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TO BUILD A FIRE
(1945)

A church that is only immersed, never having repented of sins nor having received the Holy Spirit . . . is not a Christian church, even though it has a sign twelve feet high stating they are Christian.

—A. Word, November 1945

The death of a close friend always causes one to think about his own mortality, and so it was with Archie Word early in January 1945. One of the elders of the Crabtree church, where Archie had his first local ministry, died, and Archie attended the funeral at the Scio Church of Christ. He could not help but think,

When my time comes to leave this old earthly tabernacle, when "I shall rise to worlds unknown," will I be

glad that I have given my life to the "Defense of the Gospel" and to the building up of the Body of Christ on this earth, His Church?¹

(Archie Word could not have known that as he penned those words his own life was now at the half-way mark.)

If there was one thing in this world that Archie Word loved, beside his own family, it was the family of God, the church. When he agreed to leave the successful field of full-time revival work, nine years previously, and take the church at Montavilla, he had issued a big challenge to the congregation that met at 550 N.E. 76th Avenue in Portland. As he now entered his 10th year of ministry with the church, he was more determined than ever to proceed "purely on Scriptural grounds." On the eighth of January 1945 he outlined the program that had proven to be so successful for nine years:

FOR MYSELF

1. The Lord to lead, guide and bless me according to His written Word.
2. To do the work of an Evangelist as given in the New Testament, and especially as outlined in I & II Timothy and Titus.
3. To build the Church as it was in the days the New Testament was written, free from all outside, unscriptural alliances and organizations (not to specialize in a Christian Endeavor or Sunday School program).

FOR THE ELDERSHIP

4. To have elders who are Scripturally qualified . . .
5. That every organization in the local Church is to be answerable to the Eldership.
6. The wives of elders and all women to be in subjec-

tion to their own husbands, and to abide by the elders' decisions . . .

FOR THE CHURCH IN GENERAL

7. That Christians are praying people.
8. That every Church member who has named Christ as his Lord is to "depart from unrighteousness," and refrain from all ungodly habits and amusements.
9. To deal with sin as outlined in Matt. 18:15-17 and I Tim. 5:20.
10. To be backed by all Christians, earnest, praying Christians and to be
11. bucked by all who want to hide behind Church Membership, while they live worldly lives . . .
12. To be bold to testify for Christ, to be soul winners.
13. To treat every member alike and to have no favorites.
14. To have outside evangelists hold God-guided revivals.
15. To preach God's system of finances – tithes and offerings.²

(Regarding the matter of "popular amusements," Archie listed 17 Bible verses as an "acid test" for such – "whether it be movies, tobacco, dancing or anything else.")

SOUNDING THE ALARM AGAINST COMMUNISM

As World War II slowly wound to an end, Archie Word was sounding the alarm against the Russian bear that was taking gigantic strides in Eastern Europe. In an article, "The Bear Growls!" he was prophetic to a point:

It will not be long now until I will have plenty of company. But at the present mine is a lonely voice. For years over the radio, from my pulpit and through

my publications, I have warned of the menace of Atheistic Communism.

My friends have smiled indulgently. My foes have raved at my folly. Few have taken my warnings seriously. . . . The observant and understanding are beginning to face the facts. Those facts will be upon us in avalanche proportions *within twelve months* (emphasis mine, Author)

. . . Our leaders can scarcely sleep at night in their eagerness to please Russia. . . . We have submitted to the butchery of Poland because Russia wanted her slice. We have virtually turned over the Balkans to Russian dominance. . . . We see her making her well-defined plans to communize China. Our commentators even help along.

. . . The big bear is slowly, surely, tenaciously, insistently on his way to dominate the world. And America is in his program. . . .

. . . the appeasers are busy, honey-like explanations and assurances dripping from their editorials and broadcasts. . . .

Our children, enslaved and oppressed, will rise up and curse us. And our dust and ashes will stir restlessly, as though remembering our perfidy and treason. We have betrayed our nation with a kiss and turned her over to the mob!³

(In 1945 Russia gobbled up Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Poland.)

Archie Word was a politically aware and ardent anti-Communist all his life. By this time he was preaching on radio station KVAN Mondays through Fridays at 9:35 each morning. *The Church Speaks* was now going to over 4,000 readers. A pastor of Pilgrim Christian Tabernacle in Buffalo, New York, wrote, "I hasten to add my deep appreciation of what you are doing. . . . I have followed you in writeups in the *Standard*. . . . It takes courage to do what you are doing

. . . you have my prayers that God will use you mightily in the work of the ministry."⁴ Walter Stram, then president of Dakota Bible College, distributed the paper to each student and supporting church in South Dakota.

A TALE OF TWO CONVENTIONS

On January 10-12, 1945, a new "Conference on Evangelism," similar to the one held annually at Cincinnati Bible Seminary, was begun at San Jose Bible College. Archie Word, one of the main "feeders" of students to the college, was a frequent chapel speaker when in the area, so it was no surprise when he was asked to be on the inaugural program. His message was based on II Timothy 2:2, "Committing the Word to Faithful Men." The entire address was carried in the February 8, 1945 *The Church Speaks*. In part, Word wrote,

Once upon a time, long, long ago, there was in America a group of people who sought to RESTORE "THE FAITH" AND "THE CHURCH REVEALED IN THE WORD OF GOD." They did not have a year book with 612 pages of denominational traditions and machinery reports. . . . BUT THANK GOD, "THEY HAD POWER."

Once we said, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak, and where the Bible is silent, we are silent," but now, they say, "We speak where the Bible is silent and we are scared to death to speak where the Bible speaks."⁵

After roundly denouncing departures from the faith — like the social gospel, open membership, Federal Council of Churches, the Campbell Institute, modernism in some Bible colleges — he concluded:

May God grant that this school, sponsoring this

conference on evangelism, and every soul in the divine presence, may be faithful to that which has been committed to us and by our word and life commit this MESSAGE OF SALVATION UNTO OTHER FAITHFUL MEN ALSO.⁶

Two months later *The Church Speaks* (March 15, 1945) carried a front-page report of two conventions that Archie had attended: one, a sectional Disciples of Christ convention in the Midwest; the other, the new Conference on Evangelism in San Jose. Describing the “modulated” preaching at the first convention which he called “a few minutes of morpheus injections to a listless few listeners,” he wrote:

When will we cease from this seeking for something erudite and new and return to that which is virile and eternal? Seems as though even a jackass ought to learn after awhile that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God. . . . Preachers, let’s cut out the monkey business of Inter-faiths, Inter-denominational movements, Federal council super-denominational tower of Babel and get back to “THUS SAITH THE LORD.”⁷

The San Jose conference, in stark contrast, was seen by Word as “a convention of free men, where no lines were attached except that the message must be upon the Word of God.”

Great preachers of the old Jerusalem gospel were there. They had nothing to fear as they cut loose and from the Book gave great sermons on everlasting issues of life. . . . Men reached heights of eloquence that had not known were in them as the Spirit of Christ moved in our midst.⁸

Word was absolutely effusive in his praise of the

new preaching conference:

Brothers, it was wonderful! So very wonderful that I can hardly realize myself that I have been to an assembly of preachers where there were no axes to grind and where men were more interested in wielding the SWORD of the Spirit than they were in building “Our Denomination.” Thank God for the San Jose Bible College and for the privilege of Being There!⁹

Two attendees at the new conference were captivated by Archie Word’s preaching — transfer students from Ozark Bible College, Burton W. Barber and James McMorro. They sensed a kinship that would ripen in the years to come.

As more and more local churches in the Restoration Movement broke with the liberal Disciples of Christ, “Restoration Congresses” sprang up here and there among conservative churches. Archie Word announced in *The Church Speaks* one such meeting, which was held at Santa Clara on March 20 and 21. He promised that the meetings would feature preaching “that denounces sin as SIN, exalts Christ as our LORD, and engenders confidence in Jesus Christ’s saving and keeping power.”

THE WAR IS OVER!

During O.L. Mankamyer’s return meeting at Montavilla (March 25–April 22), President Roosevelt died. Before the month was up, Mussolini was unceremoniously executed and Hitler blew his brains out in a Berlin bunker. The long, bloody war, which had claimed 50 million lives, was nearly over. On May 7 Germany surrendered. The war in the Pacific continued until two dreadful days in August when atomic

bombs virtually vaporized Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

One of the most intriguing letters ever published in *The Church Speaks* appeared in the March 15, 1945 issue. It was from a soldier named "Otis," stationed in England, recovering from wounds he had received on the front line. Otis thanked Archie for praying for him during the War, then added,

A lot of servicemen are going to take up the ministry after they return home. . . . Mr. Word, I am very happy to say that of the many ministers I have heard preach you are one of the few that preached God's Word as it is. You will never know how much that has helped me since I have become a Christian, especially since I have been overseas.¹⁰

Another interesting letter arrived in March. It was from Leon Appel, future president of Lincoln Christian College. Appel wasn't sure Word would remember him, although Appel would never forget Archie Word and his life-changing meeting at Brookings, South Dakota!

Received a copy of your paper this morning. . . . I sat down and read it from cover to cover. . . . I appreciate knowing there are others who dare call things by their first name. If we could just get 1000 ministers from among the body of Christ to do just that. . . . Don't suppose you remember me. I met you some years ago when you were in Brookings, South Dakota, holding a meeting for E.E. Knight. At that time I was studying for the ministry in a denominational church. May God bless you in your work.¹¹

Whether it was a lonely soldier overseas or a man studying for the ministry in a denominational church, A. Word had a place in his heart for men who wanted

to serve God.

"BEND 'DE MAN!"

By April the young church in Gresham was ready to support herself and her new minister, Vernon Beeks, one of the first graduates of San Jose Bible College. The first "swarm" had taken. Others would follow at the urging of Archie Word. On May 7 (the day Germany surrendered), K.O. Backstrand returned to Montavilla from San Jose Bible College to become Archie's new associate minister (Berle Thomas had left in February). The two men put together a unique plan: while one would leave for revivals, "carrying on campaigns of evangelism all over the United States," the other would remain at Montavilla, preaching, conducting the five weekly radio broadcasts, and fulfilling other local ministerial duties. The plan was to change off about every eight weeks, so they could "have a home." To their credit, Florence Word and Marcia Backstrand stood behind their husbands in this new venture, even though it meant they and their children would be left alone for long weeks and months at a time.

Archie was the first to hit the road, leaving for revivals in Ukiah and Marin City, California, during the months of June and July. Lee Turner, a student at San Jose Bible College, had heard Archie preach, and asked him to come to Marin City to conduct a meeting. During this meeting Turner was ordained to the ministry. It was at Marin City that Archie witnessed an incident that he would later use many times as an illustration in his preaching. An old-fashioned fundamentalist black preacher provided him with the illustration. Archie later wrote,

While conducting a meeting in Marin City, California, I visited a Negro congregation that was using the same building we were (different hours). They came in all the way from on-time to an hour-late, and during the meeting they all marched around the room and laid their offering on the table in the front. Finally the preacher got up to preach. He was not a PhD by any means. He was not a polished orator in the least sense of the word, but he said one thing that every preacher needs to remember, and he emphasized it so I will never forget it. At the top of his full voice-power he screamed, "Bredren, don't bend 'de Book; bend 'de man!"¹²

While Word was preaching in California (he also spoke at Rialto and Los Angeles), Harold Buckles returned to Montavilla for another meeting. When Archie came home for a happy reunion with his family it was K.O. Backstrand's turn to leave for several months of meetings, beginning at Cresswell, Oregon. And so it went for many years.

ARCHIE TAKES ON BOB ELMORE AND THE C.R.A.

