

CALL HIM A
Pharisee

*A Response to James Woodruff's
"The Church in Transition"*

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INTRODUCTION

A group has arisen in Searcy, Arkansas, as well as elsewhere, which is convinced it must leave us in order to establish New Testament Christianity. They have circulated literature which they asked us to read without bias. I have endeavored to do this and have been mailing to various members of this group my evaluation of what they have had to say. Some of them have been returning my responses unopened. They would not know whether I considered it without bias (unless this means that I accept it, and am biased if I do not) because they will not read it.

I phoned one of them and asked why he would not read what I had written. After all, I had taken considerable time and read what they had to say. He replied that Paul did not take time to deal with all the criticisms which the Pharisees made of his work and teaching. I asked: Does this mean that I am a Pharisee? He replied: What is a Pharisee? I said: (1) One who said and did not (Matt. 23:3). (2) One who made void God's word because of their traditions (Matt. 15:3). (3) One who trusted in himself that he was righteous and set others at naught (Lk. 18:9-12). (4) Pharisees also honored God with their lips but their hearts were far from God (Matt. 15:8). (5) Whose worship was vain because it was based on the doctrines derived from men (Matt. 15:9). (6) Tithed "mint, anise, and cumin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone" (Matt. 23:23).

This person replied that I was a Pharisee. I told him that in my dealings with those who claimed to be inspired by the Spirit I found they were quick to judge one's motives and character. I also told him that this was an easy way out for one who did not want to examine an evaluation of some of his beliefs.

Even if one is a Pharisee, it does not mean that one teaches no truth. When the Pharisees were in Moses' seat (i.e., when they actually expounded what Moses taught) they taught truth, and this truth was to be obeyed. Jesus makes clear that truth is truth, and truth is binding, regardless of by whom taught. "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you do, these do and observe, but do not ye after their

works; for they say, and do not” (Matt. 23:2-3).

Paul rejoiced when Christ was preached even when an individual preached “Christ of faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds. What then? only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea and will rejoice” (Phil. 1:17-18).

One may need to study what the Pharisees say even when they are making void God’s word through their traditions. Why? Because such is an assault on the Christ and the faith which He made possible. Such teaching can lead others astray. Therefore, we should study to show what they teach and why it is contrary to the will of God. How can we contend for the faith, and do what we can to keep others from being led astray by Pharisees, if we do not know what they are saying and the arguments which they use to support their false doctrines? Jesus spent considerable time exposing and refuting the Pharisees.

Furthermore, one might find out, through studying what comes from one whom they have labeled “Pharisee,” that this person was mislabeled and that what he says may scripturally refute error which is held by those who mislabeled one a Pharisee.

THE AUTHOR CALLS US PHARISEES

The author [James Woodruff] charges that we took the same wrong turn the Pharisees took,

“This error seems to be the Achilles’ heel of most restoration movements at some point in their history. I fear that we, in what is known as the American Restoration Movement, have fallen victim to the same weakness,” The next sentence indicates that it is more than a fear on his part, “We have searched the Scriptures, thinking that in them we have eternal life; and, not realizing it is He who is the life, we have failed to come to Him that we may have life. We, like they, have become enamored by the written Word to the point of becoming oblivious to the Living Word.”¹

He can speak for himself and I can speak for myself. At no time in my life have I expected to find salvation except in Christ. But I also realize that He said His word is the life-giving seed of the kingdom (Lk. 8:11-14). The word is God’s word (2 Pet. 1:12), pure (Psa. 12:6), truth which sanctifies (John 17:20), powerful, sharp (Heb. 4:12), living (1 Pet. 1:23), spirit and life (John 6:63), endures (1 Pet. 1:23-25), enables us to withstand the tempest if we hear and do (Matt. 7:24-27; 1 John 2:17), steadfast, holds good (Heb.2:1-4), can break man but cannot be broken (John 10:33-36), begets (Jas 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23-25), incorruptible (1 Pet. 1:23-25), authoritative (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10), enlightens (Psa. 119:130), discerns (Heb. 4:12), active (Heb. 4:12), spiritual food (Matt. 4:4), milk, meat (1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12-14), enables us to grow unto salvation (1 Pet. 2:2), purifies (1 Pet. 1:22). It is seed (Lk. 8:11-15), a hammer (Jer. 23:29), fire (Jer. 23:29), sword (Eph. 6:17) and a mirror (Jas. 1:22-25).

