

REMINISCENCES, OBSERVATIONS AND CONCERNS

By

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Reminiscences, Observations and Concerns

Introductory:

Thank you for being here and providing me the privilege of speaking to you today. Preparation has been a burden at a very difficult time in my life but nevertheless I am honoured to be invited to do this presentation. Not having been assigned a topic, it has been difficult to decide what to present. Much will be of a personal nature and from my own memory which I confess is not what it used to be.

It has been advertised that I would do “Reminiscences in the style of Joseph Ash”. Not likely! I believe he wrote his 22 chapters from memory when in his mid 80s. I am 90. He seems to have had a remarkable memory that I cannot match. Many of his memories are based on personal experiences whereas much of mine is based on my familiarity with the news of what was happening in the churches across the country. He was dealing with a part of Ontario, I am considering the whole of Canada. Besides these considerations there is no way that I could, in one speech, do anything similar to his 22 extended chapters. His writings are very interesting and valuable and are currently available in book form from the Gospel Herald.

It is, in my opinion, appropriate that the Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society’s archival collection has found a home in Meaford. The choice of this location for this year’s meeting is, in part, to recognize and celebrate this. In a real sense, Meaford has been the “Jerusalem” of Canada. The gospel has spread across much of the Dominion from here.

One branch of my own family traces through Meaford. Let me briefly explain. William Brewster, a capable, educated and respected Englishman was, among others, guilty of leading independent congregations of Christians at a time when the state church persecuted those who participated in such activities. Major issues were: 1) The conviction that each congregation of believers should be independent of any other authority save that of heaven through the word. 2) Only adults capable of faith and repentance were properly qualified to be baptized. In contrast, the state church of the time insisted that all congregations must be under its authority and required that infants be “baptized” and persecuted the parents who did not conform.

Facing confiscation of property, jail, torture and even death if they refused to conform/recant, Brewster and others fled to Holland, and, concluding that the state church was not likely to change, made their way across the Atlantic in the Mayflower. Forced to flee because of their efforts to practise their religious beliefs, they also had a second motive – the hope and need to take the gospel to the natives of North America.

Timothy Brewster, eight generations from William of the Mayflower, was a Baptist preacher in Ellisville, New York, who joined the Disciples and continued to preach

among them. He corresponded with and had personal association with Alexander Campbell. His granddaughter, Selina, married a John Williams of Bath, Ontario who was later mentioned as a member of the Meaford congregation. Their granddaughter, Selina York was a teacher in frontier Manitoba. Here she met an Irishman named Charles Perry. They married, homesteaded in Saskatchewan and had two children. Realizing that she was dying of tuberculosis, they journeyed by horse and wagon some 1600 miles, often without roads, all the way to Meaford. Here Charles was baptized and Selina died. After her death, Charles married her sister, Mary, our grandmother.

On her deathbed, she requested that her eldest son, Ernest, attend the Bible School in Beamsville, Ontario. In 1909, at the age of 16, he came east and attended the school where he met Grace Stewart. In due time they married and in 1924 settled on her parental farm where they raised 8 children. The farm was near the Tintern church building that had been built on family property by her grandfather, Adam Huntsman and her father, William Stewart. All of this has been included because of its historical interest and to point out that the Perry family and whatever part they have had in the Tintern congregation and elsewhere can be traced back to Meaford.

As I was growing up at Tintern, the congregation was made up of about five families, had no regular preacher and met in a one room building that was without electricity or water, and was heated by two wood burning stoves. A “parking” shed for horses and wagons, located behind the building, was mostly used to store wood in those days. My father, as reported in his obituary, “split the stove wood and built the fire”. (He then returned home to do farm chores and, if time permitted, have some breakfast. ECP.) It continues, “he swept and dusted, he taught the Bible class, if a speaker was not available he would read an article from a Christian journal.” The church has grown a tad since then and according to a recent presentation by Martin Cann close to 100 of those presently attending along with their spouses and children, not including the Perrys who are now few in number, have Meaford backgrounds/connections.

It should also be noted that members of the York family followed Charles and Mary to Saskatchewan and, according to J. C. Bailey’s account, “thus the church began” in that province. Many from Ontario took advantage of opportunities provided by the settling of the prairies and it would be interesting to trace those from Meaford and their part in spreading the gospel to “the uttermost parts” of Canada.