Ever since his graduation from Eugene Bible University, Archie Word had been fighting the "machine" setup of the Disciples of Christ. He fought it because he felt that organizations like the United Christian Missionary Society, "unified promotion," and State Secretaries were all additions to the local church and its work. To Archie Word there was no higher authority than the Word of God and "the church revealed in the Scriptures." But it came as a surprise to some of his friends when he began to write editorials in *The Church Speaks* against some para-church efforts within the "independent" and "direct support" movement. The first of these organizations to take the brunt

of his pen was the Christian Restoration Association of Cincinnati, Ohio.

The C.R.A., interestingly enough, was organized to encourage the "direct support" of missionaries, something Archie Word believed and practiced. It came into being in 1925, two years before the conservatives broke with the liberals and formed the North American Christian Convention. James DeForest Murch was its first president. The C.R.A. served as a "clearing house" for direct support mission efforts at home and abroad. The publication *Restoration Herald* soon became synonymous with the C.R.A. Archie Word did not oppose the work of the C.R.A. until R.E. Elmore, editor of *The Restoration Herald*, wrote some complimentary things about him in one of his columns. Elmore saw the man from Montavilla as "uncooperative" in missions because he would not go along with the "middle man" approach to supporting missionaries. A personal feud soon developed.

Archie admitted that he had a "bitter experience" with Bob Elmore in a front page article, "Bob vs. Bob," of *The Church Speaks* (Oct. 20, 1945). Elmore had taken Word and his beloved Montavilla church to task in the pages of *The Restoration Herald*, and Archie did not like the national "bawling out." Some observers on the sideline, however, pointed out that Archie Word was only getting what he had practiced in his own paper.

The flap began in November 1944 when Elmore ran a piece on a "Missionary March" in the Webber Street Church of Christ of Urbana, Illinois. The report, sent in by one Willard Leavens, stated that the 200-member church had given \$1,504.84 to missions in the last four-and-a-half years. In the March 1945 *Restoration*

Herald, Elmore ran a story on the “live wire evangelist of Portland, Oregon” to “awaken interest in other churches.” The 200-member Montavilla Church, it was noted, had given over \$3,000 in the past year to missions, and that was due to the system of tithes and offerings. However, when a friend handed Elmore a copy of the June 10, 1945 *The Church Speaks*, and Elmore saw his name on the front page, he saw red. Archie had written that the June issue was dedicated to a woman whose tithe had paid for the entire issue. Then Archie added, “Thank God for those who can see and realize the true objective of restoring Jesus’ church free from Bob Hopkins and Bob Elmore. May her tribe increase.”¹³

Stung, Elmore ran a bitter piece on Archie, *The Church Speaks*, and the Portland church in the September 1945 *Restoration Herald*. He called Archie “coy,” a “racketeer,” “Pharisaic,” “coarse,” and “vulgar.” He twice referred to The Church at 550 as “the Jesus Church” restored at 550, a derisive term never used by Word or Montavilla. Elmore concluded his tirade by writing, “The snake charmers and holy rollers are divided into numerous sects. The little sect or cult or excrescence protruding here is perhaps, under the circumstances, the most laughable and ludicrous of them all.”¹⁴

When the September copy of *The Restoration Herald* came in Archie’s mail, he was incensed. He sat down and pounded out a reply, which appeared in the October issue of his paper, *The Church Speaks*.

As long as the C.R.A. remains simply a fellowship of Christians, on a volunteer basis, without condemning free men in Christ for not becoming subservient to it, then I suppose from a Christian liberty standpoint they

have a right to exist, but THE MINUTE THEY COME OUT WITH EDITORIALS OF BITTER AND ABUSIVE HARANGUE, trying to wreck another man’s reputation just because he says he is for NO OUTSIDE ORGANIZATION, unless it is in the Bible, they need to be dehorned and the Lord will do just that, in time.¹⁵

It did not help matters any when Archie learned that Elmore enjoyed smoking cigars! If there was one thing Archie hated more than any other, it was tobacco. In the same issue of *The Church Speaks*, but not the same article, he roared, “IF YOU SMOKE, YOU STINK! It doesn’t make any difference whether you are a preacher, deacon, elder, or just a plain sinner, you will STINK JUST AS BAD.”

(But Archie Word was not one to hold a grudge forever. In future issues of *The Church Speaks*, he ran good articles by Elmore, proof that he did not regard him as unfit in every regard.)

In October Archie traveled to Washington, Indiana, for a month-long meeting with Malburt Prater. After three weeks of non-stop revival, Prater sent this report back to *The Church Speaks*:

This large Midwestern church is feeling a stirring of the dry bones in the Word meeting. At the close of the third week we have witnessed the power of the gospel as it has been forcefully preached by Evangelist A. Word. We are seeing a cleaning up of church leaders and reconsecrations of church members. . . . Brother Word has emphasized holiness of life and it is a much neglected field in most of our Christian churches. . . .¹⁶

(Prater would later testify: “The preaching did me more good than anyone else. . . it was the beginning of my real conversion.”¹⁷ It is the author’s belief that

after this meeting the notion crystallized in Archie Word's mind that most (if not all) Christian Churches were worldly and needed to be called to repentance.)

MONTAVILLA RECEIVES THE FLAG

Back home at Montavilla excitement was mounting for a red-letter day in the life of the congregation. On Sunday morning, October 14, 1945, a representative from Standard Publishing was going to present the "service flag" to the church in recognition for "having the greatest number of men and women (46) go into active Christian service among all churches of Christ and Christian Churches in America."¹⁸ Because of his meeting back East, Archie could not be there for the presentation. He later considered his absence one of his biggest disappointments in life. The flag was presented to the church by none other than J. Willis Hale, the man who was instrumental in keeping young Archie Word in college when he was about to throw in the towel and go home. Three young men – representing the 46 young people who had gone into kingdom service since Archie Word had come to Montavilla – accepted the flag: Warren Bell, Elston Knight, and K.O. Backstrand. Hale told the church, "Do not be content with this record and settle down. . . . ever look ahead and press forward."¹⁹ The flag was draped over the front of the pulpit as a challenge and inspiration to other young people to likewise give their lives in "the ministry of the Word." In the next 20 years over 100 additional young men and women would enter "the ministry of the Word." Whatever the critics may have said about Archie Word, this was one area where no complaints could be made. He practiced II Timothy 2:2, "And the things which thou

hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." In the fall of 1945 four more young people went off to Bible college, including the gentle giant Elmer James. The church did not look on these departures as a "drain" upon the congregation.

Rather than depleting the forces at home, it seemed to help challenge others to step in and accept new responsibilities. To help train those who wanted more, K.O. Backstrand taught a Tuesday night Homiletics class and Mrs. Word taught a song leading class on Thursday evenings.²⁰

"THE MOST WONDERFUL PRAYER"

The day before the Standard flag was presented to the church, 15-year-old Patsy Siler, a member of the youth group, was struck and killed in an automobile accident. Florence Word stood by the broken-hearted mother at the graveside. She was so moved by the mother's prayer at the burial service that she wrote the only article she ever had published in the 26-year history of her husband's paper, *The Church Speaks*. Here follows, in its entirety, "The Most Wonderful prayer."

The Most Wonderful Prayer

By Mrs. A. Word

I love to pray. I love to listen to others talk to God in prayer. All my life I have enjoyed this great privilege. My father was a God-fearing, praying man, and an elder in the church since before my days began; and my husband a praying, faithful minister of the gospel, all our married life.

I have heard many pray. That includes scholarly men, missionaries returned after years of trying experiences drawing them closer to God, my own babies

just learning to talk to them, prayers for the sick, prayers for the dying, prayers by those close to death's door. But this prayer from a broken, grief-stricken mother blessed my heart more and drew me closer to God's presence than any I ever heard.

Patsy had died. She was the victim of an accident, a beautiful girl of just fifteen, full of life, in perfect health, one who enjoyed living so much. As her mother and I stood together beside the casket and looked at the very quiet form out of which Patsy had moved – the mother prayed.

She thanked God for blessings they as a family had enjoyed, for the joy of having had Patsy with them for a little while. She thanked Him for loving Christian friends helping carry her burden now. She acknowledged His will in this awful trial and asked for strength to do His will always. She prayed for her neighbors – those who did not know God – that this might help them to see Him. She prayed for other young people, especially those to whom Patsy had talked, that her sudden death might make them realize the necessity of being a Christian. She prayed for their son in the service in the Hawaiian Islands, that he might be allowed to come home, that she might have his support just now when she needed it so much – he was so loving. Prayed that his heart might be made tender toward God and he too accept his Savior. She asked for forgiveness if there had been any harshness in her discipline of Patsy who, at times, had been willful. Thanked God for the times Patsy had tried to talk with some unconverted friend on Bible subjects. She prayed for her two younger children that they might be brought up in the love of the Lord and kept free from stain of sin. She asked for strength for her own physical body, which seemed so weak, that she might be able to carry her part of the heavy load just now. Prayed for unconverted relatives that their hearts might be touched at this time. Her own grief, heartache and suffering was laid at Jesus' feet in broken sobs – but done in loving submission to a

Savior whom, she knew, loved her enough to die for her and little Patsy.

Surely only Christ living within could bring such faith, trust and unselfish love out of a heart so broken and suffering. And I thought of the words of The Master in Matthew 8:10, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel."²¹

ARCHIE FEATURED IN *STANDARD* "SYMPOSIUM"

One week after the presentation of the Standard Publishing flag, the *Christian Standard* carried a "symposium" in which seven prominent ministers in America told of their "outstanding success" in "evangelizing the field next door." The symposium began on page three of the October 20, 1945 issue. The first two ministers featured were none other than P.H. Welshimer of the Canton, Ohio, church, and Archie Word of the Montavilla congregation. The Montavilla story was called "Home Evangelism Results in Forty Full-time Workers." The man from Montavilla summarized the first 10 years of ministry with the Portland congregation. "Straight Bible teaching and pleading for the consecration of life" was the reason for "over forty young men and women entering Bible colleges to prepare for the ministry," wrote Archie. He also cited the new church in Gresham, *The Church Speaks*, the five radio programs a week (three people now in Bible college or graduated as a result), and the alternating revival work of K.O. Backstrand and himself. All this, and more, had been accomplished, he wrote, "as a natural outgrowth of straight, old-time Bible preaching and appealing to the folk to return to a 'Thus saith the Lord.'"²²

One of his meetings that fall, where "straight, old-time Bible preaching" was heard, was with the

Eastside Church of Christ in San Jose, California. The meeting began November 18 and lasted well into December. Elston Knight, the preacher at Eastside, reported on the meeting:

The straight preaching, the dynamic delivery, and the clear-cut teaching from the Doctrinal charts . . . has brought a bountiful harvest. . . . Four homes were completely united in Christ . . . several others were obedient to the gospel.²³

Knight concluded his report with a personal word to Archie Word: "Keep on keeping on in your faithful stand against the vile sins of the world, and in your earnest search for souls for Christ, and also in your humble efforts to live for God according to His Word."²⁴ Knight seemed to epitomize the life, love and labors of Archie Word in this sentence. He was a man who wanted to live by the Word of God; he loved the souls of men; and he now felt that his calling in life was to call men – especially the church – to repentance.

THE NATIONAL CALL TO REPENTANCE BEGINS

The post-war church, even in the churches known as the Restoration Movement, was being infiltrated by the world. Archie Word had seen this happen in the post-war days of World War I. In fact, he had personally experienced its sin and its consequences. What he was observing, late in 1945, through his reading and travels throughout the United States convinced him that the "Restoration Movement" was rife with wordliness but ripe for revival if someone would call it to repentance (by "Restoration Movement" Archie Word meant "those people who make up the membership of the Christian Churches including the Disciples and

the Churches of Christ that are free from the Piano test of fellowship").²⁵

In November of 1945, just as the Nuremburg trials were beginning in Germany, 44-year-old Archie Word began his assault on the problem of encroaching worldliness in the church in a front-page article with banner headlines: ARE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES, CHRISTIAN? For his text Word chose II Corinthians 13:5, "Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate." Archie believed that it was better to have an examination "from a brother in the Lord" than to have "criticism from one who is an outsider." Here follows excerpts from what would prove to be a watershed document:

God has given us a law that Christians are to be a SEPARATED PEOPLE; different from the world. . . .

