

THE BATTLE CREEK BULLETIN

Inside this issue:

Does "the Present Distress" Justify Ignoring Scriptural Commands? 1

Did Alexander Campbell Establish the Church of Christ? 2

Of Politics and Preaching What Might Have Been 4

P.M. Sermon Outline: 6

The Use and Abuse of Church Buildings

Duty Rosters 7

Announcements & For the Record 8

Does "the Present Distress" Justify Ignoring Scriptural Commands?

By Greg Gwin

During the current coronavirus pandemic, there has been frequent reference to 1 Corinthians 7:26 where Paul mentions certain considerations that might be appropriate for "the present distress." This expression has been used to justify forgoing obligations placed upon us by God's Word. Specifically, the argument has been made that it is acceptable to cancel all worship assemblies because of "the present distress". While we understand that many factors can/must be taken into consideration in the making of such difficult decisions, the use of 1 Corinthians 7:26 is not one of them. In the context Paul was discussing marriage, the privilege of marriage, and the extra concerns that being married could potentially bring during times of persecution. In those dire circumstances he argues that a married person has an extra layer of concerns for his/her spouse (vs. 33, 34). Thus, although marriage is generally a wonderful blessing, it might be better under "the present distress" to decide against exercising that option and remain unmarried. Therefore, this text is NOT saying you can neglect to do something you are commanded to do. Rather it IS saying that you might choose not to do something that you have the liberty to do. There is no authorization here for failing to fulfill an ordinance of God simply because of difficult or trying times. The early Christians faced fiery trials that we can hardly imagine. Threats, imprisonments, tortures and death were a reality to them. Yet they faithfully followed God's instructions. Inspired accounts as well as uninspired ones tell of their unyielding commitment to the Lord. Let us learn from their devotion and remain true to our Master, even during difficult times. Think!



Time of Assembly

Sunday:

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.
 Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

Did Alexander Campbell Establish the Church of Christ?

By Bill J. Humble

A Preceptor reader from Texas has submitted a list of questions that request a statement of what Alexander Campbell actually did. Since members of the church are often asked such questions as "The church of Christ began with Alexander Campbell, didn't it?" and "Wasn't Campbell the founder of your denomination?", it is of paramount importance that every member of the church understand exactly what Campbell did and what he did not do. The questions asked were:

Was Campbell a Baptist?

At one period in Campbell's career, he was affiliated with the Baptist denomination and even earlier he was a Presbyterian. After he and his father, Thomas Campbell, had both renounced the Presbyterian church, they began to study the question of baptism and were persuaded by their own investigations that immersion alone constituted Scriptural baptism. After they and several others had been immersed by Elder Luce of the Baptist Church (June 12, 1812), the Baptists of western Pennsylvania were jubilant at the "conversion" of these former Presbyterians and invited the Brush Run church, which the Campbells had organized, to join the Redstone Baptist Association.

After lengthy discussions, the Campbells affiliated with the Redstone Association but only with a written understanding that they would be allowed to teach whatever they "learned from the Holy Scriptures, regardless of any human creed." Alexander Campbell remained a nominal Baptist for seventeen years (1813 - 1830), during which an ever-increasing number of Baptists realized that he was "among them," but not "of them." Within three years following the admission of the Brush Run church to the Redstone Association, Campbell delivered an address before the annual meeting of that association, the famous "Sermon on the Law," in which he expressed sentiments which were hardly compatible with orthodox Baptist theology. When he debated Maccalla in 1823, Campbell maintained that baptism was essential to salvation: and though Campbell was supposedly defending the Baptist cause, baptism for the remission of sins was unacceptable and heretical to Baptists as to Presbyterians.

During Campbell's seventeen years as a nominal Baptist, his prestige and influence increased enormously in spite of his heterodox views. The process of separation was slow and often painful, but by 1830 the "Christians" or "Disciples" had been ousted from the Baptist denomination, and the Baptists counted their losses in the tens of thousands. Campbell was no longer a Baptist, even in name.

Did Alexander Campbell Establish the Church Of Christ?

The answer to this question is a most emphatic **no!** Before one can be said to be the founder of any institution, it is essential that the institution in question never have

existed prior to the period of its alleged founder. The church of Christ did exist long before the time of Alexander Campbell. Its establishment occurred in Jerusalem on that memorable Pentecost morning; its early history forms the theme of the Book of Acts; its needs for instruction were satisfied by the Epistles of the New Testament.

Campbell's enemies utilized every means at their command to criticize, ridicule, and undermine his work. One of their favorite tactics was to accuse Campbell of being the founder of a new religious denomination; for they believed that if he could be branded a factionist, the founder of a new sect, his plea for religious unity would appear absurd to the religious community.

