christian love when we feel that our dignity is injured or our community status lowered if one of God's children from South of the Border places membership expecting to find the love of God reflected in God's children? What definition of Christian fellowship can we give that accounts for the fact that our own faithful brethren, born with black skins, must seek "Christian education" at the hands of Baptist and Methodists?<sup>97</sup>

Although Horton's address received newspaper reaction and furnished material for animated Lectureship conversation, it was Spain's speech which had jolted the church. Spain's 1960 remarks had been received with mixed and extreme feelings. As he spoke, murmurs of approval rippled through the packed auditorium. He received lusty "amens" at crucial junctures, like when he shouted: "If the shoe fits and pinches, there is nothing I can do about it." Newspapers throughout the Southwest reported his controversial lecture, and congregations were buzzing with interest for months at the resounding implications of its message.

A year prior to Spain's speech, Abilene Christian College had appointed a special committee composed of faculty and board members to investigate the possibilities for an integrated campus. In the fall of 1961 Negro students were officially admitted to the Abilene graduate school. In 1962, undergraduate work was made available to qualified students of any color. As other schools of the brotherhood in Lubbock, Oklahoma City, Fort Worth, and Searcy, Arkansas, quickly followed the Abilene decision; observers found it difficult to divorce the educators' changing attitudes from Spain's dramatic Lectureship challenge. His address was clearly a catalyst which helped to solidify the brotherhood's convictions. It

should not be concluded, however, that the role of educational institutions controlled by churches of Christ was merely one of reaction and submission. In fact, the several nationally significant colleges of the brotherhood were among the very first private schools in America to provide decisive leadership in this, the most complex social issue of the twentieth century.

What a vital contribution the Abilene Lectureship has made to Christian education among churches of Christ! The destiny of Christian education was virtually chartered in the early lectures of Sewell, Baxter, Cox, Armstrong, and Speck. When they first rose to speak, members of the church supported and controlled only a handful of small and struggling Bible colleges. But when they sat down, the flame had been lit. In time, they yielded the rostrum to Morris and Pope, to Young and Sanders, and to a myriad of others, but the message was the same. The distinctive type of education championed by the vision-gifted pioneers had come to yield a second-generation fruitage which even the fondest of their visions could not have encompassed.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>*The Reformation of the Nineteenth Century* (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Company, 1901), p. 153.

<sup>2</sup>"Bethany College," *Millennial Harbinger*, Series Three, VII (1850) p. 291.

<sup>3</sup>Rollo James Bennett, "History of the Founding of Educational Institutions by the Disciples of Christ in Virginia and West Virginia" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1932), p. 212.

<sup>4</sup>David Lipscomb, "Nashville Bible School," *Gospel Advocate*, XXXIII, No. 24 (June 17, 1891), p. 377.

<sup>5</sup>"Charter of Childers' Classical Institute," as quoted in Board of Trustees of Childers' Classical Institute, "Minutes," November 3, 1906.

<sup>6</sup>Speck, "Christian Education," *Lectures*, 1919, pp. 257-258. Although delivered in 1918, Speck's speech was published in the 1919 volume.

<sup>7</sup>Sewell, "Christian Education," *Lectures*, 1919, pp. 6-7.

<sup>8</sup>Baxter, "Christian Education," *Lectures*, 1919, pp. 199-200.

<sup>9</sup>*Education in Religion and Morals* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1904), p. 332.

<sup>10</sup>Clifton E. Olmstead, *History of Religion in the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), pp. 286-290. Also see J. M. Price, *et. al.*, *A Survey of Religious Education* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1940), p. 406.

<sup>11</sup>Clarence H. Benson, *A Popular History of Christian Education* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1943), p. 106.

<sup>12</sup>Stewart G. Cole, *History of Fundamentalism* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1931), pp. 43-44.

<sup>13</sup>James Hastings Nichols, *History of Christianity, 1650-1950*, (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1956), p. 408.

<sup>14</sup>Sewell, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup>"Opportunities On Sunday Morning," *Lectures*, 1956, p. 106.

<sup>16</sup>Sanders, "Christian Education," *Lectures*, 1961, p. 153.

<sup>17</sup>"Our Young People," *Lectures*, 1920-1921, p. 134.

<sup>18</sup>"Christ and Our Children," *Lectures*, 1957, p. 195.

<sup>19</sup>"A Christian College in the Northeast," *Lectures*, 1957, p. 177.

<sup>20</sup>Speck, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 263, 264.

<sup>22</sup>Baxter, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

<sup>23</sup>"The Work of Abilene Christian College," *Lectures*, 1924-1925, p. 12.

<sup>24</sup>"Christian Education," *Lectures*, 199, pp. 39, 46.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>26</sup>"The Work of Religious Education," *Lectures*, 1944, pp. 55-56.

<sup>27</sup>"Restoring God to Education," *Lectures*, 1952, pp. 53, 60.

<sup>28</sup>"Restoring God to Education," *Lectures*, 1958, p. 179.

<sup>29</sup>"Opportunities for Christian Colleges," *Lectures*, 1956, p. 83.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 86, 87.

<sup>31</sup>Young, "Restoring God to Education," *Lectures*, 1952.

<sup>32</sup>"Our Educational Program," *Lectures*, 1919, p. 67.

<sup>33</sup>"The Status of Bible Teaching Today," *Lectures*, 1936, p. 82. "In the state of Texas," reported Stephenson, "it is possible to secure high school credit in Bible by passing an examination over the Old and New Testaments prepared by the State Department of Education. In the city of Dallas, instruction in the Bible is given to students in the various churches of which they are members, and if they are successful in passing a certain examination they are given

high school credit for their work."

<sup>34</sup>Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>35</sup>Price, *op. cit.*, p. 403.

<sup>36</sup>"Opportunities of the Bible Chair," *Lectures*, 1955, pp. 210-211.

<sup>37</sup>Yarborough, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>38</sup>Philip Henry Lotz, *Orientation in Religious Education* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1950), p. 519.

<sup>39</sup>*An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1958), p. 199. Also see Frank Gaebelein, *Christian Education in a Democracy* (Oxford: University Press, 1951), p. 105.

<sup>40</sup>"Biblical Journalism," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, pp. 143-144.

<sup>41</sup>"Week Day Opportunities," *Lectures*, 1956, p. 234.

<sup>42</sup>"Why Jesus Is the Hope of the World," *Lectures*, 1943, p. 43.

<sup>43</sup>Pope, *op. cit.*, pp. 89, 90, 91-92.

<sup>44</sup>Sanders, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>45</sup>Pope, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>46</sup>Quotations in this paragraph are from James F. Cox, "Ideals and Purposes of Abilene Christian College," *Lectures*, 1934, p. 189, Don H. Morris, "The Need for the Christian School," *Lectures*, 1942, p. 4, and M. Norvel Young, "Restoring God to Education," 1958, p. 190.

<sup>47</sup>Cox, "Ideals and Purposes of Abilene Christian College," p. 189.

<sup>48</sup>Young, "Restoring God to Education," 1958, p. 190.

<sup>49</sup>Young, "Restoring God to Education," 1952, p. 71.

<sup>50</sup>"Christ on the Campus," *Lectures*, 1957, p. 203.

<sup>51</sup>"Restoring God to Education," 1952, p. 71.

<sup>52</sup>"The Need for the Christian School," p. 8.

<sup>53</sup>"Restoring God to Education," 1958, pp. 190-191.

<sup>54</sup>These three quotations are from Morris, "The Need for the Christian School," p. 14, Young, "Restoring God to Education," 1952, p. 72, and J. P. Sanders, "The More Abundant Life as One That Stresses Christian Education," *Lectures*, 1961, p. 161.

<sup>55</sup>Speck, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 265-266.

<sup>57</sup>Yarborough, *op. cit.*, p. 69. These words are strikingly similar to those of Speck uttered a year earlier: "The solution calls for great preachers, well trained. Those of the past though sometimes largely untrained, did work heroically. The preachers of the next generation must have all of the eloquence and evangelistic fervor of the pioneers, and they must add to these the learning, the social interest, the sympathy, and the teaching power that comes through college training" (pp. 267-268). This remarkable similarity of language is rendered even more interesting, by the fact that, although Speck's speech was delivered a year prior to Yarborough's, they were both published the same year in the same volume.

<sup>58</sup>Speck, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

<sup>59</sup>Sewell, "Christian Education," 1918, p. 11.

<sup>60</sup>Sewell, "Christian Education," 1929, p. 46.

<sup>61</sup>"Religious Education in Texas," *Lectures*, 1928-1929, pp. 9-10.

<sup>62</sup>"The Christian School," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 314.

<sup>63</sup>"Columbia Christian College," *Lectures*, 1957, p. 191.

<sup>64</sup>Quotations in this paragraph are from J. C. Bailey, "Our Northernmost College," *Lectures*, 1955, p. 203, and Harvey Childress, "York College, A Unique Opportunity," *Lectures*, 1956, pp. 385-386.

<sup>65</sup>"The Christian College," *Lectures*, 1959, pp. 321-322.

<sup>66</sup>References in this paragraph to Robinson, "Effective Missionary Work," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, p. 84, Burns, "Except They Be Sent," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 142, and Pack, "Preparing the Missionary," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 132.

<sup>67</sup>Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>68</sup>Mattox, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

<sup>69</sup>White, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

<sup>70</sup>"Abiding in the Doctrine of Christ," *Lectures*, 1957, p. 148.

<sup>71</sup>Person, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>72</sup>Price, *op. cit.*, p. 411.

<sup>73</sup>"When Weighed in the Balance Are We Found Wanting?" *Lectures*, 1922-1923, pp. 68-69.

<sup>74</sup>Baxter, "Christian Education," p. 202.

<sup>75</sup>Sewell, "Christian Education," 1929, p. 47.

<sup>76</sup>Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

<sup>77</sup>Sanders, "Christian Education," p. 163.

<sup>78</sup>Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>79</sup>Morris, "The Need for the Christian School," p. 14.

<sup>80</sup>Baxter, "The Work of Religious Education," p. 63.