Are most Christian churches over this land saying anything very strong to their people about being a separated people?

Archie then alluded to some of his meetings he had held in larger Christian Churches across the country.

. . . in those in which I have been privileged to hold meetings, I have found them literally gutted with Hollywood's rotten habit. . . . I've known churches with 800 members that were so gutted with worldliness that they could not have a prayer meeting.²⁶

He then asked a big question and proceeded to answer it:

Is a church like that, a Christian church? . . . MOST

CERTAINLY NOT! Why are they in that condition? Usually it is because, thru the years past the preachers never got farther in the Bible than Acts 2:38 and even in that, the emphasis was upon **Baptism**. Let us **NEVER FORGET THAT REPENTANCE FROM SIN PRECEDES BAPTISM AND THAT THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT SUCCEEDS BAPTISM** and a church that is only immersed, never having repented of sins nor having received the **HOLY SPIRIT**. . . is not a Christian church, even though it has a sign twelve feet high stating they are Christian.²⁷

The sins of churches in the mid-40s, as seen by Archie, were two-fold: sins of the flesh (movies, card playing, drinking, smoking, dancing), and sins of the spirit (prayerlessness, weak preaching, no soul winning, a rebellious spirit). "The cancer on the Christian church today is worldliness," he charged. The solution, as he saw it, was to build a roaring fire in the church of God.

Maybe you are asking, "Well, Brother Word, how can we overcome these habits that we have allowed to fasten themselves on us during the past years?" It reminds me of the man who was scraping the frost off his windows with a razor blade. He was making some headway but as fast as he got a place cleaned off it became covered over again. There was just one remedy . . . build a fire in the house and the heat on the inside would loosen the frost and keep it off. Just so, Christ on the inside will drive the Devil out and keep him forever fenced out.²⁸

That holy fire would have to come from straight Bible preaching. Archie Word believed that the reason for this cancer in the church was weak preaching; the remedy was simple — strong preaching; preaching that resulted in genuine conversion.

(Word included an interesting footnote at the conclusion of "Are Christian Churches, Christian?" "I am not pleading for the name 'Christian Church' at all. I do not want to start a word battle with those who claim that 'Church of Christ' is the **ONLY** name in the Bible, nor a fight with the 'Church of God, **ONLY**' advocates. I am merely asking a question to you who claim to be Christians, **ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN?**")

A NEW FELLOWSHIP BEGINS TO FORM

Archie Word was not alone in his desire to see holiness of life restored to the churches of the restoration order. In different parts of the country three young men were showing zeal for the same cause. Two of them, James McMorrow and Donald G. Hunt, had grown up together in the church in Cincinnati, Iowa (a small town named after the much larger town in Ohio). The third man, Burton W. Barber, had met Hunt and McMorrow at Ozark Bible College. During his junior year at Ozark, Barber proposed that the three kindred spirits "launch a paper" and open a "worker-training school." Barber had already been exposed to Archie Word's influence in 1941 through Word's book, *The Church Revealed in the Scriptures*. All of them had been receiving and reading Word's journal, *The Church Speaks*. The three men had already cooperated in sponsoring two summer preaching rallies in Cincinnati, Iowa, in 1944 and 1945. Now, in the winter of 1945, while McMorrow and Barber were studying as transfer students at San Jose Bible College and Hunt was doing postgraduate work at Cincinnati Bible Seminary, they began laying their plans to publish a weekly gospel paper that would call the church to evangelism and holiness of life. You

cannot start a national weekly newspaper without a mailing list. Where would they get the names? They turned to Archie Word and he supplied them with the mailing list of *The Church Speaks* (at that time the paper was going out to over 4,000 readers).³⁰

A simple connection linking like-minded men in Portland, San Jose, and Cincinnati was started in November of 1945, and it was a connection that would last until Archie's death in November of 1988, 42 years later. The die was cast. The man from Montavilla had formed a friendship with the three men that would, in short time, forge a new fellowship among the Independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ. Archie Word would continue to associate with brethren and churches in the independent movement for the next five years, but in 1950 he would cast his lot for good with those who came to be known as "the Ottumwa brethren."

Notes

1. *The Church Speaks*, Jan. 8, 1945
2. *Ibid*
3. *Ibid*
4. *Ibid*
5. *The Church Speaks*, Feb. 8, 1945
6. *Ibid*
7. *The Church Speaks*, Mar. 15, 1945
8. *Ibid*
9. *Ibid*
10. *Ibid*
11. *Ibid*
12. *The Other Day*, p. 18
13. *The Church Speaks*, July 1945, & *Restoration Herald*, Sept. 1945
14. *The Restoration Herald*, Sept. 1945
15. *The Church Speaks*, Oct. 20, 1945
16. *The Church Speaks*, Nov. 25, 1945

17. *The Life Story of Archie Word*, p. 117
18. *Montavilla Memories*, p. 48
19. *The Church Speaks*, Nov. 25, 1945
20. *Montavilla Memories*, p. 48
21. *The Church Speaks*, Dec. 23, 1945
22. *Christian Standard*, Oct. 20, 1945
23. *The Church Speaks*, April 7, 1946
24. *The Church Speaks*, Nov. 25, 1945
25. *Ibid*
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28. *Ibid*
29. Personal notes from Donald Hunt to the author (1990)
30. *Ibid*

16

“REPENT OR PERISH!” (1946)

If I had the strength to go through the churches again, instead of preaching to convert sinners, I would preach to bring up the churches to the gospel standard of holy living.

—Charles G. Finney

If it was needed in his day, how much more is the need in our day.

—Archie J. Word

World War II was now over. Dictators like Mussolini and Hitler were gone from the world scene. Emperor Hirohito shocked Japan by denying his divinity. But new wars and new dictators were beginning to take the stage in 1946. Ho Chi Minh came to power in the little-known country of Vietnam. Mao Tse-tung

declared an all-out war on Chiang Kai-shek. Early in January 1946, 51 nations participated in the first session of the United Nations in New York. But in the same month the Central Intelligence Agency was born. Trust would have to be earned by the new world order of 1946, especially in countries controlled by Communism. Winston Churchill visited the United States in March and gave his famous speech at Fulton, Missouri: "An 'iron curtain' has descended across the Continent."

In Archie Word's world many changes were also taking place. He first met the man who would become his first son-in-law in January of 1946 in San Jose, California. Iowa-born Donald G. Hunt had driven halfway across the United States just to hear this man once dubbed "America's foremost evangelist."

It was at the 1946 Conference on Evangelism at San Jose, California, that I first saw him. . . . he sat on the front row on the righthand side. He was strong looking, wore a wooly, light brown suit, and was somewhat dark complexioned. As a young preacher I did not feel at liberty to intrude into his activities to introduce myself. But toward the end of the conference, I happened to be in a group out in the foyer with whom he shook hands. Who would have thought that our lives would become so closely associated?¹

THE WORD-HUNT CONNECTION BEGINS

Donald G. Hunt was born in rural southern Iowa on April 26, 1922. His parents took Donald and his brothers, Kenneth and Gail, to church in the little town of Cincinnati, Iowa. Although the church had restoration roots, it had declined into a community church status. Hunt recalls that Floyd Edwards was "the first real gospel preacher I got to hear, and I was

somewhere in the lower grades at the time."² Other preachers came along who also influenced the earnest young boy: men like George Swan, Jr., and Ralph Waldo Emerson (the preacher, not the philosopher). In time one of Hunt's brothers, Kenneth, and a good friend, James McMorrow, left the coal mining town and headed off to Bible college. McMorrow, a lanky six-footer, had been a pitcher in the St. Louis Cardinals' Minor League farm club at St. Joseph, Missouri, but had come down with a sore arm. Now he was ready to pitch for the Lord.³

In his senior year of high school, Hunt was asked by the elders of the Cincinnati congregation to teach the high school class, McMorrow's old class. He had been taking a correspondence course from Standard Publishing and was ready for the challenge. For the next three years he not only taught the high school class but also took on the Sunday evening young people's class, a Thursday night adult class, a Wednesday night Bible study for all community young people (over half the town's youth came), a Tuesday night "Christian Worker's Meeting" for the young marrieds (although he was still single at the time), and a Sunday night Bible study for the entire congregation. Immersing himself in the Bible soon caused him to reconsider his life plans. His ambition had been to raise a different breed of registered cattle on several farms, but now he began to think that people, not cattle, should be his life work.

One day he surrendered himself to the Lord, praying, "Here am I. Send me. Thy will, not mine, be done!"⁴ On July 31, 1942, he was formally set apart to preach by the Cincinnati church and he found preaching points at Exline and Udell, Iowa. In the fall he and

Ira Cochran left for Ozark Bible College, then located in Bentonville, Arkansas. There he met F.W. Strong, president of the tiny school. He also met a young homesick student named Billy James Hargis, who would go on to become an international anti-communist figure. Hunt was delighted to be reacquainted with James McMorrow and was also pleased to meet Burton W. Barber, a 23-year-old married student who excelled in debating the non-instrumental brethren. It was not long until the three kindred spirits began to lay plans to work together. During the summers of 1944 and 1945 they co-sponsored a three-day preaching rally in Cincinnati, Iowa. During Hunt's junior year at Ozark, Barber proposed that the three of them begin publishing a new weekly publication and open a new Bible college. All three of them were of the opinion that the independent churches needed a fresh call to evangelism and holiness of living. About this time McMorrow and Barber transferred to San Jose Bible College, largely due to the influence of Archie Word's book, *The Church Revealed in the Scriptures*. Hunt went on to graduate from OBC in May of 1946 and left for Cincinnati Bible Seminary to do graduate work. While a student there he began editing a weekly paper, *The Voice of Evangelism*. Barber and McMorrow were associate editors. The bulk of their new mailing list came from Archie Word in Portland.

Archie returned to Portland from San Jose, where he had met Hunt in January of 1946, and worked with Jack Moore, a converted preacher and former leader of the Northern Baptist Convention, who held a rare one-week revival at Montavilla. A few weeks later the first issue of *The Voice of Evangelism* (Feb. 7, 1946) arrived on his big desk. He jotted off a note to the

young triumvirate, which was published in the March 30 issue:

I like the first issue of *The Voice of Evangelism*. More power to you. Keep pressing the battle. A. W., Portland, Oregon.⁵

Brief excerpts from Word's *The Church Speaks* soon found their way into *The Voice of Evangelism*, but it was not until July 20 that a front-page article from the Portland preacher's pen was published, "Why Some People Love the Gospel and Others Hate It." In the next 40 years Archie Word's byline would appear 200 times in *The Voice of Evangelism*, more than any other writer (except Hunt).

ARCHIE'S CHAPEL "REVIVAL" AT M.B.C.

In March Archie Word traveled to Minneapolis at the invitation of Russell Boatman to preach a series of messages in the chapel of Minnesota Bible College. Boatman wanted to "treat the students to 'the Word as preached by A. Word,' " and recalls, "He fulfilled my hopes and expectations."⁶ For fledgling Bible college students to be exposed to the sin-fighting preacher from the West Coast was something else. Student Ken Broad said Word "set the student-body back on its heels."⁷ He later recalled an incident that took place:

Somehow we discerned we were in for something special when he strode to the platform and opened that large book of notes and outlines. He said nothing for a period of time, and by then you could have heard the proverbial 'pin' drop. *Then* he said, "I like to do my preaching down where the people are." This was a reference to the fact that the platform at the college was a good many inches above the main floor. His

next action was a shocker. He picked up the pulpit and lowered it to the floor, came down the steps and began to preach, if memory serves me correctly 'REPENT OR PERISH!' You can surely imagine the impact that had on some 200 students!⁸

One of the many students who rededicated his life to Christ during the Minneapolis chapel revival was Hugh Olson, who testified,

His preaching was to me, and I'm sure to many others who were hearing him for the first time, the most dynamic and penetrating I had ever listened to. It 'got to me,' and near the end of his week of preaching I responded in rededication to his invitation which was extended at the close of all his services. . . . For the remaining two years that I was at MBC a definite atmosphere of revitalized and serious spiritual dedication prevailed at the college as a direct result of his having been there.⁹

Olson estimates that the number of students who made a public response during that unforgettable week of preaching was "in excess of 50."