At this point I would comment on the role mothers can play in the spiritual lives of their children. It was a mother’s concern that her children not grow up without a knowledge of the Bible that resulted in the 1600-mile journey to Meaford by horse and wagon over fields and along bush trails. Another mother’s request sent my father to the Beamsville Bible School where he met my mother whose mother influenced her children to attend. And my mother can be given much credit for so many of her family attending Christian Schools.

The Value of History:

In my earlier years, I disliked history so how have I ended up as the author of a history book, a collector of historical documents, a charter and long-time board member of the C.C.C.H.S. and here giving this speech? Interestingly, two of my closest colleagues are poles apart on the value of this society. One never became a member and argued that our studies and energies should be directed towards the future – preparing ourselves and others for heaven. The other, a dedicated and charter member of the Board has been a driving force and consistent worker for the Society. Although they are friends, I do not know whether they have discussed these different views that have been revealed to me or not.

What happened to change me? The study of history in school seemed to involve remembering dates, places, events, names and battles. It seemed boring and not of much value. However, as a part of a small, struggling country church that obviously was not in favour with the surrounding religious community, I began to have questions. How did the situation get this way locally and in the broader picture? Thus, what happened in the past to bring us to this situation became of interest to me. The question, “How did we end up in these circumstances?” called for an investigation of the past, hence a study of history.

Does history have value? It must have. God has provided us with an extensive history of His relationship with His creation and assured us of its value for us in Romans 5:4, *“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”*

Here are some human evaluations:

“He who doesn’t study history is likely to repeat it.” – unknown source

“If you want to understand today, you have to search yesterday.” – Pearl Buck

“He who learns and learns, and acts not upon what he knows, is like he who ploughs and ploughs but never sows.” – unknown.

The real reason for my transition from disliking to pursuing the study of history, besides the above mentioned curiosity, was my admiration for heroes of the past and my interest in their biographies. My interest was in men who, like famous Bible characters, had strong convictions and stood by them regardless of consequences. I learned of many, who rather than taking the easy course of following the crowd, studied and thought for themselves and when their conviction differed from what was popular or what was being enforced, they stood for their convictions, refused to compromise and courageously accepted and sometimes even seemed to welcome persecutions, which often, if they refused to recant, resulted in painful torture even unto death such as being burned at the stake.

Such barbaric persecution has become much less common although it still occurs in some places. Even now it still takes the courage of a hero to “Go Against the Flow”. I have a “show and tell item” at this point. This cotton bag, that I have used for several years to

carry my reading materials, pictures the outline of a small fish (such as in early times was a symbol for Christians) in a stream with many larger, fierce looking creatures. The poor little fellow is swimming upstream against the current and facing all of the huge, threatening monsters going with the current. It would be both easier and safer to make a “U” turn. We are reminded of Paul’s admonition to Christians in Romans 12: 2, which in Phillips’ translation reads, “*Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God remould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity*”. We are in the position of the little fish in both the moral and doctrinal areas of our lives. It is all too easy to “go with the flow” and many of us “little fish” give in to the pressures and fail to stand firmly against the “big guys” in both morals and doctrine. We take the easy course, go with the flow. An admiration for those who have not gone along but rather have stood firmly for their convictions despite the difficulties and consequences has played a part in growing my interest in history.

Of course, this did not just involve the admiration of their demonstration of “backbone,” but it also caused me to be interested in knowing what they believed and why it was so important in their lives. These beliefs and the biographies of those who held them so strongly became of increasing interest to me.

My early questions in the religious realm were twofold: 1) How did we get the Bible and is it really from God and therefore important to be studied and obeyed? 2) How did the “Christian” world get into this condition?

When I began my graduate studies in 1948-49, we had to choose a field of study for our thesis. The choices, as I remember, were doctrinal, textual, historical or practical. I chose the historical and, having read much on the history of the Restoration Movement in the United States but not being aware of much having been written about it in Canada (I did not, at that time, know that Reuben Butchart was working on his large volume, *THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST IN CANADA SINCE 1830*), I chose church history with the history of the Restoration Movement in Canada in mind as my title.

As I began my research, way back before the Internet, it became clear that, other than depending on the fallible memories of a rapidly thinning group of senior Christians, the periodicals published among us would be the best source of reliable information. I remembered a cluttered room in our large farmhouse that during my boyhood, stored a lot of old papers. Among them I had seen many “Christian” magazines from both Canadian and U. S. sources. Some were addressed to my grandmother and others to my parents. Mother was a “pack rat”!