I have never heard anyone pray to the written word instead of to God as revealed in Christ. Those who believe that “the implanted word... is able to save your souls” (Jas. 1:21) realize that Christ is the Savior and the word is His instrument. It is not God, but is God’s voice (Matt. 22:31-32; Rom. 9:17; Ex. 9:16), the voice of the Spirit (Rev. 2:1, 7; 3:8, 11, 17, 18, 29), the witness of the Spirit on whatever the Spirit speaketh (Heb. 10:15-16), the voice of the

¹ James Woodruff, *The Church in Transition*, page 29.

inspired men (Acts 13:27), and to have the word of the inspired person is to have the person who spoke in times past (Lk. 16:29-31). It can produce faith (Rom. 10:17; John 20:30-31), certainty (Lk. 1:3-4), make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:16), produce understanding (Eph. 3:3-4), convey commandments (Acts 13:45-47; 1 Cor. 14:37), regulate our conduct (1 Tim. 3:14-15), exhort (1 Pet. 5:12; Heb. 13:22), remind (2 Pet. 1:12-14; 2 Pet. 3:1-2), make our joy full (1 John 1:4), admonish and warn (1 Cor. 4:14), guard us and enable us to meet temptation (Psa. 119:11; Matt. 4:3-10), guard us against error (1 John 4:1-2; 1 Tim. 4:1-7), show Jesus is the Christ (Acts 18:27-28), teaches, reproves, inspires, is sacred, corrects, instructs, or disciplines (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Shouldn't we love God's word as well as love God? How can one love God and be indifferent to or minimize His word?

How can one, whose heart is right, fail to realize that God's word reveals God and Christ to us? How could such a one look intently at the word and not see Christ revealed? I have never met anyone whom I thought was so enamored with Christ's word that they did not see Christ.

Are some so enamored by the Living Word that they are "to the point of being oblivious" to the written word? What can one know about the Living Word without some knowledge of the written word, whether they studied it personally or learned something from someone who had studied it? Devotion to the Living Word without any knowledge of the written word would not cramp anyone's lifestyle or cause them to be uncomfortable with it. In fact, faith in the Living Word comes through the written word (Rom. 10:17).

VIRTUALLY DERAILED

Unless we learn what wrong turn was taken, which "virtually... derailed the American Restoration movement from its original intent," we shall not make the necessary changes. We are not the first restoration movement which took a wrong turn.¹ Some think that a restoration started by Ezra took a wrong turn and ended up with the Pharisees (the Separated Ones). Christ gave true criticisms of the Pharisees and these criticisms were "Jesus' harshest criticisms."

¹ *Ibid.*, pages 27-28.

*Jesus told them the wrong turn had been made at the point of their perspective on the Scriptures: 'You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life' (John 5:39-40). They had become enamored by the written Word but oblivious to the Living Word.*¹

The author concludes that we also have become Pharisees.² Could he make a harsher criticism? Consider:

(1) No one knows when the Pharisees originated. Josephus said they existed during Jonathan's reign (B.C. 144-139),³ in the time of the Maccabees (B.C. 167-63).⁴ "... Phariseeism is the result of certain uncontrolled tendencies and desires in the heart of man."⁵

(2) God called on His people to be a separated people, and the Pharisees started out with this as their goal, but they finally separated themselves by their wall of self-righteousness and traditions of men. Years ago I asked: "Is it wrong for us to be determined to do God's will? To restore the New Testament church? Does what happened to the Pharisees have any lesson for us? ... Is it easier to defend a few external features of New Testament Christianity than to live by its spirit? If we have the spirit of New Testament Christianity, will we be careful to do what God has authorized?"⁶

(3) Was the problem of the Pharisees found in a too high a regard for the written word of God? Was it wrong to "delight in the Law of Jehovah; and on his law... meditate day and night" (Psa. 1:2)? "Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psa. 119:11). Did the Pharisees have God's word laid up in their hearts?

(4) The Pharisees were not careful to study and do God's will. They transgressed God's word by their traditions (Matt. 15:1-12). Their worship was vain for they taught doctrines which were the

¹ *Ibid.*, pages 28-29.

² *Ibid.*, page 29.

³ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.5.9.

⁴ James A. Hastings, Editor, *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, "Pharisees."

⁵ James D. Bales, *Woe Unto You?* Page 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pages 3-4.

precepts of men and made void God's word. Their heart was far from God (Matt. 15:1-9). They were hypocrites who said and did not. They tithed mint, etc., and left undone the weightier matters of the law when they should have done both (Matt. 23:1-36). *THEY TRUSTED IN THEMSELVES THAT THEY WERE RIGHTEOUS AND SET OTHERS AT NOUGHT* (Lk. 18:9). To find righteousness in Christ is not to trust in one's self.