"MORE NEEDED THAN EVANGELISM"

Since 1930 Archie Word had worked in the field of evangelism. His travels had taken him from coast to coast and border to border. He had preached in hundreds of churches, large and small. Now he was possessed with a growing conviction that the great need of the church was not so much a surge of evangelism as it was a revival of holiness. And even though, back in the Midwest, there was a new publication called *The Voice of Evangelism*, and a new school called Midwestern School of **Evangelism**, the real thrust seemed to be a call to separation from the world and

holiness of life in the church. The budding Word-Hunt connection was already getting the reputation as a "holiness movement" in the Restoration Movement. Out on the West Coast, Word wrote,

My Brethren, you don't have to join a 'HOLINESS MOVEMENT!' If you are a Christian, you belong to His Church and you are a part of the holiest movement ever known to man!¹⁰

The sin of tobacco continued to take the brunt of his journalistic blows. In October he must have been pleased when the University of Buffalo released a report confirming what he had been preaching for years—that smoking caused lung cancer. But smoking was only a symptom of a deeper problem he felt was working like a cancer in the body of Christ. Unconverted church members, according to Archie Word, was the real problem. And the reason for that situation was preaching that did not explain what real faith and repentance were. In an April article, "Too Many Church Members," he wrote,

Too many members! Too many baptisms and not enough CONVERSIONS! . . . Brethren, I am not mad at anybody, but I am sounding this warning, that unless we attend to God's business in a more Scriptural way, by demanding FAITH and explaining what FAITH is; demanding REPENTANCE and explaining what REPENTANCE is. . . . demanding BAPTISM and making sure that the candidate knows that Christian baptism consists in more than a ceremonial ducking, we are a doomed people and our assemblies will have Ichabod written over their doors.¹¹

The front-page headline of the August 4 *The Church Speaks* screamed, "MORE NEEDED THAN EVANGE-

LISM OF THE SINNER.” Word cited 19th century revivalist Charles G. Finney, who said, “If I had the strength to go through the churches again, instead of preaching to convert sinners, I would preach to bring up the churches to the gospel standard of holy living.” To which Word added, tersely, “If it was needed in his day, how much more is the need in our day.”¹² For 16 years Archie Word had led Billy Sunday-like revivals; now his preaching (and writing) sounded more like Charles Finney. He was not writing off the evangelism of sinners as much as he was placing a new emphasis on the conversion of unconverted church members. Continued he,

God knows I believe in preaching the Word of God to the sinner who is lost . . . but there is a need that is of more importance than the evangelizing of the ‘Outside Sinner’ and that is the REVIVING OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF CHRIST’S CHURCH! . . . IN THE AVERAGE ‘LARGE CHRISTIAN CHURCH’ ALL OVER THIS LAND THERE ARE MORE OF ITS MEMBERS IN THE THEATER DURING THE WEEK THAN EVER DARKEN THE CHURCH DOORS ON PRAYER MEETING NIGHT AND SUNDAY EVENING COMBINED! I’LL DARE THE PREACHERS TO REALLY BEAR DOWN ON THIS EVIL. . . . WE NEED TO SAVE THE CHURCH MEMBERS BEFORE WE CAN SAVE THE WORLD.¹³

Archie Word practiced at home what he preached through *The Church Speaks*. To produce a resurgence of revival, evangelism and holiness in the Montavilla church in 1946, he brought back revivalist O.L. Mankamyer for a power-packed revival that lasted from May 5 to June 2. He described his fellow-revivalist as “a man of sterling character. . . . absolutely fearless in his denunciation of sin . . . unsurpassed as a

pulpit orator. . . . a missionary evangelist that is not afraid to speak what he knows, by the Bible, to be the truth.”¹⁴

NORTH TO ALASKA

Archie Word made his first journey outside the continental United States as a minister of Christ in June 1946. Hal Watkins, a 1945 graduate of San Jose Bible College, familiar with Archie’s preaching in San Jose, asked Archie to come to Anchorage, Alaska, and hold a revival in his mission church. Watkins knew Word could save souls because his own father had been converted to Christ during Archie’s 1945 meeting with the Eastside church in San Jose. Archie described the challenge of Alaska in the May 5 *The Church Speaks*:

Alaska is a challenge to any good and true gospel preacher. . . . there is a lot of hell up there. . . . a lot of the Devil’s business going on wherever there is a lot of loose money floating around. . . . so much idleness a vast part of the year, BUT WE BELIEVE the Word of God is able to blast sin wherever it is given a hearing.¹⁵

Alaska, “the last frontier,” which did not become a state until 1959, was still a “rough and tumble” territory. Archie Word, ex-sailor, ex-pugilist, was God’s man for the occasion. Bidding his wife and children a tearful farewell on the docks in Portland, he boarded the *S.S. Alaska* and set sail for the last frontier. The first night of his voyage was spoiled by two female “jazz hounds” in the cabin next to his. They kept him up half the night playing records and entertaining a “gang of renegades” who were coming and going until three in the morning. The next night they started it up again and Archie called for the head steward who did

nothing about it because he was getting paid for the liquor he was supplying the "jazz hounds." He then spoke to a young steward who told Archie it was none of his business.

Three days later the S.S. *Alaska* docked in Valdez (the site of the big Exxon oil spill in 1989). Archie Word stood by the rail on the top deck and watched the hands unload and take on cargo. Suddenly he saw the smart aleck young steward take a swing at the First Mate. A bloody fight ensued. By the time the ex-boxer Word could get below, the fight was over. But the ship's officers, who had heard of the fight, were in a fix. Who could they believe? The First Mate or the young steward? Archie decided to "help" them discover the truth. The ship's officials were so grateful they fell over themselves making sure he was treated right the rest of the voyage to Seward. The two "jazz hounds" were moved to different quarters and Archie finally got a good night's sleep.

From Seward the man from Montavilla traveled by rail to Anchorage. There he was met by young Hal Watkins who informed Archie that he had made advance arrangements to use the high school auditorium for the meeting. Word, rather curtly, told Watkins, "Cancel the auditorium! My kind of preaching doesn't pack 'em in."¹⁶ This from a man who had "packed 'em in" in auditoriums, large and small, all up and down the West Coast from 1930 to 1935! So the meeting was held in a little log church building that Watkins had constructed. Archie and Hal spent four weeks calling from house to house in a frontier city "cursed with indifference to Christ." Thousands of people promised to come, but only a few came. Archie said, "We found that there are liars in Alaska

just the same as in the states." Anchorage may be where Archie got the idea for his famous calling card ("Did you try or did you lie?"). The month-long meeting came to an end with 15 decisions for Christ: 13 baptisms, one reconsecration and one backslider reclaimed for the Lord. One couple who was converted during the Anchorage campaign was Mr. and Mrs. Frank Weller, parents of Jerry Weller, who, in time, would become an associate editor of *The Voice of Evangelism*. Weller later wrote, "I am so thankful that God used Brother Word's ministry to lead my parents to the Lord and thus indirectly me."¹⁷ In 1952 Archie Word would return for a much more productive revival in the "hard field" of Alaska.

MISSING DADDY

While her beloved husband was gone all those days and nights in far away Alaska, Florence, as usual, was busy keeping the home fires burning. One can only imagine the lonely evenings she spent in the living room in the house on Glisan Street, after the children were tucked into bed. One night she was moved to write what she was feeling so keenly in her heart. When Archie finally returned to Portland, ever the resourceful editor, he published the lovely tribute in *The Church Speaks*.

"JUST MISSING YOU"

By Mrs. A. Word

Sure 'tis funny how we miss the muss
Of someone who is gone:
No newspaper in the bedroom
At night when day is done.

No shirt collars to be cold starched
When the ironings tucked away.

No old work pants in the corner
Bits of sand and wisps of hay.

No necktie on the bed post
Dirty socks upon the floor.
No bits of crumpled paper
Where he'd looked the days mail o'er.

Some would say, "Must be convenient,
That much less work to be done."
I must answer, "Foolish Person!
Work for loved ones is just fun."

True we miss these little duties
But the "miss" no pleasure is
For we also miss the blessing
Of the smiling face of his.

Miss the whistle in the doorway
When the meal time brings him in,
Miss the happy squeal of children
Welc'ming him with quite a din.

Miss his presence, miss his loving,
Miss him all the long day thru.
But are happy for, tho far away,
We know he's always true.

Yes, we miss the mess of someone
Who is gone—but so much more
We'll be happy when he's home again
And coming in the door.¹⁸

Anna Jean, then 11, remembers the influence of her mother during those long spells when Archie was gone preaching.

Many of my early childhood memories are dominated by my Mother's life because Daddy was gone extensively on revival meetings. There were times when he was gone for six months at a time. Yet, he was always the center of our lives. Our plans were for his return,

something special being done on the house, or just for him. Our prayers were for his success for God and for his safety. Our lives were interwoven with him and his work for God in every day thoughts and living. Mother lived each moment in anticipation of his return. . . . Even when gone our Father was the core of our home in every respect.¹⁹

But when Archie returned from Alaska, and swung three-year old Esther up into the air, she screamed. Not with joy, but with terror. She did not know who he was! This happened more than once.

Dad was gone so much when I was very small. . . . One time, after six months on the road, I didn't know who he was. . . . Mom said it was very hard on him that I was afraid of him.²⁰

After only two weeks at home, Archie was off again — this time on a trip that would take him to meetings in Nebraska, Iowa, Ohio and Illinois.

ACCUSED OF NOT "FIGHTING SIN!"

Among those who attended the 1944 and 1945 rallies in Cincinnati, Iowa, was a "remnant" of faithful folks from the Drake Avenue Disciples of Christ church in nearby Centerville, Iowa. In the summer of 1946, encouraged by the three editors of *The Voice of Evangelism*, the group was ready to start their own church. Archie Word was called to conduct the church-planting meeting. A large tent was pitched on the county courthouse lawn and services were held each night for three weeks. The Disciples' State Secretary and editor of the Iowa Christian Missionary Society, J.A. Dillinger, took Hunt, Mc Morrow and Barber to task for importing an out-of-state evangelist to "go

in under the eyes of a good, loyal church and . . . tear down churches instead of fighting sin." This was probably the only time the Word-Hunt connection was ever accused of not "fighting sin"!

Criticism notwithstanding, good crowds came out each night to hear "A. Word preach the Word." One night nearly 400 people crowded into the tent to hear the West Coast evangelist. Hunt's first quality personal time with the man who would soon become his father-in-law came one Sunday afternoon in Word's upstairs hotel room. The piano playing during the meeting had left something to be desired, causing Archie to comment, in passing, that he wished he had brought his oldest daughter, Margaret, to play for the services. "So you have a daughter?" inquired Hunt politely. Word coughed, then laughed. "I have five daughters!"

By the end of the three weeks a new church had been established in Centerville, a town of 6,500 in south-central Iowa, only a dozen miles from the Missouri line. This church would soon become the host of a key annual rally for churches in the Portland-Ottumwa fellowship, "the Centerville Rally." The infant church sent a thank-you letter to Montavilla, expressing its appreciation to them for the loan of their preacher: "Brother Word's efforts brought into being a great work. . . . God, through his tireless efforts and bold, fiery preaching, wrought in each one of us a complete conversion."²²

One of the families converted in the 1946 campaign, the Sweeden family, recalls that Archie called at their house one afternoon. Mrs. Sweeden, like hundreds of others, promised the preacher that she would "try to come to the meeting," whereupon Archie

handed her his new calling card, which read, "Did I try or did I lie?" All day long she thought about those words. When her husband came home from work she told him they were going to church because she did not want to be known as a liar. Before the meeting was over the Sweedens were safe in the fold.²³

"REPENT OR PERISH!"