<sup>81</sup>Young, "Restoring God to Education," 1952, p. 69, and "Restoring God to Education," 1958, p. 196.

<sup>82</sup>Person, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>83</sup>Yarborough, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>84</sup>Price, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

<sup>85</sup>Yarborough, *op. cit.*, pp. 68, 73.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 409-410.

<sup>87</sup>Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>88</sup>Armstrong, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>89</sup>"Christian Scholarship," *Lectures*, 1960, pp. 344-345.

<sup>90</sup>Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>91</sup>"Southwestern Christian College," *Lectures*, 1954, p. 263.

<sup>92</sup>"The Work at Southwestern Christian College," *Lectures*, 1956, pp. 377-378.

<sup>93</sup>"The Commission After Twenty Centuries," *Lectures*, 1920-1921, p. 196.

<sup>94</sup>"The Latin American Field," *Lectures*, 1946, p. 140.

<sup>95</sup>*The Dallas Times Herald*, February 24, 1960, p. 1. Similar reports of the address also appeared in the following newspapers: *The Tulsa Tribune*, *The Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, *The Abilene Reporter-News*, *The San Antonio News*, *The Nashville Banner*, *The Fort Worth Press*, *The Houston Post*, *The San Angelo Standard-Times*, the *Borger, Texas News-Herald*, the *Wichita Falls Record News*, *The Corpus Christi Caller*, the *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, the *Waco News Tribune*, the *Texas City Sun*.

<sup>96</sup>"Modern Challenges to Christian Morals," *Lectures*, 1960, p. 214.

<sup>97</sup>"The Abundant Life As One of High Fellowship Values," *Lectures*, 1961, p. 83.



# 15

## The Christ-Centered Life

No one is a Christian anymore than he is reproducing in himself the life of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the modern definition of Christianity is true, and is expressed thus, "Christianity, the life of Jesus Christ reproduced in human life, so that our thoughts, feelings, purposes, words, and deeds are like him."<sup>1</sup>

Hall L. Calhoun's 1927 admiration for the "modern definition of Christianity" came, strangely enough, at a time when the Abilene Lectureship was becoming known for its immediate opposition to all things "modern." Underpinned by an assemblage of unchanging doctrines, the speechmaking was characteristically committed to the propagation of ancient and absolute truths. Calhoun's definition of applied Christianity, however, not unlike the comments of other lecturers, would have been entirely satisfactory to the liberals of the era. The Abilene lecturers had no argument with the contention of liberalism that the spirit and quality of Jesus were meant to be reproduced in his followers. They were fully agreed that nothing can be Christian which leaves that out—or even makes it secondary.

*The Person of Christ*

German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher was one of the first to outline the modern experimental method of dealing with religious belief. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century another German writer, Albrecht Ritschl, popularized Schleiermacher's view that Christianity was essentially a profound and personal experience for the individual believer. The Ritschlian school, which quickly came to have considerable vogue in this country, insisted that theology should be the expression of a confrontation between Christ and the believer. As this appeal to Christian experience caught on in America it led ultimately and dramatically to the person of Jesus Christ. Christianity, exclaimed the liberals, was Christ! Its authority was drawn not so much from a special revelation as from an exciting discovery. All valid doctrines were attributable to this personal religious experience and were important only as they were created and shaped by Jesus himself. Hence, the Ritschlian approach came to be described as christocentric.

The prominent position which modernism gave to the new theology had created, by the turn of the century, much interest in critical studies of the life of Jesus. It was argued that men should reverence only the "historical Christ," not the speculative conceptions based on mythical christology. Genuine Christianity, the liberals contended, has its basis not in sentimental dedication to a book of laws, but in actual encounter with Christ. Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* epitomized and summarized this awakened interest in biographical studies of Jesus. The modernists were intent in relating Christ to the practical problems of the present. "Relevance" became a magic term. They even maintained that proper stress upon such "relevance" and "relatedness" would eventually put doctrinally hairsplitting in the background and dissolve all denominational distinctions. In a diligent effort to reproduce the virtues and characteristics of Christ's person-

ality, they focused full attention upon the person of Christ—more pointedly, his *humanity*.

Many conservatives, however, looked with jaundiced eye upon the christocentric claims of liberalism. To counteract the disturbing results attendant to the liberal emphasis on Christ's humanity, they marshaled their forces for a fight to salvage Christ's divinity. Acknowledging that Christ was man, they hastened to reaffirm that he was also God. In doing so they assumed the posture of the apologist for christological dogma, defending the divinity of Christ at every corner where the new criticism had created clouds of doubt. But in the retreat from Rome, many conservatives ran right past Jerusalem. Rebounding from the liberal programs of social welfare and practical morality, they were driven to an embattled extreme which tended away from intimate touch with Christ's contemporary potentialities. They rightly assessed the modernistic appeal to christocentric experience as a denial of the exclusive authority of the written word. But unfortunately, in the forensics of reaction they offered a brand of bombastic preaching and vitriolic vituperation which was anything but Christ-centered. Their logic and rhetoric in defence of the virgin birth and resurrection did little to stir duplication of the person and spirit of the living Lord. Practical piety does not feed upon logic. That faith which produces fruit is nourished by an attitude toward Christ—not an argument about Christ. Surely the historic Fundamentalist movement itself serves as a solemn reminder that righteousness is not so much a by-product of dogma about Christ, as the result of a personal relationship with Christ.

Slightly more than one hundred Abilene speeches were designed to inspire duplication of the Christlike life. At first the emphasis was by no means prominent. During the early years the Christ-centered theme might be likened to a draft of fresh air which only occasionally wafted across the platform. But by the 1950's it had developed into a stiff and steady Lectureship breeze.

A few of the early speakers, and many of the later ones, revealed an awareness of those many moments in Christendom's history when doctrinal rigidity and practical spirituality were unable to blossom concurrently within the same soil. From Moses to Christ, those who have clung with pietistic punctuality to the legal observances of law have often been furthest from the incorporation of the law's spirit. Furthermore, those who have sought to preserve the precise letter of the law have tended to equate precision in doctrinal pronouncement with the achievement of spiritual perfection itself. Punctilious ecclesiastical performance has ever posed a deadly deterrent to spiritual maturation.

The Abilene lectures which discussed this problem were exceedingly diverse; a few even harrassingly miscellaneous. Their subject matter, which ranged from an epithetical diatribe on the evils of card playing to a carefully reasoned rationale urging Christians to avoid participation in carnal warfare, virtually defined tidy classification.

### *Commitment to Christ*

The beginning place for the Christ-centered life is absolute renunciation of self and complete commitment to Christ. While much of the academic intelligensia looked askance, the Abilene spokesmen unashamedly found the cornerstone of practical religion in the words of Christ: "Seek ye first the kingdom of Heaven, and all these things will be added unto you." As early as 1920 F. L. Rowe sounded the call for total commitment. "The Lord's work," he said, "should enlist our energies and consume our thoughts to the exclusion of all worldly ambitions or considerations."<sup>2</sup> R. C. Bell and Foy Wallace, Sr., were other 1920 speakers who featured the priority of complete consignment to Christ. Bell confidently claimed that the committed Christian need not be concerned about his physical health, his earthly bank account or be "at all distracted by the cares of life and be thus made unhappy and inefficient for God will provide."<sup>3</sup> Wallace added that such "blessed

assurance" could only be made possible when human self-reliance was eclipsed by surrender to Christ and His will. "We are bought with a price and we do not belong to ourselves. Whatever we do in the store, shop, office, school room or on the farm is for the purpose of elevating and furthering the Kingdom of God."<sup>4</sup>

The theme of commitment to Christ was renewed with added vigor during the 1939 series. Harvey Scott, Homer Hailey, and J. P. Gipson delivered lectures on the general theme of "Stewardship." Scott argued that every difficulty of discipleship, from a disdain for the worship pew to stinginess in financial giving, was merely symptomatic of the basic malady—a lack of complete consecration. Gipson, a medical doctor, insisted that "even our bodies do not belong to us, they belong to Christ." "Neither can the Christian," continued Hailey, "a bond servant of Christ, recognize either himself or his time as his own, but as belonging to Him who bought him."

The inability of the believer to completely renounce self was named as the major hindrance to genuine devotion to Christ. "The human heart cannot hold within it two great loyalties," stated J. P. Sanders in 1943. "At any moment of crisis, the one that is truly first will stand out and dominate the other. God and mammon cannot occupy first place in the same heart." Jack Bates suggested that although most Christians nominally admit that self denial is the price of discipleship, "our greatest problem today is the matter of taking Christ seriously." Since Adam turned his back on Eden, man has elected to measure the worth of his life by a warped system of values. But he has reaped only misery in his search to attain happiness through self-sufficiency. "In our eager search for life," added Bates, "we miss the abundant life. We put second things first. We place things which do not matter above that which matters a great deal."<sup>5</sup> Alonzo D. Welch described the ultimate reward of a distorted standard of values:

Although one of the paramount drives of the human personality has always been the desire for security, the inescapable dilemma, as evidenced by centuries of

human striving, is that the more we seek for security in the realm of matter the less we have of it. Thus, what appears, while we seek it, to be security, becomes the cause of our insecurity.<sup>6</sup>

In 1942, Athens Clay Pullias capitalized upon war-torn emotions to appeal for devotion to Christ's values. Surveying fifteen years of depression, despair, and social revolution climaxed by "the ghoulish nightmare of 1939," Pullias contrasted "immediate values and ultimate values. Those who clearly distinguish between these two sets of values will gain tremendously in the battle to hold fast to eternal things."<sup>7</sup>

James D. Bales later defined sin itself as the preference of carnal rather than spiritual values—the choice of self rather than Christ as the supreme object of trust and service. Years earlier Robert Alexander had named selfishness as the root of all human unhappiness and cited Christ: "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."<sup>8</sup> The Christ-centered life, therefore, can only become a reality when the object of trust and adoration is transferred from one's self to Christ.