Thus began my collection of restoration materials. Other old publications were obtained from John Williams, C. G. McPhee, Margaret Whitelaw and some from sources in Meaford. People seemed very willing to help by either loaning or giving. I also, later, had some access to the large collection of Reuben Butchart then stored at Victoria College of the University of Toronto.

Not then knowing that I would later become an editor of the “Gospel Herald”, I, nevertheless, became quite interested in the story of these early publications, the lives and trials of the editors as well as the information they revealed. The history of these publications, their effectiveness and influence was to have been a chapter in my thesis, but it soon became obvious that there was just too much material for that. Hence, the topic for my thesis was changed from “A History of the Restoration Movement in Canada” to “A History of Religious Periodicals in the Restoration Movement in Canada”.

This, in considerable, perhaps too much, detail, provides the background of my book and also provides the origins of the collection of publications which was the spark or one of the sparks that lit the flame that resulted in the formation of the Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society and brought us to where we are today.

Observations:

Rather than using the style of Joseph Ash, I will make a few more general observations. Arriving on the scene in the early 1920s, my earliest memories are of a few people meeting in the one room building mentioned earlier. There appeared to be little prospect of growth or doing much for the Lord although, even then, there were evidences of concern for the lost of the community and in far away places such as India and Japan. I have, since then witnessed many changes in both the size of the congregation, the comfort and convenience of its facilities and the possibilities of useful service both locally and abroad.

At the turn of the century the churches south of the border had divided over instrumental music and the formation of the Missionary Society. How long would it take for these divisive trends to migrate north? The establishment of two Bible Schools early in the 20th century: The Beamsville Bible School led by S. M. Jones and the Maritime Bible and Literary Institute by the Tallman brothers, as well as the launching of The Bible Student magazine by H. M. Evans, may have been, to some extent, a reaction to/or in anticipation of these problems.

By the early twenties most a cappella churches were small and struggling to survive. The restoration “brotherhood” had been devastated by the introduction of instrumental music in many congregations and by the efforts of some over many years that culminated in the formation in 1922 of the “head office” organization known as the All Canada Committee. Both were believed by some to be departures from the basics of the movement.

There were few “professorial” preachers. Some churches in cities such as Toronto, Hamilton, Windsor and, perhaps, Calgary and Victoria in the West were practising “mutual ministry”, brought here by brethren from the Old Country and strongly supported by the Beatys of the Bible Index magazine (1873 – 93). In fact James Beaty had written a book entitled, “Paying the Pastor Unscriptural and Traditional,” published in 1884. One edition substituted the word “Papistical” for “Traditional”. Most preaching was being done by “lay” preachers who supported their families by working at secular trades and vocations. After the closing of both Bible Schools during World War I, their

teachers and students appear to have provided much of the preaching and leadership for many congregations.

Although it is unlikely that it included all congregations the directory of the Christian Monthly Review in 1922 listed only 30 congregations of which one third were in cities and the rest were small town or rural churches. It is difficult to know but it appears that there might have been only one or two full time supported workers. This situation appears to have continued through the twenties and the "Great Depression." The gospel paper of the time, the Christian Monthly Review, struggled to survive but ended its services in 1933.

Existing churches continued to meet faithfully and there were some outreach efforts especially in rural areas. In the Prairies there were many new communities without churches or opportunities to worship. J. C. Bailey, H. A. Rogers, Wilfred Orr and others rose to these challenges with admirable energy but inadequate support.

The following excerpts have been selected from an article entitled OUR RESPONSIBILITY from the pen of H. A. Rogers that appeared in the May 1926 edition of the Christian Monthly Review.

WHAT IS BEING DONE

How much have Canadian brethren done to convert Canadian people in the last twenty years? How long will it take to have all Canadians hear the pure 'unadulterated' Gospel of Jesus Christ, at the same speed as has been made in the past?

OPPORTUNITIES--DOORS OPEN.

Before God I feel obliged, brethren, to set some things before you – it has been bearing down upon me for a long while – it will be your privilege to act as seems prudently before God.

The fields in Saskatchewan alone are ripe, ripe unto the harvest. Where are the laborers? Are we praying that they may be sent? Some of my readers have nothing to give, it may be, but it is not true of most of them.

I feel that if all the brethren in Saskatchewan did all they would, that they could well support an evangelist all the time. Perhaps they have not been taught enough along this line. May God help them to see the great importance of doing more for the souls of men.