The third annual Cincinnati Rally followed the Centerville revival and Archie appeared on the three-day program, held in the city opera house, with such conservative stalwarts as Will J. Wright, Irwin Son, Noble Tester, J. Halbert Brown and Nathan Williamson. People came from 10 states to hear preaching that was later described as bold, straightforward and forceful. "The note of evangelism, of spirituality, of Biblical doctrine, and the example of bold and persuasive preaching as preached in these sessions have been equalled by few rallies held anywhere this year."²⁴

Archie's closing sermon, "Repent or Perish!", is one of his most memorable messages and deserves special consideration. Prepared on 22 sheets of 8 ½ by 11 paper, using a variety of colored ink in large letters (he wrote his sermons in large letters so he could stand a distance from the pulpit and still see his notes), "Repent or Perish!" is a classic.

"There is a great deal being said today against the receiving of 'the pious unimmersed' into church membership," he began, "but there is very little being said about the 'UNPIOUS IMMERSSED' who are already in the membership.

"Let us remember this, brethren, REPENTANCE is just as important in God's plan of salvation as is BAPTISM . . . if the sinner will not repent of his sins, the

blood is not applied, the Holy Spirit is not given, and the baptized UNREPENTANT sinner perishes just the same as the repentant sinner who REFUSES to be BAPTIZED. Both are rebels against the authority of God.”

Then, after reading his text, Luke 13:1-5, he said: “My topic is my proposition, and this sermon will have but two divisions. First, ‘REPENT YE!’ ” In this division he showed how repentance, to be genuine, must be actual, entire and immediate.

“Repentance that is acceptable to God must be ACTUAL, not fictitious. . . . A few tears yesterday which are all dried up today is not repentance. A promise made but broken is not repentance. That weak and broken vow you made is not repentance. A transient emotion is not repentance. You may say, ‘I’m sorry, I repent, I’m going to quit my devilishness,’ yet go on tomorrow in that same sin! THAT IS NOT REPENTANCE! . . . You did not repent, and my text still stands – abbreviated, pointed, pungent. ACTUALLY repent or perish.

“True repentance must not only be actual, but it must be ENTIRE. How many foolish sinners say, ‘I will give up my old stinking tobacco . . . my lying and gossiping . . . the card playing and gambling . . . the filthy companionship of Hollywood in the theaters and the dance.’ . . . Hear me, saint and sinner, it is not ONE sin nor fifty; it is a solemn renunciation of ALL SIN! One accursed snake of lust in your heart makes repentance a sham. One leak sinks the ship at dock. IT IS ALL OR NOTHING WITH GOD! . . . A true sinner’s repentance makes him say, ‘Gild thee as thou wilt, O sin, I abhor thee! Cover thyself with pleasure, make thyself gaudy, like the snake with azure scales – I hate thee still, for I know thy venom and I will flee from thee.’

“Repentance that is effectual must be IMMEDIATE. Many people say, ‘When I am a little older I’ll repent.’ Others, ‘When I am near death’s door, when I am facing eternity, I’ll repent.’ . . . But listen, brother, it is terribly few who ever change from long lives of sin into saints on their death bed . . . when death comes it is bad enough to have a tortured body without having the pangs of repentance eating into your remorseful soul. God says, ‘**Today**, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your heart.’

The second part of this watershed message dealt with the fearful consequences of failing to repent – PERISH!

“A hundred years ago pulpits rang out with a message of terror. Sermons were filled with warnings about the terrible hell and the awful wrath of God that is certain to come at judgment. But, brother, THAT WAS A HUNDRED YEARS AGO. Today . . . preachers . . . do not want to frighten anybody. BUT HELL IS A FRIGHTFUL PLACE JUST THE SAME, AND VERY REAL.

“Personally, I do not care what men or churches think or say about me for preaching the revealed will of God. I am going to tell sinners of God’s awful and certain punishment whether they like it or not. I feel I must warn all men everywhere! . . . I would rather speak what I know . . . than to have you yell at me all throughout eternity, ‘You flattered us, but you did not warn us; you didn’t tell us of eternity’s doom; you left the wrath of God out of your message to please us, and here we are in hell together. . . .’

Archie then gave three reasons why God said we must “Repent or Perish!”

“First, because God is a God of justice. Who can

imagine the JUST Jehovah allowing sin to go unpunished? Some may dream of such a God, and others may intoxicate their brains to where they can imagine a God without justice, but no sound mind or healthy brain can imagine a God without justice.

“Second, . . . does not the record show that God has always punished men for sin? Has God changed? . . . Were not Adam and Eve punished? . . . See the hail of hellfire and brimstone as it rained upon the perverts in Sodom and dare doubt that God punishes sin. . . . ALL SCRIPTURE INSPIRED OF GOD CORROBORATES THE STATEMENT THAT HE PUNISHES SIN!

“Third, your conscience, unless it is utterly dead, says, ‘God punishes sin!’ . . . You say, ‘I cannot BELIEVE God will punish me for my sins,’ but you KNOW THAT HE WILL! . . . He has given you a fore-taste of it in your guilty conscience that is stirring and lashing you now!

“Oh brother, won’t you repent tonight?”

ON TO OHIO

When the Cincinnati rally was over, Archie stayed on in the Hawkeye state to preach on another rally at Keota, where O.E. Richardson was preaching. Archie reported that “the Sunday School lady superintendent in the morning became the theater ticket taker in the evening.”²⁵ Without a doubt he railed on this, as well as other sins, in his one-night stand in Keota. (Richardson was later carried bodily from the pulpit by those who did not agree with his preaching.)

From Keota it was on to Inavale, Nebraska, for a revival with the Inavale Christian Church which began September 1. Preacher Elmer McEathron billed Archie Word as,

. . . an able speaker, speaking frankly and straight from the shoulder. You will hear straight Bible preaching, uncompromising, unafraid, not seeking to please men. . . . In all of his preaching he strives always to get people to be in earnest about this business of Christianity . . . to cause people to think about Christ’s teaching, especially relating to His church and holiness of its members.²⁶

During the Inavale campaign two milestones took place back in Portland. The Word’s oldest daughter, Margaret, left home for Bible college in San Jose. And their only son, Archie, Jr., went to his first day of school at John L. Vestal elementary. About this time the nation’s worst maritime strikes were occurring on both coasts – all shipping was frozen. Soaring meat prices caused people to start eating horse meat – something the Word children had eaten for years anyway. Florence regularly bought horse meat because the meat was cheaper, tasted nearly the same as beef, and was rich in protein.

At the conclusion of the Inavale meeting, Archie headed east for another Conference on Evangelism at Cincinnati Bible Seminary, October 15-17, held at Emery Auditorium on Walnut Street. Appearing with him on the program were nationally known speakers like Russ Martin, Claud F. Witty (a noninstrumental brother who was working with James DeForest Murch toward Christian unity), P.H. Canary, Ira M. Boswell, Burris Butler, R.C. Foster and R.E. Elmore (the editor of *The Restoration Herald*, with whom Archie had been feuding). The 1946 Conference was the first held since 1944 (because of wartime restrictions on travel) and 2,500 brethren packed the auditorium to hear the preaching, much of which took on the Disciples for

their various departures from Restoration principles. In an article called "The Feast of October," Canary described the three-day event:

Not only was the very air electric with loyalty to Jesus Christ and His Gospel, but one could feel a lifting, moving sensation like a rising tide, a powerful and determined intention to crush or spew out and discard, disown, and be rid of all those institutions and forces inimical to this clean and tonic movement to restore the essentials of Christianity.²⁷

(Canary was referring to the increasingly leftward drift of the Disciples, who had met in August for their annual convention in Columbus, Ohio. In response to the Disciples' liberalism, several "Committees of One Thousand" were formed among the independent churches. In fact, one of the speakers at the 1946 Conference on Evangelism, who decried the Disciples' modernism, was Willis Meredith, chairman of the Missouri Committee of One Thousand. As we will see later, Archie was tremendously impressed with Meredith's address.)

Archie had been assigned a text from I John, "He Who Denies That Jesus Christ Came in the Flesh is the Antichrist." Those who attended say that loud "amens" rang out from every corner of Emery Auditorium as he went after the liberals with the sword of the Spirit as he promised he would do, in Seattle, in 1929.

During the Conference Archie stayed with Donald Hunt in his room on the campus of Cincinnati Bible Seminary, where he was finishing up his graduate work and editing *The Voice of Evangelism*. Not much is known of their conversation but when Archie finally

returned to Portland he sent word to Margaret, now in San Jose, that before she got too interested in anybody else, he knew of a nice young man back east. Archie Word did not just want his children to marry someone in the church – he wanted them to marry someone who was completely committed to Christ, as he felt Donald Hunt was. (It is significant to note that by October, 1946, the divorce rate had risen 25% in the United States. That fall Dr. Spock produced a book proposing radical changes in child-rearing – changes that would soon be negatively evident in many American homes.) Future son-in-law Hunt had his first article published in *The Church Speaks* in September 1946. Archie's "Repent or Perish!" appeared in the Oct. 24, 1946 *Voice of Evangelism*.

CUSSED AND DISCUSSED

Back home in Portland, Archie had much to do. After getting reacquainted with his family there was mail to answer, *The Church Speaks* to edit, church business to catch up on, radio programs to produce. In fact, sometime in 1946 the radio broadcasts temporarily came to an end. There was just so much a man could do. But *The Church Speaks*, his national voice, would continue, no matter what time constraints there were.

People who did not know Archie Word well often accused him of things that were farfetched and hard to believe. Two accusations surfaced in late 1946: that he "received the unimmersed" and that he was a member of the Ku Klux Klan! A member at Montavilla invited a friend to church one day, and the woman replied, rather indignantly, "Why, I should say not! I've been a member of the Christian church too long

to ever go out there where they receive unimmersed folk into the membership." Before the flabbergasted member could respond, she set off again, "We've been told how it is that you have such good crowds at prayer meeting and at the evening services; you compromise and don't say anything about baptism!" This was too much for Archie. In the October 6, 1946 *The Church Speaks*, he replied,

To those who have known me thru the years, that is simply a huge joke. No one ever bears down on immersion any harder than I do. . . . we have a baptistry and it is always full.²⁹

Then he added a parting shot:

Every member . . . has repented of his sins and become converted. . . . I do not know of one member in the church here that uses tobacco, frequents the theater, goes to dances or plays cards. We believe that when a man comes out of the baptistry, he should 'ARISE TO WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE' and we do all we can to see to it that he has a good example around him in others.³⁰

The other false accusation, even sillier than the first, was that Archie Word was a member of the notorious Ku Klux Klan. This groundless and base accusation was made during one of his meetings that summer of 1946, perhaps in Centerville, Iowa.

. . . in the meeting in which I was recently engaged, the local 'Christian Church' preacher, manipulated from the headquarters of the Disciples' denomination made it his business to go to the local newspaper office and tell them that this man Word, who is coming in here to preach, is really a Ku Klux Klan organizer.³¹

In spite of innuendos and gossip like this, Archie Word continued to be a strong voice for many across the United States, both within and without the Restoration Movement. In May 1946, Roy Coop wrote,

I like the straight-forward and unapologetic manner in which all the articles are printed. We have too many spineless imitations of the real thing, writing and preaching today. So it does our hearts good when we find some one who . . . does not try to honey-coat sin.³²

Orin Hardenbrook added his appreciation in July 1946:

The day for soothing sermons, soft-soaping discourses has certainly passed, and in its stead has come the need for straightforward, never to be forgotten thrusts against sin. May God use you in an ever greater service to lost humanity.³³

One of the most interesting and encouraging letters Archie Word received as editor of *The Church Speaks* came in December 1946. A Baptist preacher from Los Angeles wrote as follows:

I have been reading it very carefully and prayerfully, checking it against the Word of God. I have finally reached the conviction that your position is correct, scriptural, and that it offers the way out of sectarianism and denominationalism. Hence, I praise God for whoever was kind enough to send in my name for the paper. . . .

