

The Way Of Unity Between “Christian Church” and churches of Christ

by
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Brethren, this is an important occasion, and the truth should be spoken kindly, clearly, and positively; hence, permit me to speak frankly and encouragingly. I am not a "delegate" to this "conference" or "unity meeting;" neither am I a "representative" of the churches of Christ; I have not been sent here by any church or group of churches; I am not clothed with any "official authority." I am here at the kind invitation of Brother Claud F. Witty; so I alone am responsible to God for what I say.

Truly, Brother Edwin Erret has said: "No man in Christendom generally is such a bore today as the man who merely pleads for unity and offers no plan, and no man in the brotherhood beats the air so uselessly with platitudes as he who bores the brethren with mere pleas for peace. Such pleas have become something of an insult to the brotherhood. What we all want now is some thoroughgoing study of the way of peace, the basis for true unity. The wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable." (Christian Standard, March 25, 1939.) It is the purpose of this address to follow the suggestion above and give a thorough study to the way of unity between the "Christian Church" and the churches of Christ.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth century there arose in different sections of our country religious leaders who recognized the exceeding sinfulness of

divisions in the religious world, and who appreciated, to some degree at least, the teachings of the New Testament on the unity of God's people. Barton W. Stone, with others, about 1804, severed his connection with the Presbyterian Church and led a movement to unite believers in Christ on the New Testament. This movement later became known as the "Christian Church," and the individual members called themselves "Christians." A little later, about 1809, the Campbells began an independent movement in Western Pennsylvania and Virginia with the same objectives; this group became known as the "Disciples' Church," and the members called themselves "Disciples." The movements led by Stone and Alexander Campbell continued as independent groups, with no cooperation, until 1832. At Lexington, Ky., a meeting was held to unite these two groups. Some historians record that the Campbell group at this time numbered about twelve thousand and the Stone group about fifteen thousand. They met on New Year's Day, 1832, and continued in session four days. "Raccoon" John Smith was selected from the Campbell group to set forth the New Testament grounds of unity, and B.W. Stone represented the "Christian Church." The meeting resulted in the uniting of these two groups. "Raccoon" John Smith was my grandfather. May the present meeting on this occasion have the same happy results. It will have the same results if all have the same spirit that actuated there, for we all have the same New Testament.

Common Ground

The churches of Christ and the "Christian Church" hold to the same fundamental doctrine of the New Testament; both recognize in the

New Testament the two great lessons taught therein-what sinners must do to be saved and how saints must live to go to heaven; both believe that the alien sinner must hear the gospel, believe in Christ as the Son of God and Savior of men, repent of all sins, and be baptized into Christ; that there is but one way by which the Lord adds people to his church, and that is through obedience to the gospel, or submission to the will of God as expressed to aliens. There is common ground here, and, with few exceptions, all teach clearly and emphatically that there is no promise to an alien who does not obey the gospel; both teach that by obedience to the gospel the Lord adds to his church; that "except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5.)

There is more common ground. Both teach that after one becomes a member of the body of Christ, "we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Tit. 2: 12, 13.) Both teach that Christians are to be guided by the New Testament in all work and worship, and recognize, with few exceptions, the New Testament as the only authority in guiding the Lord's people in their work and worship. There is common ground here, and the Lord's people can, and should, be united on how people become Christians and how they should live the Christian life. They were united on these fundamental truths and practices for many years. This is proof positive that they can still be united on these fundamental and basic teachings of the New Testament. All authority in matters of work and worship of the Lord's people belongs to Christ, and that authority is revealed in the New Testament for our guidance. "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for

instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." (II Tim. 3:16, 17.) This common ground with only one guide constitutes the only ground for the unity of God's people.

United from 1832 to 1849

The Lord's people remained a united body from the meeting in Lexington, Ky., in 1832 to 1849. At that time in Lexington my grandfather presented the New Testament teaching for unity. He said, in part, the following:

"God has but one people on the earth. He has given to them but one Book, and therein exhorts and commands them to be one family. A union such as we plead for—a union of God's people on that one Book—must, then, be practicable.

"Every Christian desires to stand complete in the whole will of God. The prayer of the Savior, and the whole tenor of this teaching, clearly show that it is God's will that his children should be united. To the Christian, then, such a union must be desirable.

"But an amalgamation of sects is not such a union as Christ prayed for and God enjoins. To agree to be one upon any system of human inventions would be contrary to his will, and could never be a blessing to the church or the world; therefore, the only union practicable or desirable must be based on the word of God as the only rule of faith and practice... "I have the more cheerfully resolved on this course, because the gospel is a system of facts, commands, and promises, and no deduction or inference from them, however logical or true, forms any part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. No

heaven is promised to those who hold them, and no hell is threatened to those who deny them. They do not constitute, singly or together, an item of the ancient and apostolic gospel. While there is but one faith, there may be ten thousand opinions; and, hence, if Christians are ever to be one, they must be one in faith, and not in opinion. When certain subjects arise, even in conversation or social discussion, about which there is a contrariety of opinion and sensitiveness of feeling, speak of them in the words of the Scripture, and no offense will be given and no pride of doctrine will be encouraged. We may even come, in the end, by thus speaking the same things, to think the same things.