SASKATCHEWAN.

I feel sure that there are more open doors of opportunity for the Gospel in Sask. than any province in Western Canada. Bro. W. Orr is not yet a church planter, but a waterer. The watering is needed as well as the planting, and may God stir your soul to help to water through Bro. W. Orr – he is worthy, and no spendthrift. Any of the brethren in Sask., N. D. and Montana would verify this, feel sure. All contributions would be reported.

FREE PRESS NEWS.

About two months ago the writer read from the Free Press, Winnipeg that there were 1,123 school districts in Saskatchewan alone, where no preaching of any kind' is being done, and that the

Methodist Church intended to supply as many of these fields as possible this summer. Shall we sit by and see doctrines of men infused into the souls of men? We have the truth. We may boast of it, but how will God look upon us if we do not do what we can to break the bread of life to those starving for the truth? There are thousands waiting for the Gospel. Should it take all the ability a Church has to feed itself? What missionary work are we doing in our homeland?

A PLANTER.

Past labors have demonstrated that if the writer were on the fields the year round, that from four to six new churches would be established – the doors are open. Shall the blood of these people who have not heard the Gospel cry against us in the last and great day? This is a grave question, brethren. Do we really believe the Bible? Do we believe that souls are lost? Are we willing to save them? Are we at ease in Zion? Are we *willing* to send a planter into this Field? I say willing at some cost! As one who ought to know, I can explain why Sask. offers the greatest opportunities for the Gospel of Christ.

A report of his successful church plant in Radville appeared in the same issue as follows:

RADVILLE

Left Weybum and reached Radville February 25th, 1926. Went direct from the station to see what would be done by way of renting a hall for a meeting. Looked at one priced at \$3.00 a night - too high! Went to look at another, more out of the way and inferior location, priced at \$25.00 for three weeks.

I told the owner I'd use his hall but did not know whether I would use the hall for three days or three weeks. I realized it would be up to the preacher to make up for the difference in the location to get the crowd.

Had poster's printed next morning, and around with them I went. I left one at almost every house in Radville. Had extra seating provided on Saturday, and at 8.45 p. m Sunday we began. Had meeting late so that the other churches would be dismissed in time to come.

Well, I forgot the exact number we had the first meeting, but think it was towards forty, perhaps. In two weeks time the number was near one hundred and fifty – lots of gossip by this time. Some saying that he don't believe in Christ, the resurrection and the Bible. I don't know how many other things the accused was accused of. However, on we went with questions of all kinds coming to the box most every night.

Our audience consisted of Pentecostals, Union Church, no Church, Anglicans, two by two, and perhaps some three by fours, for all we know.

The talk ran high, and the writer deferred first principles and the Holy Spirit question as long as he thought he had time to.

GOOD FEELINGS.

Most everyone seemed to be in finest spirits as long as the corns were untouched, and God and the Saviour being held up in praise, with the power of their word.

CHANGE OF FEELINGS.

When obedience and the work of the Holy Spirit were put before the people with all the power of command, some began to balk and snort about the false teaching; and so, to some extent at least, there was dissention.

OBEDIENCE.

When the invitation was extended, men and women began to obey, and twenty were baptized. Six others took membership. I think the major part who were baptized, had been Anglicans, some two and two and Lutherans. The church is working fine.

My expenses for the Radville meeting, which began February 28th and closed March 30th, were one hundred and twenty-eight dollars. Received liberal contribution from some which made the burden smaller.

– H. A. R.

The arrival of the Great Depression curtailed outreach activities in both missions and at home. For small congregations the entire collection might be made up of coins totalling less than one dollar. Dust bowl conditions in the West resulted in Ontario churches and individual Christians sending relief to their Western brothers. I remember mother drying apples on a tray over the kitchen stove and sending them West.

In the mid thirties we welcomed signs of recovery. Omagh Bible School (now Camp Omagh), a summer school for young people, was started on the Johnstone farm in 1936. Many who attended have been active in the churches. Some went on for further Bible centered education and have served at home and in mission fields. Among these we name – Joe Cannon, Murray Hammond, Keith Thompson, Geoffrey Ellis, Leslie Grant, and Eugene, Donald and Ralph Perry.

The Christian Monthly Review struggled through part of the depression but succumbed in 1933. Its successor, the Gospel Herald, appeared on the scene in the rural Prairies in 1936. It continues to serve up to the present but is threatened by the electronic culture of the times.

