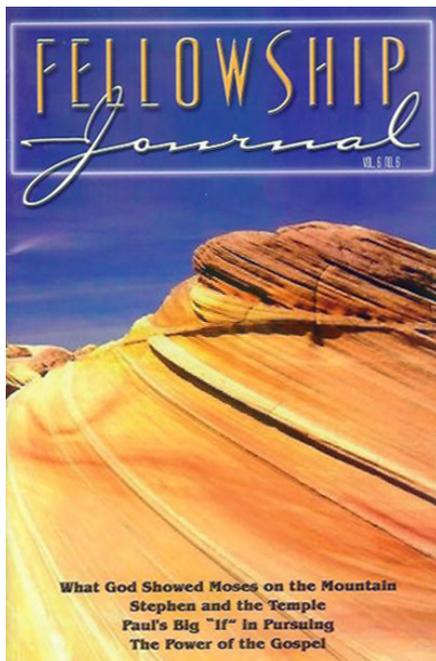


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Stephen and
His Message

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Corrections:

In the previous issue (6:5), the following statements require correction:

On page 8, the hymn "Utterly Abandoned" is erroneously attributed to Watchman Nee. The lyrics are actually those of a poem found in the book "Streams in the Desert." As far as I am aware, the author is unknown.

In the box on page 11 it is stated that some of the Motilone were martyred as they brought the gospel to another tribe. While this may be true, I was confusing the Motilone with another tribe, the Huao ("Auca") in Ecuador, whom Jim Elliot, Ned McCully, Nate Saint, Peter Fleming and Roger Youderian were attempting to reach when they were martyred. Tona, one of those who took part in the murder of these five missionaries, was himself martyred as he later brought the gospel to a tribe that had been their enemy.

Furthermore, the messages on Moses referred to as Messages Seven, Eight and Nine were actually Messages Six, Seven and Eight! The correct Message Nine is found in this issue.

I apologize for these and any other mistakes.

- John Berglund

A Word of Encouragement from the Music Weekend at Ashland Woods

...Is this the first time in the history of God's church that there have been issues to face over music? Absolutely not! As only one example, let us cast away for the moment the limitations of time, and briefly enter in to a Puritan worship service of 1692 in England...

Line by line the clerk read a Psalm; line by line the congregation sang after him...that is, everyone except young **Isaac Watts**.

After church services that Sunday, when his father called him to the carpet for not singing, Isaac said bluntly that there was no music in the Psalms. He said further that the Psalms didn't rhyme, and that there was no sense in having to sing them line by line. When outraged Deacon Watt's blood pressure subsided, he suggested that if his young upstart son were smarter than King David, he might try *his* hand at writing something better! The result of that challenge was a revolution in church singing that has resounded for more than two and a half centuries.

Staid old Deacon Enoch Watts must have spoken without thinking when he hurled this sarcastic remark at his ugly little teenage son. (Though eighteen years of age, Isaac was barely five feet tall, with a head that seemed too big for his body and a long, hooked nose.) At his boarding house in Southampton the Deacon himself had taught Isaac five languages before the boy was fourteen years old. And for twelve years, Mrs. Enoch Watts had tutored this oldest son of hers in the writing of

verse. At seven, he had won a medal for writing rhymes. He waxed so poetical that when the elder Watts threatened to flail him for rhyming even in his everyday conversation, the boy cried out, “O Father, do some pity take, and I will no more verses make!”

Accepting his father’s challenge, eighteen-year-old Isaac set about “Christianizing” and modernizing the Psalms. His first song began:

Behold the glories of the Lamb
Amidst His Father’s throne
Prepare new honors for His Name
And songs before unknown...

The congregation is said to have been so pleased that for two years Watts had to bring in one of his “modernized” psalms every Sunday! Watts went on to write six hundred hymns, including “Joy to the World,” “Am I a Soldier of the Cross,” “Alas and Did My Savior Die,” and “Our God, Our Help in Ages Past”.

With his bold departure from Psalm singing, Isaac Watts gave to Christianity a popular and inspiring medium of worship, thus also paving the way for Charles Wesley (who wrote 6500 hymns), John Newton, William Cowper and hundreds of others.

Watt’s hymn “Alas and Did My Savior Die” was instrumental in the salvation experience of Fanny Crosby, age 31, in 1851. She recounts that at a revival service at John Street Methodist Church in New York they began to sing this hymn, “when they reached the third line of the fifth stanza (‘Here Lord I give myself away’) my very soul was flooded with celestial light”. Fanny Crosby went on to become perhaps the most prolific hymn writer of all time, allegedly writing upwards of 10,000 hymns.

Aboard a British man-of-war off the coast of Newfoundland in 1941, during devotional services, President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill sang Watt's hymn, penned in 1719:

O God, our help in ages past
Our hope for years to come;
Our shelter from the stormy past
and our eternal home!

And so it was that Isaac Watts faced the issues of music in the church in his day, and accepted the challenge to make a

contribution that was to bless many for generations to come.



The kinds of songs that we sing as believers correspond to Revelation 12:11, where we are told the

Lord's believers overcome by the blood of the Lamb and *the word of their testimony!* Gloria Gaither, someone who, along with her husband Bill, has written many beloved gospel songs, made a notable comment regarding this. She wrote, "The 'praise and worship' versus 'gospel songs' argument should never come up! We need to sing the songs that have outlived us. We need to sing the songs as new and fresh as this morning's experience with our neighbor or our children. We need the songs that remind us that we have a history with God. We need the songs that sing our testimony as personal as the email of encouragement we just received from a fellow believer. All must be biblical, beautiful, true, powerful, and, yes, personal. Let's encourage each other daily, singing hymns and spiritual songs." Amen! -*Everett J. Cook, Goshen, Indiana*

“...HOW GREAT IS THE SUM OF THEM!*”

Psalm 139:17

In 1989 the Cosmic Background Explorer satellite (COBE) was sent into the orbit, and within a few minutes “saw” for the first time the ancient cosmic ripples left behind by the original creation of the universe¹. Stephen Hawking called it “the most important discovery of the century, if not of all time.”²

What wowed the scientific community was how exact everything had to be for us to simply be here. Many physicists felt forced to conclude that the universe must have been planned. The margins of error for so many variables required for our existence turn out to be so incredibly small that, when added together, they provide evidence of design³.

The idea of a Creator has not made everyone happy, however, so some have proposed that the multitude of “coincidences” required for our existence suggests that there could be an infinite number of universes⁴, and that we just happen to be in the one that was able to support the “evolution” of beings such as ourselves who can appreciate this. (According to them, not only are we a lucky accident, but the universe is too! These scientists theorize that our universe must be just one “bubble” out of an endless “foam” of universes trying to come into being.)

Yet John Polkinghorne, a colleague of Hawking’s at Cambridge University, has said, “There is no purely scientific reason to believe in an ensemble of universes...A possible explanation of equal intellectual respectability--and to my mind, greater elegance--would be that this one world is the way it is because it is the creation of the will of a Creator.”⁵

**not the sum of the alleged universes, but the sum of the thoughts God has towards us!*

*** references and further comment found on page 48*

From the Labor Day Weekend in Cleveland

THE GOSPEL

A Word on Singing

There are many different ways to sing a song, but the main thing is to learn not to criticize. Who are we to say what is right or wrong? Some have pointed to the type of music the young people enjoy at such activities as Mountaintop in a derisive way. Who are we to judge another person's enjoyment of Christ? In fact, if they are enjoying something of Christ, we should be with them! Anything is better than being dead! Once you are in the realm of death, *nothing* is right. If someone were to ask you which of the ways of singing we heard today was right, you should answer every way was right. Sometimes the music can lead, sometimes the singing can lead; sometimes the verses lead, sometimes the melody leads... whatever brings us to Christ is right, for we are in the age of the gospel, which means "good news"!

The Gospel: Its Definition

The Greek word for "gospel" is *euangelion*. It is composed with *eu* (good), *angelos* (messenger) and *-ion* (the suffix conveying the thought "be related"). Therefore, "gospel" means being related to the good news, or pleasant messages announced by a messenger. Not only so, *angelos* originates from *ago*, which means "to lead". Therefore the gospel has impact; it initiates a leading and causes a response so that it might be followed and lived out.

The Messenger and the Message

Perhaps the happiest message in human life someone has to give is when their child is born. No new father or mother has a long face when telling someone they are going to have, or have had, a baby. The messenger and the message are one. The parent is even proud of how big the baby is at birth. Does it really matter? A small baby will grow to be a bigger one. The crucial part is that you are so happy! You have some great news: You have a baby boy or girl! When I found out about the birth of my grandson, that instantly became my message. Why? Because I was so happy! "I have a grandson!"

Every true preacher, or transmitter, of the gospel is someone who is constituted with the gospel. The more you are constituted with it, the more you can transmit it to others. Such preachers of the gospel enable others to enjoy and partake of it as well. It is really a marvelous thing that we can participate in bearing the gospel to others!

Leading Others to its Goal

Euangelion also contains the thought of being led to a goal (from the Gk. *ago*). Therefore, the gospel bears an effect on others; it has an effectiveness. We just experienced four ways to enjoy the same song. For instance, in one case the singing was allowed to lead, and in another the instruments were allowed to lead. In another case, there was a combined leading. The effect was that the enjoyment of that hymn was brought to our being. The gospel leads. The Lord's word will never return to Him void (Isa. 55:11). In other words, when you preach the gospel, something surely happens. Something operates, and that operation produces a direction and an effectiveness. It leads to something. Therefore, the gospel has impact.

