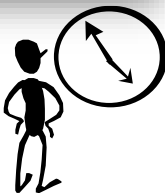


### Inside this issue:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>Do the Churches of Christ Suffer from Amnesia?</i> | 1 |
| <i>That Many Pastors Can't be Wrong</i>               | 4 |
| <i>You Can't Pick and Choose</i>                      | 5 |
| <i>A.M. Sermon Outline:</i>                           | 6 |
| <b>In the Morning of Joy</b>                          |   |
| Duty Rosters  | 7 |
| Announcements & For the Record                        | 8 |



### Time of Assembly



#### **Sunday:**

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.  
Worship 10:00 a.m.  
(every other week)

Worship 5:00 p.m.

#### **Wednesday:**

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

## Do the Churches of Christ Suffer from Amnesia?

By Hugh Fulford

In the October 2022 issue of the *Christian Chronicle* (identified as a subsidiary of Oklahoma Christian University), a book review is set forth under the headline, “New book explores where Churches of Christ fit” (p. 37). The name of the book reviewed is *In the Great Stream: Imagining Churches of Christ in the Christian Tradition*, published in 2021 by Abilene Christian Press. The author of the book is Leonard Allen, dean of the College of Bible and Ministry at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn. The reviewer of the book is Benjamin J. Wilson, identified as “the senior minister for the Central Church of Christ in Ada, Okla.” I do not know brother Wilson, but I have met brother Allen on at least one occasion. I have read some of his earlier published works, but have not read the book under review. My knowledge of the book's contents is dependent upon brother Wilson's review.

The opening paragraph of the review reads as follows: “Churches of Christ struggle to express our place in Christian heritage. Are we Catholic? No, but we believe in one apostolic church. Are we protestant? Not exactly, but that seems closer to the mark. Are we the first-century church restored after a 17-century hiatus? We often say so, but it feels like amnesia to pretend the intervening years never happened.” In response to brother Wilson's words, I would note first that it is not universally true of all churches of Christ that we do not know how to “express our place in Christian heritage.” Many (hopefully, most of us) know exactly who we are and what our place is in the religious community. We do believe in one catholic (universal) apostolic church (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 4:4), but we are not Catholic (either Roman or Eastern Orthodox, or any of the

over 20 sects within the Catholic Church). We do protest all un-biblical and non-biblical doctrines and practices of Protestantism with its over 200 different denominations in the United States and 45,000 different denominations globally, each of them (Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, etc.) with its own multiplicity of sects and divisions, but we are not a protestant denomination!

Rather than the churches of Christ not knowing who they are, it is the religious world around us that does not know quite what to make of us or where to put us. As Alan Highers recently wrote:

“Denominations have a very difficult time with the teaching of churches of Christ. The denominations all have a human founder, and they want to ascribe the same condition to churches of Christ. Therefore, the denominational bodies started by John Calvin or John Wesley or some other man all contend that churches of Christ were begun by Alexander Campbell. Older denominational spokesmen were fond of using terms such as Campbellites or Campbellism. This practice often brought them into debates or public controversies with the churches of Christ, but they could not name any doctrine or practice among churches of Christ that originated with Alexander Campbell. Churches of Christ could give book, chapter, and verse from the Bible for what they believed and taught” [“Churches of Christ: The Original Church,” *The Spiritual Sword*, October 2022, p. 47].

Some of us who are older remember when sermons were preached and tracts were written under the title “Neither Catholic, Protestant, Nor Jew.” The church of Christ does not fall into any of these categories, but the denominational world has always wanted to put us in the Protestant category and make of us a human denomination. And for a number of years now some of our left-wing brethren have wanted to do the same thing. They are embarrassed by the oneness of the church and its exclusive nature. They are ashamed of its claim to not be a denomination. They too want to make it a denomination and put it in the camp with what they often refer to as “the other denominations.”

Brother Wilson, in his review of brother Allen's book, averred that it “feels like amnesia” to say that we are the restored church of the first century, that such seems to indicate that the churches of Christ are pretending that the intervening seventeen centuries from the close of the first century to the late 1700s and early 1800s “never happened.” Really?!!

Faithful churches of Christ know quite well the religious history of those seventeen centuries. They are familiar with the predictions of apostasy from the original faith of the apostolic church of which the New Testament warns (see Acts 20:28-31; II Thesalonians 2:1-12; I Timothy 4:1-5; II Timothy 4:1-5; et. al.). Those departures did occur, resulting in Catholicism. The departures can be easily traced and identified by the stu-

dent of church history. The careful reader of the New Testament can see the difference between what Catholicism teaches and what the New Testament teaches. Our memory has not failed us on this point!