"For several years past I have stood pledged to meet the religious world, or any part of it, on the ancient gospel and order of things as presented in the words of the Book. This is the foundation on which Christians once stood, and on it they can, and ought to, stand again. From this I cannot depart to meet any man, or set of men, in the wide world. While, for the sake of peace and Christian union, I have long since waived the public maintenance of any speculation I may hold, yet no one gospel fact, commandment, or promise will I surrender for the world" (Life of Elder John Smith, pages 452-454.)

This is the ground of unity that was accepted in 1832 by the Stone and Campbell groups; it is the fundamental teaching of the New Testament. Such a unity honors the truth of God, respects the authority of Christ, and glorifies God. Brethren, this is where the churches of Christ stand today; it is where unity may be found now; it is where you left the New Testament; it is where you left the churches of Christ, and it is where you can find them when you come back. On this ground and teaching, and only on this, can

scriptural unity be had now; on these basic principles of the New Testament Christian unity may always be had. The people of God were united on these principles from 1832 to 1849; they were united on these principles when the church began. Christians enjoyed the sweet fellowship of the people of God and made marvelous progress when so united. They made deep inroads on denominationalism and increased more rapidly in number than at any other period in the history of the Restoration Movement.

Departures

In 1849, the first major departure was made. David S. Burnet was the father of the Missionary Society; it was organized in 1849. David S. Burnet was a convert from the Baptist Church and he brought the idea of the Missionary Society with him from the Baptist Church. "He was brought up as a Presbyterian but at sixteen years of age, after careful study of the New Testament, was baptized into the Baptist Church." ("The Story of the Churches." by Errett Gates, p. 190.) He said, "I was born into the missionary spirit, and did not relinquish it when I associated myself with my present brethren." (Christian Magazine, Vol. 3, p. 173.)

John T. Brown in his history of "Churches of Christ," p. 153, says:

"David S. Burnet was the father of organized cooperative work among the disciples of Christ. He crystallized the sentiment for cooperation. He was the leader of leaders, who, more than any other man, advocated the adoption of the plan of cooperation, which has grown to its present power and usefulness among our people. Afterward, in looking over his life-work, he said: "I consider the

inauguration of the society system, which I vowed to urge upon the brethren if God raised me up from my protracted illness of 1845, was one of the most important acts of my career." He was indeed the leader of the leaders in the work of organization and formation of the American Christian Missionary Society.

So, according to David S. Burnet, "the father of organized, cooperative work among the disciples of Christ," the resolution to urge the society on the Brethren originated in the sickroom in 1845, in the mind of David S. Burnet, but was not put into execution until four years later, 1849.

Dr. Errett Gates in his "The story of the Churches-The Disciples of Christ," pp.240. 241, bears this testimony:"The first serious internal controversy arose on account of the organization of this first missionary society. The society was opposed on the ground that there was neither precept nor example in the New Testament for the organization of societies for the spread of the gospel. Some of the bitterest satire in the columns of the Christian Baptist had been directed against the 'mercenary schemes' of the missionary, tract, and Bible societies of the various denominations. Campbell's approval of the organization of the new society did not save it from the assaults of many of his brethren. The enemies of the society went back to the Christian Baptist for their most effective epithets against the new scheme, and Alexander Campbell of 1823 was arrayed against Alexander Campbell of 1849.

"The struggle for organized missionary work among the disciples was begun, and progress was contested at every step by a bitter and relentless opposition, which became a party within the ranks with its leaders and newspapers."

It will be admitted by all that the Missionary Society was thus the first departure from the original grounds of the New Testament teaching as set forth by the pioneers when they united; those who made the departure were responsible for the division on this point. The "Christian Church" departed from the ground of unity and attempted to justify its course in the organization of the Missionary Society. The churches of Christ remained faithful to the New Testament and the "plea and platform" to which the early reformers had called God's people; the churches of Christ stood firm on that platform. In no fair, just, or logical way could the churches of Christ be called a faction unless the whole group was a faction from 1832 to 1849. The "Christian Church" became the faction and was responsible for the division. The churches of Christ were no more a faction in remaining loyal to the New Testament than were Caleb and Joshua when they made a correct report of the spies. The fact that a majority of the churches went with the departure does not make the ones who remained loyal a faction. There is neither precept nor example in the New Testament for any organization, except the independent, local church, and by virtue of the commission given to it by Christ, its head, it can and should "preach the gospel to the whole creation." (Mark 16:15.) No other organization is needed for the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of saints-any other organization is an addition to New Testament teaching and is condemned by the word of God. The Missionary Society occupies a position of irreconcilable opposition to the New Testament. The churches of Christ will not compromise nor surrender here; if there is to be unity with the "Christian Church," it must abandon the Missionary Society. At first the Missionary Society had no authority; it acted only in an advisory capacity. Many who were opposed to it