When I was in the military, I was not allowed to preach the gospel directly, but I could still testify that belief in Jesus brought joy to me. I told my sergeant and platoon leader this, but my comments seemed to have no effect on them. No one seemed to care. Then, during the festive time of the New Years festival, right in the midst of it, the platoon commander took me aside and earnestly said, "You must tell me: What is it to believe in Jesus?" I was shocked. I thought my words had no

effect, but at a certain time, in a certain environment, that speaking led to something! My first thought was, “It works!” It was effective! I thought nothing was happening, but in reality many were affected. We have no idea when or where or how, but the gospel will produce a result.

Even though outwardly it may not seem to have much impact, when you are enjoying the reality of the gospel, your preaching will bear fruit, for the gospel leads. It has impact. It initiates a leading and causes a response that it may be followed and lived out.

Announcing a New King and a New Era

Euangelion was an important word to the ancient Greeks. It often had to do with the birth or inauguration of a king, or the ruling and reigning of a new king; a new age. When such things happened, imagine a herald coming to a town, crying “euangelion!” Everyone would be anxious to find out what was happening. “A new king! A new prince! A new era!” The gospel not only has rich content; it also denotes a change in rule during which everything becomes different.

In the United States you somewhat look forward to this every four years. When a new president comes in, such as when Ronald Reagan became president, there is the promise of change. In Reagan’s case, the hostages in Iran were released the very day of his inauguration, for Iran realized there was a new ruler with a new rule who had come into power! They dared not risk to continue what they had dared under the previous administration. Why? Because a new age had come in. Likewise, in Berlin, Reagan told Mikhail Gorbachev, the ruler of the Soviet Union, “Take down this wall!” And eventually it came down. When there is a new ruling, there can be real change. It was this hope that backed up the herald as he cried out, “Good news! *Euangelion!*” What backed up that joyful word was the ruling—there was a new king. Of course, then, it had to do with who the ruler was!

With the coming of a new ruler came a new age. This is why people celebrated when they heard there was a new king. If the king was a good king, it meant there would be healing, protection, and a prosperous future. In the Old Testament,

such a new age was accompanied with the offering of sacrifices with a view to God's blessing upon the new era. There was feasting along with the sacrifices. In this picture, we can see people consecrating themselves to God because of the "gospel". At such a time, people's lives changed. With our belief, there is an offering of sacrifice with a view to a new hopeful era. At this time your life changes. Why? Because you have heard the gospel, and are re-energized and filled with hope at the new opportunity. The gospel becomes a reason for you to become more joined to the Lord, and you enjoy feasting before Him!

I hope you can appreciate the gospel in such a way. I have loved the Lord for over fifty years now. I can tell you, it has been a time of feasting, offering sacrifices, enjoying Christ and of offering myself to Christ.

In the New Testament the Gospel Has Become a Matter of a Life Relationship

In the New Testament age, all these matters are realized in Christ. In the Old Testament when the gospel is preached, God says, "I will call some people and make them Mine and give them the priesthood and feasts and bring them to live in the good land." It is all very practical, yet it is short of the divine element! It is something of God, but it is not God Himself.

I walked into the hall before the meeting and the first person I saw was my grandson. Suppose I then saw another baby. I would certainly appreciate that baby, but I would also easily say goodbye, because that is the "Old Testament" because I am not with that little child in life. When an old man realizes his life is short, a real affection comes out for little ones. Even so, it is your own children and grandchildren that you are bound up with.

In the Old Testament, God spoke and did many things, and His love was genuine, but there was no life-relationship involved. In the New Testament it is very different. For instance, when I see my grandchildren I am full of feeling and consideration because I have a life-relationship with them. I boast and rejoice in them as in no other children. If you do not yet have grandchildren, you will one day discover what that is, and if

you do not experience the same thing, there is something wrong with you!

The Gospel Today is Totally Realized in Christ

How about the good news? You have to say, “Wow, the prince, Christ; the king, Christ; the inauguration, the new ruling, all the blessings—all are focused on Christ, because Christ is the gospel”. If you have Christ, you have the gospel. If you enjoy Christ, you enjoy the gospel. When you have Christ, the gospel is with you, for in the New Testament age, the gospel is totally realized in Christ. He is the One reigning in us as our king. He is the reality of all the riches of the entire New Testament age. The New Testament economy is just Christ. Christ is also so satisfying to God; He is the reality of God’s economy. He becomes our riches, healing, protection and hope of glory in this new era. In this new age of hope He also becomes the necessary sacrifice that we might have access to God. He is also the reality of the feasts wherein we enjoy God and receive the dispensing of the divine life for the building up of His kingdom. The whole process is the gospel.

The Operation of the Gospel to Make Time Effective for Eternity

The concept of eternity implies no beginning and no end. What is eternal without beginning or end is self-existing and ever-existing. In eternity, God had a desire, which required an economy. To carry out this economy, in eternity God set apart something called time, which has a beginning and an end. In light of this, we must realize that time is supported by eternity. It is part of eternity. God produced time to bless eternity. He supports it. He produced time so that in it He might gain us all as a blessing to Himself. Therefore eternity supports time and time becomes the source of blessing to eternity. How marvelous!

Thus everything in time should have a value to eternity, for time is borne by eternity for eternity. Time exists to bless eternity.

You may wonder how it is that time could have an end when it is in eternity. The idea is that there will come one moment as

a “compactification” which is a finalization. Suppose I want to count out a thousand dollars. Using one hundred dollar bills I begin to count. When I reach a thousand, the purpose of my time counting the bills is accomplished, for I now have what I wanted. God is after something, and in that thing time and eternity find their purpose. The entire purpose of God becomes compacted into that moment, and God will be very happy when He reaches that point, for everything is in that “compactified” moment.

Since God is unlimited, why does He need an economy? He needs it for the coming “compactification”. He would create time, and use eternity to support it, and use it to bless Himself. In this blessing, we all are gained. Throughout the period of time, many millions are gained by eternity to become a blessing to eternity. Eventually God gains a culmination, a compactification, of what was gained in all of time. Therefore, God’s economy is very simple. In eternity, God had a view. He said, “I am infinite, unlimited, all-sufficient. I am everything. I am that I am. There is nothing that can be added or reduced, but one thing I am waiting for: that compactification. Therefore I need time. I will use eternity to support it.” Eternity does not disappear when time is here. Time is surrounded by eternity. Time’s value and essence and blessing are eternity. Time is for eternity. What God is trying to gain in time is for eternity. This is why God desires man to be gained by Christ to be a blessing to eternity. What is that? Gospel!

Christ is the Only Thing of Value in Time for Eternity

What is the focus and value of time? What is the center of time and the riches of the blessing in time? God would answer: “Christ!” A man without Christ does not live in time properly. A man who lives in time should be in Christ.

Your life-value is Christ. You can have all things in time, yet they are valueless if they cannot be counted for eternity, and the only thing for us that is of value in time is Christ. Eternity is backed by Christ. So when you say, “Lord Jesus I receive You as my Savior,” you begin to be valued by God and enjoy the blessing of God. You find out that even though you live in time, you also live in eternity, for eternity supports time.

Two people both live the same day. This one lives a day studying and attempting to gain things, but without Christ. You, however, live a day that God can appreciate, for in this day you have gained Christ! What is that? Gospel. In your experience the new age, the new ruling, the new reality, the feasting and the sacrifices come in, for Christ is everything in the gospel and Christ backs up eternity, and eternity backs up time, and God uses time for us to gain Christ. This is called God's economy! God's economy means that God in eternity arranged or designed time, supported by eternity, for people in time to gain eternity; and as people in time gain eternity, which is Christ, this eternity becomes a blessing to God Himself.

***The Goal of the Gospel: That Moment God Gains
What He Desires***

What is the "compactification" of time and eternity that God is waiting for? It is the New Jerusalem! At that moment it comes down, time ends, for we all become the Bride of Jesus Christ, and we all become the Holy City in which God and Christ have their eternal abode. Isn't that marvelous?

***The Gospel is Simply Everything God Desires For Us
Becoming Ours, and This "Everything" is Christ!***

In conclusion, the gospel is God's economy, God's will, God's desire, God's being and God's work being joined to us and being partaken of by us. The gospel is Christ, who is the reality of the good news. He is the new king, the new ruling, the new sacrifices, the new feasting and the reality of all the heavenly things for us to enjoy. This is the gospel. What is the gospel? Christ! Who is the gospel? Christ! How do you enjoy the gospel? Christ! How do you preach the gospel? Christ! How do you release the gospel? Christ! How do you operate in the gospel? Christ! Everything is Christ, and only Christ. The value of time is Christ, not your job. The more we are in Christ, the more we are in the reality of the gospel.

From a message given by Titus Chu during the 2007 Labor Day weekend in Cleveland, Ohio (Message Two)

The Pattern Shown Moses Upon the Mountain of God:

A Portrait for Our Growth and the Church Life

In the Bible, your operation has to do with your person. The young co-workers always have to tell themselves, “I want to explore. I want to face new situations. I want to be challenged.” Then something can be developed. For some reason, however, it is very difficult for many to say, “I am willing! Challenge me!” Yet it is only when you have such a spirit that the Lord can cultivate you.

I first served in Hall Two in Taipei, which was made up mainly of saints who were humble tradesmen. Then I moved to a hall with small districts and learned so much there about how to serve in a district. Then I went to college where there was a small church. There I mainly preached the gospel on that campus for two months, and began to participate in the leadership there. Then the Lord took me to the second university to learn. Eventually I went to Taiwan University and continued to labor. In the nine years I was really in the church life in Taiwan, I passed through many situations. Thus, when I came to the US as a young graduate student, I was able to produce something for the Lord’s testimony. My labor has extended to South and North America, Africa, and the Far East. Why? Because I was willing to be challenged. Unfortunately, Americans do not seem able to handle much pressure. Therefore you have to learn not to be an American, but a servant of God who is ready to go! Then the Lord can really use you.

