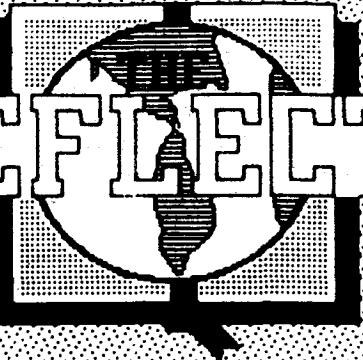


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THE REFLECTOR



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"ANOTHER GENERATION AROSE..."

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel." -- Judges 2:10

While introducing a sermon, I kind of apologized to the audience for preaching on something that I knew they had heard time and time again. A young preacher friend came to me after the services and kindly rebuked me for being apologetic for preaching on that subject. He said, "You forget that many of those other times you preached on this subject, that my generation was not old enough to get it. It is all fresh material to us." He made an important point that I hope I never forget: it just takes one generation of failing to teach and you have a generation that knows not the ways and works of God.

It is a thrill to read all that God accomplished for Israel through Moses and Joshua. It is an inspiration to read of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and the working of God to bring them into the promised land, against all odds from the human point of view. It is wonderful to read of how this people, with little military power or training, were able to stand against all enemies - because God fought for them. But, alas, they can no longer stand before their enemies (Judges 2:14). Why? A generation arose "who did not know the Lord nor the work

which He had done for Israel". A generation that had more in common with its enemies than it had in common with the Lord. (Judges 2:12,13).

This generation was far enough removed from the events that brought them out of Egypt, making them a separate and distinct nation, that it did not mean as much to them as it had to Joshua and his generation. After Joshua and "the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the Lord which He had done for Israel", things changed. It was a new day - a new generation. This generation was unable to appreciate the hardships, the sacrifices, the battles and the reasons for loyalty that the other generation had experienced in order to establish Israel as God's great nation. They could not have known them by experience and somehow Joshua and the elders that outlived him were unable to sufficiently impress them upon their minds. Surely, they must have known they were a distinct nation. The Lord's nation. But, they did not appreciate what made them so, nor the background struggle that brought them to this point. So, it became much easier for them to reach some accommodations with the people around them and adopt their ways of worship. And I suspect it would have been hard to make them understand why the older generation was so hide bound in their opposition to at least some worship of other God's and at least

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Generation...

some of the more pleasant aspects of idolatry. And why must they maintain their fathers' hard-line stance, if there could be a way found to lessen the friction with their neighbors by accepting as much of their ways as possible.

God's people, His church, has had to fight many a battle, endure great hardship, and engage in much labor in order to establish and maintain their distinction in the world. They have had to be delivered from many "Egypts" since the establishment of the church in the New Testament. After almost every case of deliverance there arises a generation that does not know the sacrifices, the toil, and the reasons behind the positions taken by the preceding generation. The new generation becomes all too willing to reach an accommodation with the very people with whom their fathers struggled, not only for their own good, but to see that this new generation would be God's distinct people and enjoy His blessings and favor.

The new generation knows that there are differences between "us" and "them". But they know not the reasons behind the differences. The new generation knows that "our position" on certain issues are different from their neighbors, but they know not the reasons behind the positions. The new generation knows the results of the past struggle has been to isolate and separate us from "other churches", but know little about the issues that produced the struggle in the first place. So, reaching some sort of working accommodation with those good religious people around us and those brethren who have gone out from us may not be big deal with the new generation.

It is not altogether the new generations fault. It is easy for the generation that fought the battles, endured the hardships, and worked their way out of error by hard study and much discussion to simply forget to pass the appreciation of it on to the next generation. It is easier to hand them the end results of it all than it is to impress upon them the importance of the background behind the results. It is easy to let the grow up taking for granted that they know what we know about "Egypt" and its slavery and the importance to maintaining our freedom in Christ from the enslaving influences of the

religious world around us. So, they seeing what they consider to be unpleasant conditions (conditions that are a necessary part of being God's distinct people and conditions created by our past struggles and toil) they see them as a tragic results and set about to remedy things in a way that would not please the Lord. They see the separateness without appreciating the reasons behind it. Knowing how pleasant unity is, they set about to establish the unity without regard to what caused the division in the first place.

In the early 1800's a movement back to New Testament Christianity, commonly called the "Restoration Movement", took place in this country. Its aim was Christianity without denominationalism. Great strides were made. Debates were conducted. Great men, at great personal sacrifice, came out of denominationalism and established congregations in many communities that had not denominational ties. But, there arose another generation and many of those congregations became a part of what is known today as the "Christian Church" or "Disciples of Christ" denomination with neither reservation nor apology for being a mainstream protestant denomination. The sacrifices of the past and the scriptural arguments against denominational practices has little significance to the new generation.

In the late 1800's and early 1900's there was a great struggle to free churches of Christ from and to keep others from being involved in institutional and/or centralized arrangements for church work. Much discussion took place in papers and from pulpits on the issue. The results were that some congregations were saved, others spared and still other established that were free of these things. But by the middle of this century, a generation arose that seemed not to appreciate that struggle and many of these very congregations became involved with human institutions and centralized arrangements. The battle had to be fought all over again.