when it was organized tolerated it on the ground that it was only an advisory body with no authority, and, hence, they claimed, the advice it gave to the churches needed not be heeded if a church did not desire to follow the advice. Benjamin Franklin was one of this number. He affiliated with the society at first only because it was "only advisory, voluntary, and had no authority. .. and had no right to interfere with the independence of the churches." ("Life and Times of Ben Franklin," p. 348.) This society was a confessed departure from the practices of the pioneers. It soon grew in proportions and soon usurped the autonomy of the churches and stands today as a monument of the cause of woeful division and strife in the brotherhood. It has in recent years gone to such extremes in its departures and arrogance that the Christian Standard has felt called upon to oppose it so stoutly, yet the Christian Standard still claims the right to organize a human society to do a part of the Lord's work. The churches of Christ today stand just where the pioneers stood before the Missionary Society was organized; they sustain the same attitude toward it now in their opposition to it as did the brethren who opposed it when it was organized. Brethren, give up the Missionary Society and come back where you left the people of God and there will still be unity on this point. There can be no unity so long as a part of God's people claim the right to organize a Missionary Society and thrust it upon another portion of God's people.

A second departure was the introduction of instrumental music in the worship. This began about 1859. It was not introduced because it was found in the New Testament; neither were those who introduced it in the worship guided by the New Testament. But few have been bold enough to attempt to prove that the New Testament authorizes

the use of instrumental music in worship. Many have claimed on other grounds that they have a right to use instrumental music in worship, but the point made here is that no one, guided by the New Testament, introduced the organ into the worship. Errett Gates, in his history referred to above, p. 250, says: "The organ controversy was the missionary controversy in a new form, for both grew out of the opposition to human innovations in the work and worship of the church ... The organ party treated it as a question of expediency on which there should be forbearance and liberty. The antiparty treated it as a matter of principle." The arguments now used to justify the use of instrumental music in worship are "after-thoughts" and were not used when the instrument or organ was first imposed on the brotherhood.

The use of the instrument of music in the worship must either be put in the class of things authorized by the New Testament, or its use must be classed in the realm of opinion or expediency; there is no other alternative for it. O.E. Payne and others affirmed that the use of the instrument was included in the New Testament use of "psallo." J.B. Briney and the Christian Standard at one time endorsed Payne's position. Those who occupied this position were forced to teach the use of instrumental music in worship. If the instrument is in the New Testament meaning of "psallo," then, the New Testament commands the use of instrumental music when we engage in the worship of God; and when we do not play the instrument in worship, we are in rebellion against God; God commands whatever is in the New Testament meaning of "baptizo." We have no alternative in either case except to do what is in the words "psallo" and "baptizo" or be in rebellion against God. There is no other conclusion, and there is no escape from this conclusion. God commands us to "psallo," and

no matter what it means, that is what we are forced to do by the word of God, or to rebel against him. If the position of the advocates of the use of instrumental music in worship is correct, then every church that does not play instrumental music in its worship is in rebellion against God.

The other alternative that many took, and still advocate, is to place the organ in the "area of silence" or in the field of expediency. But if there is no stronger reason for using the instrument than the opinions and judgments of men, it is sinful to force the use of the instrument in worshiping upon God's people. If it is placed in the field of opinion and judgment of men, not only may it be abandoned, but should be, for it invades the realm of divine revelation. God's children, to be loyal to his word, must oppose the use of the instrument in the worship. Those who use the organ in worship make it "a test of fellowship"; they sustain the attitude that if you do not submit to the use of the instrument in worship, then you can have no fellowship with us. A denial of making it "a test of fellowship" does not change the logic of the situation; neither does the charge that those who oppose the use of the instrument in worship are disturbers of the peace and unity of God's people make it true; the charge is not a proof of the fact. Those who oppose the use of the instrument in worship are walking by faith in opposing it, but those who introduce it are making it "the test of fellowship."

Brethren, put away the organ and you will be where the pioneers first stood when the unity of God's people was enjoyed. The churches of Christ are standing now on this item just where the pioneers stood before its introduction in 1859; there was unity then on this point and there can be unity now at this point when the organ

is pushed aside. Brethren, if you think there will be a compromise or surrender by the churches of Christ on this point, you are mistaken. Pardon the personal reference; I have had a part in the training of more than five hundred gospel preachers, I have had contact with more than a thousand others. I know their attitude, their convictions, and their loyalty to the truth of God. I know the attitude of thousands of members of the body of Christ; they all love unity and are loyal to Christ; the gospel preachers occupy the same attitude today toward it that J.W. McGarvey declared as his conviction at one time, and will oppose it as did he. In the *Millennial Harbinger*, 1868, pp. 213-19, J.W. McGarvey replied to "Brother Hayden on Expediency and Progress," and said, with respect to societies, instrumental music in the worship, and other things:

"Our work is to check them and turn them back from their course; not to outstrip them in running after organs and compromises. The loudest call that comes from heaven to the men of this generation is for warfare, stern, relentless, merciless, exterminating warfare against everything not expressly or by necessary implication authorized in the New Testament. Such is my unwavering conviction; and my only regret is that I cannot fight this fight as it should be fought.