(5) Does John 5:39-40 mean that the Pharisees "had become enamored by the written Word but oblivious to the Living Word"?¹

(a) They searched the scriptures but not with good and honest hearts. Instead they had blinded themselves. Their heart had waxed gross, their ears were dull, and their eyes closed (Matt. 13:14-15, 23; Lk. 8:15). They were not the only ones who had done so, but they had done it. If they had loved God's word and stored it up in their hearts they would have accepted Jesus.

(b) If they had searched the scriptures with integrity and industry they would have found eternal life for they would have realized, in the light of the amazing words and deeds of Jesus, that the prophets spoke of Him. Jesus said the Scriptures bore witness of Him but they refused to follow it and come to Him (John 5:39-40).

(c) Jesus also said they "have not the love of God in yourselves" (John 5:42). How could such a one love God's word when they loved not its Author?

(d) They could not believe because they sought glory of man and not of God (John 5:44).

(e) They rejected Him who came in the Father's name and therefore in the Father's power because He was not what they wanted. However, they believed someone who came in his own name and therefore with only the power that a man could muster (John 5:43).

(f) They set their hope on Moses as they misinterpreted him in their unbelief. But they did not believe Moses, and Moses would accuse them to the Father (John 5:45). "For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye *believe not his writings*, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:46-47).

(g) If they had been of those whose will was to do God's will, instead of the will of man, they would have realized that Jesus and

¹ Woodruff, *The Church in Transition*, page 29.

His teachings were of God (John 7:17). If they had searched the scriptures with honest hearts they would have accepted Jesus and found in Him life eternal. It is profitable to search Scripture if our will is to learn and do God's will, but if we are like the Pharisees we search them to no ultimate profit.

Does Jesus indicate, in John 5:39-47 that the Pharisees were so "enamored by the written Word" that it made them oblivious to the "Living Word" to whom the written Word bore witness? How is such a conclusion possible concerning those who made void God's word that they might keep their traditions?

What proof does the author give that we are Pharisees? The title of the chapter from which we have quoted is "Where We Are." The first, and I assume he considers it a *major* proof, is that: "We have searched the Scriptures, thinking that in them we have eternal life; and, not realizing it is *He* who is the life, we have failed to come to Him that we may have life. We, like they, have become enamored by the written Word to the point of becoming oblivious to the Living Word."¹ He has the authority to make this assertion concerning *himself*, but who gave him authority to make this judgment concerning "the American Restoration movement"?

How does he prove this assertion? Concerning the point (1), which I shall evaluate under the next heading, the author said: "To illustrate we need go no further than the running debate between the 'Word Only' brethren and the 'Spirit Indwelt' brethren."²

Point (2) he calls "further evidence."³ Let us consider these, and other, "evidences" which "prove" we have become so enamored by the written word that we are "to the point of becoming oblivious to the Living Word," and have become Pharisees.

PROOFS THAT WE TOOK THE SAME WRONG TURN THE PHARISEES TOOK?

What proof does the author give that we took the wrong turn as did the Pharisees and became like them? (1) We differ on how the Spirit dwells in us. I cannot understand how the difference between

¹ *Ibid.*,

² *Ibid.*, page 30.

³ *Ibid.*

brethren on how the Spirit dwells in us proves anything with reference to being so enamored by the written word one is oblivious to the Living Word.¹ As far as I know, no one denies that our bodies are the temple of the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Christ dwells “in your hearts through faith” (Eph. 3:17). God and Christ come to those who love them and obey Christ’s words, and make “our abode with him” (John 14:23). Does one have to know precisely how they make their abode with us in order to believe it? The Father is in us and we are in the Father. To differ over the *how* proves nothing concerning the position that some do not see beyond the written word to the reality of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

(2) The author thinks logic has much to commend but when one “enshrines Aristotelian logic as the know-all, and end-all of doctrine” and has replaced “Christ’s perspective, we have made a wrong turn.”² Is it unscriptural to think logically as one reasons concerning Scripture? When Paul “reasoned with them from the scriptures” (Acts 17:2), was he reasoning illogically? Using our minds and trying to think straight while studying to find what the Bible teaches has nothing to do with whether one has replaced the Living Word with the written word. I have reasoned with a dearly beloved brother who sometimes uses the “language” of symbolic logic. I told him I had rather speak five words in a known tongue than ten thousand in an unknown tongue. My concern with him was not that he was too logical, but that on certain things he reasoned illogically. I know of no one who “enshrines Aristotelian logic as the know-all, end-all of doctrine.”³ Of course, I do not know everyone. However, to try to reason logically in studying scripture and set forth what it teaches is not making logic our doctrine. Because without the mind I cannot understand anything God or anyone else teaches does not mean that I enshrine the mind as the know-all and end-all of doctrine. Nor is one trusting in one’s self that one is righteous and despising others,⁴ because one uses one’s own mind in understanding scripture.