This act of unconditional surrender in which the human will becomes subservient to the authority of Christ is described, biblically, as the process of faith. Hardeman Nichols revealed to his listeners the opinion of the Greek authority Thayer, who wrote that the term "faith" in the original language involved "a giving up of one's self to Jesus." Derived from the Greek word whose root meaning is "to bind," Nichols insisted that in the response of faith, the genuine believer binds himself to Christ, makes himself one with Christ. "Therefore, to have faith in Christ and God means that we have an absolute transference of trust from ourselves to the Godhead, and it requires a complete self-surrender." He added that "it is not simply an idea about God and His existence, but is a relationship with God."<sup>9</sup>

Faith avails, then, not because of any innate merit in the act of believing, nor even because of the capacity of the be-

liever to believe greatly, but because of the object of faith—*Christ*. Faith does not save in the sense of being one's savior. It is Christ who saves through faith. Even the most religious of people, while maintaining the symbols of religious faith, can lose personal touch with the very object of faith, Jesus Christ. Perhaps the Abilene lecturers were familiar with such contemporary essays as Reinhold Niebuhr's "Religiosity and the Christian Faith." In any event Nichols and Niebuhr made the same point regarding the American ritual of "faith in faith." Niebuhr wrote:

The "unknown God" in America seems to be faith itself. Our politicians are always admonishing the people to have "faith." Sometimes they seem to imply that faith is itself redemptive . . . . One must come to the conclusion that religion *per se* and faith *per se* are not virtuous, or a cause of virtue. The question is always what the object of worship is . . . .<sup>10</sup>

Hence, a vital faith involving the total personality and rooted in the person of Jesus Christ was named as the grounds for commitment of the human will to divine authority. The following paragraph from A. V. Isabel's 1961 lecture sums up the attitude of self-surrender which tempered scores of Abilene addresses.

When we attain to the spiritual maturity that "we count all things as refuse that we may gain Christ," then out of a heart of overflowing love will spring a fountain of joy that will move us to "spend and be spent" in serving others. We can then say with Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). The scales of indifference, selfishness, vanity, and pride will then fall from our eyes, and we can see clearly the true purpose of life, and the joys of peace beyond comprehension will swell our hearts.<sup>11</sup>

### *Communion with Christ*

From the very beginning, Abilene lecturers reduced the essence of Christianity to intimate communion with God

through Christ. In 1922, for instance, Thomas E. Milholland eulogized the apostolic conduct of Peter and John who in the early chapters of the book of Acts were described by their enemies as having "been with Jesus." Pointing to this phrase, Milholland exclaimed: "There we get our power! He is the spiritual dynamo of the universe!"<sup>12</sup>

This theme achieved significant proportions as the platform matured. The scriptural phrase, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," was chosen as the 1957 Lectureship theme. "One of the greatest needs of the Church today," said Eugene Clevenger in the program's keynote address, "is a deeper realization and appreciation as to what it means for Christ to be in us. Christianity is a matter of our being in Christ . . . and Christ being in us."<sup>13</sup> The Christian religion is a communion between God and man made possible through the intercession of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, what for our grandfathers was an experience of deep communion and for our fathers was a revered tradition, is for much of our generation only an inconvenience. Unless Christ is discovered anew by every generation religion will be meaningless and real communion impossible.

There are points of commonality between the Abilene understanding of personal communion with Christ and the existentialistic concepts within America's main theological stream. But there are also significant differences. For the lecturers, man's opportunities of communion with Christ are dependent upon the authority of the revealed written word. The revelation of God is singularly accomplished by the life and sacrifice of Jesus. The core of the quest for communion with Christ is more biblical than existential. On the other hand, the so-called "god-experience" of the liberals might be received in a variety of ways. Intensely personal factors encouraged the conclusion that communion with Christ is basically experiential and not directly related to biblical revelation. Harry Emerson Fosdick, in his autobiography, recalled that the "solid ground of assurance" in his life has been direct



immediate personal experience. "As for me," he said, "it is the experience itself in which I find my certainty, while my theological interpretations I must, in all humility, hold with tentative confidence."<sup>14</sup>

Calhoun's lecture on "The Indwelling Christ," maintained that man was not only created in the image of God, but since God and Christ are one, he was also formed in the likeness of Christ. The Christian scheme of redemption was designed, according to Calhoun, that fallen man might reclaim his lost image and mature "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Calhoun also contended that "the devil's work in this world is to destroy from the soul of man this image of God and likeness of Christ in which man was created." Recalling the scriptural phrase, "partakers of the divine nature," he said:

Partakers of the divine nature means sharers in that divine nature . . . . So we must have Christ's mind in us, Christ's spirit in us, Christ's nature in us . . . . So, the Christ that dwells in you and me must be the living Christ, until our thoughts and feelings and purposes and words and deeds, our nature, our very life is a reproduction of His . . . . What do the best modern writers tell us Christianity is? The reproduction of the life of Christ in the human life. This is what it means to be a Christian.<sup>15</sup>

Once again a faith involving total commitment was preliminary to any meaningful communion with the person of Christ. In the phrase from Ephesians 3:17, "that Christ may come to dwell in your hearts through faith," the Greek term *katoikeo*, translated "dwell," signified "to settle permanently." It should be distinguished from the similar but different word, *paroikeo*, which refers to a temporary sojourn. "What a wonderful thing it is," said Clevenger, "that Christ will honor us permanently—to settle within our hearts." He added:

It is wonderful to know that we have Christ without to copy, but it is more wonderful to know that we have Christ within to control. When Christ controls us he becomes the center and circumference of our lives.

Everything we do is Christ-centered—it is done with Christ in mind . . . . When the indwelling Christ takes control of my heart, it is no longer I who lives but Christ. It is a life of complete self-abandonment.<sup>16</sup>

### *The Spirit of Christ*

“Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith,” quoted E. W. McMillian in 1929. “Put in language more in keeping with our own usage,” he added, “some things in his law are more important than other things in his law.”<sup>17</sup> It is not surprising that as the most thoughtful men of the movement assembled they were constrained to warn of the danger of being flawlessly fastidious in observing external ordinances but blissfully ignorant of the inward vitality of Christianity.

No tension automatically exists between the letter and the spirit of Christianity. While the path may be precarious, a legitimate concern for doctrinal exactness does not lessen inherently one’s chances for developing the Christlike spirit. In fact, doctrinal propriety is not only compatible with the spirit of Christ but no fully spiritual life can be produced apart from absolute truth in doctrine. Although doctrinal obedience should not be viewed as an end within itself, it is a necessary means to the end. The end—the ultimate goal toward which all religious effort should strive—is the individual development of the Christlike personality. The avalanche of speechmaking which urged the Abilene audience not to neglect the “weightier matters of the law” seems to imply that this elusive end was not being fully achieved. It also suggests that the lecturers believed the Devil’s perennial pitfall for all who would “speak as the oracles of God” had trapped, at least to a measure, the brotherhood of the churches of Christ.

Several lecturers were distressed about the ease with which movements structured on the letter of the law—movements like theirs—could lose sight of the spirit of Christ. They recog-

nized from history that those hearts which had taken frugal care to fulfill each command had, paradoxically, provided fertile soil for the cultivation of Pharisaism; that those seeking to be most righteous were those most prone to self-righteousness.

As their favorite warning device the lecturers pointed to the hideous caricature of doctrinal accuracy tellingly void of the spirit of Christ. Virtually every series of lectures contained the solemn reminder that the only purpose for the divine discipline of doctrinal regulation was to create within human hearts the Christlike spirit. For instance, in his 1927 lecture, "Theory and Practice," Carl L. Etter argued that soundness in preaching was hypocrisy unless complemented and perfected by soundness in practice.

Do we seek to be judged by our theory or by our practice? Are we the "true" and "loyal" disciples of Christ because we are more liberal in our means, or is it because we are giving a few pennies in the correct way? Do we hold the title of "loyal brethren" because we are doing more to care for the widows and orphans, or is it because we are caring for a few in the Scriptural way? Or are we the "true blues" because we are doing more to evangelize the world, or is it because we have sent out a few missionaries in the New Testament way?<sup>18</sup>

W. A. Kercheville, who also lectured on the 1927 program, agreed with Etter. "We have put God first in name," he said. "We have given him control in doctrine. But where we have failed, brethren, we have not honored him in our practice."<sup>19</sup> The following year, F. L. Young added his testimony to the growing indictment: "I would not for a moment discourage soundness in the faith, but I would encourage, yea emphasize, consecration of life and spirituality."<sup>20</sup>

Speakers also viewed biblical ignorance within a Bible centered movement as a sign of superficiality and Pharisaism. Among these were J. P. Crenshaw and C. E. McGaughey. They decried the inconsistency of condemning others for disobeying the Bible while being too uninformed to personally

teach them the way of salvation from the scriptures. McGaughey said: "If any group of people, therefore, in all the world, should be thoroughly familiar with God's revelation, it should be that group which claims to be Christian and 'Christian only.' How unfortunate that there are many Bibles today that have no marks within them, no tear-stained pages, and so little evidence of use."<sup>21</sup>

Crenshaw was particularly concerned over the dangers of Pharisaism within the brotherhood. In 1934, he announced: "Brethren, our doctrine is unassailable." He then charged, however, that the world was being denied a perfect church because of the inconsistent and sinful lives of its members. "May God help you and me to get a conception of the Spirit of the apostles; may we work like they worked; may we live like they lived; may we serve like they served, and may we love like they loved."<sup>22</sup> Because of the unabated interest in this theme, J. P. Crenshaw was invited to address the 1954 audience on the topic, "Overcoming the Tendency to Pharisaism." He sharply defined the issue: "The people that are in the most danger of frustrating God's gracious purpose are not men and women steeped to the eyebrows in sensuous sin, but the clean, respectable, church-going, sermon-hearing people who enjoy a tendency toward Pharisaism."<sup>23</sup>

### *The Love of Christ*

Crenshaw was thus among the lecturers who were insistent that members of the church frequently failed to practice what they preached. In 1937, Paul Southern bluntly added: "Some brethren today are 'watchdogs' of orthodoxy, but only stray hounds in putting it into practice."<sup>24</sup> Thirteen years later Lemoine Lewis made specific references to the Fundamentalists in a contrast not complimentary to his own brethren:

Out among the people that we call "Fundamentalists," when something good happens to them, they begin to talk about what the Lord has done for them; but

when something comes to most of us, we talk about our "good luck." And there is a lack of a sense of close, personal relationship between us and God. People feel that when they are around us. They know that we have not sent out missionaries as other people have sent them out. We have not built hospitals to care for the sick and suffering; we have not distinguished ourselves in the work of caring for the needy. And as they listen to our preaching, so often they go away thinking of law rather than of grace.<sup>25</sup>

In 1956, George Bailey quoted the words of Clarke: "The most terrible of lies is not that which is uttered, but that which is lived." He then observed:

How true this is. The very moment you begin to tell others what Christianity can do for them, they will immediately start looking for those things in your own life. In fact, the world is watching you for six days in the week, to see what you mean by what you say on the other day. Preaching, therefore, without practice, is like going into battle with wet powder or with blank shells.<sup>26</sup>

Speaking on the same program with Bailey, A. C. Dunkleberger, editor of the *Nashville Banner*, discussed the topic, "Practice What You Preach." His comments are revealing:

Unintentionally, you understand—without any guileful purpose, and certainly with no intent to deceive. It is only that we, many times, *understand* what is right in a given situation, and how to prescribe it for others; then out of carelessness, or laziness, maybe, or painful disregard of what is right and wrong, we do the opposite.