Across the country most of the preaching was being done by “non professionals”. Some who grew into it in their local congregations, others had attended the earlier Bible Schools, the Carman, Manitoba Bible School in the twenties, the Bible School in Selkirk in the thirties, or the short term seasonal schools held in the Prairies. Young people wishing to study beyond these opportunities were going to Christian Colleges in the U. S. and, all too often, not returning to serve in Canada. Congregations seeking full time workers sometimes found them in the U.S. It was quite common for congregations to have one or more “Gospel Meetings” each year featuring “big name” evangelists from the States. Some of these were quite effective. Among these were Roy Cogdill, Foy Wallace, Ed Craddock and Jack McElroy. In those days we often managed to attend meetings at neighbouring congregations and enjoyed good lessons and warm fellowship. I remember walking to such meetings in Beamsville, about 7 miles, and later when we had cars driving as far as Sarnia on occasion.

World War II, brought conscription and the resulting question of whether Christians could serve in the military. The Gospel Herald provided information on the ways in which conscientious objectors could proceed. Congregations could register with the government as having convictions against war. A sample letter was provided. Some young people, apparently not of a pacifist mind, volunteered and served in the war; Among those with scruples on the subject some were actually persecuted because of their stance; some applied for and did alternate service and some wore the uniform but requested non-combatant service. The war was an interruption in their lives and in many church activities.

However, the war brought attention to worldwide needs, challenges and opportunities. Individuals and congregations in both the U.S. and Canada took up the challenges resulting in a time of the spread of the Gospel worldwide and encouraging growth at home. Many prepared for and entered the mission fields; Bible Correspondence Courses were used widely and effectively; home Bible studies and other forms of personal work bore fruit; Sunday Schools and Vacation Bible Schools were used to reach into neighbourhoods; population centers were targeted for church plants; and door knocking campaigns were conducted.

In 1945, Radville Christian College grew out of the seasonal schools in the Prairies and provided both a High School education and a Bible training program. I moved there in 1950 to head the Bible Department but to my surprise found that plans had been changed and I was expected to teach as many as nine High School classes per day besides supervising a dormitory. Prior to going West, I had been involved with others in the initial steps and property search for a planned Christian school in Ontario. After an unsuccessful search in the Milton-Oakville area, a property in Beamsville had been chosen. Two years later, my experience in the West resulted in my recruitment to join Bruce Merritt as charter teachers for Great Lakes Christian College which offered beginning High School classes and evening Bible and related subjects.

Sadly, R.C.C., after making several moves under the name Western Christian College, ended sixty-seven years of service this past June. Great Lakes continues with the High School in Beamsville and the Bible College in Waterloo, both needing our continued support.

Fellowship Concerns:

I became a Christian in the mid thirties during a meeting preached by Roy Cogdill in Beamsville. Having trained as a lawyer, he gave thoroughly reasoned lessons and was very convincing. Some years later he and others from the South were still being invited to hold meetings in Canada. By this time he had become a leader in a movement whose teachings emphasized restrictions on the use of church buildings and church treasuries. They came to be labelled “Anti” because they were against having recreational or social functions in church buildings, against doing mission work by the sponsoring church arrangement, against churches helping finance orphanages, and against churches pooling resources to preach by radio or television. (These brethren are now labelled “non-

institutional”.) Unfortunately, some Canadian churches accepted these teachings and practically severed fellowship with those that did not. Some churches even removed kitchen facilities only recently included in their buildings. Cool relationships and the absence of fellowship continue to this day even though, to my knowledge, we are still registered with the government as one group.

In the early fifties, brother Cogdill was a dinner guest at our table. When we questioned him on this matter he expressed concern that, under the sponsoring church arrangement, one church was serving another that he considered unscriptural. As I remember the conversation, I asked him which church he considered the servant--the sender or receiver of funds? His response, apparently referring to the Herald of Truth program, was, “It wouldn’t have been so bad if it hadn’t gotten so big.” During the same conversation, I recall him saying that the money should not pass through the “sticky fingered elder’s hands.” Apparently, the alternative was to send the money directly to the evangelist, missionary, or program provider without regard to the condition of their fingers. This lack of good fellowship continues to this day.