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, page 31.

SYLLOGISM OR SCRIPTURE?

In speaking of the desire for unity among young people, Woodruff said:

[They] are not interested in points of doctrine arrived at by syllogisms instead of a 'thus says the Lord.' They do not share our convictions about some of our finely-tuned positions. However, they do share our respect for the Bible, and they may have gone beyond us in their respect for the biblical plea for unity of believers. They deserve to have a biblical base upon which they can stand in their desire to accept those who differ with them.¹

One must use one's mind in discerning what the Scriptures say and a syllogism may help clarify something for at least some. There is a biblical basis for this statement. The Sadducees thought that when man died, man was like the little dog Rover. When he died he died all over. In dealing with these deniers of the resurrection, Jesus said: "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. 22:23, 31-32).

When we go back to Exodus 3:6 we find God was speaking to, and identified Himself to, Moses. "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." God was not discussing with Moses the nature of man but what He said revealed something about man's nature. God said I *am*, not *was*, their God. If death ended all, God *was* (past tense) their God, but would not be their God when God spoke to Moses, for these had long ago died. Since God said I *am* their God, the spirit had survived death although the body turned to dust. This destroyed their false view of man's nature. What was inferred here was used to combat their doctrine of man's nature. But what does this have to do with the resurrection? Since God was able to create man with such a nature that the spiritual aspect of man survived the death of the body, God would have no problem in bringing about a resur-

¹ *Ibid.*, pages 16-17.

rection. The Sadducees erred because they did not know “the *scriptures*, nor the *power* of God” (Matt. 22:29).

It can help some to put the argument in the form of a syllogism. Major Premise: God *is* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Minor Premise: God *is* the God of the living, not of the dead. Conclusion: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are living, not dead.

Jesus was not discussing the nature of the written word, of scripture, with the Sadducees, but what He said revealed something of its nature. Scripture is the voice of God. When we listen to it, God is speaking to us. But God is speaking whether we listen or not. “Have ye not *read* that which was *spoken unto you* by God, saying...” (Matt. 22:31). Though written hundreds of years earlier, it was still God speaking, and in this case speaking to *them*.

Are there no “finely-tuned positions” here? What is wrong with fine-tuning? This is the first time I have heard that fine-tuning is a bad thing. Does one tell a mechanic not to fine-tune a car, does one want a non-fine-tuned musical instrument such as a piano? Of course, one cannot conscientiously accept a position as biblical, whether finely-tuned or not, unless one sees that it is biblical. Bales 2:38 is not sufficient in and of itself to prove or disprove anything concerning Scripture. I am not right in and of myself, and neither are you. The Bible is right and we are right as long as we understand and agree with the Bible. Did not the Pharisees finely-tune tithing when they tithed “mint and anise and cummin,” small garden plants? Did Jesus condemn this? No, but He did condemn substituting this for something far weightier. “These ye ought to have done, and not left” undone justice, mercy, and faith. There are weightier matters and there are lesser matters, but those who will to do the Father’s will seek to do it in things both great and small. We should major in majors and minor in minors, but this does not mean we should eliminate the minors. In fact, in some cases it may be a greater test of one’s faith to obey in a minor matter than a major one. One may be able to see why a major matter should be done, but the minor seems foolish to some. Why bother about the minor, they may assume. Let us not fail to obey those things for which we can see no rhyme or reason except that the Lord, the God of love and of justice, told us to do it.

Every generation, through no fault of its own is born ignorant, but they should not remain in this state. Teaching them how to

think and study the Bible is very important. One must understand with one's own understanding, but all of us need help from time to time. There are those who just want to *feel* and do not like the work which is involved in studying and thinking. Jesus was trying to get the Pharisees to *think* when he placed a scripture alongside a scripture to which they had referred. He then asked: "If David then calleth him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matt. 22:45). If they had reasoned correctly they could have understood that He is David's son in that he was of the physical lineage of David but He is David's Lord because He is the Son of God. Some might think this was fine-tuning. It is certainly scriptural tuning.