I am persuaded, brethren, that the sincerity of those in error—impressing by the devotion of their lives—has, in a multitude of cases, outweighed in influence the preaching of the truth, perfect in its linguistic presentation, but drowned out by the noise of malpractice.<sup>27</sup>

No Abilene speaker was more disturbed about the lack of the spirit of Christ within the brotherhood than E. W. Mc-

Millan. His speechmaking, which reached from 1921 to 1964, was dominated by this theme. Contending that the church was guilty of a distorted emphasis, McMillan recalled in 1946: "While living in Abilene fifteen years ago, I delivered a series of sermons in another town on the subject of love, God, prayer, worship, justice, mercy and several other things. At the close," continued McMillan, "an elder said, 'Sometime, give us a good old gospel sermon.' Such ignorance is more than pathetic."<sup>28</sup> During a second 1946 address McMillan continued the discussion. Granting that it was sometimes necessary for preachers to defend the faith against departures he emphasized that it was even more important for them to maintain a proper motive and spirit in their opposition to such departures. He used a graphic illustration to demonstrate the grave responsibility incumbent upon all self-appointed "defenders of the faith":

Men who defend the Church from these departures are much in the same position as a surgeon is beside his patient. One foul germ on his knife or from his breath could defeat all his skill . . . . Just as the white muslin is of less value after passing through greasy hands, the sublime scheme of Divine Grace has less appeal when it comes forth upon the foul breath of a corrupt man in heart.<sup>29</sup>

In his 1959 address, "The Missionary's Spiritual Life," McMillan resumed his favorite theme. He asserted that a thorough knowledge of the Bible was of no value unless it served to inspire within the reader's heart the Christlike spirit.

I hold the firm conviction that my brethren have searched the four Gospels with sufficient diligence to understand and repeat the worded doctrines with reasonable accuracy . . . . There sometimes arises, however, a serious question about whether or not we have developed that basic quality which stood so tall and grand in the Lord Jesus . . . . Have we, in reading the four Gospels, traced mainly the geographic steps of the Lord? Have we learned mainly the verbal accuracy in what He said without drinking deeply of that spiritual fountain in Him . . . ?<sup>30</sup>

In 1943, J. P. Sanders featured love as the very core of the gospel and cited a passage which appeared in many addresses:

The basic idea that lies at the heart of all Jesus' teachings concerning righteousness is the idea of love both to God and man. One of the scribes came and heard them questioning together, "knowing that he had answered them well, and asked him, What commandment is first of all? Jesus answered, The first is, hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, and thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these (Mark 12:28-31)."<sup>31</sup>

The example of Christ's love cut the pattern for the extent and quality of each man's love for his fellowmen. Hall L. Calhoun recalled the words of Christ at the last supper: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you." Calhoun then drew the conclusion: "Love is the very spirit of Christianity."<sup>32</sup> The speakers also discovered significance in the Greek term for "love," *agape*, which unlike the similar terms *eros* and *philos*, suggests that man is required to reproduce the same type and quality of love which initiates with God. The highest manifestation of love is the capacity to love genuinely the unlovely, to love unselfishly without desire or hope for reciprocation. Christ, therefore, set for his church love's standard: "As I have loved you."

Several Abilene lecturers questioned the degree to which Christ's spirit of love had actually been incorporated into the practice of the churches of Christ. The prevalence of a factious spirit appeared to verify the existence of a high degree of self-love. Just as self-trust prohibits commitment to Christ, so self-love interferes with man's satisfaction of the commandment to love his fellowmen. Logan J. Fox reminded his audience that, "He who does not love his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen (I John 4:20)." Fox deplored man's incredible tendency to love himself, in the

form of things, more than other persons. "Persons differ from things in that things are to be used by persons, but never are persons to be used either for things or for other persons. In this whole universe only persons are ultimate, only persons bear the image of God. What tragedy it is then," Fox exclaimed, "what infinite folly, that man should value things more than persons!"<sup>33</sup>

In 1955, Ellis McGaughey explained that the very nature of the Greek term, *adelphotas*, which is translated in English "brotherhood," signifies that "we should have a special love for each other and the whole family." He put an embarrassing question to the preachers in his audience:

Love is not in competition with others. As Christians we are engaged in the same work. One remarkable thing about envy is that most of the time it is confined to those in the same line of work. One physician envies another more successful, the lawyer another lawyer considered more eminent, and even preachers must be careful or they will be envious of another preacher with superior ability.<sup>34</sup>

Elbridge Linn's lecture on "Brotherly Love," suggested that "there is no weakness more general among Christians than faultfinding." In 1935, Earnest Beam, a California preacher, noticed an absence of love and a mote-hunting inclination among his brethren. "We can argue for the right name," reasoned Beam, "for the correct baptism, the Lord's Supper, and tell everyone how loyal we are, but unless we come to have love, we will show to the world more and more that we are nothing but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals."<sup>35</sup> In 1961, Howard Horton observed that the church was frequently embroiled in internal controversies because it had neglected such "weightier matters" as Christ's spirit of love. He concluded his lecture with a penetrating indictment: "Unbridled pettiness is the revenge that is exacted from a people who have not shown the conviction nor the courage to stand for justice and righteousness. If we care not for the weightier matters, how can we ask or expect God to deliver us from our own littleness?"<sup>36</sup>



### *The Character of Christ*

"It is just as dangerous," exclaimed Carl Spain, "for Christians to pervert the gospel by their lives as it is to pervert it from the pulpit! In either case, it is a perverted gospel and it will not save."<sup>37</sup> An important corollary of the Christlike spirit is the maintenance of Christlike character—purity in personal living. Just as doctrinal pronouncement without practice is impotent, the Christian life which fails to be morally circumspect is a contradiction.

Numbering among the most colorful Abilene addresses were those delivered in the interest of purity in character. Several speeches, particularly toward the beginning of the platform, were direct frontal attacks upon specific moral and social evils. For instance, in 1922, A. B. Barret registered shock at the popular movie magazines, the photographs of actresses and actors, the music and dancing, the cigarette smoking, and the game tables and playing cards which embellished "even the houses of elders in the church of Christ." Recalling with regret the loose moral conditions which prevailed in several of the homes of the brethren in which he had visited during his evangelistic travels, Barret said:

I have gone where the daughter would go into the parlor and play a fox trot or some other kind of trot; the son would light a cigarette and go off to town; the father would remember that he hadn't watered the cow or pigs and would leave; then the mother would say, "Brother Barret we don't agree on religion; consequently we have decided to say nothing about such matters in our home," and so I write a sign and put it over the door, "'there is no room for Christ here" . . . . I pass by the movies where I see the most obscene, vulgar pictures, advertising a show, as "Peacock Alley" or some such stuff like that; then the Christian people stream into that place . . . . I come unexpectedly into a home, and find the young lady of the home entertaining with tea, which means progressive set-back, pitch, smut or some other popular game in which a prize is offered, and I put up a sign, "no room for Christ here."<sup>38</sup>

As the platform matured, changing social patterns caused the speakers' tolerance quotient to rise noticeably and they altered their attitudes toward specific moral issues. For instance, they steadily grew more reserved in the pronouncement of anathemas against such "evils" as card playing, coffee drinking, cigarette smoking, record playing, moving pictures, and the reading of popular magazines. In contrast to this trend, however, many lecturers, from first to last, voiced unwavering opposition to social dancing and drinking. With these two exceptions they became increasingly less exercised over specific social or moral infractions and sought rather the postulation of broad principles capable of controlling personal conduct. Several lecturers suggested that the thoughts of the heart ultimately determine an individual's standard of conduct. W. F. Ledlow, whose 1922 approach to moral righteousness contrasted with Barret's address, said: "Thoughts are the raw material out of which life's structure is built. Much depends on the 'rough material.'"<sup>39</sup> In 1941, Charles H. Roberson maintained that,

In the Christian life, the thought-realm is the seat of the greatest difficulty with which man is confronted. One's thoughts are so elusive, so difficult to control, so entirely independent of any law, that to order them aright well nigh seems impossible . . . . Hence, for the heavenly citizen God has imposed a rigid self-discipline, and lays upon him the responsibility of thought-selection. And when one has learned his own helplessness, he yields himself to the Master and relies upon his promise to undertake the responsibility of guarding his heart and his thought.<sup>40</sup>

Another 1941 speaker, Jack Meyer, advanced four principles by which a Christian's social conduct should be governed: he must be different from the non-Christian; he must not crave the popular approval of his contemporaries; he must consider the end result of all his actions; and he must strive to preserve his influence for the cause of righteousness.<sup>41</sup> The first of Meyer's principles, the assertion that the Christian must stand apart and be separate from the people of the

world, was underscored by many other speakers. In 1944, Cecil Wright maintained that Christianity must remain "unspotted from the world."