Five Times Up the Mountain

The first time the Lord appeared to Moses upon the mountain, the Lord revealed what was in His heart (19:3-6). The second time He revealed that they needed to fear Him, for He was the Holy God (19:20-23). The third time, God expressed who He really was, as their rest and source (chs 20-23). In His presence they could enjoy the rich feasts. The fourth time (24:1-11), He indicated that through Moses He would be able to gain the congregation, so He commanded Moses to come up with Aaron and his sons, as well as seventy elders. There they ate before the Lord in one of the most pleasant scenes in the entire Bible (24:10). Everything was clear between those people and God. Nothing was opaque; everything was transparent. If anyone can be so transparent with God, he is quite spiritual. Few, however, can afford to be so transparent with God. Most go to the Lord holding something that they will not allow the Lord to touch. They dare not even tell the Lord what it is, for they fear that if the Lord should touch it, they could not survive! Yet everything in that instance was transparent. In that glorious atmosphere they ate and drank. That concluded the fifth “going up” (beginning with 24:12). Now the Lord would tell Moses how to *attain* all these riches. How? Firstly, by our becoming His testimony and, secondly, by our growth in life.

A PORTRAIT OF OUR GROWTH AND OUR CHURCH LIFE

To God, His people were His personal treasure; His priestly kingdom; His holy nation (19:5-6). Then He said, “I want to show you My holiness.” God’s holiness, however, was not going to be gotten easily! The people may have said, “We are ready!” but they didn’t realize what it would take. So the Lord showed them who He was, and how He desired what their living should be. Thus they had this very God, with the sacrifices and the festivals. With this as their initial capital, they would be able to carry out the rest.

Our Growth is For His Testimony

For the Lord to truly gain His testimony and for us to be in the true rest and satisfaction we must have a healthy growth.

Portrayed in a Sanctuary: The Tabernacle

This growth is not for us; this growth is for His testimony. Furthermore, this growth is not individual; this growth is corporate. So the Lord portrayed in this fifth time the tabernacle, something fifty cubits wide and one hundred cubits long. In other words, for this growth God is responsible (indicated by the number 50), and this growth must go on until the Lord is fully satisfied (signified by the number 100). The Lord is responsible for His fullness to be attained. For this, the Lord would also have a 10 cubit “cube” called the Holy of Holies. In conjunction with it would be a 10 by 20 cubit area called the Holy Place, which exists for our entry into the Holy of Holies. All this reveals that the Lord will bring us into the church life, which is portrayed by the tabernacle. This church life is one hundred percent under the Lord’s leading and provision. In the portrait of the tabernacle, the Lord demonstrates He is totally responsible for our growth.

Not According to What Seems Sensible to Us

Remember, in Exodus 24:10-11 they were enjoying eating and drinking in the Lord’s presence, where everything was so transparent and heavenly. Then the Lord called to Moses, saying, “Come up!” He finally had a happy moment with Aaron and his sons and the seventy elders there. Four times already he had climbed that mountain, and he was eighty years old! Now a fifth time God calls him to come up into the mountain to be there. For how long? That was up to the Lord.

When God works with you to grow in the church life, and works for the church life to be built up, everything goes against our concept. Whatever you think just doesn’t work! The Lord told Moses to go up the mountain simply to be there. Therefore Moses went, along with Joshua. As he went up, he told the elders to wait until he returned. Therefore, they were all on trial, for no one knew when he would return. Moses’ job was now to go up, and the clear sky and enjoyable atmosphere disappeared, and Moses asked something unreasonable of them—that they wait there for him, after everything else had departed. Moses could not tell them how long to wait, because God had not told him how long he would be on the mountain. All these old men were on the spot. They had gone

up for one meal. What were they to eat while they waited? The whole situation did not seem very sensible.

When you really want to see the church life develop and grow, nothing really will be what seems to be sensible. In fact, whatever makes sense to you will probably not grant you as much growth as the things that do not make sense.

When Moses went up, God's glory was upon the top of the mountain. The elders remained below with Aaron and his sons. They must have considered whether they should continue to remain, for things were no longer that clear. They saw an overall glory, and that Moses was up in it. My guess is they all went back rather than obeying Moses, and that is why Israel got into such trouble later (in Exodus 32).

A Golden Ark, A Golden Table for Bread, A Gold Lampstand, Four Layers of Covering, A Brass Altar for Offering, Four Kinds of Offerings, and a Brass Laver

Upon the mountain, God instructed Moses to have Israel make Him a sanctuary so He might dwell among them (25:8). In verse 9 He makes sure that Moses understands to make the things exactly as He instructs. God then instructs Moses to make an Ark of Testimony (v. 10), a table for showbread (v. 23), and a gold lampstand (v. 31). He went on to instruct Moses in the making of the tabernacle's curtains in 26:1, involving fine linen, goat's hair, ram's skin dyed red, all covered by a layer of badger skin (or perhaps porpoise or seal skin). Thus there were four layers in all.

Then in 27:1 He instructs Moses to make an altar of acacia wood covered in brass for burnt offering.

Then God tells Moses how their living should be for the building up of His dwelling. In 29:14 He tells Moses that the flesh of the bullock with his skin and dung shall be burnt outside the camp for a sin offering. Thus there had to be an area outside of the camp for such a thing. Then God spoke of the wave and heave offerings, representing the Lord's resurrection and ascension. Now we come to 29:18, where a whole ram was to be burnt upon the altar for a sweet smelling savor to the Lord. This was a burnt offering. In verse 28 we also see

there was a peace offering. In verse 41 there was an offering called a meal offering. Four offerings are thus mentioned: the sin offering, the burnt offering, the peace offering, and the meal offering. No mention of a trespass offering is made yet, for the Israelites have not yet failed. The trespass offering thus appears later in Leviticus.

In Exodus 30:1, God instructs that an altar of incense should be made. In the Old Testament it sets outside of the Holy of Holies, but in the New Testament it appears to belong to the Holy of Holies, for by then the veil has been taken away!

In 30:17, God tells Moses that a laver of bronze should be made. There are no dimensions given, for different cases need different sizes!

The Ark of Testimony

Our experience of the church life begins with the Ark of Testimony. The portrait we see in the tabernacle is the church life, and it is our growth in life. Our growth is from the Ark to the Table to the Lampstand to the Fine Linen to the Goat Skin to the Ram Skin to the Porpoise Skin to the Brass Altar to the Sin Offering to the Burnt Offering to the Peace Offering to the Meal Offering to the Incense Altar to the Laver...this is our way.

Let us come back to Chapter 24:16. The glory of the Lord settled upon Mount Sinai, and the clouds covered it six days. On the seventh day the Lord called unto Moses out of the midst of the clouds. Moses was a great man to be able to sit those six days! He might be able to tell Joshua not to worry for a few days, but after that, he would wonder perhaps whether they were in the wrong spot. Joshua must have been chomping at the bit, wondering where is the Mountain Top? He must have felt it had to be something so great. But finally God came, and told Moses, "I need a sanctuary which shall be My abode, by which I might be among you".

Every local church life must be a sanctuary presenting every aspect of the Lord's heart's desire. Therefore the first thing God ordered was for Moses to make Him an ark. What is this ark? It is the Ark of Testimony where He could meet with man and where man could come to Him. It was upon this ark

that His glory could be shown and His desire made known, so His people might know what kind of God they had. It was there God and man could speak together. In the Holy of Holies there was only one thing, and that was the Ark of Testimony. This indicates that no one can really be in the church life unless they see Christ. It must be realized that Christ is the unique center in the church life. Besides Him, nothing else counts and nothing else has value. We are in the church life for God. Period. Thus the first thing God revealed was the Ark of Testimony, revealing that His desire is to be with us, and that our need is to come to Him.

The Table of Showbread

In addition there are two elements to sustain us. One of these is very good: it is God the Son, represented by the Table of Showbread, upon which are twelve loaves. In other words, God will forever be our satisfaction. No one can find and know God apart from Christ. God says "If you desire to follow Me, the first thing you must know is how to enjoy the Showbread. You must know how to enjoy this very Christ".

The Ark was made of acacia wood covered by gold, as was the Table of Showbread. God covers us, who represent the acacia wood. Any tree that can grow in the desert has to be tough. Nothing of fragile beauty could survive in that climate. In the church life we want the Lord to be with us, so we have to become tough against whatever is against God. An acacia tree is covered with thorns. It is very tough, and has the ability to withstand just about any kind of environment. In the wilderness, everything is against life, yet the acacia tree has the ability to grow there. Even against the animals that desire its moisture, it is able to survive.

I believe some of you have been to some parties where perhaps many things are going on. I believe some of you give others the sense you are resistant to such things, as though you have thorns. The things others are influenced by cannot touch you. The Lord built the Ark of Testimony of such a tough humanity blended together with His divinity. Upon this Ark, God and man were able to meet. This is Christ, and this is also the construction of the Showbread Table.

The Lampstand

When it comes to the lampstand, however, everything is gold. In the matter of the lampstand, God comes to you in a particular way. You may come to God for enjoyment, but God recognizes that within you is a piece of gold which is the divine life. Based upon this piece of gold, He is going to work upon you. Eventually He will beat you into a lampstand. In this, nothing of you is involved, for the whole lampstand is a beaten work of pure gold, produced by an artful hand. It is a entirely a matter of the Spirit's work.