I have come to see that Baptism, as commanded by our Lord, and as practised by the Apostles, IS immersion in water, FOR (or UNTO, or IN ORDER TO) the remission of sins; and, of course, I have long abandoned the unscriptural theory of once in grace always

in grace. . . . I have a few personal friends and followers here in S.W. Los Angeles-Inglewood area . . . and they want me to start a church. The question is: What kind of a Church? And by what name shall it be called?³⁴

A Los Angeles Baptist preacher convinced of the necessity of baptism! Convinced by a Portland preacher accused in his own home town of not preaching baptism! Responses like this must have warmed the heart of the preacher-editor Archie Word, a man "cussed and discussed" far beyond Portland, Oregon.

Notes

1. *The Voice of Evangelism*, Dec. 1987
2. *Ibid*
3. *Ibid*
4. Personal notes from Donald Hunt to the author
5. *The Voice of Evangelism*, Feb. 7, 1946
6. Letter to author from Russell Boatman, Oct. 4, 1990
7. Letter to author from Kenneth Broad, Sept. 14, 1990
8. *The Voice of Evangelism*, April 1989
9. Letter to author from Hugh M. Olson, Nov. 6, 1990
10. *The Church Speaks*, Mar. 3, 1946
11. *Ibid*, April 7, 1946
12. *Ibid*, Aug. 4, 1946
13. *Ibid*
14. *The Church Speaks*, May 5, 1946
15. *Ibid*
16. *The Life Story of Archie Word*, p. 124
17. *Ibid*, p. 118
18. *The Church Speaks*, Aug. 4, 1946
19. Letter to author from Anna Jean Word Rodda, Dec. 11, 1989
20. Letter to author from Esther Word Burgess, Nov. 28, 1989
21. *The Voice of Evangelism*, Sept. 28, 1941
22. *The Church Speaks*, Jan. 5, 1947
23. *The Life Story of Archie Word*, p. 24
24. *The Voice of Evangelism*, Sept. 14, 1946
25. *The Church Speaks*, Feb. 17, 1952

26. *The Inavale Christian*, August 1946
27. *The Anchor* (1946 C B S. annual), pp. 82,83
28. *The Church Speaks*, Oct. 6, 1946
29. *Ibid*
30. *Ibid*
31. *The Church Speaks*, Nov. 3, 1946
32. *Ibid*, May 5, 1946
33. *Ibid*, July 7, 1946
34. *Ibid*, Dec. 8, 1946

17

“LET 'ER SPLIT!” (1947–1948)

He never sounds an uncertain note, nor compromises the truth for the sake of sparing the feelings of men. He preaches as a dying man to dying men, challenges men to live a pure, holy, sanctified, transformed life in Jesus Christ.

—Leon Appel, on A. Word, January 1947

A course in Christian Evidences at Eugene Bible University had been largely responsible for convincing a young Archie Word of the reasonableness of Christianity. Christian Evidences would remain his “strong suit” throughout his lengthy preaching career. Word would normally open his revival meetings with a message on the inspiration of the Scriptures or why he believed in a personal God. One of the reasons he believed so

strongly in Christian Evidences was because of his college experience.

Once upon a time I was skeptical, and I drifted in my skepticism until I was almost an atheist. I was brought back to a faith in God through Nature's design. . . . I shall never cease to give thanks to the many people who helped me to clearly see the hand of God in all this.¹

Therefore, it grieved him to no end when his alma mater, or at least some who had studied there, or taught there, began drifting into denominationalism. In 1947 Word lamented:

My foundations were laid deep in this Christian religion. I attended the old Eugene Bible University when it stood out clean from all outside organizations. We were taught in our classes that Jesus Christ's religion and church are clearly and FULLY SET FORTH IN THE SACRED WRITINGS. . . . I thank God those foundations were well laid, and while some of my old professors forsook their classroom stand . . . by God's grace I am still building, to the best of my ability, on 'The Word of God,' and on nothing else.²

Word added that a number of people across the United States had been urging him to "come out of the so called Christian Church, or Disciples' denomination, and stand as our forefathers did for Jesus Christ's church, free from all encumbrances."³ He also was influenced by the thought that some day his children and grandchildren might be asking him, "What did you stand for, Granddad?" With these influences on his thinking, Archie Word began to formulate his stand.

HOW WORD SAW OTHERS AND HIMSELF

Archie Word perceived three distinct but separate groups in the Restoration Movement at this point in time (1947). He charged all three groups with adding to the time-honored slogan, "the Bible only makes Christians only." Of the Churches of Christ (non-instrumental), he commented, "They won't sing a PSALM in their church, nor will they allow anybody else to sing a PSALM in their midst."⁴ (Word believed that a psalm was a song accompanied by a musical instrument.)

The second group, "the fundamental Church of Christ, sometimes called the Christian Church, but refusing the nomenclature of Disciples . . . have a bold portion of faith, repentance, confession and BAPTISM, plus the Christian Restoration Association. . . . Woe be unto the brother who does not line up with the movement and bow down to the KING PIN, Bob Elmore."⁵

Word labeled the third group as "the Octopus group," which "reached out from Indianapolis" with a "very small portion of the gospel," in many instances, according to Word, a "different gospel." He viewed the Disciples of Christ (Christian Church) as a denomination.

And where did Archie Word see himself in this picture? In an article, "Who Is Your Partner in This Hate Game?", he viewed himself as a crusader of pure autonomy.

My voice has always been, and always shall be, the Lord willing that I live and retain my right mind, a fearless, fighting, crusading voice for the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ's church, crusading for the New Testament church free from all outside entangling alliances,

either state or national, as long as I live shall be my one supreme aim.⁷

In short, Archie Word saw himself as separate from the three major groups of the Restoration Movement, although, at this time, he was still carrying strong ties with the Independent Christian Churches.

Word saw each of the three aforementioned groups as being plagued with some "plus" doctrine. The plus doctrine of the Churches of Christ was their "sing only" doctrine. "I challenge any 'Anti-Musical Instrument Church of Christ,' common church member or evangelist, in the entire world," said Archie, "to find me one instance in the New Testament where the church met for worship and they had congregational singing, either with or without an instrument." The "plus" doctrines of the Disciples of Christ were "entangling alliances" like the U.C.M.S., while the Christian Church had the C.R.A. (Critics were quick to point out that Word's "plus" doctrines included his anti-worldliness teachings.)

"WHY DIDN'T SOMEONE TELL ME?"

During 1947 Archie and his associate at Montavilla, K.O. Backstrand, continued to alternate being gone in revival meetings. Backstrand began the year with a meeting with Earl Chambers and the church in Grass Valley, California. When he returned, Word left for a March revival in Bayard, Nebraska. During this meeting the community was shaken to its depths by a terrible automobile accident that claimed the lives of several of its leading citizens, including a doctor and a Bible School superintendent in the church. Following the funeral, the building was packed each night for

the revival services. Many responded to the invitation. Toward the close of the meeting Archie preached a message on accepting Christ. One man felt it was too late for him.

As I stood at the door, one of the brothers of a man who had been converted along with all his house took my hand and said, between sobs, 'Why didn't someone tell me about these services so I could have accepted Christ too?'"

A few months later Archie received word that the man had been fatally injured in an oil field accident. Incidents like this caused him to urge each church member to be a diligent soul winner, lest "at the judgment bar of God somebody will have to face him and have him say, 'You never mentioned Him to me.'" ¹⁰

ARCHIE TRAVELS TO THE BRITISH WEST INDIES

The "open membership" (receiving the unimmersed) and "comity" question (agreeing not to proselytize members of other churches) had been raging like wildfire on several foreign mission fields ever since Leslie Wolfe had "blown the whistle" in the Philippines in 1926. In April 1947 Archie Word left the continental United States on a combination Gospel-preaching, fact-finding tour of the British West Indies, Jamaica in particular. *Christian Standard* (Aug. 2, 1947) listed four "direct support" churches in Jamaica. It was these "free churches" that Archie visited.

Archie was greeted by Tom Moodie, a co-worker of the recently departed C. Vincent Hall who was one of the first to tell Americans about the churches of Christ in Jamaica. Brother Moodie was preaching for the

church in Kingston Gardens and became Word's host for the next three weeks. Word reported in *The Church Speaks*:

He treated me like a Christian brother. . . . gave me a place to sleep, and because of the poverty of the ministry down there I paid my own board. I lived in his home for more than three weeks while I visited the various churches in the island. I preached for the congregation where he ministers. . . . Brother Moodie agreed with me in every message and sat on the front seat during every service and usually gave the invitation.¹¹

While on the beautiful island Archie also met A.R.A. Hepburn, a native of Jamaica, who was preaching for the York Street Church of Christ in Kingston.

I enjoyed preaching several times in the pulpit there. He has the strongest church in the island, numerically, made up of the poor natives. . . . the minister (was) too poor to buy a gasoline lamp for his street meetings. . . . He wore the same suit all the time I was on the island. . . . a poor man but a godly man. His prayer life is deep and his understanding of the scripture is in some instances almost unbelievable.¹²

Archie testified that Brother Hepburn was one of the finest men he had ever met. "I've never met a finer, cleaner cut, more firm-believer in the plea to restore Jesus Christ's church than this man."¹³

Word's meetings in Jamaica resulted in 88 decisions for Christ. He came back to the United States with a zeal to encourage American churches to support their sister congregations in the British West Indies by the "direct support" method.

These people have no 'Board' in America, no overseer in the island, no money raisers in the states and no

means of soliciting funds for their work. I present this picture to call your attention to the work they are doing. . . . send money directly to them, I'm no 'Middle Man' for them. . . . All these men want to do is build simple New Testament Christianity. They are able and worthy men and the only people who oppose them are the ones who want to be recognized as 'THE HEAD' of the churches of Christ in the island I am appealing to you for your direct support of these two men.¹⁴

(One thing Archie Word did *not* inform his readers of was the fact that while preaching in Jamaica he picked up the whooping cough and "very nearly died."¹⁵ It was a weary and worn-out man who barely managed a wan greeting when his wife and children met him on the docks of Portland. He had turned 46 while gone.)

"THE MONTAVILLA PLAN"

June 9, 1947 was a memorable day in the life of the Montavilla church. On that day a new associate minister was added and a new congregation was begun. Leo Yoder, a converted Mennonite, joined K.O. Backstrand as an associate minister. Word praised Yoder as a fine family man and capable preacher of the Word. Yoder would remain on staff until 1954 when he accepted the call from a church in Sacramento, California. The same day that Yoder became an associate minister at Montavilla, the church began supporting Lee Turner, who was endeavoring to establish a church in the northeast part of Vancouver, Washington. This was "the Montavilla plan," and it began operation the same week as "the Marshall plan," which sent millions in economic aid to war-ravaged Europe.

A church of 200-plus was now paying the salaries of four preachers.

THE OTTUMWA MEETING

The summer of 1947 found Archie Word engaged in a month-long church-planting meeting in Ottumwa, Iowa. The meeting had been called by the three young co-founders of a new Bible college, Midwestern School of Evangelism, in order to have a place of worship for the 27 new students who were expected in the fall. A building was rented at 105 West 5th Street to house the students and a tent was pitched on the front lawn for four straight weeks of nightly preaching.

(A side note of interest: The year before the new school opened, Hunt, Barber and McMorrow asked Don DeWalt, professor at San Jose Bible College, to consider becoming the new school's president. DeWalt, who had taught Barber and McMorrow at San Jose, declined the invitation.¹⁶ Lee Turner was also invited to join the new faculty but he could not because of his new church work in Vancouver.)