It should not come as a surprise that, some years later, some young people became disillusioned by the lack of evangelistic zeal as many churches appear to have settled into an “at ease in Zion” housekeeping mode in the ‘70s and ‘80s. In this climate some were attracted to the Crossroads/Boston movement that thrived in a sort of cultic/controlling approach to spreading the gospel. Originating on a college campus in Florida, it rapidly spread to other campuses, sort of climaxed in Boston, but rapidly became international. Some Canadian youth became active participants and effective leaders. The movement came to Toronto and soon spread to other major Canadian cities. Now known as the International Church of Christ, it continues as another disruption of fellowship.

Missions:

In my memory and experience over the years Canadian churches have shown outstanding interest in and support for the spread of the good news into the “darker “ corners of the globe, mission work. In my early years mission news from India, Japan and Africa appear in our papers, announcements were heard and missionaries sometimes paid us visits and gave reports. For many years a large portion of our budget at Tintern has been allotted to mission work and only in recent years have facilities maintenance and local staffing costs changed that. Relative to the strength of the church we in Canada have been and continue to be highly involved especially in providing and sending workers. More recently, with improved methods of travel, many have gone on short-term campaigns and projects to serve in many parts of the world.

Earlier, most went for long terms. They went to Zambia, Japan, Okinawa, Papua New Guinea, India, Germany and South Africa. More recently, while continuing and/or increasing involvement in these areas, Canadian Christians have done productive works in Eastern Europe, Nigeria, Central and South America as well as China and other parts of Asia. Being a part of the British Commonwealth of Nations has enabled some of these to enter places such as Nigeria and India where those from the U. S. had difficulty

gaining access. This would be the case for the Bailey, MacMillan, Perry and Johnson families in India and Ralph and Joyce Perry in Nigeria.

Evelyn and I are among those who went. Our story is a bit different. In 1974, Namwianga Christian Secondary School in Zambia was in a very discouraging condition and Dr. George Benson, Chairman of its U.S. Board, made an appeal in chapel at Harding University in Arkansas asking for help to find someone with experience and ability to take leadership of the school. A former student of Great Lakes Christian College was present and chose to suggest that he contact me as the “man for the job”. I had completed fourteen years as Principal at Great Lakes. Thus it was that we found ourselves in Zambia in October 1974 to begin six years as Headmaster of the school and three years in preaching, Bible teaching and Bible Correspondence work.

Concerns:

Except for the energetic activity as churches were begun in the young communities in the Prairies in the 20s, there appears to have been very few new congregations until after WW II. During this last period, there were many who enrolled in colleges to prepare to serve in the churches. Populations centers were targeted, Sunday Schools, Vacation Bible Schools, Gospel Campaigns, Home Bible Studies and door knocking were used effectively. By decades the approximate numbers of new churches look something like this: two in the ‘30s; ten in the ‘40s; twenty-one in the ‘50s; twenty-eight in the ‘60s and thirteen in the ‘70s. These are rough estimates. Some may represent amalgamations or re-locations. We have not included closures. More recently there seems to be few new starts and closures or defections are more common. We are not presently growing.

Of concern is the fact that there are few evidences of such outreach efforts today. Have we become complacent? Does it take a war or some such intervention to remind us of the urgency of the “into all the world” command? There are easily available tools that we can use to reach our neighbours. How many of us view Key to the Kingdom each week, or invite friends and neighbours to do so, and then discuss it with them? Are we aware that WBS which some of us are using for overseas outreach has correspondence lessons suitable for use right here at home?

Perhaps things have gone too well for us here. We bask in our successes and this seems to have resulted in our failure to remember that we and our neighbours need God. In our self-sufficiency, while thinking of ourselves as faithful disciples there is evidence that we are in danger of becoming careless and even reckless in our handling of God’s word. Could we become so arrogant that we would take the liberty of putting our own preferences and wisdom ahead of the word itself. History says, Yes. An instance is the recycling of the Instrumental Music issue that some congregations have chosen to do. Such seem to neither learn from history nor recognize that such had no place in the New Testament Christianity that the Restoration Movement is attempting to restore. Another example is that of a group, not of us, but historically Restorationist, that recently distributed questionnaires to determine whether or not to offer baptism by immersion. How can we be so bold as to think that such is left to our decision?

In his recently published 650 page book, TRACES OF THE KINGDOM, in which he makes the case that churches of Christ existed in Europe before the Reformation and later came into fellowship with the Restoration Movement in the 1840s, Keith Sisman presents case after case of terrible persecution of courageous people for their faith. Under such treatment, often driven underground, these churches, nevertheless, became quite numerous according to his research. He suggests two reasons why so few of them can be found today: Many compromised with Calvinism and evolved into the Baptist church and, others, wishing to be recognized and accepted in the religious world of the time blended with the Protestant denominations.