Christ is the showbread for us to enjoy, providing the way for the Spirit to work upon us. In every aspect of the lampstand there is a "three," for you have the Triune God working upon you in three steps. Firstly there is the cup. Then there is a bulb. Then you have a blossom. These are the three stages in the lampstand's workmanship. We may feel we love the church life and are for it, but when the Lord really comes in to work upon us, we may find it not so pleasant. Therefore the Lord tells you to come back to the showbread table to enjoy Christ some more. Then, as you are satisfied, He asks "Are you ready?" and He works upon you some more. First He beats a cup as a container, then a bulb, then the flowers.

The cup stage makes you empty. The bulb is to make you ready. The flower is to make you effective. When we are first saved, we just have a square of gold. It has not been shaped yet! Eventually, through the Lord's work, it becomes a cup, yet empty inside. Therefore we cry out for the Lord's mercy. In my life, many times I told the Lord I have seen something, and then the Lord beats me, and a cup comes out, and then a bulb, then a blossom. We feel the beating is difficult, yet it produces something.

The Four Coverings

How romantic is such a Christian life! Too many just go from meeting to meeting. Few realize they can become the Ark of Testimony to speak to God and to whom God may answer. Furthermore, we may daily take Christ as the showbread for our total satisfaction, and tell Him, "Lord I am here, ready for You to work upon me." This would seem enough, but God

says, “No, you have to be covered. The work of the Spirit is to produce a cover, which is fine linen filled with the humanity of Jesus”. Many young people are so rough, just being interested in fun. God desires to see in the church life that a lot of brothers are filled with fine linen. It is the innermost layer, which means you cannot see it unless you are really within the church life. Covering the fine linen was a covering of goat skin. These are the sinful men (Matt. 25:32). Sheep are pleasing to God, but goats are not, for they are the sinful ones. Yet they are here, covered by the rams’ skin dyed red. Therefore when people come into the church life, they see so many with a fine nature, yet realizing at the same time they are all those who are sinners. These sinners, however, are covered by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, symbolized by the rams’ skin dyed red.

You may expect the brothers and sisters in the church life to behave as saints. They have no problems, you think, until you begin to pursue Christ together with them. Then you discover what goats they are! Don’t you think I am good and spiritual? But if you were really with me, you may find out I am also goatish. Goat hair covers the church life, but above it all is ram’s skin dyed red! Therefore we have to say we love each other, for Jesus died for each one of us. We are all pretty goatish, but Christ died for us! The church life would be filled with gossip were it not for the fact the Lord’s blood covers us all.

Over everything as the topmost layer is the badger skin, which must have been quite ugly. From the outside, one sees this as the appearance of the sanctuary. Even we may experience meeting in an ugly meeting hall, but with beautiful saints. We do not have beautiful chapels, but we do have so many beautiful saints (not by birth, but beautiful through the blood of Jesus, with the humanity of Jesus).

The Altar of Burnt Offering

As we see all this, we appreciate God’s economy and His desire to be with us, and as we partake of the daily bread, His Spirit is working upon us all the time as we are in the church life enjoying Him. Eventually due to all of this we have to say, “Lord, I consecrate myself to You”. This is why the brass altar is mentioned next.

The Sin Offering, Burnt Offering, Peace Offering and Meal Offering

When you see these things, you say, “Lord I am joyful to give myself to You, and to the local church life”. Then the Lord mentions four further things. Number one, God says, “If you want to give yourself to Me, you must first realize you are sinful”. When we give ourselves to the Lord, we should realize we are sinners. We have nothing to boast in. Then, as your consecration advances, you realize not only you are a sinner, but also a burnt offering ready to burn yourself to ashes for the Lord’s satisfaction. The Lord does not desire religious people; He desires burnt offerings for His satisfaction. Such people have no future in the world and do not even have a future in the church life. As a burnt offering, we have no agenda. We just love the Lord, and want to give ourselves fully to Him as a burnt offering. We say, “Lord, consume me with fire”. When we take the Lord as our sin offering and offer ourselves as a burnt offering, then we enjoy the peace offering, for we thus have peace with God and with man. After this we live a life in the humanity of Jesus, portrayed by the meal offering.

I am a sinner, but I am consecrated, having set myself fully apart unto God. In my consecration I have peace with God and man. Therefore I can bear the Lord’s testimony and preach the gospel and in my person become a meal offering, for my entire person becomes saturated with the humanity of Jesus. After experiencing this, the Lord says “Become the incense altar”. Your prayer is no longer that you need this or that, but, “Lord, I am one with You in Your economy. I have enjoyed Your presence and the work of the Spirit and how the church has become my covering. I experience all these offerings. Now, Lord, I am so one with You in Your economy! All my prayer is no longer according to me, but according to You and Your desire”.

The Laver

Finally, we have the laver, for even at the most prevailing times, we realize we are unclean. In the purest place or during the most spiritual time, we are still unclean. According to the last station according to God’s revelation, we realize no matter how spiritual

we are, we can never be someone beyond the need of the Lord's washing. We see the vision, we enjoy the showbread, we enjoy the work of the Spirit, we enjoy the covers, and we enjoy the altar. We really can say, "Christ we are Yours! We like to be consumed for Your purpose." So the Lord tells us we need the sin offering, the burnt offering, the peace offering and the meal offering. Now we walk with Him. Our prayer and living should be so one with His economy. Now as one at the incense altar, you are so close to the Ark of Testimony. All your prayers, living and exercise are in the principle of the incense altar. But even though you are that spiritual, you still need the laver. No matter how pure or prevailing we seem to become, there always will remain something that needs the Lord's cleansing, and something that limits the Lord's work within us.

God's desire is that His people become to Him His specific treasure, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. He wants them to know who He is in His holiness, and what is in His heart, and to be with Him in a full enjoyment. Therefore, grow in the church life! Take the church life and go through the growth in life, step by step.

Somewhat we all have seen the Ark of Testimony. Since you see something, you should desire the Showbread and the work of the Spirit and to be covered, even though you are so sinful. Then you should desire to consecrate yourself through all the offerings and become so one with Him. Even as you become so one with Him, however, you realize you still need Him to cleanse you all the time.

The Glory of the Lord Filled the Tabernacle

According to Exodus 40:17, one year after they departed from Egypt, the tabernacle was raised up. It was produced in one cycle of God's time. God was very happy, for the cloud covered the tabernacle and the glory of the Lord filled it. The Lord was declaring, "Now I have what I want!

From a message given by Titus Chu during the 2006 College Training in Montreal, Canada

THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST IN PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE THIRTY: NOT ASSUMING, BUT LAYING HOLD...

...if, perhaps, I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus. - Philippians 3:11-12

Through the seven steps portrayed in chapter 3 of Philippians, we arrive at the highest place of our Christian life, which is the reality of incorporation with the person of Christ, conveyed in verse 12: "...I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus." (*For an overview of these seven steps, please see Message 27 of Number 5, Issue 5, available for viewing online at www.clevelandonline.org- Editor.*)

The first step we must take on this pathway is to come out of the religious world into the reality of Christ. Most Christians seem unable to depart from the realm of religion, for they are satisfied by what they find there, such as good messages or doctrine. The second step is to count everything that you might perceive to be gain as loss, whether your education, gift, status, disposition, ability: all these you have to count as loss. Then the third stage is to count all things that are in the world to be loss on account of Christ; whatever people admire. Why would you do such a thing? On account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ! When you have this experience, you are qualified to come to a deeper experience, which is to be found in Him. To be found in Him is not necessarily the top experience we may know, but it is precious when your Christian life becomes something based upon the accomplished work of Jesus Christ, according to the operation of the Spirit, and according to the person of Christ. After you learn to be found in Him, you begin to know Him. To us, this is real maturity—to know Him, the power

of His resurrection, the fellowship of His suffering—even being conformed to His death.

IF Perhaps I May Attain...?

What is left to do for someone who is conformed to the death of Christ? Once a person has died, it would seem everything is over and finished. But the interesting thing is that after Paul said “I want to know Him, I enjoy the power of His resurrection, I participate in the fellowship of His suffering and my person is being conformed to His death” he brings us to verse eleven: “*If perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.*” How could there still be an “if?” If a person is conformed to His death, it seems he surely should be able to say, “Surely the out-resurrection now awaits me.” But instead he says, “*If perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.*” If? Why “if”?

Paul Had Not Yet Completed His Course

I believe he wrote this in AD 67, three years before he was put to death. He still had a few more years to live. He is saying that all the revelations, attainments, blessing, riches, and constitution he had acquired in the Lord did not guarantee his tomorrow.

We may enjoy what the Lord is speaking in our gathering together tonight, after having been blessed in all the wonderful singing. 9:30, however, is still waiting for you. Do you have some experience of the power of His resurrection, of the fellowship of His sufferings, and being conformed to His death? To some degree, you might be able to say yes. However, in about an hour you will depart from here, and all that you have learned will be put on trial once more.

We Must Guard Our Pursuing Attitude

We must guard ourselves every moment. It is not simply that we are victorious or we fail; once you have come to this point you are truly mature. You have overcome religion and the world, and you know Christ. How prevailing you are when you are such a believer! Yet Paul says, “*If perhaps I may...*” What a warning!

How much more encouraging it would be if Paul had said with assurance: “the out-resurrection is now mine!”

I am somewhat old now, being around 70. Have I labored? Have I loved the Lord? Have I been in the truth? Have I paid a price? Have I been through the experiences of the previous five steps? To all these I can reply “yes”. Can I, however, say that I am therefore an overcomer? As long as the Lord has not yet returned, none among us can boast in this way. We all must lean on the Lord’s mercy that we may continue to attain.

Attaining is to Arrive At

The word “attain” in verse 11 is the same word used in Ephesians 4:13 for “arrive” (“until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith”). This word has to do with the exertion of some effort. In Ephesians, this effort is seen in the process that takes place from the time God gives us apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherd/teachers until we corporately become a “full grown man” at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Therefore, you can see that to “arrive” or “attain” includes so much!