The author said this philosophy predates the Common Sense Movement and the American Restoration. He cited Eusebius who spoke of those who treated Scripture recklessly, set aside the rule of ancient faith and have not known Christ, "They do not endeavor to learn what the Divine Scriptures declare but strive laboriously after any form of syllogism which may be derived to sustain their impiety."¹ That reason may be prostituted to arrive at unreasonable and ungodly conclusions is no argument against reason itself, any more than it is against the mind or heart. One can twist logic as well as twist scripture.

One can twist logic in order to sanction twisting scripture (2 Pet. 3:17). The fact that some are of a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:28) is not an argument against the mind or loving God with all your mind. The fact that the mind can be defiled does not prove that one who endeavors to reason logically is defiled. Eusebius made it clear that those of whom he spoke had no love for truth and twisted things to support their impiety. In 1979 I published a book on *The Irresponsibles or Righteousness Through Rationalization*, and showed how people try to escape responsibility for their wrongdoing. There are two possible kinds of reasons in such situations. One the reason they did it, and the other the reason they give to justify what they did. Isaiah spoke of those who put darkness for light and light for darkness and called evil good and good evil (Isa. 7:18-21). It is possible to convince one's self that the evil one

¹ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5.28.13ff, quoted in *The Church in Transition*, page30.

wants to do is good and therefore one should do it; or the good one does not want to do is evil and one should be praised for not doing it.

G.C. Brewer slew a book by E.D. Slough with a syllogism, according to F.L. Rowe.¹ Book I congratulate brother Brewer. I do not criticize him for using a syllogism.

REACTIONARY THEOLOGY

(1) We, have majored “in reactionary theology, occupying ourselves with the task of fine-tuning the religious world around us, while minoring in or ignoring the task of formulating and verbalizing a positive message of good news that would meet the needs of the unchurched.”²

(a) Some brethren seem to be concentrating today on what-is-wrong-with-the-church theology. They may be reacting against what they thought in the past or what some brethren think today.

(b) There is a reactionary theology where one reacts from one extreme to another. The author has gone to extremes regardless of whether he reacted against a former extreme in his own life.

(c) Is it not good news to tell those who are “churched” in denominations that they can become just Christians, members of Christ’s church, by obeying God’s word concerning entrance into the church, and how to work and worship therein? The vast majority of people who attend our Bible classes and assemblies will not be people who do not believe in Christ or the Bible. If we are going to preach any sermons to meet their needs we shall have to deal with the wrongly “churched.” Furthermore, it is my opinion (though I have never made a survey) that most people who will permit you to study the Bible with them in their homes are not people who do not believe the Bible and are atheists, etc. There are a lot of people in our country who do not belong to any religious body but have at least some faith in Christ, the Bible and moral principles.

Isn’t it just as good to get a person who is “churched” but has

¹ “Slough and a Syllogism,” *Forty Years on the Fire Firing Line*, Kansas City, Mo.: Old Paths Book Club. 1948, pages 133-142.

² Woodruff, *The Church in Transition*, page 31.

not obeyed the gospel to obey it and be saved, as to convert one who has had no faith at all in Christ? Of course, we want to win all kinds of folks for Christ. From high-school days I have been concerned about Christian evidences to convince the unbelievers.

(2) The author cited a school of preaching that did not have a course in the life and teaching of Jesus though it had courses on how to meet denominational errors. When their attention was called to this, they immediately put in such a course.¹ This showed they were interested in being balanced. However, we must not overlook how much of the life and teaching of Christ can be found from Acts through Revelation. For many years I taught a course in the life and teaching of Jesus.

(3) The author says we have a reactionary theology if we feel more qualified to discuss various doctrinal differences with the denominationally churchied than we do in leading unbelievers to faith in Christ.² The author said “most people in our movement would” feel more qualified to discuss doctrinal differences than to converse with unbelievers.

(a) I do not find this hard to understand. They know more about the Bible than they know about the philosophies of unbelief. There are far, far more (in my judgment) Christians who can tell what the Bible teaches about creation, than are qualified to argue from a scientific standpoint the doctrine of evolution, or atheism, or modernism, or moral relativism. How many could refute the Marxist-Leninist dialectical philosophy of life? Since unbelief is widespread in our own country as well as in other parts of the world, more attention needs to be given to these things without neglecting the discussions with the “churchied.” As the iron curtain countries are opening up, more people need to be trained how to deal with those who are unbelievers.