"In conclusion, let me add that if any brother who reads this sees fit to style me intolerant, dictatorial, or self-consequent, I say to him that I claim to be nothing more than one plain disciple of Christ, and to exercise a prerogative which belongs to us all. It is my duty to find fault with everybody and everything that is wrong; and it is equally the duty of every other brother. In the full and free performance of this task lies only safety for the truth. Error alone can

suffer in such a warfare, and she alone is afraid of it. If I have struck one blow amiss, let it be returned on me double, and it will be well."This language of McGarvey expresses the conviction of thousands of gospel preachers and the sentiment of many thousands of disciples of Christ today. It is the duty of every Christian to stand firmly and loyally for the New Testament scriptures, and to wage a "stern, relentless, merciless, exterminating" warfare on anything and anybody that opposes the teachings of the New Testament on the purity of worship. Again, brethren, there maybe a few in the churches of Christ that are inclined to compromise and surrender here for the sake of unity, but this is not the case with the many preachers and the multitudes of members in the churches of Christ. No zeal for unity should blind us to the truths of the New Testament, or cause us to waver from the basic principles of New Testament worship. Surely it now begins to dawn upon some of you the only grounds of unity with the churches of Christ.

A third departure is that the "Christian Church" has now become a denomination. It affiliates with denominations and has taken its place in the religious world as a sister denomination. Some of the leaders have compromised with denominational errors, and acknowledge that the "Christian Church" is just another denomination among the denominations of the world. A.W. Fortune, of Lexington, Ky., has written and published "The Disciples in Kentucky," which is a history of the "Christian Church" in Kentucky; it was published in 1932. On page 31 of his book he says: "On the crest of a gently sloping bank, a few rods from the pike between Paris and Little Rock, is a little meetinghouse, which was the birthplace of the "Christian Church." "The Cane Ridge meetinghouse may be the "birthplace of the Christian Church," but is not the birthplace of the

church of God. The New Testament teaches that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ began on Pentecost at Jerusalem more than nineteen hundred years ago. Errett Gates in his "The Story of the Churches," pp. 321, 332, treats the "Christian Church as a denomination, and frequently called it a denomination. He said: "The church took action in a series of resolutions declaring its loyalty to the doctrinal position of the denomination, and affirming its right to liberty in local church government." Again he said: "There has come to some of the best spirits of the denomination a new and intense appreciation of its mission as a Christian union movement. The leaders in this reviving sense of obligation to the principle and practice of Christian union are J.H. Garrison and Herbert L. Willett, who are doing all they can as editors of the Christian Evangelist and Christian Century, respectively, to inspire the denomination with this new eagerness for a united church." Be it remembered that Errett Gates was one of their number. In acknowledging itself as a denomination the "Christian Church" betrays the Restoration Movement and surrenders to the enemy the cardinal principles of New Testament teaching. Brethren, lay aside the denominational paraphernalia, destroy all denominational machinery and apparatus, and condemn the denominational spirit among you, and come back to the New Testament, and take up the "plea" of the pioneers for unity on the New Testament, and there will be unity between the "Christian Church" and the churches of Christ on this point. The "Christian Church" is a denomination, self-confessed and historically recorded, without a creed, without an objective. It feebly preaches unity, but boldly and openly practices division as a denomination; it has wrecked the movement for unity by its denominational attitudes and practices. There can be no unity until it ceases to be a

denomination. When it ceases to be a denomination, then, and not until then, will there be unity between these great bodies on this point. Brethren, the churches of Christ occupy the same ground now in opposing all denominations that our fathers occupied; the churches of Christ are standing now in spirit and attitude toward denominationalism where the fathers stood, and where you left them. You know where you left the churches of Christ, hence, you know where to find them; come back and unity is the inevitable result. There will be no compromise or surrender on this point. The churches of Christ, so long as they are loyal to the New Testament, cannot compromise on this or any other point so clearly taught in the New Testament. You should not want any compromise on error, there will be no compromise. Do you now see the way to unity?

Causes of Separation

It is well to review the causes of separation, to look at the steps more closely that have been taken in the departures; then you can see more clearly the scriptural ground of union. It is noted here first that "opinion" was made equal to the word of God. There should be a clear distinction between faith and opinion. Faith is a firm conviction resting upon clear and satisfactory testimony. "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1.) We are told specifically how faith comes: "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Rom. 10:17.) This settles it as to how faith comes; it comes by hearing the word of God. Where God has not spoken, there can be no faith, for "faith cometh by hearing the word of God," and Christians, when they are loyal to God, "walk by faith, not by sight." (II Cor. 5:7.)