When Paul says, “If I may attain,” he is saying “I have paid the price throughout the years. I have done so much. But regardless what I have accomplished, I must continue to pursue.” A young man may say “Amen!” to this, but an old man such as myself has a different perspective on this. For instance, when we used to go to the trainings with Brother Lee, I was happy to get up early to have fellowship with those who sought me out before the meetings. For ten days, my time was full of such appointments. Now, however, could I even face such a thought? Yet Paul tells us that as believers, we are allowed no “breaks”. Americans like to say, “Give me a break!” but this is not what a Christian is allowed to say, regardless how far he has come. Instead, he can only say, “I press on!” When you arise out of religion into Christ, you must still say, “I press on!” When you come to know the Lord and His resurrection power and the fellowship of His sufferings and even know conformity to His death, you must still say, “I press on!” Regardless how much you have or how far you have

come in your Christian life, you still must continue pressing on by the Lord's mercy if you desire to attain to the out-resurrection.

The Out-Resurrection on the Day of Resurrection

What is "out-resurrection"? Out-resurrection refers to the outstanding resurrection. It is interesting that there are different categories of resurrection! When the Lord comes, the Christians that meet Him will be at various levels of growth. Those who are at the "top" will enjoy the most outstanding resurrection. Those in the middle will enjoy the "medium" resurrection. All will be resurrected. When Lord comes all the Christians will be eternally brought into glory, but they will not all shine the same (see 1 Cor. 15:41). At regeneration, perhaps every believer is the same, for it is only our spirit that is filled with the Lord at that point. We still have a fallen soul with a big flesh. Comparatively speaking, what you have of Christ at regeneration may seem small, but that little bit of Christ qualifies you to be in the riches of resurrection! If, however, all you have when the Lord returns is what you possessed from the time of your regeneration, your resurrection will be with a minimal glory. But as you grow by pursuing Christ, your soul becomes more and more transformed, and the life-element in you increases. When you are resurrected, the resurrection power you experience corresponds to that element of the divine life within you. It is that power that will uplift you and be broadcast. You cannot expect that what is outwardly seen will go beyond what is inwardly possessed. It must match.

Suppose a country girl were to marry a millionaire. For her to begin to match that kind of life might require a long period of time. For her to begin to match the judgment and tastes of that millionaire will require a kind of process. She will have to "grow" to be able to appreciate those riches. This may not be the best example, but perhaps it may give you some insight. The Lord, with His unsearchable riches and resurrection power, has come into us. Now we must grow to match Him. In the beginning of our Christian life, there is very little that we can point to that matches Christ. Yet as we grow in Him, we match Him more and more, and are able to love and appreciate Him according to all that He is. If we are such a person, surely our resurrection will

be outstanding, for our spirit, soul, and eventually our body will be able to bear such a testimony in glory to the Lord. Your enjoyment of Christ will have taken you to such a place that in that day your entire being—spirit, soul, and body—will express such a high degree of the Lord’s glory. What you have enjoyed of Christ will be transmitted even to your body for all to see for eternity. This is the “out-resurrection” Paul speaks of.

When they are in disagreement, I have heard some brothers say to each other, “Well, the Lord will make us clear at His judgment seat”. I really doubt the Lord will have the time to deal with all such matters. All He will have to do is expose us. In that Great Day, we will all stand in our various “shades” of glory. If we have not arrived where the Lord desires us to be, I do believe there is a process to make it up, for the Lord is wise. It will not be something, however, that is as today, for today we live in the age of grace. Today, Christ is so available for us to gain!

Many Christians simply look to that Day as the day of relief from their troubles. They do not realize that resurrection is a reward for their struggle to gain Christ in this age. Oh, how we should all desire to attain to the outstanding resurrection! I want my soul to become even more transformed and my body so transfigured in life. I want my spirit, soul, and body to match Christ in glory to the fullest possible extent! We shouldn’t look at resurrection as merely some final process; we should seek more of its substance today! No matter how good you are today, you must remind yourself there is also yet a tomorrow. Therefore we cannot afford to be so confident. We must keep the attitude, “If perhaps I might even...”

Obtained Outwardly and Perfected Inwardly

Such persons have the possibility of becoming complete outwardly and perfect inwardly. In other words, inwardly and outwardly such a person matches Christ to its fullest extent.

Paul continues to write, “Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected but I pursue if even I may lay hold of that for

which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.” This is the height; this is incorporation. This is the highest place of Christian growth. The Lord has laid hold of me. I also lay hold of Him. To have the out-resurrection in view is easy. Every action, every deed, every decision, every exercise, every operation, I want to make sure everything in my life matches the out-resurrection. Paul doesn’t want to relax or become loose, so he doesn’t allow himself to assume he has attained. He keeps himself poised to gain more Christ.

Therefore in verse 12 he says “not that I have already obtained”. “Obtained” in Greek is somewhat like the totality of what you have. For instance, I got this car then I got the contents of what is in this car. If I get a cup made of gold, I get gold. If the cup is made of silver, I get silver. If the cup is also a work of art, I also get a work of art. You put all these together. But remember, all what he has comes from his labor. He has given up everything else on account of such excellency. He has been through all these seven phases of his pursuing. He says that even with all I have gained and attained to, I do not consider that I have yet obtained. He was out of religion. He had given up whatever else he might boast of. He had given up everything in the world. He learned to abide in the truth so that he could be found in Christ, and he paid the price in his daily life so that he might know Christ. He guarded his daily life every moment so that he might attain to the out-resurrection. Yet even with all these together, he still did not feel he had gotten enough! He realized there was something more for him to gain and to possess. Therefore he would not allow himself to feel that he had already obtained or been perfected. (What I obtain are the experiences. Out of these experiences I am perfected. The outward experiences produce the inward substance. In turn there is a kind of perfecting. I am perfect because I gain so much. I have pursued so much. I have given up so much. I have labored and struggled so much. I paid such a price. In turn, within me there is some element called perfection. Obtaining is outward; being made perfect is inward. Such persons have the possibility of becoming complete outwardly and perfect inwardly. In other words, inwardly and outwardly such a person matches Christ to its fullest extent.

Such a person, however, also realizes that Christ is unlimited, so he can never say he has obtained or yet been made perfect.)

Obtaining Christ in His Unlimitedness

As long as we are confined to four dimensions, it is not possible for us to truly comprehend what “unlimited” or “unsearchable” means. Even so, while we are living on this earth, the One we have gained, the One we have possessed, the One we have enjoyed, is this One with unsearchable riches. His name is I AM WHO I AM. In other words, He is the Eternal God, having unsearchable riches. Therefore, no matter how mature you are, compared with such an unlimited One what you have is still very limited. Christians like to believe they have everything. This is why in Christian history, you keep on confronting the same problems. A spiritual man is raised up, “I see everything.” For instance, among the Closed or Exclusive Brethren some have said, “Our father James Taylor has unveiled everything to us. What we need to do today is just to practice it.” Who is this James Taylor? He was the last great teacher among the Brethren, and he died in 1962. I believe the followers of many other spiritual men felt the same. For some reason, man likes to confine God into his own sphere of limitation, rather than to go to God with His unlimitedness.

I would like to turn us again to the verse in Song of Songs where the Shulamite says, “Before I realized it, my desire set me among the royal chariots of my people” (6:12). After that lady became so mature, she said, “Even without realizing it, I had lost myself in the unsearchable riches of Christ”. And all the daughters of Jerusalem, the Christians, cried out, “Return, return, O Shulamite.” A spiritual man led by Christ eventually comes to the realization that there is something unlimited, yet wonderfully this unlimited Christ with His unlimited riches is ready for him to enjoy, to partake of, to explore, to be part of, to become, to experience... what a blessing this is! This is why, mature as Paul was, he could write, “Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected”. And if it were so with Paul, then how about us?

Paul was the last one the Lord appeared to in person, according to his word in 1 Corinthians 15:8. He also testified that he had been caught up to the third heavens and was shown things he could not even utter (2 Cor. 12:4). Then he said, “For this one, I will boast, but for myself, I will only boast in my weaknesses.” He realized both. And as he began to finally come to the conclusion of Christian growth, he said, “Not that I have already obtained, or am already perfected”.

We give one good message, and we think Satan is under our toe. At that time we may write, “Now, I have already obtained and am already perfected. Amen. I don’t need to pursue anymore. I’m just waiting for the Lord to come back so I might enter into glory.” Instead, Paul said, “I have a lot, I see a lot, I know a lot, I experience a lot, I enjoy a lot, yet with all this, let me tell you, my feeling is that I have not yet obtained or been perfected”. Inwardly and outwardly, he realized that he still needed more Christ. Therefore, he continued to pursue.

To Pursue is to Persecute

The Greek word for pursue is the same used for persecute. When the Lord Jesus appeared to him, He said, “Saul, Saul, why do you pursue Me? Why do you persecute Me?” Paul himself testified to the Galatians that according to zeal he was a pursuer, or persecutor, of the church (1:13). When a young man dates the young woman he wants to marry, he pursues her. He doesn’t tell her, “Either you marry me or forget about it”. Instead he determines to pay any price to pursue her, even to the point of persecution. At midnight she might get a phone call from the one who is pursuing her, “Honey, I miss you”. He doesn’t care about what seems like an imposition; he simply wants to gain this person. You know brothers, Paul was such an absolute person towards Christ. Before he was converted, he persecuted the Christians to the extent that he even sought and approved of their deaths (Acts 8:1; 9:1; 26:10). He took special pains to do this. He paid a price to persecute the church. Here in Philippians he says, “Let me tell you, I have been following the Lord these thirty years. I spent three years or more to get into the Word. After I labored with the church in Antioch and traveled, raising up many local churches, and after I have become so mature, do you know

what I'm doing? I'm still pursuing my Lord Jesus, "dating" Him, even to the point I don't care if He can tolerate it or not!" We love Jesus, therefore we shouldn't worry about being too much for Him. We should "bother" Him to the extent He doesn't know what to do with us. That is called "pursuing". What you call pursuing may be too "kindergarten-like". It is not just studying the Bible a little. This is like making a long distance call, saying hello, and then putting down the phone. Can you pay a higher price? Did you ever give your future husband or wife such a short shrift?