(b) Would the author feel more qualified to discuss what he thinks is wrong with the church than to discuss reasons for the faith with a dyed-in-the-wool communist? Would he feel more qualified to discuss what he believes to be the “wrong turn” taken by the restoration movement than he would in teaching a Buddhist? I had a

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

written debate with one. I have tried to understand how they think.

(c) My early experiences led me to see the need for a study of why one ought to believe in God, the Bible, and Christ. My parents were on their way to a class to study how to better teach God's word and a train hit and killed them. This raised the issue of how could a just God allow 7 children to be orphaned. My parents were true Christians. While I was in high school my faith was attacked. When I attended Harding, there was no class in Christian evidences. I wrote G. C. Brewer and some others about Christian evidences, I wanted a course taught on this subject in the college. For decades I taught such a course. I regret I have not had time or secretarial help which would have helped me write more on Christian evidences than I have written. The Scriptures tell us to "sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord, being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15). While in graduate school I spent more time answering attacks on the faith than I did on my class work. Also I have long advocated that various brethren specialize in certain areas in order to help others have such material available.

(4) "The Restoration movement of which I have been a part for nearly forty years has been a doctrine-exalting movement directed at the intellect of the religious rather than a Christ-exalting movement directed at the heart of the unchurched."¹ Everything is doctrine, including the doctrine that Jesus is the Christ and Savior of mankind. The gospel was first preached to religious people, i.e. the Jews. Cornelius was a religious person. It was also preached to those who were pagans (Acts 17). Since the restoration movement grew out of a desire to answer Christ's prayer for the unity of all believers, it was natural that they directed their message to the religious at first. They believed world evangelism would receive a powerful stimulus from being a united people and Jesus said it would be a factor in leading the world to believe (John 17:21). Was it unscriptural to appeal to their intellect? Should not the Lord's prayer for unity, when called to their attention, move them to do something about it if they love the Lord? The biblical mind

¹ *Ibid.*, pages 31-32.

and heart are viewed often in a Scripture as being the same thing. See my book on *The Holy Spirit and the Human Spirit*. Can one reach the “heart” without first reaching the intellect?

In a world in which so many people are wrongly “churched” it is important to address them while not neglecting unbelievers.

One must aim New Testament teaching at particular audiences. In preaching in a Jewish synagogue, or to pagans in Athens, Paul aimed at these audiences. When addressing the saints, he aimed at them. How much of Acts through Revelation is aimed at the unbelievers? How many messages delivered in the assemblies of the saints were addressed to unbelievers? One can address the saints with reference to their duty and privilege to sow the seed of the kingdom, bring out ways and the spirit in which it should be done, how to teach unbelievers, etc. Paul preached a sermon on baptism to baptized believers with the purpose of reminding them of the significance of their baptism and whether they were now living the new life to which they were raised from the watery grave.

PREACHING THE EFFECT NOT CAUSE

A fourth proof, that we took a wrong turn and ended up being Pharisees, is that we have been preaching the effect and not the cause. The cause is Christ as presented in the Gospels and the effect is Acts-Revelation. Instead of majoring in Christ (the four Gospels) we have majored in the effect (Acts-Revelation). Most preaching from the pulpit has been on the effect not the cause. We did not “intentionally ignore or try to minimize Jesus’ exalted place in God’s plan,” but assumed that those to whom we preached already knew about Jesus. Therefore we did the “fine-tuning we thought necessary to bring our hearers to the degree of doctrinal purity we felt we possessed.”¹ I have heard a lot of preaching from the Gospels. Be this as it may be, what about these charges?

(1) Is there no revelation of the nature and power of the cause to be found in the effect? Is nothing known of the power of an atomic bomb (the cause) in its effect (the explosion)? Did the dynamite of the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17) explode in the world before Pentecost?

¹ *Ibid.*, pages 32-33.

(2) The effect from which I draw hope is not the sinless life of Christ in the Gospels (which demonstrates how far I fall short) but the message of His death for our sins, His burial, His resurrection and His reign. This is the cause and my salvation is the effect. Of course, without His sinless life He could not have been God's Lamb who died for our sins.