Brethren, we can take nothing for granted. We must do all that we can to pass on to the next generation all the reasons, knowledge of the toil and struggle, and good Bible knowledge behind our distinct position in the world. This generation needs to try to know and understand these things.

We still need to teach regularly on the

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OUR SERVICES

SUNDAYS

Bible Classes 9:45 AM

Worship.....10:45 AM

Worship.....6:00 PM

WEDNESDAYS

Bible Class...10:00 AM

Bible Classes 7:30 PM

VOLUME XXV

With this issue, THE REFLECTOR takes on Volume 25. This means that this year marks the 25th year of its publication. It seems hardly possible that so much time has passed since we saw the first issue, then edited by brother Bill Lambert. He was followed by brethren Jack Frost, Sr. and Edwin Hayes as editors. They all should be commended for a good job done. It has been our pleasure to edit it since August of 1970. We continue to be encouraged by the response that we receive from our efforts. We hope that with better equipment and more diligence on our part that we can make the paper better in the coming months. Also, we hope to be in a position to do more writing than we have been able to do in the past - for whatever that might be worth.

As we look back over these past years, it makes us realize that time gets away so rapidly and that there is still so much to do. There is still a lot of encouraging of the brethren that needs to be done, a lot battles for truth that still need to be fought, and sinners that need salvation. We hope that we can continue to use this paper to that end. We plan to continue to speak up against any efforts to carry the brethren into apostacy and "against those who would seek to compromise with them. We plan to continue to urge people to obey the first principles of the doctrine of Christ as well as to be true to the faith that they have begun to obey. We plan to strive for plainness of speech rather than popularity of position. We love our brethren, but we love the Lord more -- so our first priority will continue to be to please Him and hopefully that will please brethren, but if not then we still must please Him.

We hope that no position that we may teach in this paper or otherwise is so rigid that we would not change at all, in the light of scriptural evidence that we are wrong. We like to think that we would have the courage to just admit wrong and do what is needed to correct the matter. But, we do not want to be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. The convictions we have are strongly embedded within us and they are not for sale or barter. We try to be as tolerant as possible with those who may differ but we cannot compromise our convictions, not even for the sake of the peace that we love so much.

We pray that we may have the courage to continue this spirit in this the Volume and any future volumes that there might be. -- **Editor.**

first principles that many of us have heard over and over again without growing weary of them. We need to teach over and over the principles involved in institutionalism, instrumental music, and all else pertaining to church work and worship. We need to continually teach on God's marriage law, worldliness, modesty, lasciviousness (as it applies to most mixed-swimming, most dancing, most movies, much TV, etc.), etc.; or not be too shocked if the new generation accepts them as a matter of course.

It just takes one untaught generation for the church to become denominational in thinking. A young man, who had spent two years as a student in the very "Christian college" that I attended, recently asked me if I had ever "pastored a church" in Tennessee.

I am mighty afraid that in our efforts to make our preaching and teaching "relevant" that we may be neglecting much of the preaching needed to encourage this generation to maintain our distinctive place in the world. The great moral issues of our day are important themes and must be preached on. But let us not forget the old themes of the plan of salvation, the organization, work, and worship of the church; the fundamentals of faith, the identity of the church, and other "old fashioned" principles that make us a distinctive people. Too much of our preaching sounds more like social counseling lectures than they do gospel sermons.

The older generation might do well to get out some of those old sermon outlines and class notes of 25-50 years ago, dust them off, and use them again. The newer generation would do well to borrow some of those outlines and notes, do some research into what produced them, and preach and practice the points in them. Or, we may well produce an-

other generation that does "not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel."

Thoughts On Hitch-Hiking

Have you ever been driving along the road when suddenly you saw a hitch-hiker ahead? His thumb-signal is giving a message loud and clear, "If you will furnish the car, the gasoline, the time and do the driving, I'll ride with you, but, you're nuts if you think that I'm gonna chip in with any gas money; but the way, if you have an accident and I'm injured, I'll sue you for everything you have".

In just about every congregation you'll find this very same kind of attitude. Yes, there are hitch-hikers in the Lord's church! They say in one way or another, "If you supply an attractive building, lights, heat and air conditioning, so that I will be comfortable as I listen to the preacher, I'll ride along with you for awhile. But you're crazy if you think I'm gonna chip in with any real financial support. Nor will I be involved with personal work, visitation, benevolence, etc., etc. By the way if anything happens that irritates me, you'll hear from me! So, on my own terms, I'll ride along with you".

In "Pulpit Helps" Via "Pause-Profit-Ponder"

Liquor And Mad Dogs

Statistics show that 10,000 people are killed by liquor where only one is killed by a mad dog; yet we shoot the dog and license the liquor. What sense is there to this?

-- Bible Crusaders News.

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