We should give everything to pursue Christ. Do you know how marvelous it is dating the Lord Jesus? I am an old man, yet I am still "dating" Him. I am still pursuing Him with all my being, with all my person. I would pursue Christ by persecuting Christ.

Persecute Yourself to Pursue Christ

Remember, when you persecute others you always persecute yourself. As you "persecute" your wife-to-be, your wallet will also be persecuted. You will feel the pinch. As you were persecuting that young miss, you were also persecuting yourself. Brothers and sisters, a pursuer is a persecutor. Persecute the Lord by persecuting yourself. Persecute yourself for the sake of persecuting the Lord. I hope you understand what I'm talking about. I have never seen one pursuer of Christ who only persecuted Christ and not himself also. I only see real, genuine Jesus-lovers pay a price to persecute the Lord. Sometimes, in order to pursue the Lord, they lose their jobs and careers. They lose their good name. They lose their right to expect a comfortable life. In fact, they seem to lose everything. Why? Because they are persecuting, pursuing, this Christ! Isn't this good?

Before Paul was a Christian, he persecuted Christ and the church in the bad way. After he was saved, he still persecuted Christ and also himself in a good way. Isn't that marvelous? How marvelous it is for us to tell the Lord, "Thank You, You give us another day, you still give us another breath, you still give us more time, not to be normal, but to be crazy to pay any price so we can

persecute You”. This is what that Paul means when he says “I pursue” here.

Can you see this now? How crazy Paul was to launch himself out of the religious realm to pursue Christ! How crazy he was to drop everything of his background that could have been admired. How crazy he was to determine to have nothing to do with even the laudable things of the world. How firm he was to come under the truth so that he might be found in Christ, having the righteousness that was of faith alone. How insistent he was to pursue to the point he would know Christ, the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, and conformity to His death! Hasn't he come far enough in the Christian life? Yet he still realizes he must guard every day and every moment. Thus two years later, when he writes his final Epistle, to Timothy, we see a Paul who can finally says, “The time of my departing is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day” (2 Tim. 4:6-8). This crown of righteousness is the out-resurrection. Now, at this point, just prior to his martyrdom, Paul can boast “I made it!”

Do Not Forfeit the Out-Resurrection

So saints, no matter how mature you are, guard every day. Keep yourself before the Lord, in His living presence, every day. Realize that no matter how much you have attained, if you relax, that out-resurrection will become lost to you. That's why he said, “If I may even”. Then he continued, “Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I persecute. I was a persecutor all my life”. I like to say that I'm a persecutor of my Bible, especially Philipians. That's why my Bible is falling to pieces. That's persecution. I give my Bible no peace. Saints, learn this. Persecute Christ. Tell Christ, “I want You more! I need You more! I want to enjoy You more! I want to gain You more! I want to apply You more! I want Your presence more! I want You to be more real to me. I want You to be more alive to me. I want You to be more powerful to me. I want You to overrule me more. I want You to be everything to me. If not, I will not let You

go! I will hold the ‘phone’ until midnight! I don’t care what price I pay. I want to attain!” Praise the Lord!

Laid Hold of By Christ to Lay Hold of Christ

Do you like Paul? So near the end he said, “I don’t think I have got it yet. I have not obtained Christ totally in what I have gained or produced through my labor.” Marvelous! From who I am, marvelous. But no, still something more. Therefore I persecute, or *katalambano* (in Greek, meaning to seize strongly). The Lord has laid hold of me, and will not let me go. If you decide to stop pursuing after the Lord, He will not let you go! He will say, “What did you say? You are mine! I lay hold of you! I katalambano you! What are you talking about, you don’t want to be a Jesus lover? What are you talking about, you want to give up the church life? I lay hold of you!”

Sadly, however, many do not know who it is that has laid hold of us. Who is this One? Even after a sister is gained by a brother to be his wife, it still takes some time for her to get to know him. Many a girl marries a dream, for she thinks her fiance has to be the grandest gentleman in the whole universe, one who could do no wrong. Then after she marries him she perhaps finds out that he doesn’t even take a shower in the morning and wonders why she never smelled anything until after she married him. With the Lord, of course, it is different. He has laid hold of us, and constrained us to marry Him, and we say, “OK, we agree to marry You,” yet it takes us all our lives to find out how rich, how virtuous, how able, how wise, and so on, is this One who has laid hold of us. But until you fully know, you cannot lay hold of Him.

Now Gain Christ

For instance, it is often said that for a wife to gain her husband, the secret is to gain his stomach. To find out what your husband likes requires knowledge. Newlyweds have no problem with it because their love covers everything. Time, however, brings you to reality, so eventually you realize you don’t really understand that much about your husband. Saints, the Lord has gained us, and the Lord has gained us with a strong desire to be possessed

by us. We cannot run away from Him, for He has captured us to only be with Him. Therefore you cannot simply say, “Lord I give myself to You” unless you embrace what this entails. If you really mean that you want to give yourself to Christ, you have to study Him, you have to experience Him, you have to enjoy Him, you have to come to Him, so that eventually who He is can be fully realized by you. How does this take place? By your persecuting, your pursuing. Your realization should be, “I like to be with the Lord; I like to invest in the Lord; I like to understand the Lord; I like to know the Lord; I like to enjoy the Lord; I like to experience the Lord; I like to experience all the Lord’s wisdom, all His power, and all His leading”. If it is so, then you will eventually discover, what a Jesus you have. It is through this kind of pursuing that you lay hold of that for which you also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus. What is this? This is incorporation. Christ is in you, and you are in Christ. Christ’s heart becomes your heart, your desires becomes Christ’s desire. However the Lord moves, you move, because you and Christ are coordinated, incorporated into one. This is the highest plane of Christian existence.

Grow Out of Everything Else to Gain Christ

Tell the Lord, “I desire to grow. Let me grow out of religion. Let me grow out of everything I might boast in. Let me grow out of the world. Let me grow into the truth, so that I know You according to the truth, and I can be found in You. Let me grow into the knowledge, knowing You Yourself. Let me grow so that every moment I can be guarded for the out-resurrection. Finally, let me lay hold of You as the One who has laid hold of me”. Then you and He become totally matched and behave as one person. How glorious this is! We need to pray, “Lord, grant us such growth”.

From a message given by Titus Chu on April 8, 2004, during the 2003/2004 “ten-month labor”

John's Mending Ministry

The apostle John did not write anything until his old age. It was not until the Lord Himself told John, "what you see, write" (Rev 1:11), that he took up his pen and began to write to the churches. John wrote Revelation from his exile on the Island of Patmos around 90 A.D., but his Gospel and Epistles were written later from the city of Ephesus after his release.

John's ministry was a mending ministry. By this time in church history (only about 60 years after the church was born at Pentecost) there was already a lot that needed to be mended. The churches in Asia, including the church in Ephesus where John now labored, had turned away from Paul's vision (2 Tim 1:15). The church in Jerusalem had been scattered due to the Roman army's destruction of the city, spreading its law-keeping practice (Acts 21:20) everywhere. Heretical teaching about the person of Christ was troubling the churches (1 John 2:22-23; 4:3; 2 John 7). Ambitious leaders were forbidding fellowship and excommunicating those who disagreed with them (3 John 9-10). Brotherly love was sorely lacking (1 John 3:10b).

Many who loved the Lord could remember the glory of the church in its original state. They had been told that the Lord would be back soon for His prepared bride. How discouraged they must have been! We will never know how many followed Demas back to the world (2 Tim 4:10).

John was assigned by the Lord to write to meet this need. What was John's solution to these troubling times? We can see a wonderful line in his epistles.

1. Maintain the Fellowship (1 John 1)

In troubling times, we must first maintain our fellowship with the Lord and with one another by confessing our sins and by enjoying the Lord's blood (1 John 1:7). Fellowship between Christians is often the first casualty when discouragement sets in. The natural response is to accuse our brothers and excuse ourselves. Confession is needed for all our sins, but the context in 1 John is specifically any sin that breaks our fellowship. While there might be the tendency to point the finger of blame, John reminds us that we are all sinners. We all need to confess our own sins, take the blood, and fight to maintain the fellowship (1 John 1:9).

2. Touch the Anointing (1 John 2)

John reminds us that the Lord is in us as the anointing (1 John 2:20). We should not get into our minds trying to figure out how to respond to the things around us. Instead we should turn to the subjective Christ within and learn of Him. If we let the anointing abide in us, He will teach us to abide in Him (1 John 2:27). Many problems seem to evaporate as we touch the Lord in our spirits.

3. Love the Brothers (1 John 3)

Love for the brothers is the spontaneous expression of the divine life (1 John 3:14). If brotherly love is absent, it can only mean that the divine life is short. Such love acts as a gage to tell us our spiritual condition. It is easy to be full of talk, teaching, and doctrine, and think we are in the real thing (1 John 3:18; 4:20-21). But brotherly love is the test. If it is absent, we know that something is wrong.