As often as Campbell encountered this charge that he had founded a new denomination, he carefully pointed to the true character of his work and disclaimed all pretenses at being the founder of a new sect. For example, when Campbell visited New Orleans, the Commercial Bulletin announced his visit to the city and referred to him as the "founder" of a religious denomination. Campbell immediately addressed a letter to the editors of the paper; and after thanking them for the complimentary notice of his visit, he continued:

"You have done me, gentlemen, too much honor in saying that I am the 'founder' of the denomination, quite numerous and respectable in many portions of the West, technically known as 'Christians,' but more commonly as 'Campbellites.'

"I have always repudiated all human heads and human names for the people of the Lord, and shall feel very thankful if you will correct the erroneous impression which your article may have made in thus representing me as the founder of a religious denomination." (Richardson, Memoirs of Campbell, II, 441)

Neither the facts of history nor the statement of Campbell himself gives any support to the charge that he founded a new denomination. It follows, therefore, that when someone asks a Christian, "Didn't Alexander Campbell found your denomination?" he reveals either an ignorance of the basic facts involved or a malicious design. If it is a case of insufficient information, he can be persuaded that the church of Christ is not a denomination and that Campbell was not its founder. If the question proceeds from malicious intent, the questioner illustrates again the power of religious prejudice!

Did Alexander Campbell Restore the Original Church of Christ?

It would be incorrect to imply that Campbell alone succeeded in restoring the primitive church of Christ, but it is accurate to state that Campbell was one leader in a great movement whose goal was the restoration of the New Testament church. It will be observed that two things are implied when one uses the term "restoration."

1. It is implied that the church of Christ did not originate with Campbell or even during the period of his life; rather it originated and flourished before Alexander Camp-

bell lived.

2. Campbell believed in returning to the original standard, for this is the meaning of the term "restore." When one restores something which has existed earlier, he does not create or originate; he attempts to reproduce an earlier work.

"A restoration of the ancient order of things, it appears, is all that is contemplated by the wise disciples of the Lord; as it is agreed that this is all that is wanting to the perfection, happiness and glory of the Christian community ... Now, in attempting to accomplish this, it must be observed, that it belongs to every individual and to every congregation of individuals to discard from their faith and their practice everything that is not found written in the New Testament of the Lord and Savior, and to believe and practice whatever is there enjoined. This done, and everything is done which ought to be done" (Christian Baptist, March 7, 1825).

Of Politics and Preaching

By Greg Gwin

We hear it constantly in the news. Let one political candidate offer a single criticism of his opponent's position and the cry goes up, "Negative campaigning!" It has gotten to the point that no substantive discussion of political differences can be undertaken without someone making this objection. In reality, such discussions are absolutely essential if we are to make a reasonable choice between those running for public office. Obviously, the candidate himself will not discuss his questionable past performance, or his unpopular views on critical issues. If his opponent is not allowed to bring those things up, how can we know? How can we make the right choice? Please make application of this same principle to the work of preaching the gospel. There are some who are constantly fuming about what they call "negative preaching." Typically, this means that they oppose any teaching that specifies sin in people's lives; anything that says, "you're wrong, you need to do better." But, think for a moment. If those who teach and preach never deal with such subjects, how will people be informed and motivated to make needed changes in their lives? Can't you see the vital need for "negative preaching?" Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was a 'scorcher!' That church was full of problems, and Paul hit every one of them. It wasn't pleasant, but it had to be done. As a result, the people repented. And Paul wrote: "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent... for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner..." (2 Corinthians 7:8,9). We need the truth - even when it exposes and rebukes our sins. Let's demand it always!

What Might Have Been

By Barney Keith

How painful is the thought expressed by one of the great poets, John Greenleaf Whittier: "For of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: 'It might have been!'"

Many a person has thrown away his life in drug addiction, (including alcohol). Numerous are those who have thrown away their marriages by becoming involved with others. Parents have often lost their children by neglecting them, or even granting them excessive freedom. Many are those who have thrown away a good name by some ungodly behavior. Do you not suppose that a vast majority of these later in life have shed tears of bitter remorse as they have thought of "what might have been"? It is too late, however, for all has been lost.

This bitter lament is found also in the Bible. It was expressed by the "weeping prophet," Jeremiah (8:20) as he sadly exclaimed, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." God had given His people ample time to repent and turn from their idolatrous, immoral ways. They had not shown any inclination to respond appropriately to His offers of mercy. When God was no longer willing to tolerate their wickedness, the Babylonian captivity became His means of teaching them a 70-year lesson. No doubt there were times in Babylon when they mourned and wept over "what might have been" if they had only listened to the voices of the prophets who had warned them.

Such lessons ought not to fall on deaf ears today. That individual who has stopped serving the Lord faithfully will one day realize what he has given up. It may be too late then to do anything about it. My dear wayward brother or sister, before the "harvest is past" and the "summer is ended," you ought to take advantage of a merciful God's offer of pardon by repentance, confession and prayer. Better that, by far, than to stand condemned in the judgment and have to think of "what might have been."

That individual, too, who has never obeyed the gospel should ponder seriously what hell is like (according to God's word) and submit himself to the rule of Christ in faith, repentance, confession and baptism before it is too late to do so. Far better this than to be separated eternally from God and think of "what might have been."