To major in the Gospels is to major in the time of incomplete revelation (John 16:12-14), the time the new covenant was not in force, nor sins remitted (Heb. 1:3; 10:1-5), when Christ was not mediator of the new covenant, when people were not sanctified in the new covenant, when Christ had not made the offering for sin in the holy of holies (heaven), when Christ was not King or High Priest, when the true tabernacle was not yet in effect, when our altar did not exist, when the blood was not available, when we had not come to the realities of Hebrews 12:18, 22-24, when there were no children of the freewoman, before Christ was the author of our salvation, before His throne of grace existed, before we were made to be a kingdom, before the gospel was preached as fact. It was the time when the kingdom was *at*, not *in*, hand.

PAUL PREACHED "EFFECT" MATERIAL TO THE CHURCH

What Paul, and other writers of Acts through Revelation, preached to the churches is evident from what they wrote to the church and that which would be read in assemblies of the saints. Take Romans for example.

(1) Christ the fulfilment of prophecies and promise of the Old Testament and by His resurrection (Rom. 1:1-4).

(2) Christ the one who gives us grace (Rom. 1:5; 3:29-28; 4:4-5; 5:2; etc.).

(3) The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

(4) General revelation shows man's need for salvation (Rom. 1:18-32).

(5) Special revelation in the Old Testament proves that Jew and Gentile need salvation for all have sinned (Rom. 2:1-2:20).

(6) God meets this need through Christ who must be accepted by faith (Rom. 3:21-5:2). These themes are returned to several times in Romans.

(7) Romans also contains a sermon, so to speak, on the meaning of baptism into Christ which reminded them of their obligation to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6).

(8) The struggle of man who is under the law of an earned salvation and the deliverance through Christ (Rom. 7:1-8:13).

(9) The help of the Spirit (Rom. 8:14-30).

(10) One with God makes a majority (Rom. 8:31-39).

(11) Paul's concern, though the apostle to the Gentiles, for his kinsmen according to the flesh and that they had failed God. God had not failed them (Rom. 9:1-11:36).

(12) Exhortation to Christian duties (Rom. 12).

(13) Subjection to civil government (Rom. 13:1-7).

(14) The Christians duty and privilege to walk in love and light (13:8-14).

(15) How to treat weak brethren (Rom. 14:15:13).

(16) One of the values of the Old Testament to Christians (Rom. 15:4).

(17) Paul's concern for his work among the Gentiles, his requests for prayer. (Rom. 15:14-33).

(18) Greetings to various brothers and sisters.

(19) Warning concerning those who preach contrary to the doctrine they had learned (Rom. 16:17-18).

(20) The prophesied gospel made known to all the nations to produce the obedience of faith (Rom. 16:25-27). These are some of the things preached in the assemblies of the saints.

One can go through the other epistles and Revelation and prove that a wide variety of subjects was preached in the assemblies of the saints. If one wants to call it majoring they majored in the *effect* material, i.e. Christ crucified, buried, raised, and reigning.

IMPOSSIBLE

It is absolutely impossible to preach Acts through Revelation without preaching the exalted Christ. The author writes as if he did not know when Christ was highly exalted, i.e. after His resurrection (Luke 24:25, 46-47; Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Tim. 3:16). Why did Christ, in the closing weeks of His life on earth, devote so much time speaking of "the things concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3)? Why did He not dwell on His exaltation in the personal min-

istry? Why was He preached as King as well as Savior on Pentecost (Acts 2:21, 32-36)? The King is vitally related to the kingdom. When He entered into His kingdom, after His ascension, He entered into His glory (Matt. 20:21; Mark 10:37). Acts through Revelation not only contain the basic truths set forth in the Gospels, but they also contain material concerning the exalted Christ which is not dwelt on in the Gospels.

Has the author focused so much on the Gospels that he had blinded himself to the fact that Acts through Revelation deals with the time when the Messiah was exalted and glorified? He still is.

There are two parts of the great commission, i.e. preaching to those who have not accepted Christ, and teaching those who have "to observe all things" He has commanded them to observe (Matt. 28:18-20; etc.). Acts shows how they carried out the preaching to those outside of Christ and something of what was taught to converts. The rest of the New Testament concentrates on those in Christ in their various stages of growth and development. It also contains warnings, some of which are found in the Gospels and Acts, concerning the various dangers and departures as well as how to be on one's guard. All this was based on and flowed from the authority of our Risen and Reigning Lord (Matt. 28:18). Were not the apostles and prophets fine-tuning the church? Unless I overlooked it, the author said not one thing in favor of fine-tuning. In my judgment the author's book could have used a lot more than fine-tuning.