It is in the world to be sure, but not of the world. It is in the world to change the world, if possible, but not to be changed by the world . . . . The purpose of Christianity is to promote a way of life that is better than the ways of the world. And any effort to conform Christianity to the world, is, in effect, an attempt to defeat that purpose. Those who are genuinely converted, and who truly have the Spirit of Christ, will not try it—will not even want to try it.<sup>42</sup>

In his 1954 lecture, Ira North added momentum to the theme of separation from the things and the people of the world. He advised his audience:

We must realize that as Christians we do not think as the world thinks, we do not speak as the world speaks, and we do not live as the world lives. A Christian is a changed man. All things are new, old things are passed away (II Cor. 5:17). When a man becomes a Christian, he has a different set of loyalties and a different sense of securities, for he no longer looks to his money or land, but to the Lord. He has a different purpose in life, a different outlook on life, for all things are become new. He has been born again.<sup>43</sup>

Two of the Abilene lecturers were concerned with the application of Christian ethical and moral principles to business practices. In 1941, Cled E. Wallace warned that the business world was by no means removed from the obligation to fulfill Christianity's lofty standards. "The Christian in business is often in the midst of an economic struggle, and the temptation at times is strong to take advantage of somebody by pursuing fraudulent methods . . . . It is the climax of a Christian's honor that he would rather die than lie."<sup>44</sup> Five years later Orville Filbeck, of the Abilene faculty, echoed Wallace's exhortations to men of business:

The Christian finds himself in a commercial world filled with evil forces. He may question as to his duty in being honest and his chances of remaining in business. . . . If the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" are not courageous enough to be honest in business and are not willing to subordinate self-interest to the good of other people, the Church will suffer. The blunt truth is that we as members of the Church must be fair, honest, and considerate in our business relations.<sup>45</sup>

"Loyalty to Christ's Principles of Living" was the topic of Raymond Kelcy's 1943 lecture. He contended that there was no substitute for impeccable living and that the brotherhood was in need of some improvement in this area.

The power of the Church as a witness in the world is often sapped by the unChristlikeness of its members. This has caused much criticism of the Church, and has kept many out of the Church. As someone has said, "Yes, a Christian is the world's Bible, and just now we are badly in need of a revised version." The failure of members of the Church to be loyal to Christ's principles of living has retarded her progress more than all other things combined.<sup>46</sup>

### *Christ and Carnal Warfare*

Shifting social and cultural patterns and changing world conditions influenced the speakers' attitudes toward political issues as well as toward moral questions. For instance, in the tense years just prior to World War I the popular position among churches of Christ opposed the American entry into the European conflict. When the United States joined the allies many preachers of the brotherhood condemned the decision and urged fellow-Christians to avoid participation in carnal warfare. Typifying the general proclivity of the era was a petition of protest which the faculty of David Lipscomb College, led by President H. Leo Boles, sent to President Woodrow Wilson in October of 1917.<sup>47</sup> In the years preceding World War II the question of military service was re-opened. Between

1938 and 1941 the *20th Century Christian*, a newly founded magazine of the brotherhood, carried numerous articles persuasively written by prominent preachers urging that all military affairs be left in the hands of non-Christians. In 1940 F. B. Shepherd spoke at the Abilene Lectureship on the topic, "The Kingdom: Its relationship to Other Kingdoms." He maintained that no man could retain citizenship in two governments at the same time and that citizens of the kingdom of Heaven should stand "aloof from the state and refuse to have anything to do therewith except to pay taxes and render obedience thereto." In stating the opinion of many of his colleagues, Shepherd said of the war question:

Since the citizen of the kingdom of heaven is positively forbidden to take vengeance upon his enemies or the enemies of God, but to give place to the wrath and vengeance of God he cannot consistently, or legally, have part in an active or positive way as an agent of that which God characterizes as his "sword" (Rom. 13: 4). This undoubtedly enjoins the citizens of the kingdom of heaven against the bearing of arms in carnal warfare at home or abroad, offensively or defensively, against a fleshly foe.<sup>48</sup>

Although the general attitude of the preachers was beginning to shift by the mid-1940's, R. B. Sweet was an Abilene speaker who preceded the trend by advocating in 1941 the right of Christians to join the armed forces. His lecture, "Obligations of the Christian to the State," clashed sharply with Shepherd's address of a year earlier. Sweet encouraged Christians to volunteer for jury duty in their communities and said that "even capital punishment is strictly in accordance with the spirit and teaching of the New Testament." Concerning a Christian's right to participate in military service, he observed:

This is not an academic question: one that we may have to face some day far in the future. We cannot put it off and hope that we may never have to make a decision concerning it for we are squarely up against it this very day. From every community some have already gone into the army, training themselves for possible ac-

tion in battle, and others will be called every few days through the next five years. Shall we evade it and continue to give our young men in the Church no guidance or help?<sup>49</sup>

Pointing to the division of feeling which existed in the brotherhood, Sweet advised each Christian to act according to the dictates of his own conscience. He granted that if one's conscience would not permit him to serve in the armed forces he should allow himself to be put to death before becoming a soldier, "for if he goes into it against his conscience he is certainly sinning." He then compared military service to service on the police force or in a jury, and maintained:

But there are others who read the same word of God as does the conscientious objector, and they are just as conscientious, but their consciences do not forbid their serving in the military forces of our nation for defensive war. Only the individual can answer that question for himself before God. If one can accept the position that his service in the army is comparable to service in the courts of the land, or jury service, or on the police force, and believes that in acting as a soldier he is merely part of a larger police force, then no one should condemn him merely because he sees it that way.<sup>50</sup>

By the close of World War II the bulk of the brotherhood had agreed with Sweet's position regarding the Christian's right to serve in the armed forces.

### *Christ in the Home*

The Christian home is the ultimate seat of the Christ-centered life. In 1919, Joseph U. Yarborough journeyed from Austin, where he served as professor at the University of Texas, to deliver an address at Abilene.

All education has its beginning in the home . . . . Unless the home lays the foundation there can be no super structure, and both the Church and civilized so-

ciety will ultimately crumble into ruin. The lessons of the home are honesty, cleanliness, loyalty, love, consideration for others, truthfulness, and justice. It is the birthplace of reverence and piety. The intensity and the rush of modern times permit the parents but little time for instruction in these fundamentals . . . . <sup>51</sup>

Other sources confirmed Yarborough's fears that "the intensity and rush of modern times" was affecting American family life. The first homes in this country had been founded upon the biblical patriarchal pattern and formed the primary and sacred unit of society. The father was the head of the house—the physical and spiritual leader. Children were expected to render complete obedience, and were enjoined to devote their lives and labor to the family's farm or business. As a place to play, to work, to pray, to study, the home was the foundation of one's existence.<sup>52</sup>

The vast changes in the twentieth century American home were perhaps first detected in the changing role of women. The woman, as wife and mother, had traditionally been the symbol of those virtues to which the home was dedicated. As the heart of the home, she had accepted a role as the weaker sex and subordinated herself to the leadership of her husband in all things. By 1900, however, she desired emancipation from the traditional family responsibilities and sought to "live her own life." Housekeeping became less and less a chore with the advent of smaller urban houses and the popularization of apartment living. With the suffrage victory in 1920, her growing independence was greatly accelerated. Canned foods and delicatessen stores, which increased three times as fast as the population during the decade from 1910 to 1920, relieved much of the burden in the preparation of meals. Electric washing machines, irons, vacuum cleaners, readymade clothes—all converged to add more free hours to the housekeeper's schedule and sent an unparalleled number of women from the home into factories, department stores, nursing, clerical work, and stenography. "No topic was more furiously discussed from one end of the country to the other," recalled Frederick

Lewis Allen of the 1920's, "as the question whether the married woman should take a job, and whether the mother had a right to."<sup>53</sup>

The harshly vivid accounts of Judge Lindsey, the stories of petting parties and mass prostitution, the rumors of high school girls carrying contraceptives in their vanity cases, and the bumper crop of sex and confession magazines and lurid motion pictures were also felt by many clergymen and social workers to be related to the deterioration of family life. The post-war disillusionment, the new status of women, the handy adaptability of the automobile, the increased freedom granted teenagers—each had its part in affecting the nature of the American home. With these changes came a precipitous and unparalleled increase in the divorce rate. In 1910, for every one hundred marriages there were 8.8 divorces; 13.4 in 1920 and 17.5 in 1930. There was also a corresponding decline in the measure of disgrace accompanying divorce.<sup>54</sup>

During the religious debate of the 1920's, scant attention was given to conditions in the American home. While most of the problems of divorce, immorality, and juvenile delinquency were categorized as the unavoidable fruits of destructive criticism, evolution, and rationalism, the conservatives were so thoroughly preoccupied with the causes that they apparently had little time for the results.

The relatively heavy amount of speechmaking devoted to the topic of the Christian home at the Abilene Lectureship was certainly not typical of the period. And even at Abilene the home was not a prominent theme. The somewhat general comments of Professor Yarborough set the pace for most subsequent discussion. The home was pictured as the first and oldest divine institution, the cornerstone of human civilization, and the primary social unit of any culture. In 1944, H. Clyde Hale discussed "The Sacredness of the Home."

God is the author of two divine institutions. The home is the oldest which had its origin in the garden of Eden, when Jehovah God formed the first marriage . . . .