4. Prove the Spirits (1 John 4)

The Lord told us to be “prudent as serpents and guileless as doves” (Matt 10:16). While we should love all the brothers, we should not follow blindly. John says we must “prove the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Only those who maintain the fellowship, touch the anointing, and genuinely love the brothers can hope to prove the spirits. If we are short of these three items, we can only prove or disprove according to our own subjective standard.

In John’s time, there were those who claimed that Jesus had never been incarnated as a man. They claimed that He was only a spiritual being pretending to be a man, because the holy God could never actually touch the sinful material world. This was heresy, because only a real man could shed real blood to cleanse us from our sin. John says to test such teachers by holding their teaching up to the standard of the truth. Are they able to declare that Jesus had indeed come in the flesh (1 John 4:2-3)? If not, their teaching is not of God.

Today we may not confront that particular heresy, but we must still hold the truth as our standard. Is what is taught according to the Bible? Is it healthy teaching for the building up of the church, or a convenient teaching to build up the teacher(s)? We must reject anything that does not pass the test of truth, regardless of the reputation of the teacher. Additionally we must ask, “Is there a

spirit of love, or a spirit of contention behind the teaching?” John reminds us, “He who does not love has not known God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8).

5. Overcome the World (1 John 5)

In dark times such as in the days that John wrote, many who love the Lord may become discouraged and tempted to leave the church life and go to the world. They only want a sweet fellowship in which the brothers love one another and the Lord is honored as He should be. “What use is it,” they ask themselves, “to continue running the Christian race when everything is falling apart around us? It is out of our control. Let’s go elsewhere so we can at least live a peaceful human life.”

To them John writes, “For everything that has been begotten of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory which has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4). The same faith that initiated us into the divine life will enable us to overcome the temptation of the world. Did not Jesus say that He would build His church? Faith answers, “Amen!” Did He not also say that He would one day return for His glorious Bride? Again, faith answers, “Amen!” Doesn’t the Word say that some should stand as overcomers in the dark day? Once again, faith answers, “Amen!”

What should we do? John says, “And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5:14). We must pray! Prayer will embolden our faith and allow God to move.

6. Walk in Truth and Love (2 and 3 John)

John writes, “I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth... even as you heard from the beginning, that you walk in love” (2 John 1:4a, 6b). “For I rejoiced greatly at the brothers’ coming and testifying to your steadfastness in the truth, even as you walk in truth. I have no greater joy than these things, that I hear that my children are walking in the truth” (3 John 3-4).

In 1 John 4, truth was the standard against which we measured the teaching set before us. Here the truth, mixed with love, has become our walk. Those who are able to receive John’s word in the first five steps will have the reality of such a walk. Such a walk will carry us through no matter how dark the days before us. - *Dave Shields*

WHAT ABOUT STEPHEN? —A COUNTER-EXAMPLE TO UNIFORMITY

Today some brothers vehemently insist that in every age God has one unique mouthpiece for His up-to-date speaking—the “minister of the age.” Only this unique minister has “the vision” and the “ministry of the age.” He alone is qualified to speak and teach God’s people. The implications are clear; since God only gives His vision to one man, every other minister should teach only what the “minister of the age” teaches. This implies uniformity of ministry; other ministers should serve merely as “tape-recorders,” duplicating the Minister of the Age. To teach anything else would be to “teach differently;” at best it is a distraction; at worst it is destructive and divisive.

Thirty years ago the “Co-workers in the Lord’s Recovery” declared, “All teachings...which claim the Holy Spirit as their source must be checked by God’s revelation in His Word.” If we are serious about taking the Bible as our unique standard, this teaching should be evaluated against Scripture. Here we examine whether this doctrine describes the early Church’s situation in Acts. In particular we focus on the role of Stephen, the proto-martyr, whose message is recorded in Acts 7. We ask—Does the New Testament pattern of the early Church match the “blended brothers’ “Minister of the Age” doctrine? Does the Acts record exhibit the uniformity of ministry implied by this dogma? Or, does it display diversity rather than uniformity, consistent with 1 Corinthians 12:5—a “variety of ministries but the same Lord”? We conclude that the “one Minister of the Age” doctrine initially proposed by Bro. Witness Lee and repeated and elaborated by the “blended brothers,” does not “fit the data” presented in Acts. The case of Stephen is an unambiguous counter-example.

Peter, John & Stephen

The “blended brothers” apply their “one Minister of the Age” paradigm to Acts. They say, “It is clear...in the New Testament...only one man was used by God to bring His vision

to His people in a particular age....**Peter was the one...he was the minister of that age.***" The "blended brothers" claim they are merely extrapolating from Brother Lee's teaching. However, the standard for evaluating the assertion Peter was God's unique mouthpiece (the "minister of the age") is not Witness Lee's writings, but the Bible, the unique canon. It is true that no message by the apostle John is recorded in Acts; he is merely portrayed as Peter's companion. Nevertheless, it is incorrect to assert that the teaching [in Acts 1-12] was only given by one person—Peter. What about Stephen? Witness Lee describes Stephen as "a great teacher," adding, "he was knowledgeable in God's Word. He surely was qualified to teach the Scriptures." Acts chapter 7 presents a detailed record of Stephen's lengthy defense before the Jewish Sanhedrin. Its inclusion in the New Testament establishes beyond question its status as "God-breathed and profitable" (2 Tim. 3:16.) Luke's record in Acts records three major messages by Peter (Acts 2, 3 & 10). By comparison Stephen's message is significant both in length and content.

The "blended brothers" assert that "*Peter...was the minister of that age.*" Hence, based on their "Minister of the Age" dogma, one would expect Stephen to simply teach by expounding Peter's previous messages, which constituted the apostles' teaching up to that point in time (Acts 2:42). Perhaps the style could differ, but the basic content shouldn't deviate from the confines of Peter's ministry. However, significantly, **this is not what we find in Acts.** Stephen's message not only differs from Peter's in style, but also in substance. His speaking was not constrained by the apostles' teaching recorded in prior chapters. This contrast has not escaped the notice of New Testament scholars. F. F. Bruce writes, "Stephen propounded an interpretation of the Way much more radical than that maintained and taught by the twelve [apostles]." In particular Stephen voiced disapproval of the status accorded to the Jerusalem temple both by the Jews and his Christian contemporaries.

Stephen's Denunciation vs. Peter's Accommodation of the Jerusalem Temple

The temple was a forum for the apostles' ministry (Acts 3:1). Gatherings of the church in Jerusalem were held daily in the temple (Acts 2:46; 5:42). Apparently the first New

Testament Church had no qualms about operating within the sphere of Old Testament Judaism with its facilities and practices. This led Witness Lee to observe, "The early believers were not clear concerning God's New Testament economy with respect to the Judaic temple. **Not even the early apostles had a clear vision concerning God's abandonment of the Judaic things.** Hence, even after God's pouring out the Spirit upon them on the day of Pentecost to initiate a new dispensation, they still did not separate themselves from the Judaic temple...This led to a mixture of the Church with Judaism, a mixture that was not condemned by the early church in Jerusalem." Evidently the apostles failed to grasp the implications of the change from the Old Testament dispensation of law to the New Testament dispensation of grace. "According to the record in Acts, the church in Jerusalem, including the twelve apostles, did not pass through the transitional period successfully. Rather, they had a failure," Witness Lee asserts. The twelve apostles, including Peter, the "Minister of the Age," participated in (and bear responsibility for) this "failure."

In this context, Stephen's stand is striking. According to the "Minister of the Age" dogma—only Peter had the vision; God did not give Stephen his own light and revelation. Hence Stephen should speak only the contents of Peter's vision. Moreover, only Peter's word counted; Stephen should speak according to that. However, the biblical record in Acts—specifically Stephen's example—decisively refutes these claims. Clearly Stephen had his own vision, revelation, ministry and teaching. This is evident particularly in his attitude to the temple, expressed in his preaching, which aroused the ire of the religious authorities (Acts 6:13-14). F. F. Bruce, says, "Stephen attracted attention by his critical attitude to the temple. At a time when the leaders of the church were attending its services daily, he took seriously Jesus' prediction of its downfall, and maintained that such a permanent structure was not part of the divine plan for a pilgrim people." This constitutes a major point in Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin. Another respected New Testament scholar, James Dunn, says, "This is the most astonishing feature of [Stephen's] speech—its outspoken attack on the temple...**he calls the temple an idol!**" In contrast to Stephen, the twelve apostles escaped the Sanhedrin's censure on this issue due to their accommodation with Judaic temple worship.

Stephen's attack on the temple implied a critique of the twelve apostles' position. James Dunn draws attention to this, "We should not ignore the fact that Stephen's attitude was a *rejection* not only of the Jewish attitude to the temple but also of the *worship of the Aramaic/Hebrew speaking Christians so far as it continued to centre on the temple.*" He emphasizes that "Stephen's rejection of the temple meant in effect also a *rejection of the local Christians' attitude to the temple...*the bulk of the new [Christian] community apparently continued to worship at the temple...Stephen's speech was in fact a sharp-edged criticism of...his fellow believers..." led by Peter and the rest of the apostles. This suggests that Stephen's vision concerning the change in dispensations was clearer than Peter's; his speaking was more consistent with God's New Testament economy. There is no indication that Stephen confronted the twelve apostles on this issue. Nevertheless, he was not silenced by them either. Stephen's speaking was not constrained to conform to the apostles' teaching as it had been unfolded up to that point. Evidently Stephen's ministry was allowed to co-exist together with the twelve apostles' ministry within the first Christian community, the church in Jerusalem. Stephen did not minister merely according to Peter's vision, repeating his teaching. He was not limited to speaking only what Peter (the "Minister of the Age") had spoken. Stephen was not an apostle, but merely one of the seven deacons appointed to "serve tables" (Acts 6:2-6.) Yet he had his own vision and ministry; he ministered accordingly. Furthermore, Stephen was not condemned by the apostles or the church for "teaching differently" from the (so-called) 'Minister of the Age.' In fact, the Holy Spirit vindicated Stephen's speaking by recording it in detail in the New Testament! **Clearly God had more than one mouthpiece.** Stephen's case represents a decisive counter-example to the "blended brothers'" exclusive teaching concerning one unique "minister of the age."