Opinion is an expression based on human judgment, without clear and satisfactory testimony; the word "opinion" signifies "what one thinks," and in matters of religion it means what men think concerning matters on which the Bible is silent. The distinction between "faith" and "opinion" should be kept clear, for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. 14: 23.) "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" means when we do anything as service to God not clearly required in his word, we sin. To bring things into the service of God which are based only on opinion is to substitute opinion for faith. This substitution separates man from God and causes division among men. To substitute opinion for faith is to rebel against God; it is to put the judgments of men as our guide, and thus reject the counsel of God. Christians cannot work together in harmony with two different rules of action. Jesus said: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt. 6:24.) There can be no harmony when a portion of God's people are guided by human opinion and another portion guided by the truth of God; there can be no unity between "who walk by faith" and those who walk according to the opinions of men. "Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?" (Amos 3: 3.) All are to walk by the same rule; the Holy Spirit admonishes God's people over and over again to walk by the same rule. "Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another according to Christ Jesus: that with one accord ye may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 15: 5, 6.) "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together

in the same mind and in the same judgment." (I Cor. 1:10.) "Make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting others better than himself." (Phil. 2: 2, 3.) "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfected; be comforted; be of the same mind; live in peace: and the God of love and peace shall be with you." (II Cor. 13: 11.) These and many other scriptures of like import emphasize the fact that God's people should be of "the same mind," "the same judgment," "of one accord." This can be among the people of God only by all taking the New Testament and walking by faith; it cannot be when some of God's people "walk by faith" and others "walk by opinion." Hence, the only way that there can be unity is for all to walk "by faith."

"Areas of silence," "liberty of opinion," and "the realm of expediency" are trite phrases used by leaders in the "Christian Church" and have been coined and put on a par with the teachings of the New Testament. It is just another way of saying that the opinions of men may guide the people of God, and that some of the people of God should submit to the opinions of men. There was unity with God's people so long as they respected the slogan, "Where the scriptures speak, we speak; and where the scriptures are silent, we are silent"; but when brethren began to claim the authority to speak where the New Testament is silent, and impose their opinions upon other brethren, division and separation were the inevitable results. W.R. Walker, in *Christian Standard*, May 27, 1939, said: "There are two areas in our religious living in which the authority of Christ must be recognized. The first embraces all his teaching and that of his inspired followers, the 'vocal area'; but there is another area, the 'area of silence.'" He further said: "I am persuaded that Christ has

authority in the `areas of silence.' Christ, by his silence, in every situation concerning which he has left no direct teaching, has bestowed on me this authority to act for myself." Here are the two standards or rules recognized by many in the "Christian Church," namely, that of "walking by faith," and that of "walking by opinion." W.R. Walker calls the opinions of man in the "areas of silence" "the authority of Christ." This is tantamount to saying that man's opinions in the "areas of silence" are of equal force with the word of God. I join issue with him on this point. There can be no unity in the "area of silence," as there can be no unity on opinions when each man claims the authority to do what is right in his own eyes. This would violate every scripture that God has given instructing his people to be "of the same mind, the same judgment of one accord."

If the liberty of opinion lets one put an organ in the worship, it will let another oppose that act; - if acting in the "realm of silence" permits one to act for himself, it will permit every one to act for himself. If liberty in opinion will let one organize a missionary society, the same liberty of opinion will let another group of God's people oppose that society. Neither the "Christian Church" nor the churches of Christ can have the liberty of opinion, in the sense that they make their opinions the basis of action for themselves and for the church. One will have his opinions tyrannized over by the other. It will be nonetheless tyranny of opinion that a majority, great or small, imposes its opinion on the minority. One man has as much right to "liberty of opinion" as another, or any number of others. This doctrine of liberty of opinion in "the areas of silence" involves the right to act on those opinions, and our actions come in contact with the actions and opinions of others; this is the very thing that will continually gender discord and division. The slogan, "In essentials,

unity; in opinions, liberty," when the opinions become the guide in work and worship of the Lord, violates the basic principles of New Testament teaching and subverts the will of God.

The great aim and end of the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, and the planting of congregations of Christians, were to bring man back into loyal obedience to God and submission to his clearly revealed will; but to allow man to do as he pleases in "the areas of silence" destroys unity and thwarts the great aim of God in restoring the rule and authority of God on earth. Man is unable to keep his opinions in the "area of silence" - he thrusts them into the realm of revealed truth; he makes them invade the areas of faith. "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer. 10: 23.) To exalt opinions in the church and let these guide people is to thwart the very purpose of God in bringing man to the submission of divine will. The opinions and judgments of men exalt man, and prevent his submission to the high God of heaven. Thomas Campbell, in his "Declaration and Address," said "Our desire, therefore, for our brethren and ourselves would be to reject human opinions and the inventions of men as of no authority, or as having no place in the church of God. We should cease from further contentions about such things, returning to and holding fast by the original standard, taking the divine word alone for our rule; the Holy Spirit for our teacher and guide; and lead us into all truth ... that, by so doing, we may be at peace among ourselves, follow peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." The pioneers of the Restoration Movement thought that divisions could be healed only by all giving up their opinions and inventions, and ceasing to impose them on church. The divisions and breaches that the advocates of the

liberty of opinion in the "areas of silence" have caused can be healed by each one giving up his opinions and the inventions of men, and not ask his brethren to submit to and accept anything but what is clearly required in the scriptures. This is the way our fathers found peace and established unity among the people of God. However, some are now seeking unity and peace in the opposite direction; they are demanding that every man have the privilege to bring, without opposition, his inventions and opinions into the church, and that all others fellowship him.