Both these institutions have been misunderstood and have been desecrated. All the trouble comes because men have abused the home and the Church.<sup>55</sup>

Jesse P. Sewell stressed the vital role of parents in the spiritual development of the child. He affirmed that mankind's most sacred responsibility is that of parenthood. "The most inexcusable and sinful neglect possible," he said, "is to bring a human life into existence and then shirk the responsibility to properly train that life." In the home, he continued, "the very foundations of character, spirit, attitude and conduct, are laid in the hearts of the children."<sup>56</sup> James F. Cox agreed: "It is here that the eternal future of the child is practically determined."<sup>57</sup>

The speakers expressed great alarm over social and moral conditions which threatened to destroy the spiritual fiber of family life. "As the decline of the Roman empire began in the corruption of the home," warned H. Clyde Hale, "we face one of the gravest dangers in the history of our nation in the gradual decline of the home." Cox had been more specific in 1927. He listed family quarrels, bursts of temper, ugliness of spirit, and unwholesome playmates as adverse circumstances disturbing the child's spiritual development. He also lamented the inclination of parents to delegate educational responsibility "to Negro or other nurses with the result that the child's mind is poisoned and warped for all time by the ugly stories and immoral practices of these ignorant and sometimes indifferent people."<sup>58</sup>

As might be anticipated, the rising "divorce evil" was labeled the chief threat to the sanctity of the home. Accepting the biblical prescription of marriage as a lifetime contract between a man, woman, and God, the lecturers insisted that wedding vows could be honorably dissolved only in the death of one of the partners. Several speakers contended that the single exception to this divine rule—the only scriptural reason for divorce—was adultery. The widespread practice of marriage between "unscripturally divorced individuals was occa-

sionally described as "legalized adultery." Eldon A. Sanders appealed to the language of Christ:

"It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement; but I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Matt. 5:31-32). Speaking again to strengthen the union in the home, Jesus said: "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt. 19:15). Yet this nation is leading the civilized world in divorces just because Christianity is not practiced in every home.<sup>59</sup>

H. Clyde Hale attributed the rise of juvenile delinquency to the "divorce evil." Speaking of Hollywood's influence in the popularization of adultery and divorce, he asserted: "There exists the idea that marriage is for convenience and if it doesn't work, we will set it aside."<sup>60</sup> In 1956, Judge Sam Davis Tatum spoke at length of the juvenile delinquency problem. He shared his experience in the Juvenile Court of Nashville, Tennessee.

For over 14 years, it has been my high honor to serve as Judge of the Juvenile Court of Davidson County, Tennessee, an area which has a population of approximately 400,000 people. During this period of time, I have dealt with multiplied thousands of children with their families. In dealing with this multitude of children, who are the delinquents of today and many of them will be the criminals of tomorrow, I soon reached the conclusion that these children are what they are because of the training or lack of training they have received. They are untrained children. The parents have failed to follow the teachings of the wise man of old when he proclaimed, "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."<sup>61</sup>

Judge Tatum blamed parents that "are too busy," the failure of fathers to lead, the broken home, and the use of alcoholic beverages, for producing the swelling army of delinquent children. Of the broken home, he said: "Eighty-five or ninety percent of the children that come into the Juvenile Court

for violating the law, come from such homes." Of the use of alcohol, he reported: "I have seen more sadness, more heart-break, more despondency brought about by drinking of alcoholic beverages than probably any other one thing. I have seen pitiful children, ragged children, diseased children, hungry children, grossly neglected because of liquor." Tatum also mentioned the significant relationship between regular church attendance and happy homes:

.... I have tried approximately 14,500 youngsters under the age of 17 for violating the law.... Of that great host of children, in only two instances, did the father and mother go to Sunday School and church regularly with their children.... And of that approximate 14,500 youngsters, only 93 of them were going to Sunday School and church regularly at the time they came into the Juvenile Court for breaking the law. Yes, the fathers and mothers that go to Sunday School and church regularly with their children, by their way of living, impress upon the child that there is something of value.<sup>62</sup>

The speakers recommended specific measures to strengthen the spiritual fiber of the home. Christian literature, supervised social activities, and other similar measures were warmly approved, but the main recommendations concerned family Bible study and worship. In 1936, George H. Stephenson observed that "even the best of our homes are failing to give the time they should toward regular and systematic Bible teaching."<sup>63</sup> Six years later Eldon A. Sanders urged Christian parents to teach "the members of the family to reverence God's word."<sup>64</sup> In 1944, Hale offered the opinion that "the great trouble in the world today regarding the home, is that the Bible has not been respected and used as the home textbook."

God's Word should govern the home. The Bible should be read daily in the home. What a beautiful picture to see the father and his wife and the mother of his children gather around the fireside reading the Bible, and then the blessings of God pronounced upon the home. I tell you that such homes stand as a bulwark against all the evils which beset our paths today!<sup>65</sup>

M. Norvel Young was among the Abilene speakers who recommended family worship as a vital means of spiritual development. "God expects fathers to do more than pay the bills." "And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). He particularly stressed the value of Bible reading and study in the home.

More and more Christian homes are taking time for the family to get together at least once a day for a fifteen minute period of daily worship. It is a pity that too many people think that worship is something that is limited to a church building as a sacred place . . . . We are also Christians in our home. We need to impress upon our children the fact that God is just as near to us in our home as He is in the church building.<sup>66</sup>

### *Christ, the Hope of Glory*

What was the Abilene opinion about life after death? "Death is a forbidden subject with many people," declared lecturer Glenn L. Wallace in 1950, "and none but the Christian who has a knowledge of what awaits him after death can look upon it without fear. Only those who believe the words of our master, 'I have the keys of death and of Hades; be not afraid.'"<sup>67</sup> To the Abilene spokesmen, Christ not only held the key to life, but he was the only solution to the mystery of death. The resurrected Christ was the focal figure in their confident belief in a life after death. No Lectureship speeches were specifically devoted to a discussion of the doctrines of eternal reward or punishment. One can conclude, however, that the lecturers believed in the existence of a literal heaven prepared for the righteous; and in a literal hell made ready for the wicked. Reuel Lemmons, 1956 peroration embodied these basic beliefs.

When the last battle has been fought and the last victory won, then shall the captain of our salvation stand upon Zion's glorious summit with the kings of earth at

His feet and the crown of crowns upon His head. His trumpeter shall call the victorious hosts of Armageddon, and they shall answer with a shout of victory as up from the land and sea they come—an innumerable host of living transformed and dead resurrected. They shall flow up into Him as a living sea of conquering heroes, and each shall stack his armor on the hills of light and enter in through the gates into the city. There the victor's song shall ring forever with the volume of a mighty waterfall, and in the midst of a great white throne shall rise as a symbol of perennial peace.<sup>68</sup>

Although the subject of heaven failed to attract the undivided attention of a single major address, the confident belief in heaven's reality obviously colored the spirit of every address. Similarly, while only a handful of actual references to hell can be found in the manuscripts, tacit belief in the doctrine of the future punishment of the wicked was also an assumption upon which most of the speeches were based. The Lectureship pointed toward a great day of judgment. Its impact was focused, not in time, but in eternity. John Banister explained that,

This means more than endless life, it is life in its fullness, life at its best. Heaven is to be a place of perfection, of happiness and holiness. It is to be a place where the spirits of just men are made perfect. It is to be an eternal city, a better country, a new garden of Eden, a sabbath rest for the people of God. Moreover, heaven is an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and a place that fades not away since it is reserved for all who are guarded by the power of God through faith!<sup>69</sup>

The eternal victory was made real, and humanly possible, only because of Jesus Christ—his life and his death. "Do you want to behold his glory?" asked Jim Bill McInteer. Reminding his brethren that the glory of the "word made flesh" had been graciously showered upon all men, McInteer plead:

In simple obedience to his will, will you allow Jesus to touch you, lift you, and lead you to the land where

"there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light from the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign forever and ever."<sup>70</sup>

The men who mirrored the American Restoration movement at the Abilene Christian College Lectureship sought to be servants of that "kingdom set up by the God of heaven which shall never be destroyed." They were deeply convicted that the hope of heaven itself was hinged upon their relationship to the King and their faithfulness in restoring the Kingdom.

In 1923, W. D. Campbell said it well: "Let us, beloved, stand like a wall of fire for the Gospel, as the Lord gave it, and as his apostles preached it; and for the church of Christ, in its purity and simplicity as revealed in the New Testament and faithfully give our lives in restoring it." Then Campbell came to the meaning of it all: "And in the coming day—We shall stand on the winning side."<sup>71</sup>

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Hall L. Calhoun, "What Jesus May Be to a Human Soul," *Lectures*, 1926-1927, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup>"The Personal Element," *Lectures*, 1920-1921, p. 169.

<sup>3</sup>"How to Live," *Lectures*, 1920-1921, p. 216.

<sup>4</sup>"The Emphasis Where it Belongs," *Lectures*, 1920-1921, pp. 114, 115.

<sup>5</sup>References in these two paragraphs are from Scott, "Christian Stewardship: Divine Ownership," *Lectures*, 1939, p. 2, Gipson, "Stewardship of our Bodies," *Lectures*, 1939, p. 17, Hailey, "Stewardship of Our Time," *Lectures*, 1939, p. 34, Sanders, "The Implications of Christian Hope," *Lectures*, 1943, p. 65, and Bates, "Filled Unto the Fulness of God," *Lectures*, 1957, p. 50.

<sup>6</sup>"In Nothing Be Anxious," *Lectures*, 1957, p. 82.

<sup>7</sup>"Hold Fast to Eternal Things," *Lectures*, 1942, pp. 16-17.

<sup>8</sup>"The Mind of Christ," *Lectures*, 1951, pp. 16, 27.

<sup>9</sup>"The More Abundant Life As One That Is a Life of Faith," *Lectures*, 1961, pp. 89, 92.

<sup>10</sup>"Religiosity and the Christian Faith," in *Essays in Applied Christianity*. (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1959), p. 64.

<sup>11</sup>"The Abundant Life as a Life of Self-Giving and Service," *Lectures*, 1961, p. 30.

<sup>12</sup>"Lasting Memorials," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, p. 51.

<sup>13</sup>"If Christ Be In You," *Lectures*, 1957, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup>*The Living of These Days* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), pp. 235-236.

<sup>15</sup>"The Indwelling Christ," *Lectures*, 1926-1927, pp. 17-18.

<sup>16</sup>Clevenger, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup>"The Weightier Matters of the Law," *Lectures*, 1928-1929, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup>"Theory versus Practice," *Lectures*, 1926-1927, pp. 130-131.

<sup>19</sup>"Putting God First," *Lectures*, 1927-1928, p. 239.