A New Testament Precedent for Diversity, not Uniformity

Watchman Nee, along with others, regarded Acts as the "blueprint" for the entire Church age. In his view, "what God has set forth as our example in the beginning is the eternal will of God. It is the divine standard for all time." Brother Nee regarded Acts as the normative standard. It was not merely the earliest phase of Church history; it provides the divine

design for today. He wrote, "God cannot lead a man one way in Acts and another today...[I]n principle the will and ways of God are just the same today as they were in the days of Acts."

This principle ought to be applied to the case of Stephen. As Dunn points out, "It is clear that from an early date there was a ***diversity of attitude to and practice of worship and a fairly sharp divergence of opinion...***" Along the same lines Dunn says, "We see here ***the first instance of Christians differing (and differing sharply) in their interpretation of Jesus' teaching***" about the role of the Jerusalem temple. During His earthly ministry, Jesus had predicted the destruction of the temple and personally abandoned it. Shortly after Pentecost, "Stephen...did not hesitate to emphasize this side of Jesus' teaching and to elaborate it even though it meant being (sharply) critical of his fellow (Hebrew) Christians and provoking the hostility of the more orthodox Jews," Dunn explains. This observation of diverse attitudes and interpretations existing in the first local church cannot be dismissed by asserting—"That was a time of transition; it doesn't apply today!" ***If Acts is (to use Watchman Nee's words) "the highest expression of God's will," that expression includes diversity and not uniformity;*** the Church's "blueprint" includes toleration, not excommunication. The "blueprint" applies today.

Variety in Vision, Diversity in Ministry & Teaching, yet "One Accord"

The case of Stephen offers a striking counter-example to the "blended brothers' Minister of the Age" dogma. Although Stephen was a contemporary of the Apostle Peter, he clearly had his own vision, revelation, ministry and teaching (Acts 7:56). Stephen's vision, ministry and teaching were significantly different from Peter's, yet he had the liberty to exercise it. Moreover, the New Testament records a significant divergence in views and teaching within the early Church concerning temple worship. The environment of the early Church permitted the co-existence and expression of diverse views. Apparently the twelve apostles tolerated the expression of these divergent views. Stephen preached in the synagogues. The viewpoint represented by Stephen was not suppressed; nor was it condemned as a "different teaching." Stephen was not quarantined by the apostles for "teaching differently." Yet, in the presence of this obvious diversity, Luke still records that

the believers were in 'one accord' (Acts 2:46; 4:24; 5:12). Witness Lee maintains that "one accord" characterized the Church prior to Acts 15; this includes the period under discussion here. Apparently the differing visions of Peter and Stephen did not prohibit 'one accord' among the Jerusalem believers.

These observations contradict the claims of the "blended brothers." They are on record asserting "We cannot have one accord if we have a different vision....If I have one vision and you have another, we have division." Yet the Acts record suggests that Stephen's vision differed significantly from Peter's; however that divergence did not cause division! From another perspective Stephen's interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures and Jesus' teaching regarding the temple also differed from the apostles'. According to the "blended brothers" such "interpretational differences" reflect serious underlying problems. They claim, "When Christ is the Head practically in our experience, **it is impossible for there to be different interpretations** of the Scriptures. The Head is very clear. Interpretational differences prove that some members have problems with the Head and are not under the Head." In the present case, this dogmatic assertion implies that either Stephen or the twelve apostles had "problems with the Head and [were] not under the Head." One or the other stands condemned by the "blended brothers"! We leave them to answer the obvious question—"Which one?"

Moreover the "blended brothers" allege that diverse viewpoints among workers are another serious problem. They allege that "As long as we have **different views on a minor point, we cannot have one accord** (Phil. 3:15)." These claims appear inconsistent with the different viewpoint regarding the temple expressed by Stephen in Acts 7. Stephen's attitude contrasted sharply with that underlying the apostles' practice regarding the temple. This difference was not merely "on a minor point." It was not a superficial or irrelevant divergence in view. It was not concerning different personal practices like baptism by immersion vs. sprinkling. Nevertheless Luke does not record that the 'one accord' was lost, nor that disaccord was produced! Evidently the early believers' unity withstood the test of a much greater degree of diversity than many suppose. Acts records 'one accord' even in the presence of differing views on important points of substance.

Biblical 'One Accord' Vs the Blended Brothers' Uniformity

The Acts record does not match the "blended brothers'" doctrine of a unique 'Minister of the Age,' with no diversity in vision, viewpoint and interpretation. Their theory fails to "fit the data" contained in Acts for at least two reasons. First a careful analysis of Acts implies we should reject the notion of a unique 'Minister of the Age.' Certainly Peter was God's mouthpiece and an important one. However, **God also used other believers as His mouthpiece**—Stephen being a prime example. This view matches Witness Lee's statement—"**In the New Testament age God would not allow His people to have a single, unique leader among men.**" The Apostle Peter was not the first "Pope," as Roman Catholics claim; neither was he the first in a line of unique "Ministers of the Age," as LSM's "blended brothers" allege! Moreover, we reject claims of "ministerial continuation" by successive "Ministers of the Age," just as we deny Catholic claims of apostolic succession among the Popes

Another underlying reason Acts fails to fit the "blended brothers' mold" is that what they term 'one accord' actually corresponds to uniformity. By definition even minor differences in viewpoint or interpretation violate uniformity. Evidently the "blended brothers'" concept of "one accord" is indistinguishable from uniformity. In contrast, the Acts record indicates that 'one accord' can exist, even in the presence of marked differences in vision, views and interpretation. This biblical description doesn't match the "blended brothers'" version of 'one accord,' because their definition amounts to uniformity.

The "blended brothers'" version of 'one accord' contrasts with Witness Lee's words, "To be in **one accord does not mean to get rid of all the differences.** If this were the case, we would never have the one accord in this age. We must...keep the unity without caring to have uniformity." Early in his ministry Witness Lee testified that the co-workers were able to work together despite pronounced doctrinal differences. He said, "we fellow workers...have been able to keep together... though we have not always seen eye to eye on points of doctrine...We dare not say that we have had no differences of opinion (sometimes they have been quite pronounced); but....**we have not gotten into difficulty even when we**

have differed in our doctrinal viewpoint." This raises the obvious question—If co-workers could be in 'one accord' despite pronounced differences then, **why not now?**

In scientific analysis one well-documented counter-example which violates an established scientific law calls the whole hypothesis into question. We offer the New Testament case of Stephen, the proto-martyr, as a decisive counter-example to the "blended brothers'" paradigm of the unique "Minister of the Age" and 'one accord.' We believe unbiased evaluators of Luke's portrait of the early Church would conclude it is characterized by unity with marked diversity. It does not depict the kind of rigid uniformity accompanied by a mere token variety implied by the "blended brothers' Minister of the Age" doctrine or their definition of 'one accord.' These teachings are not the issue of "cutting straight the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Shouldn't these New Testament examples, expounded without distortion, inform our practice today?

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NOTES:

This is a short version of a piece entitled, "**WHAT ABOUT STEPHEN?—A COUNTER-EXAMPLE TO LSM'S UNIFORMITY,**" posted on the "concernedbrothers.com" website. Please see that article for documentation (footnotes, sources etc.) and a fuller exposition of the points presented here.

* **Boldface type** in this article has been added for emphasis.

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Notes from Page 7

1. These findings have been confirmed more recently by the Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe (WMAP). In 2003 the WMAP acquired further evidence for a specific model of the creation of the universe that depicts a very finely “tuned” event. It also determined that the entire universe is composed of only 4% of “regular” matter. The rest is “dark matter” (23%) and a mysterious “dark energy” (73%!) that acts like “reverse gravity”. Scientists simply do not know what this “dark energy” is!

2. Quoted on p. 139 of *Show Me God*, by Fred Heeren.

3. Read, for instance, Chapter 14 of Hugh Ross’ *The Creator and the Cosmos*.

4. In the May 2005 issue of *National Geographic*, for instance, there is a fanciful fold-out that attempts to lend credibility to the idea.

5. Quoted on p. 43 of *A Shattered Visage: The Real Face of Atheism* by Ravi Zacharias.

Anyone interested in this topic is encouraged to read the books mentioned above by Heeren and Ross. Heeren’s book, in particular, is an excellent introduction. He even makes quantum physics seem easy to understand! (Brother Tim Savisky also has a book out which I haven’t read, but after reading it Mark Jordan was inspired to write a song which the saints from Goshen sang during the Music Weekend, so it must be pretty good!)

The mystery of the universe continues to draw people to think on God, just as it constrained David to write:

***When I consider Your heavens,
the work of Your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which You have set in place...
What is man that You are mindful of him,
or the son of man that You care for him? (Psalm 8:3-4),***

*The physical realm is a great testimony to God’s existence so that unbelief might be “without excuse” (Romans 1:18-20) . As Michael Denton notes in his book Nature’s Destiny, scientists are confronted with an increasing mass of evidence that our universe was planned. Many are troubled by its many qualities that support our existence and continue to fight against what it implies, writing books such as The Cosmic Landscape: String Theory and the Illusion of Intelligent Design (Leonard Susskind). At any rate, for the sake of the gospel perhaps there should be some among us who can understand what people are talking about when they mention such things as the weak or strong anthropic principle and **Schrodinger’s cat!** - John Berglund*