Are we also forgetting our roots and our hard fought progress? I am led to wonder how many of those who are soon to take up leadership roles in the churches are aware of the restoration and why it was needed. Do I detect a somewhat general increasingly open attitude towards groups whose teachings do not conform to the word?

I fear that there is a tendency to become careless, flexible and uncommitted on important doctrinal matters. Such topics are often absent from lessons and sermons. We note that after mentioning the coming judgement of the “living and the dead”, Paul instructed Timothy to “preach the word, be prepared in season, out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage (exhort) with great patience and careful instruction” (II Tim.4:2). The next verse mentions some who “will not put up with sound doctrine” but prefer their “own desires” Such are pleased when sermons are informative and entertaining but not so pleased with correction, rebuke and exhortation. Are we slipping into such a situation?

Another cause of concern is in the area of Christian education. Our Christian schools were founded, primarily for our own young people. However, enrolments that used to be heavily balanced in that direction are coming to be disproportionately from other sources. Do we no longer recognize the value of a Christian Education? Failure to support and use our own schools has already resulted in the closure of W.C.C. and, if I am correctly informed, is a threat to Great Lakes. The relationship between church strength and growth and Christian Education is historically obvious. Our young people are too precious to be carelessly put at risk.

ON A MORE POSITIVE NOTE:

In the July 2012 issue of the Gospel Advocate, Ancil Jenkins identifies a number of factors common to the first-century church and to two periods of rapid growth of the church in the U.S. Among them are: a strong desire for biblical truth, a willingness to follow it no matter the cost, a belief that those outside the body of Christ are lost and a desire and willingness to plant new congregations. Hopefully, these concepts can be found and encouraged among us as we face the challenges before us.

I thank you for your patient attention and apologize that honesty has caused me to end on a less than encouraging note.

Eugene C. Perry, August

2012

ADDENDUM

Additional Item:

In reference to the need to include doctrinal materials and correctional exhortation in our preaching, I am reminded of being told that such was inappropriate because it laid a “guilt trip” on the hearers! One wonders! Does the intent of the sermons in the New Testament appear to be to make the hearers feel good?

The reasons for the many losses and few gains in the United Church of Canada were being discussed at a recent convention as reported in The St. Catharines Standard of August 16, 2012. One minister, David Ewart, expressed his view as follows: “Because we’re so liberal . . . we have a hard time selling ourselves”. He continues, acknowledging, “. . .the only firm doctrine of this church is that there is no such thing as a final statement of doctrine” and opining that we do not “call for personal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ It’s dropped off of our agenda, I would say, and consequently membership declines”. Although this is just one man’s observations it is worthy of consideration and possible application.

Corrections:

Page 1:

Timothy was of the sixth generation. It was his granddaughter who was of the eighth generation.

Ellisburg rather than Ellisville.

Page 2:

It appears that my source of information on the 1600-mile journey of Charles and Selina Perry from Saskatchewan to Meaford was not accurate in some of the details.

The following items are found in Shirley York Anderson's research on the York family.

Portage la Prairie (MB) Weekly Tribune, 5 Sept. 1884: Touchwood Hills - Mr. and Mrs. Perry in company with some others from Round Plain passed here on the 29th on their way to Troy. Mrs. Perry being an invalid, will be met, at some point on the line by a sister and will return to Ontario for the benefit of her health.

Meaford (ON) Monitor, 26 Sept. 1884: Her illness began in June last, and the disease, though slow at first soon firmly rooted itself. On the 30th of August, the family consisting

of parents and two children left their home and drove ninety miles to Qu Appelle [sic] to take the C.P.R. train for Port Arthur.

The long journey (about 1600 miles in all) was a tedious and difficult one and was prolonged six days on account of floods on the track, and sickness of all the family but one. It was finished on the steamer Algoma: to Owen Sound and a drive to Meaford which was reached on the 11th inst.

Meaford (ON) Monitor, 3 Oct. 1884: Mr. Charles Perry (son in law of Mr. F. York) left for the North West on Monday, he takes the steamer at Owen Sound for Port Arthur. He leaves his two little children with his friends. We trust Mr. Perry has seen the saddest part of his experience in life and he may rest assured his very kind attention and efforts to please and comfort his dying partner will be long remembered by her many friends and acquaintances.