Archie Word had not fully recovered from the whooping cough he had picked up in Jamaica. The Ottumwa meeting was not a pleasant one for him, physically.

They had my room clear in the top of that building, hotter than blazes, and I coughed out the window. We were preaching right by the highway which went right by the school – the tent was down by the highway. Those big diesel trucks would drive by . . . no P.A. system . . . me with whooping cough trying to preach!¹⁷

The Word's oldest daughter, Margaret, accompa-

nied her father on this trip to play the piano for the revival meeting. By the end of the meeting two decisions had been made: the new church would meet in the rented administration building at 5th and Court, and Margaret Word, transferring from San Jose Bible College, would stay on to teach music in the new school. The faculty at Midwestern had already arranged for a music teacher who had gone to Chicago for special training. While there she married a Roman Catholic and was summarily dismissed by the faculty in Ottumwa. This left them without a music teacher.

"Do you think your daughter could teach here?" Hunt asked Word.

"You'll have to talk to her. I can't tell you," was Word's reply. He later recalled:

She decided to stay. She didn't want to. She wanted to go back and take more piano . . . in San Jose. (But) she stayed in Ottumwa and has been there ever since. I remember when we came to Iowa and had just crossed the river at Omaha. Margaret said, 'O Daddy, this is the most beautiful country I have ever seen.'¹⁸

(Before the first school year was over the young music teacher was dating the young Bible college teacher Donald G. Hunt. The Word's second daughter, Barbara, enrolled at San Jose before Archie returned home from this trip. About the same time K.O. and Marcia Backstrand amiably ended their two-and-a-half year ministry with the Montavilla church and went back to Cincinnati, Ohio, for additional schooling. Archie stayed on in Iowa for the annual preaching rally in Cincinnati along with the school's faculty, and guest speakers, O.L. Mankamyer and Will J. Wright.)

THE GREAT 'JAP BALLOON PREACHING' CONTROVERSY

The annual Conference on Evangelism hosted by San Jose Bible College had been one of the true highlights of Archie Word's life up to this point in time (1948). He had sent a remarkable number of students from Portland to San Jose. Whether he was on the program or not, he would normally attend the conference, enjoying the preaching and fellowship. The 1948 conference was held January 7-9. The singing, led by "Rusty" Ingraham and a 33-voice choir, was grand. The theme, "The Church Meeting the Problems of Evangelism," was developed by Floyd Hughes, Dale Williamson, T.R. Appelbury, V.E. Butterworth, Harry Chapin (Archie's old singer from the 30s), Morris Butler Book, Woodrow Phillips, a Dr. Kiss from Budapest, Hungary, and Archie Word, who preached a powerful message on "The Problem of Divorce and Its Effect on Evangelism," a message that is still talked about today by those who were present in 1948.

But when he returned to Portland after the conference, Archie published an article in *The Church Speaks* that marked the beginning of the end of his relationship with Bill Jessup and San Jose Bible College. Jessup recalls:

He returned to Portland and the next issue came out with big headlines, 'Jap Balloon Preaching.' In this article he told about the sermons at the Conference and how they were like the balloons the Japanese were sending into California by the wind. They were aimed at nothing and so hit nothing. . . . I remember writing Archie and told him that I had always looked upon him as a real man and was really hurt that he wasn't man enough to talk this over with me before writing such an article.¹⁹

Editor Word's front-page article in *The Church Speaks* (Feb. 1, 1948) read as follows:

I've just returned from a great conference on evangelism among brethren who claim to be strictly on the up and up. No wobblies there, or at least that is what the school started out to be. I traveled nearly a thousand miles, not just to look into the faces of old friends, although I love them dearly, but to have my heart searched, my soul stirred, and my thinking agitated. Some of the men did just that, one especially, Dale Williamson, but for the most part it was 'Jap Balloon Preaching.' . . . This condition among CONFERENCE PREACHERS is not local, it is GENERAL. I've visited in conferences on evangelism from coast to coast. I know whereof I speak. . . . WE NEED SERMONS THAT ARE SPECIFIC, DEFINITE and CONCRETE, that will cause men to be convicted, converted and consecrated.²⁰

The editor of the Portland "dynamite sheet" received many letters from readers in the next few weeks wanting to know exactly what he was getting at. Archie wrote that he did not know if it was because his readers "can not read" or because he could not "write sensibly." In any event, "Jap Balloon Preaching No. 2" was published in the April 4, 1948 *The Church Speaks*. This time he tried to clear the air once and for all.

I would like to make it PLAIN to some folk, WHAT I was talking about. It was 'Jap Balloon Preaching' that I was criticizing and not the San Jose Bible College. . . . to my knowledge there is not a school anywhere in the United States that has stood out through the years for genuine Christian living, sound doctrine and freedom in Christ any stronger than Pres. Wm. L. Jessup, Roy B. Shaw, Don DeWelt, and V.K. Allison, of the San

Jose Bible College. They are my friends of many years standing, and they are my friends NOW. I think that they are BIG ENOUGH MEN to understand what I was driving at in my article. . . . I'm writing this second article that some folk who read (my first article – Author) too hurriedly, cocked their little air rifles too quickly and fired away at me before they understood what I was driving at.²¹

Word went on to explain that the editorial was “meant for PREACHERS,” and that “preachers preaching to Bible college students and to other preachers ought to know . . . just what the sins of the Bible college students and preachers are. . . .”²² It is not clear just who of the 27 speakers at the 1948 Conference on Evangelism Archie Word ever had in mind. Two of the speakers, Morris Butler Book and Woodrow Phillips, had Archie for revival meetings later in the same year. But the damage was done. Things would never be the same again between Archie Word and San Jose Bible College.

The “Jap Balloon Preaching” controversy arose again in the May 9, 1948 issue of *The Church Speaks* with two more articles from the pen of Archie Word: “The Opposite of Jap Balloon Preaching” and “I’m Deeply Hurt.” In the same issue he took another friend, Elery Parrish, to task for supposedly “hobnobbing” with the U.C.M.S. (spelled U\$EEAME\$\$), for Brother Parrish borrowing some money from the Disciples Board of Church Extension to finance a new congregation in Parkrose, and for appearing on the convention program at Turner, Oregon. Parrish, like Jessup, both classmates of Archie’s at Eugene Bible University, was summarily “written off” by his old friend. The son of Walter Stram, Don Stram, suggests

that about this time Archie Word began to “write off” many of his old preaching companions.

I do know that in the early days Dad and Archie were quite good friends. But in time, Archie ‘wrote Dad off’ (as he did so many others, including Elery Parrish). . . . Archie was also very divisive and separated himself from the mainstream of his brethren. With all the good he did, I personally feel he also did a lot of damage, which even now is waiting for repair. The late Howard F. Hutchins was another one ‘written off’ by Archie. By the way, ‘written off’ is the language they used! Others whom I know experienced the same ‘writing off’ were: James Earl Ladd I, J. Frank Cunningham, Earl F. Downing, Willie W. White, to name a few.²²

100 RESPONSES IN GERING, NEBRASKA

The same day Archie Word started a month-long revival with Kenneth Beckman and the church in Gering, Nebraska (Feb. 1), Clinton Locy began a week of “Rapid Eye-O-Graphic Bible Education” with the Montavilla congregation back home. Editor Word ran a full-length ad in *The Church Speaks* heralding Locy’s teaching as “rapid, accurate, simple, nonsectarian, endorsed by educators of all leading denominations.” He called Locy “the dean of visual aid.” Some were led to wonder, however, how he could “write off” good Restoration men, yet have a man “endorsed” by “all leading denominations” at Montavilla.

When Word began his meeting in Gering he could not have known that he would some day spend the last 18 years of his life in this western Nebraska town situated in the shadow of Scotts Bluff National Monument, nor that he would breathe his last breath of life here. The revival was a blockbuster. Archie reported “an even 100 responses to the gospel invitation, with

one minister of Christ and one elder being baptized."²⁴

Following the Gering meeting, Archie preached on a rally at nearby Bayard, "where the house was packed and every aisle was full." From western Nebraska he traveled back to the West Coast for a month-long meeting in Turlock, California, with Woodrow Phillips. Word reported "a wonderful fellowship" with 12 responses to the invitation.²⁵ During the Turlock revival the Supreme Court ruled that religious instruction in public schools was unconstitutional, something that undoubtedly incurred the wrath of Archie Word.

"I WILL STAND ALONE AND LIKE IT"

Since 1927 the North American Christian Convention had become a rallying point for the "independent" fellowship of Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. Following the inaugural convention in Indianapolis (Oct. 12-16, 1927), a total of nine conventions had been held, most of them in Cadle Tabernacle in Indianapolis. The 10th North American was to be held in the Springfield Armory, Springfield, Illinois, April 21-25, 1948. Archie Word, who had some other speaking engagements lined up back East about then, decided to attend.

Orval Morgan was president of the convention that year. The Payne Sisters led the music. A total of 2,354 were registered — the largest registration in the history of the young convention up until that time. The theme, "Christ Commands — We Must Obey," was handled by speakers like Morgan, William E. Sweeney and P.H. Welshimer. It is interesting to note how the preaching at the convention struck two preachers (one young, the other turning 47, the opening day of

the convention).

Floyd Strater recalls:

What an experience for a young preacher in his first days of ministry! The convention was small by today's standards, but it looked big to me. I thought I had died and gone to Heaven!²⁶

Archie Word, on the other hand, thought he had died and gone to the other place! With the exception of one address (like his recent experience at San Jose), he was not pleased with what he heard. In 1952 he recalled the experience.

A few years ago I attended a highly-publicized convention in Illinois. I was about disgusted with the apple-polishing that was everywhere manifest and had decided to go home when a friend of mine persuaded me to remain and hear a man whom he described as an old grey-haired judge. I stayed, and to my surprise, the old judge preached a real sermon with no foolishness nor pleasing men in it. I spoke to him afterwards and commented on some of the 'light stuff' with no challenge that had gone forth from the pulpit in comparison with his whole-souled earnestness. His reply was something like this. 'Brother Word, if these younger men realized, as I do, that every time that I preach, at my age, it may be my LAST sermon, they would probably preach differently.'²⁷

The "old judge" was none other than Willis H. Meredith of Poplar Bluff, Missouri. Along with Heber Nations he had founded the Missouri Committee of One Thousand in 1946, an organization of concerned "independents" who charged the Disciples of Christ with "abandoning the Word of God."²⁸ Meredith, in fact, had delivered an address against liberalism just

prior to Archie Word's sermon on the Antichrist at the Conference on Evangelism in Cincinnati, Ohio (Oct. 16, 1946). Other than Meredith's message, Archie Word did not like much of what he heard at the N.A.C.C. in Springfield. In the June 28, 1948 *The Church Speaks*, he wrote a front-page article, "What I Saw and Heard at the North American Convention" (note the intentional omission of "Christian"):

It was brought out in one of the addresses that we ought not to say very much about the inconsequential and insignificant things that are attempting to cause division among the brethren.²⁹

He then assailed those who thought that the machinery of the Disciples was "inconsequential and insignificant." He called the Disciples' hierarchy a "national shrine of cowards and infidels," vowing never to give in to voices he perceived as calling for tolerance with the Disciples. He also published a page-three article, "Who Disfellowships Who?"