Brethren, there can be no unity with God's people when some walk by their opinions. You have tried it long enough to learn by sad experience that peace and unity cannot be found by the double standard-walking by faith and walking by opinion. Thomas Campbell further declared in his "Declaration and Address" that "If any circumstantial, indispensably necessary to the observance of divine ordinances, be not found upon the page of express revelation, such, and such only, as are absolutely necessary for this purpose, should be adopted under the title of human expedients, without any pretense to a more sacred origin, so that any subsequent alteration of difference in the observance of these things might produce no contention or division in the churches." We are not to tolerate actions or institutions based on human opinions, but are to support loyally everything commanded by divine authority.

Opinions, men may have; opinions, men will have; but what should be done with these opinions? Since they belong to the "areas of silence," let them be kept in silence. Alexander Campbell said in *Millennial Harbinger*, 1837, p. 439, on "opinionism":

"There is a growing taste for opinionism in the ranks of reformation.

This must be quashed or there will be an end to all moral and religious improvement. It has ever been the harbinger of schism, the forerunner of all discord, vain jangling, and bad feeling amongst all classes of religionists. It has, indeed, ever been the plague of Christendom... What is an opinion? Persuasion without proof, say some of our lexicographers. It is a speculation built on probable evidence. It is neither knowledge nor faith; but, in the absence of these, it is an inference, a conclusion to which the mind inclines or assents according to its information and mode of reasoning... I hereby define opinionism to be liberty of propagating one's own opinions...

"But we do not admit the right: for if this be a Christian right, it is an equal and an inalienable right. Now if the liberty of propagating one's own opinions be the right of a Christian, then every man, woman, and child in Christ's church has a right to propagate his or her opinions, and to complain if that right be not respected by all the Christian community. And as there is no restriction as to the number or magnitude of subjects on which opinions may be formed, there can be no limitation of the number of opinions that may be offered for adoption or propagation; and thus the whole earthly pilgrimage of the church may be occupied in the discussion of such opinions.

"Again, if such be the right of all, it is the duty of all to listen and judge; for all Christian rights oblige to corresponding duties. If only one person in a church has a right to propagate his opinions, it is the duty of all the rest to listen to him; for that, the very nature of the right implies. But if all have the right in question, then all are obliged in turn to propagate his own opinion on any one or all the ten thousand topics on which a person may form an opinion: for be it

observed, the dominions of opinion are larger than the dominions of knowledge and faith united.

"We are therefore rationally and religiously compelled to deny any such right. It is not the right of any one citizen of Christ's kingdom to propagate any opinion whatever, either in the public assembly or in private; consequently, it is not the duty of all, nor of any one, to listen to an opinionist in his efforts to dogmatize or establish his opinions. This is an important point, and we state it confidently and boldly ... To walk by opinions rather than faith, or in opposition to faith, is effectually to make the Book of God of no authority. Moreover, in the decisions of that volume, he that propagates an opinion and seeks to attach persons to it, or to himself on account of it, is a factionist in embryo, in infancy, or in manhood."

The way to peace and unity is to take the New Testament as the only rule and walk by faith-that is, by the word of God. We cannot introduce our own opinions and impose our judgments on the people of God and have unity; we cannot exalt the "areas of silence" and "the liberty of opinion" and have unity. It is folly to plead for unity among God's people and at the same time plead for the right to impose opinions on others; it is contradictory in fact and principle to claim to walk by faith and at the same time claim the liberty to express our opinions and walk by them; it is unscriptural, illogical, divisive, and damnable to exalt our opinions and force them upon others. There can be no union and peace among the people of God in following such a course. If there can be unity on opinions, the "Christian Church" has much work to do within its own ranks, for there is a wide range of opinion within them.

"The Law of Expediency"

The evils of opinions in the work and worship of God have been many. The word of God is supplanted by them, and the blood of Christ is counted unholy. To follow the opinions of men is to open the floodgate to all sorts of practices in the name of Christ. If one opinion is to be followed, all opinions may be followed, and there is no limitation to the evil of departing from the word of God. The denominations have their creeds, confessions of faith, and disciplines to hold them in check, but the "Christian Church" has no creed. They boast of their slogan, "no book but the Bible; no creed but the Christ; no name but the divine name." So, when the leaders stray into the "areas of silence" and wander in the wilderness of opinions, there is nothing to keep them from departing from the Bible and drifting far in the field of human judgments. Brethren, witness the great length to which some in your own ranks have gone and take warning. Another evil of opinions is that of a disregard for the authority of Christ in religion. Charles P. Butler, in the Christian Standard March 25, 1939, in deploring the present condition in the Christian Church, said: "All this was followed by one of the most ruinous things we face today-to wit, a disregard for law and authority, both human and divine; and it extends from the cradle to our national leaders. We sowed to the wind and we have been reaping the whirlwind." What a sad picture! The "doctrine of expediency" or the "law of expediency" came in with the "liberty of opinion" in the "areas of silence." It is an afterthought. The missionary society was organized and in operation before this law was discovered and applied. The same is true with respect to introduction of the organ. J.B. Briney, in his treatise on "The Doctrine of Expediency," said with respect to instrumental music in the worship:

"I affirm that an "instrumental accompaniment" is an addition to this ordinance, and affects its character, and is therefore an infringement of the divine prerogative. That singing as worship is a divine ordinance will not be questioned in the face of the scripture cited above. That the 'instrumental accompaniment' is an addition is simply certain from the historical facts in the case, it having been born five hundred years out of time. Therefore, whatever men may think of its expediency,, it affects the character of the divine appointment, and cannot be tolerated for a moment.

"There is no room here for expediency, or man's wisdom. It is not the prerogative of expediency to say in what manner an ordinance shall consist. Inspiration has ordained that the sacrifice of praise shall be offered with the human voice. Then let expediency neither add nor subtract. Expediency may regulate my voice-that is, it may determine whether I shall sing with a bass, tenor, or alto voice; but beyond this, and the like, it must not go. It must not say with what I shall praise, for it would then be determined in what an ordinance shall consist, which, as we have already seen, must not be allowed."Am I told that it is expedient because 'it attracts the world'? I beg leave to state that the worship of the Lord's house was not ordained for the world. Is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ to be brought down to the standard of the world? Is this the program of expediency? If the caprice of the world is to be regarded in these matters, the very same emergency that demands the organ will demand the very best skill in its use, and therefore, the beer-bloated Dutchman from the theatre of Saturday night will be in demand in the sanctuary of God on the Lord's day!"

It is true that after Brother Briney wrote this, he fell in with the

practice of using the instrument in worship, and later wrote in defense of the organ; but he was never able to answer his own arguments that he had made against it.

It Is Scriptural To Oppose Opinions

God clearly teaches his children to oppose opinions in guiding his people in his work and worship. When an opinion invades the realm of divine revelation, it is to be opposed by the loyal child of God. God teaches that it is sinful to act in religion on opinion. There is solid ground in the scriptures on which faith may rest in opposing the introduction of opinions, and of practices based on them. God teaches by emphatic precept and clear example that it is a sin to introduce into his service things which are not commanded by him; such things are based simply on what seems good to man. When we have divine testimony on which to base our actions, it is a matter of faith; but when we do not have divine testimony, it is a matter of opinion. It was a matter of opinion, or human judgment, "that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Jehovah." (Gen. 4: 3.) He did what was right in his own opinion, but it was rejected and he became a murderer. The spirit that led him to do service, based on his own opinion or judgment, led him to this fearful evil. The virtue of Abel's worship was that he did the will of God and made his offering by faith; he brought nothing of his own opinion or judgment into the service of God; and Abel "being dead yet speaketh." (Heb. 11: 4.) What does Abel say "as he yet speaketh?" Clearly he says do the things plainly commanded by God-which are matters of faith-but give no place to opinion, or things based on opinion in the service of God. The man who does not hear that

declaration, as it resounds down the ages from the days of Abel to the present time, does not hear Abel speaking, or the voice of God speaking through Abel to all future generations. Jehovah taught the same lesson through Moses. He said to the children of Israel: "Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes." (Deut. 12: 8.) The children of Israel were forbidden to follow their own opinions or approved judgment; they were forbidden to do "whatsoever is right in his own eyes." Again, after giving this warning, God said: "What thing soever I command you, that shall ye observe to do: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." (Deut. 12: 32.) Here they were forbidden to do that which was right in their own eyes, to add anything to what God had commanded, and to subtract anything from it. They were not permitted to enter "the area of silence" and do as they pleased. The children of Israel sought to change God's order of government from that of judges to that of a kingdom. Samuel remonstrated with them, but Jehovah said to Samuel: "For they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them." (I Sam. 8:7.) Again he said to the people: "But ye have this day rejected your God." (I Sam. 10: 19.) In exalting their own judgment and preferences, the children of Israel rejected God. To reject God's way is to reject God; to put their own judgments before that of God was to reject him. It may seem good to man to do this, but it always leads to ruin. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Prov. 16: 25.) The people had no thought of rejecting God in this act, but they rejected him nevertheless. They followed their opinion in changing the order of God's government to that of the kingdom: they thought that they were doing right, but they were rejecting God.

Everything that was introduced by man in the Jewish religion, based on the opinion or wisdom of men, was classed under the term "tradition." In Matt. 15: 1-10 Jesus condemned those who worshiped him according to the "traditions" of men. "But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." Jesus denounced those who mingle the traditions of men with the service of God as hypocrites who draw near with the mouth, while the "heart is far from me." All who so worship God worship in vain; God allows no divided service. He does not permit the judgments and opinions of men to be mixed with the teachings of God. Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up." (Matt. 15: 13.) Jesus teaches the fundamental lesson to all people for all time, that all services or institutions based on the opinions or judgments of man, no matter how much man may think they honor God, or how much in harmony with the divine will they may seem to be to man, are sinful in the sight of God, and must be destroyed. Man can serve God acceptably only in the way God has appointed. Things based on the opinions of men necessarily fall under the head of the commandments of man. The word of God is the seed of the kingdom, or "the seed is the word of God." (Luke 8:11.) That is, from the word of God every act of service in the kingdom of God must spring; a seed can produce no plant or fruit save that which is embodied in the seed. No act or service can belong to the kingdom of God unless it is found in the word of God, which is the seed of the kingdom. Every act of worship not found in the word of God comes from the opinions of men. It is a sin to follow ordinances, or services, based on the precepts and doctrines, opinions, and teachings of men. (Col. 2: 20-23.) It is not only wrong to bring such things into the worship of God; it is wrong to tolerate them in the

worship; it is wrong to affiliate with them or countenance those who bring them in. Hence, it is sinful to bring anything not commanded by God into the worship of God; it is unfaithful and disloyal to Christ to tolerate them in the worship; it is wrong to encourage and fellowship those who walk by opinions; it is cowardly and rebellious to refuse to oppose them. Christians must walk by faith; hence, it is a matter of faith to oppose opinions in worship. To introduce these things into the worship of God is to force others to accept the opinions of those introducing them as a rule of faith equal to the word of God; but to oppose the introduction of them is to comply with the command of God to keep his temple and service pure. It is a work of faith to oppose the doctrines and commandments of men.

Conclusion

All who truly believe in Christ, who take the New Testament without any addition or subtraction as a guide, and love the Lord can be united in one holy and happy brotherhood without any sacrifice of truth or conscience. If man's wisdom can guide in the service of God, it is as good as the wisdom of God; to make services based on the opinions of man a part of the worship of God is to place them on an equality with the blood-sealed appointments of Christ; to do such is to make the wisdom and authority of man equal with the wisdom and authority of God. All who do this count the blood of Christ, which seals the covenant, unholy-that is without sanctifying efficacy. If service, based on man's opinions and unsealed by the blood of Christ, is acceptable to God, it is equal to that service rendered through the blood-sealed appointments, and hence the blood is of no avail; it is unholy; and it does not consecrate nor sanctify the service

sealed by it. If any service not authorized by the word of God, not sealed by the blood of Christ, is acceptable to God, then that authority and blood are not needed to render any service acceptable. Hence, to introduce those things not authorized by God and not sealed by the blood of Christ is to declare the sanction of the Holy Spirit and the seal of the blood not necessary.

There is but one pathway to unity among God's people; there is but one rule that can make us one in Christ Jesus; only one way that can bring salvation to the world. All must exalt the supremacy of the word of God and keep opinions private; no one should propagate his opinions in "the areas of silence," but acknowledge the leadership of Christ and love each other as brethren in order to enjoy Christian unity. So let each one lay aside all opinions, ways, inventions, devices, practices, organizations, creeds, confessions, names, manner of work, except those plainly presented and clearly required in the New Testament. Let all determine to do nothing in religion, save that plainly taught in the scripture and ask his brother to accept nothing that God has not required. Let all do faithfully just what God has required, and let all do this in the way approved by God, and unity is the inevitable result and no "conference" or "unity meeting" is needed. This will reduce all religious worship and service to its original divine simplicity and purity, and will restore to it its original efficacy and power to save. In this simplicity and purity of worship, and in perfect harmony with the will of God, the richest blessings of God will be ours. Faith unites men to God and one another; opinions sever them from God and one another; opinions are the occasions of endless strife and bitterness. Brethren, let us not be deceived; let us not have a misguided zeal for unity that blinds us to the only way which leads to God and unity. When Martin Luther was summoned

by imperial authority before the Diet of Worms and asked to recant what he had said, he closed his speech with these immortal words: "Unless you confute me by arguments drawn from the scripture, I cannot and will not recant anything; for my conscience is a captive to God's word, and it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. Here I take My stand- I can do no otherwise. So help me God Amen! "

Postscript

The foregoing address was delivered by H. Leo Boles at the "unity meeting" in Indianapolis, Ind., May 3, 1939. It produced a profound impression on the minds of those who heard it. A.T. DeGroot, in the Christian Evangelist of May 11, said: "The strongest language employed at the conference, other than in the expected warmth of some exchanges in the open forums, came in the address of H. Leo Boles, of Nashville, Teen." The Christian Standard of May 13 carried the observation that H. Leo Boles was "Outspoken in argument." W.L. Totty, of Beech Grove, Ind., summed up the matter in these words: "The meeting reached its zenith the afternoon of the second day when H. Leo Boles spoke for an hour and thirty-one minutes. He told them in no uncertain terms what had caused the division and what it would take to bring about unity that if they expected a compromise they were mistaken. Perhaps no greater address has been given since the Restoration, especially at a time when they were attempting to win us by smooth sayings."

The recent publication of the speech in the Gospel Advocate and the Christian Standard has created a widespread interest and called forth much favorable comment.

Brother Boles has presented the only safe and acceptable grounds of unity. He has sounded the tocsin of war—a war of extermination on all forms of innovation and compromise. It will likely be a long time before we see a clearer or more courageous presentation of the issues involved. The extensive circulation of this address will be productive of much good.

—B..C. Goodpasture.