<sup>20</sup>"Exalting the Church," *Lectures*, 1928-1929, p. 109.

<sup>21</sup>"Open Thou Mine Eyes," *Lectures*, 1950, p. 205.

<sup>22</sup>"The New Testament Church in Apostolic Times," *Lectures*, 1934, p. 16.

<sup>23</sup>*Lectures*, 1954, p. 247.

<sup>24</sup>"They All With One Consent Began to Make Excuse," *Lectures*, 1937, p. 54.

<sup>25</sup>"Jesus Calls Us," *Lectures*, 1950, p. 174.

<sup>26</sup>"Teaching By Personal Example," *Lectures*, 1956, pp. 6-7.

<sup>27</sup>*Lectures*, 1957, pp. 122, 128-129.

<sup>28</sup>"The Kingdom That Cannot Be Shaken, I," *Lectures*, 1946, p. 103.

<sup>29</sup>"The Kingdom That Cannot Be Shaken, II," *Lectures*, 1946, p. 124.

<sup>30</sup>"The Missionary's Spiritual Life," *Lectures*, 1959, p. 87.

<sup>31</sup>Sanders, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>32</sup>Calhoun, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>33</sup>"The Abundant Life As One That Places the Spiritual Above the Material," *Lectures*, 1961, p. 132.

<sup>34</sup>"Love the Brotherhood," *Lectures*, 1955, p. 53.

<sup>35</sup>"Brotherly Love," *Lectures*, 1952, p. 7.

<sup>36</sup>"The More Abundant Life As One of High Fellowship Values," *Lectures*, 1961, p. 84.

"God's Fellow Workers," *Lectures*, 1953, p. 195.

<sup>38</sup>"Room for the King," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, p. 154.

"Character Building," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, p. 154.

"Our Heavenly Citizenship," *Lectures*, 1941, p. 15.

"The Social Life of a Christian," *Lectures*, 1941, p. 53.

<sup>43</sup>"Christianity, A Way of Living," *Lectures*, 1944, pp. 13-14.

<sup>43</sup>"Overcoming Worldliness," *Lectures*, 1954, pp. 274-275.

<sup>44</sup>"The Business Life of a Christian Citizen," *Lectures*, 1941, p. 32.

<sup>45</sup>"The Christian in Business," *Lectures*, 1946, p. 190.

<sup>46</sup>*Lectures*, 1943, p. 143.

<sup>47</sup>William S. Banowsky, "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Preaching of H. Leo Boles," (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of New Mexico, 1958), p. 63. The author has a carbon copy of the original four page document titled "A Protest of War," which was mailed to President Wilson. Among the thirty-eight teachers and preachers who signed the petition were B. C. Goodpasture, and J. Leonard Jackson, later to lecture at Abilene, and Charles R. Brewer, brother of Abilene lecturer G. C. Brewer.

*Lectures*, 1940, p. 146.

*Lectures*, 1941, p. 203.

*Ibid.*, p. 206.

"Our Educational Program," *Lectures*, 1919, p. 66.

<sup>52</sup>See Arthur W. Calhoun, *A Social History of the American Family From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1945), Ruth Lindquist, *The Family in the Present Social Order* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1931). and Merle Curti, *The Growth of American Thought* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943), pp. 50-68.

<sup>53</sup>*Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the Nineteen Twenties* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931). pp. 96, 97.

Ernest R. Mowrer, *Family Disorganization: An Introduction to Sociological Analysis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1927) pp. 3-28. Frederick Lewis Allen said of the model-A Ford: "The closed car, moreover, was in effect a room protected from the weather which could be occupied at anytime day or night and could be moved at will into a darkened byway or country lane. The Lynds quoted the judge of the juvenile court in Middletown as declaring that the automobile had become a 'house of prostitution on



wheels,' and cited the fact that of thirty girls brought before his court in a year on charges of sex crimes . . . nineteen were listed as having committed it in an automobile," p. 100.

<sup>55</sup>*Lectures*, 1944, p. 34.

<sup>56</sup>"Christian Education," *Lectures*, 1928-1929, pp. 42-44.

<sup>57</sup>"The Perils of the Child," *Lectures*, 1922-1923, pp. 42-44.

<sup>58</sup>This paragraph cites, Hale, *op. cit.*, p. 8, and Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>59</sup>"Christianity in the Home," *Lectures*, 1942, p. 114.

<sup>60</sup>Hale, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>61</sup>"Train Up a Child in the Way That He Should Go," *Lectures*, 1956, pp. 33-34.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 45, 49-50.

<sup>63</sup>"The Status of Bible Teaching Today," *Lectures*, 1936, p. 82.

<sup>64</sup>Sanders, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>65</sup>"The Home—Its Importance," *Lectures*, 1944, p. 32.

<sup>66</sup>"Restoring God to Education," *Lectures*, 1958, pp. 184-185.

<sup>67</sup>"The Death of a Saint," *Lectures*, 1950, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup>"Evangelism," *Lectures*, 1950, pp. 30-31.

<sup>69</sup>"The Hope of Heaven," *Lectures*, 1950, p. 153.

<sup>70</sup>"I Beheld His Glory," *Lectures*, 1958, p. 253.

<sup>71</sup>"The Church Which Was Built by Jesus the Christ," *Lectures*, 1922, 1923, p. 194.



# Appendix



## ABILENE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE LECTURESHIP SPEAKERS

1. Adams, Walter, 1930,\* 34, 62
2. Aikin, Owen, 1954
3. Alexander, Robert, 1928
4. Alten, Dieter, 1950, 1964
5. Arceneaux, Early, 1921, 31, 33, 33, 33, 33, 41
6. Arledge, J. S., 1930
7. Armstrong, J. N., 1922, 35, 35
8. Austin, Clyde, 1963
9. Bailey, George, 1956, 57, 61, 63
10. Bailey, J. C., 1947, 51, 55, 59
11. Baird, James O., 1952, 1961
12. Bales, J. D., 1948, 1957
13. Banister, John H., 1940, 48, 48, 48, 51, 51, 54, 57
14. Barber, H. L., 1954, 1956
15. Barret, A. B., 1918, 22, 22
16. Barton, W. B., 1958
17. Bates, Jack, 1957, 1958
18. Baxter, Batsell, 1919, 24, 30, 33, 33, 35, 44
19. Baxter, Batsell Barrett, 1947 56, 58
20. Beam, Ernest, 1935, 1955
21. Bell, R. C., 1920, 27, 37, 43, 46
22. Bell, Robert, 1961
23. Benson, George S., 1937, 37, 47, 56, 59, 63
24. Bills, W. D., 1923, 1938
25. Black, W. D., 1925
26. Blum, Heinrich, 1955, 1960
27. Bobo, David H., 1960
28. Bordon, E. M., 1926
29. Brecheen, Carl, 1964
30. Brewer, G. C., 1921, 24, 26, 27, 31, 31, 31, 32, 34, 34, 34, 38, 39, 44, 44, 52, 55
31. Brooks, R. R., 1926, 1927
32. Broom, Wendell, 1958
33. Brown, Edward, 1955
34. Brownlow, LeRoy, 1951, 1956
35. Bryan, Alan M., 1955, 1959
36. Bryant, Rees, 1960, 1962
37. Buchanan, C. A., 1926
38. Burch, Walter, 1964
39. Burns, Leon C., 1959
40. Busby, Horace W., 1930, 1936
41. Calhoun, Hall L., 1927, 27, 27, 27, 27, 29, 29, 29, 29, 29
42. Campbell, W. D., 1923, 23 23, 23, 23, 23, 27
43. Cannon, R. C., 1952
44. Carney, T. M., 1922
45. Carter, Morgan, H., 1924
46. Caskey, Guy V., 1955, 57, 61
47. Chaddick, A. DeWitt, 1938
48. Channing, Leonard, 1950
49. Chessir, L. Haskell, 1960
50. Chester, Ray, 1959
51. Childress, Harvey, 1956
52. Childress, James, 1929
53. Chism, J. W., 1920, 1931
54. Chumley, Charles, 1949, 1955
55. Clark, A. Hugh, 1926, 34, 34, 42, 43 44
56. Clevenger, Eugene, 1957
57. Coffman, Burton, 1956, 59, 62
58. Coffman, E. C., 1933, 37
59. Cogdill, Roy, 1931
60. Colley, A. O., 1920, 21, 23, 28, 34
61. Collins, Willard, 1953
62. Cook, Lynn, 1957
63. Cooper, David L., 1921
64. Copeland, Milton, 1957
65. Cox, James F., 1922, 23, 24, 30, 30, 32, 34, 37, 44
66. Craig, Mack Wayne, 1964
67. Crenshaw, J. P., 1934, 1954, 1954
68. Cubstead, Lane, 1962
69. Cuthbertson, M. C., 1925, 1928
70. Cypert, W. G., 1918
71. Dabney, Allen B., 1920 1920
72. Daley, M. O., 1931
73. Davis, W. M., 1925, 1933
74. Dayne, Harry, 1951

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\*The dates signify the year(s) in which each speaker appeared on the Lectureship and reveal the number of his appearances.

75. DeHoff, George, 1955
76. Dickey, John A., 1931
77. Diestlekamp, Leslie, 1954, 1956
78. Dixon, H. A., 1954, 57, 58, 64, 58, 64
79. Dobbs, Jim, 1963
80. Dong, S. K., 1951
81. Douthitt, B. L., 1937
82. Dunkleberger, A. C., 1957
83. Dunn, Frank, 1956
84. Dunn, Gustus A., 1923
85. Dunn, J. W., 1928
86. Dyer, Herschel, 1957, 1961
87. Durst, John S., 1923
88. Earnhart, Paul, 1953
89. Echols, Eldred, 1949, 1952
90. Elkins, A. LeRoy, 1921
91. Elkins, Tice, 1918
92. Ellis, Carroll, 1962
93. Etheridge, Truman H., 1922, 1938
94. Etter, Carl L., 1923, 1927
95. Evans, Dwain, 1963
96. Fanning, Boyd, 1957
97. Farley, C. A., 1964
98. Ferguson, Everett, 1953, 60, 62, 62
99. Filbeck, Orval, 1946
100. Finto, Don, 1958
101. Fogarty, Dan F., 1952, 1955
102. Forrest, U. R., 1926
103. Foster, Otto, 1943
104. Fox, Harry Robert, Jr., 1951, 1960
105. Fox, Logan J., 1953, 57, 61, 63
106. Freeman, W. W., 1920
107. Fudge, Bennie Lee, 1956
108. Fullerton, Byron, 1941
109. Gano, Maurice D., 1919
110. Gardiner, Andrew, 1964
111. Gardner, Don, 1959
112. Gatewood, Otis, 1947, 51, 55, 58, 59
113. Geiger, L. L., 1952, 1964
114. Gipson, J. P., 1939
115. Goodpasture, B. C., 1950
116. Gray, Leonard M., 1953, 1963
117. Greene, Kenneth, 1962
118. Guild, Claude A., 1952, 1959
119. Hailey, Homer, 1934, 37, 38, 47
120. Hale, H. Clyde, 1944, 1944
121. Hall, Maurice C., 1953
122. Hall, S. H., 1932, 32, 32
123. Hall, W. Claude, 1927
124. Hamilton, F. T., 1952
125. Hardcastle, Jack, 1955
126. Hardeman, N. B., 1924, 24, 24, 24
127. Hardeman, Pat, 1955
128. Hardin, Daniel C., 1962
129. Hardin, John T., 1954
130. Harper, E. R., 1950
131. Harrell, Pat, 1959
132. Harvey, J. D., 1927, 1943
133. Hawley, Monroe E., 1964
134. Hicks, Olan L., 1946, 62, 62
135. Hill, Cecil, 1936, 1938
136. Hinds, John T., 1925, 25, 25, 25, 25, 25,
137. Hines, J. L., 1929
138. Hobby, Alvin, 1947
139. Hockaday, W. Don, 1927
140. Holton, A. R., 1919, 21, 28, 51, 57, 59, 59, 60, 62
141. Horton, Howard, 1956, 1961
142. Hudson, John Allen, 1931, 35, 35
143. Humble, Bill, 1962
144. Ijams, E. H., 1935, 1935
145. Isabel, A. V., 1957, 1961
146. Jackson, Hulen L., 1938, 1949
147. Jackson, J. Leonard, 1958
148. Jennings, Alvin, 1959
149. Johnston, Rex, 1957
150. Jones, Robert C., 1931, 36, 42, 53
151. Kallus, Reiner, 1960
152. Keeble, Marshall, 1950
153. Kelcy, Raymond C., 1943, 58, 62
154. Kelton, Tommy, 1957
155. Kenley, R. O., 1925
156. Kennamer, L. G., 1925
157. Kercheville, Mack, 1946 1953
158. Kercheville, W. A., 1927

159. Kerr, A. J., 1959  
 160. Kharlukki, Preston, 1953  
 161. Klingman, C. C., 1918  
 162. Klingman, George A.,  
 1918, 18, 19, 22  
 163. Kurfees, M. C., 1920, 20,  
 20, 20, 20, 20  
 164. Kyker, Rex, 1963  
 165. Lanier, Roy H., 1924,  
 1938  
 166. Lawrence, A. R., 1926  
 167. Lewis, W. B., 1918  
 168. Ledlow, W. F., 1922,  
 1929  
 169. LeFan, James, 1963  
 170. Lemmons, Reuel, 1940  
 46, 51, 55, 56, 64  
 171. Lewis, Jack P., 1954  
 172. Lewis, LeMoine G.,  
 1950, 55, 64  
 173. Lightfoot, Neil R., 1960  
 174. Linn, Elbridge, 1952,  
 1958  
 175. Lockhart, Stanley, 1959  
 176. Long, W. S., 1935, 1935  
 177. Lyles, Cleon, 1956, 1963  
 178. McCaleb, J. M., 1920  
 179. McCord, Hugo, 1943,  
 1956  
 180. McGaughey, C. E., 1949,  
 50, 55, 61  
 181. McInteer, Jim Bill, 1958  
 1964  
 182. McMillan, E. W., 1923,  
 24, 29, 30, 34, 46, 46,  
 48, 49, 50, 56, 59, 62  
 183. McPhee, Charles G., 1953  
 184. Malcomson, W. G., 1921  
 185. Malone, Avon, 1953  
 186. Malone, Joe, 1952  
 187. Marshal, R. R., 1962  
 188. Mathews, Harrison, 1956,  
 1963  
 189. Mattox, F. W., 1957  
 190. Merritt, J. Dow, 1937,  
 1958  
 191. Meyer, Jack, 1941, 1960  
 192. Mickey, George, F., 1927  
 193. Milholland, Thomas E.,  
 1922, 1956  
 194. Mitchell, Carl, 1953, 56,  
 58  
 195. Moody, Vernon, 1961  
 196. Morehead, B. D., 1937  
 197. Morgan, C. C., 1936,  
 198. Morlan, G. C., 1930  
 199. Morris, Don H., 1930,  
 31, 36, 42, 44, 63  
 200. Mullens, Leonard, 1951,  
 53, 60  
 201. Nelson, J. B., 1920, 1929  
 202. Nichol, C. R., 1927, 44,  
 44, 46, 52  
 203. Nichols, Elmer, 1925  
 204. Nichols, Gus, 1955, 1964  
 205. Nichols, Hardeman, 1961,  
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 206. Nichols, James W., 1952,  
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 207. Nicks, J. W., 1961  
 208. Norred, C. A., 1929, 36  
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 209. North, Ira, 1954, 1964  
 210. North, Stafford, 1962  
 211. Ochoa, Antonio, 1952  
 212. Oka, Shoichi, 1961  
 213. Olbricht, Thomas, 1963  
 214. Oliphant, W. L., 1926,  
 28, 33  
 215. O'Neal, L. E., 1953  
 216. Ortis, Gabriell, 1953  
 217. Osborne, Roy, 1960  
 218. Otey, W. W., 1938  
 219. Owens, Delmar, 1953  
 220. Pack, Frank, 1950, 54,  
 58, 59  
 221. Paden, Cline, 1948, 51,  
 54, 56, 57, 61  
 222. Paden, Gerald, 1961  
 223. Perry, Lowell, 1964  
 224. Phillips, O. E., 1918,  
 1920  
 225. Phillips, T. W., 1918,  
 1931  
 226. Pittman, S. P., 1926, 26,  
 26, 26, 26, 26  
 227. Pope, Jack, 1956,  
 1960  
 228. Pullias, Athens Clay,  
 1940, 42, 42, 49, 49, 49,  
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 229. Pullias, C. M., 1924, 28,  
 28, 28, 28, 28, 29  
 230. Reagan, Wesley, 1953  
 231. Reed, Kenneth, 1961,  
 1964  
 232. Reeves, Bill, 1949  
 233. Reichel, Gottfried, 1953

234. Revas, Pedro, 1947,  
1954
235. Richards, J. H., 1946
236. Rideout, Kenneth, 1963
237. Rhodes, B. F., 1923
238. Roberson, Charles H.,  
1924, 32, 33, 36, 38, 40,  
41, 42, 43, 46
239. Roberts, J. W., 1959, 1962
240. Roberts, Luther G., 1941
241. Robinson, C. J., 1922
242. Rockey, E. H., 1957
243. Rogers, Clifton, 1953,  
1964
244. Rose, Thomas D., 1928,  
1940
245. Rose, W. K., 1927
246. Rowe, F. L., 1919, 22, 36
247. Salvoni, Fausto, 1959
248. Sanders, Eldon A., 1942,  
1946
249. Sanders, J. P., 1943, 43,  
43, 43, 58, 61
250. Sanders, Joe, 1960
251. Sanders, Liff, 1918, 1921
252. Sawyer, Wyatt, 1963
253. Scaggs, W. P., 1925
254. Schubert, Joe D., 1957
255. Scott, Harvey, 1928, 1939
256. Sewell, Jesse P., 1919, 20,  
21, 22, 23, 24, 29, 38,  
39, 42
257. Shepherd, F. B., 1919, 23,  
25, 26, 29, 40, 43, 43,  
43, 46, 48
258. Sherrod, Paul, 1947
259. Short, W.N., 1929
260. Showalter, G. H. P.,  
1919, 22, 32, 44
261. Skelton, Robert, 1960
262. Slayden, Paul, 1930, 30,  
30, 30
263. Smith, Colin B., 1940,  
1947
264. Smith, F. W., 1921, 21,  
21, 21, 21, 21
265. Smith, G. Dallas, 1919  
19, 19, 19, 19
266. Smith, Foy, 1956
267. Smith, John T., 1922, 31,  
34, 34, 38, 41
268. Smith, Oscar, 1923, 1935
269. Smith, R. D., 1922
270. Smith, R. J., 1957, 1958, 63
271. Smith, W. R., 1932
272. Smithson, John T., Jr.,  
1960
273. Smithson, John T., Sr.,  
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274. Southern, Paul, 1937, 38,  
40, 41, 46, 54, 56
275. Spain, Carl, 1948, 53, 58,  
60
276. Speck, H. E., Sr., 1918,  
19, 21, 39
277. Speck, H. E., Jr., 1961
278. Spring, Truman, 1959
279. Starnes, Trine, 1952
280. Starnes, W. W., 1921
281. Starnes, Warren E., 1928
282. Stephenson, George,  
1936, 49, 54, 58, 63
283. Stevens, John C., 1957
284. Straiton, John A., 1919
285. Stubblefield, C. M., 1926
286. Summerlin, M. I., 1957,  
1963
287. Sweet, R. B., 1935, 35,  
41
288. Swinney, W. L., 1923
289. Tant, Yater, 1939, 46, 46
290. Tarbet, T. H., 1961
291. Tatum, Sam Davis, 1956
292. Taylor, H. I., 1959
293. Taylor, Herbert, 1958
294. Taylor, John C., 1925
295. Teel, Gordon, 1960
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