Further, we know how the Protestant Reformation occurred beginning with Martin Luther in 1517, and what happened as a result of it: the establishment of the first protestant denomination--"the Lutheran Church" in c. 1521, followed by the rise of a multiplicity of denominations (man-made churches), each with its own human name, false doctrines, erroneous practices, various ways of salvation, and different avenues of worship. Memory has not failed faithful churches of Christ regarding protestant denominationalism and how, when, and why it developed!

Churches of Christ likewise know that in the late 1700s and early 1800s men in various denominations began to recognize how far removed the Christianity of their day was from the Christianity of the apostolic age. A cry went forth to return to the church as set forth on the pages of the New Testament. Those leading in this movement believed in the "seed principle," that is, that the word of God is the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11) and that what that seed produced in the first century it will reproduce in any century thereafter, including the 21st century. In the first century, the gospel did not produce either the Catholic Church or any of the protestant denominations now extant in our world. It produced Christians only and the only Christians! (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; I Peter 4:16). It produced undenominational churches of God or churches of Christ (I Corinthians 1:2; Romans 16:16). (Note: I have always contended that Paul's letter to the church of God at Corinth got delivered to the right address!). That same gospel that went forth from Jerusalem in c. A.D. 30 as we read in Acts 2 will produce the same churches of God or churches of Christ now as it produced then! If not, why not?

As Alan Highers again wrote:

"Some individuals do not go back far enough to see and know the truth. Some go back as far as Wittenberg in Germany, to Henry VIII in England, or to John Calvin in Geneva. Some even trace their religious journey to Rome or Constantinople. Let us go all the way back to Jerusalem, to the beginning of the church for which Jesus died, to the first century and to the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42) [Op. Cit. p. 3].

Far from suffering from amnesia, faithful churches of Christ are very well aware of what has happened down through the centuries since the close of the apostolic age: apostasy (resulting in the Catholic Church), reformation (resulting in protestant denominationalism and further apostasy and division), and restoration (resulting in the restoration of the original church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ). We are neither Catholic, Protestant, nor Jew, all efforts on the part of some to pigeonhole us and to imagine us in "the great stream of the Christian tradition" to the contrary notwithstanding!

## “That Many Pastors Can’t be Wrong”

By Jeff Smelser

So asserted an advertisement for a direct mail service used by more than 1,000 churches. One would think that even with a passing familiarity with the Bible, people would be reluctant to determine the validity of something based on the number of people who believe in it.

When the twelve spies returned to the camp of Israel to report what they had seen in Canaan, ten of them said, *“We are not able to go up against the people for they are too strong for us”* (Numbers 13:31) while only two said *“We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it”* (Numbers 13:30). The people, evidently thinking that surely ten spies couldn’t be wrong when only two spies offered a contrary opinion, balked at trying to invade Canaan. The ten were wrong—the two were right.

Goliath was a giant who opposed the army of Israel in the days of King Saul. It was the prevailing opinion that Goliath could not be defeated. *“When all the men of Israel saw the man, they fled from him and were greatly afraid”* (I Samuel 17:24). It would have been easy for a youth such as David to assume that so many trained soldiers, could not be wrong. But you know the rest of the story.

The law of Moses warned against being swayed by a multitude: *“You shall not follow a multitude in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice”* (Exodus 23:2).

And Jesus said, *“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it”* (Mt. 7:13-14) And yet the stumbling block for many in obeying the pure gospel of Jesus Christ is that doing so would be an implicit denunciation of Christendom, and it seems that “millions professing Christians can’t be wrong!” They can be and they are. And the only way I can be right is to follow God’s word without being swayed by the multitudes.



## You Can't Pick and Choose

By Alan Smith

Here is an "urban legend" regarding exams at Cambridge University which is still fun to read.

It is said that during an examination one day a bright young student popped up and asked the proctor to bring him Cakes and Ale. The following dialog ensued:

Proctor: I beg your pardon?

Student: Sir, I request that you bring me Cakes and Ale.

Proctor: Sorry, no.

Student: Sir, I really must insist. I request and require that you bring me Cakes and Ale.

At this point, the student produced a copy of the four-hundred-year-old laws of Cambridge, written in Latin and still nominally in effect, and pointed to the section which read (roughly translated): "Gentlemen sitting examinations may request and require Cakes and Ale." Pepsi and hamburgers were judged the modern equivalent, and the student sat there, writing his examination and happily slurping away.

Three weeks later, the student was fined five pounds for not wearing a sword to the examination.

When we are studying the law, we sometimes are careful to find those things which may benefit us, while trying to ignore the rest. It happens with the Bible all the time. Ever known anybody who only quoted the Bible when it was convenient for them ("*Judge not that ye be not judged?*") They want to get their "cakes and ale" but ignore the part about "wearing a sword."

God's Word isn't like a cafeteria.

We don't get to go through and pick out which parts we want and which parts we don't like.

*"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty"* (James 2:10-12).

Take delight in those parts of God's law which give delight but be ready to take the responsibility given by the rest of His law as well. Have a great day!