ANOTHER IMPOSSIBILITY

If in preaching to pagans, the author had to major in the Gospels. It would be impossible for him to instruct and convert a pagan jailor the same hour of the night (Acts 16:31-34). The gospel of 1 Corinthians 15:1-5; Rom. 1:16-17 is God's power unto salvation. How much did the jailor know of the four Gospels?

FINE-TUNING

The author said we assumed our audience knew about Jesus and that we therefore could spend our time fine-tuning. He illustrated this by saying that:

[Billy Graham preached] Christ, bringing people to the

point of faith and repentance. He would leave them thinking that they were at that point 'in Christ' and needed only to identify with a denomination. Many were the times I would pick up right where Graham left off, I would fine-tune his message by overemphasizing baptism to those people.

It is true that practically all in our usual audiences know about Jesus.

He said Graham had no right to leave it off and the people need to "hear baptism," but the general impression which was left was "All you teach is baptism." He and many others were:

...only "half-gospel preachers" –and the second half of that, of which Paul says quite disturbingly, "Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 1:17). We had no more right (maybe not as much, in view of Paul's statement) to preach only the last part of the good news than Billy Graham had to preach only the first part.¹

Since it should not be left off and people need to hear about baptism, what is wrong with preaching what the Bible teaches about it? However, in what I have taught (as well as others I have heard) there is mention of faith, repentance, and the Lordship of the Savior Jesus as we present what Christ teaches about baptism. A sermon on baptism does not devote as much time to faith as a sermon on faith, but it should be shown that salvation by faith involves baptism into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). When the invitation is offered my custom is to urge those who have not accepted Christ to be baptized, from a believing and penitent heart, into His death, burial, and resurrection and be raised to walk in newness of life. I have not surveyed what others do.

Were Priscilla and Aquila engaged in unscriptural fine-tuning when they taught Apollos "the way of God more accurately" concerning baptism? They realized Apollos "had been instructed in the way of the Lord" but needed instruction showing that the baptism of John should not be preached under the new covenant. Paul taught that those who received the baptism of John needed to be

¹ *Ibid.*, pages 32-33.

baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. It is right to teach this to one privately or to a group (Acts 18:24-19:7).

When we deal with the unscripturally “churched,” it is important to teach them what Christ teaches about His church.

NOT SENT TO BAPTIZE?

Does Paul teach that maybe Billy Graham may have more right to preach faith and repentance than the author had to preach baptism?¹ He admits that it was not right to omit either. Baptism is related to faith and obedience. Was Paul disturbed because some taught baptism? “For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel” (1 Cor. 1:17). If Paul had been sent to do the act of baptizing he could not have been faithful to his commission without personally baptizing people. If he were not sent to do the act of baptism, but commissioned to preach Christ, he could leave the baptism to others without being unfaithful to his commission. If he were disturbed because people were baptized, why did he baptize some?

Why was Paul glad he had not personally baptized many of the Corinthians? The party spirit of some in Corinth led them to start a party around the one who baptized them. Because of this party spirit he was glad he had not personally baptized many of them. “I thank God that I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius; lest any man should say that ye were baptized into my name” (1 Cor. 7:14). This shows the importance of baptism. If they had been baptized into the name of Paul, they would have belonged to Paul and it would have been scriptural to have been in a Paul Party in the church. He was glad that he had baptized so few. This gave but few the remotest and far-fetched excuse to say they had been baptized “into my name” (1 Cor. 1:15). Baptism is important because one belongs to the one into whose name one was baptized. We are baptized in Jesus’ name, in submission to and reliance on Him, therefore we belong to Him. To leave out baptism leaves out the culmination of the way we become Christ’s possession.

Paul did not say he was not sent to preach Christ and that those who believe in Him are to be baptized to get into Christ. When

¹ *Ibid.*, page 33.

Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch he must have mentioned baptism, otherwise the eunuch would not have requested baptism (Acts 8:32-37).

If the author may have had a lesser right than Graham, how could he draw the line on baptism against Graham or against those whom he said do as he did?

I leave the final judgment, as I must, of every person to the Lord. But this does not relieve me of the responsibility of drawing certain lines of fellowship.¹

To implicitly or explicitly charge us with being Pharisees is not bearing true witness. There are undoubtedly some Pharisees in the church, but to charge “the American Restoration movement” of having become Pharisees is not scriptural. It is strange that the author who stressed having the right attitude toward brethren should accuse them of being Pharisees.

¹ James D. Bales, *The Faith Under Fire*, pages 168-179.