Several times during the NACC we heard folk bemoaning the fact that someone was being disfellowshipped over his relationship to the United Society. . . . Separation is just as much a Biblical doctrine as is fellowship. . . . God knows I hunger for Christian fellowship. I go across the continent almost, at times, to have a good fellowship, but if I must endorse, or keep silent about an organization or certain set of organizations in order to have the friendly smile and well wishes of a certain little sect, separating itself from all Christians because they will not bow down to their Ecclesiastical machine, I will stand alone and like it.³⁰

Archie Word never returned to another N.A.C.C., not even when the convention visited Portland in

1958. He was a prophet and prophets preached on sin in thunder tones. Of 514 subjects treated in sermons and addresses in 50 North American Christian Conventions during 62 years, sin was preached on only six times, the lowest total of 19 subjects surveyed by Edwin V. Hayden in *North American Gold: The Story of 50 North American Christian Conventions*.³¹

(As this paragraph is being written, a copy of the December/January 1990 NACC *Update* is on the author's desk. Four respected leaders are to be honored at the 1990 NACC in Kansas City as "God's Honored Servants." One of them, J. Willis Hale, kept Archie Word in school when he was ready to leave Eugene Bible University and return to California. The other man, Don DeWelt, was "won to Christ by Brother Archie Word."³² The presence of the man who never returned is still being felt at the NACC.)

ON THE REVIVAL TRAIL

From Springfield Archie sallied forth to Streator, Illinois, where Leland Tyrell preached. Tyrell later became President of Winston-Salem Bible College, a specialized school for training black preachers of the gospel. Dale Knowles attended one night of the meeting and recalls that Word had the crowd repeat after him, "If I smoke, I stink!" "Say it after me! Come on — louder! 'IF I SMOKE, I STINK!' " Verna Ramme, long-time secretary at the church in Streator, says that Archie knew and preached the Scriptures like nobody's business; "he got a lot of folk on the right track to live by" and they all agreed that he was "very outspoken." Before each night's session there was a "well-attended prayer meeting."³³ On the final night of the meeting, according to Kenneth Broad, "no fewer

than fifty people formed a circle in the outer perimeter of the old building on Park Street and rededicated themselves en masse to do more for Jesus."³⁴ Broad called this a "momentous occasion" for the Streator church.

Then it was on to Rockford, Illinois, and a weekend preaching rally at the Central Church of Christ. Archie later wrote, "We were blessed of God. . . . they said this was the finest rally they have ever had, as each year it has grown in numbers."³⁵ While back East Word also conducted a revival for his former associate, K.O. Backstrand, at Port Jefferson, Ohio, whom locals called a modern-day "John the Baptist."

Backstrand had been preaching there while going to school in nearby Cincinnati and now became known in the community as 'John the Baptist' because of his many trips to the river to baptize persons who were responding to the gospel in A. Word's sermons. About 24 persons became Christians during the meeting and many others returned to the Lord.³⁶

After an absence of nearly three months, it was time for Archie to return to Portland. He did so just in time for Lee Turner's three-week revival at Montavilla, the meeting beginning May 9 and closing May 30. During this meeting an extraordinary event took place in the Middle East — Israel was declared a State on May 14, 1948. The day after the meeting closed another extraordinary event happened in Portland. Heavy rains caused the Columbia River to burst through embankments, virtually submerging the city of Vanport, just north of Portland. The city's 18,500 residents had only 10 minutes' warning before the muddy waters surged into Vanport, destroying everything in their deadly

wake. Over 60,000 were left homeless in Oregon and Washington and \$75 million worth of damage was done in the May 31 flood.

The Montavilla church bought a train on June 28, 1948, a "specially built, Studebaker-powered replica" that Archie dubbed "the gospel train."³⁷ The train was used for several years to advertise coming revival meetings at Montavilla, beginning with a three-week meeting in July with James Matthew Alley, the man who had told Archie Word he wouldn't last six months at Montavilla. Now, 13 years later, he had come to preach for Archie. The two grown men hopped aboard the newly painted and decorated "train" and rode it downtown where they sang and preached and announced to astounded pedestrians that Alley was going to preach at Montavilla. Word called it "one of the finest meetings in Montavilla's past thirteen years history . . . many REAL RECONSECRATIONS, several placed fellowship . . . souls born of Water and the Spirit." Alley paid high tribute to Word and the congregation in an article, "We've Been to Montavilla."

Several of you said, 'Jim, keep your eyes open.' . . . I have kept both my eyes and ears open, and what I have seen and heard may startle you. . . .

Sister Alley and I have particularly enjoyed the Lord's day morning worship service. . . . For the best possible description of the service I refer you to Pendleton's 'Memoirs of A. Campbell' in which he describes the Lord's day services in the days of Mr. Campbell's greatest triumphs as a preacher at the old Bethany church.³⁹

Alley declared that Archie Word was a combination of "the erudition of Campbell, the compassion of

Stone, the fire of Smith, and the error-chasing of Franklin.” Word’s knowledge of the Scriptures was described as “astounding,” while his “naturally logical mind and a heart that loves the Lord” also came in for praise.⁴⁰

Alley then answered some charges against Archie Word.

The charge has been hurled at Brother Word that he is dictatorial, unreasonable, egotistical and uncooperative. I challenge these statements. . . . I have had no trouble working with him. He has never dictated to me once during this meeting. I like his motto: ‘If it is in the Bible we want it – if it is not in the Bible, we won’t have it.’ . . . God has used and is using this man in a great ministry. Think of it. He is away from the church more than he is with it. The people rejoice in his soul-winning campaigns. There is love, peace and harmony among the brethren. They are a Bible carrying, Bible searching, Bible believing people. . . . No, friends, we have been here, and all these outside whisperings that we have heard about Brother Word and the Church have been wrong.⁴¹

THE WORD-HUNT CONNECTION IS SEALED . . . WITH A KISS

On July 26, 1948, the day after the Alley revival closed, Archie Word performed the marriage ceremony for his oldest daughter Margaret, and Donald G. Hunt, the young preacher from Iowa. Following the wedding (and before the newlyweds could depart for their honeymoon) Word scheduled Hunt for a six-week revival the following summer.

The connection between the older Portland preacher and the younger Ottumwa brethren had been growing stronger with each passing year. In

1947 Burton Barber wrote a mini-series in *The Voice of Evangelism*, “What Should Twentieth Century People Call the First Century Church?” He contended that the church should not be called “Christian Church,” calling for “one, specific, consistent expression of the church in this age,” i.e., “Church of Christ.” Archie Word had never contended for the exclusive use of “Church of Christ”; nor had he made an issue of the designation “Christian Church.” But in the Feb. 1, 1948 *The Church Speaks* he ran this “correction”:

In (the) last issue, the term ‘Christian Church’ was used in the article on page 4. This was an oversight in reading copy. I most humbly beg your pardon and assure you that I never use that term in speaking of the Lord’s church.⁴²

Later in the same year he wrote an article, “Why Condone, Promote and Argue for the Name ‘Christian Church?’” He gave six reasons why we should not use that term, then concluded:

Why not call the church by any name the Holy Spirit uses in the Word of God? If it is in the Word of God, preach it, but if it is not in the Word of God, don’t try to justify it, nor make excuses for using it! ‘Christian Church’ is not in the Bible!⁴³

“LET ’ER SPLIT!”

“Worldliness” was another topic that cemented the editors of *The Voice of Evangelism* and *The Church Speaks* in the late 40s. In a June 27, 1948 article in *The Church Speaks*, “Preach the Word and Let ’er Split,” Editor Word wrote:

Many times I hear people say, 'O brother Word, if you preach the Word of God to our church, it would split it wide open.' Well, brother, if preaching the Truth of God to a thing that calls itself a church will split it, then for the Lord's sake 'PREACH THE WORD' and let her split, because the only thing that the Word of God will drive out of a church is the Devil, and he has no business being in the Lord's church anyway.⁴⁴

The article went on to assail "boozers, gamblers, Jazzhounds, moving picture addicts" and the like. "If preaching against worldliness will split your 'Church' then turn loose the Word of God and let her split."⁴⁵ In the same issue, in an article, "What Do We Need Most?" he contended that what the church needed most, instead of additions, was "a great Exodus, or wholesale LANDSLIDE OF SUBTRACTIONS. Church rolls across the land, in his opinion, were "jammed with the names of those who have NEVER been converted." "Let us seek to ADD the converted, and subtract the UNconverted," he concluded.⁴⁶

Charges of "splitting churches" would now follow Archie Word throughout his career.

How could a man who advocated splitting churches ever attempt to be a peacemaker in the body of Christ? Yet, that was the role in which Archie Word found himself towards the end of 1948. The elders of a church in Inglewood, California, found themselves the target of a lawsuit by several former members who had been disfellowshipped for being "factious." The civil suit, brought in the Supreme Court of Los Angeles, was finally dismissed by Judge David Coleman.⁴⁷ In the meantime, the church called Archie Word for a revival meeting. During the meeting Morris Butler Book, the local preacher, prevailed upon Archie to

stay a month longer than he had intended. Book wrote to Florence, praising her for "so patiently living in 'widowhood' . . . I know that it represents a considerable sacrifice to you and your family."⁴⁸

Esther, then but five, alone at home with Florence while Daddy was gone and the rest of the children were at school, recalls:

Mother would pack me a lunch like she did for all the older kids when they went to school. I would drag it around the house with me and then take it outside and eat it like a picnic, or we would sit down together and have lunch at the little table in the kitchen. I also remember sitting in the kitchen while Mother ironed and listening to her tell 'Mischief Elf' stories. They were wonderful stories about Fairy-land and several characters she made up, but always with a moral to them.⁴⁹

Behind every good man, especially a man like Archie Word, stands a good woman, and Florence Procter Word was that gentle, quiet, patient woman.

Notes

1. *The Church Speaks*, Jan. 5, 1947
2. *Ibid*, July 20, 1947
3. *Ibid*
4. *The Church Speaks*, Oct. 12, 1947
5. *Ibid*
6. *Ibid*
7. *Ibid*
8. *The Church Speaks*, Jan. 5, 1947
9. *The Other Day*, p. 40
10. *Ibid*
11. *The Church Speaks*, Feb. 6, 1949
12. *Ibid*
13. *Ibid*
14. *Ibid*

15. Letter to author from Esther Word Burgess, Nov. 28, 1989
16. *Happy On My Way To Heaven*, p. 103
17. Interview with Archie Word by Don Hunt, Jr., Feb. 1988
18. *Ibid*
19. Letter to author from Bill Jessup, Jan. 19, 1990
20. *The Church Speaks*, Feb. 1, 1948
21. *Ibid*, April 4, 1948
22. *Ibid*
23. Letter to author from Don Stram, Mar. 20, 1989
24. *The Church Speaks*, May 9, 1948
25. *Ibid*, June 27, 1948
26. *North American Gold*, pp. 43, 44
27. *The Voice of Evangelism*, May 31, 1952
28. *Christian Standard*, Aug. 17, 1946
29. *The Church Speaks*, June 28, 1948
30. *Ibid*
31. *North American Gold*, p. 32
32. *NACC Update*, Dec./Jan. 1990
33. Letter to author from Verna Ramme. Oct. 5, 1990
34. Letter to author from Kenneth Broad, Sept. 14, 1990
35. *The Church Speaks*, May 9, 1948
36. *Montavilla Memories*, p. 53
37. *Ibid*, p. 54
38. *The Church Speaks*, Sept. 5, 1948
39. *Ibid*, Aug. 1, 1948
40. *Ibid*
41. *Ibid*
42. *The Church Speaks*, Feb. 1, 1948
43. *Ibid*, Aug. 1, 1948
44. *Ibid*, June 27, 1948
45. *Ibid*
46. *Ibid*
47. *The Church Speaks*, Jan. 1, 1950
48. *Ibid*, Dec. 4, 1948
49. Letter to author from Esther Word Burgess, Nov. 28, 1989

18

“HERE I STAND!” (1949-1951)

Your life is nearing the half century mark.
I pray the years yet may be many.
For of all I have met in this world below,
I love you the best of any.

—Florence Word, on Archie's 48th birthday

THE BREAK WITH SAN JOSE BIBLE COLLEGE

The front sidewalk that led up to the main entrance of San Jose Bible college was unlike any other sidewalk in America. While the cement was still wet the following words had been carefully etched in six successive sections of sidewalk: