

shall remain. When I see shaking, in terms of my philosophy, I don't just take it at face value as shaking: I see *God* in it. If I see this shaking as God getting everything ready for Kingdom exposure, then I can be excited about it. But if I am joining the crowd of those who are saying, "Alas, alas, Babylon the Great is fallen!" then it is a pretty miserable existence. But when I see Babylon falling, I am looking for Jerusalem to emerge.

NW: What do you think that shaking will produce among God's people?

EB: I think it will produce a restoration of simplicity. We are going to get rid of a lot of the unnecessary baggage and barnacles that have come into the Christian milieu which don't belong. I expect us to return to the simplicity referred to in Acts chapter 2, where the early church continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayer.

I think we are going to rediscover the meaning of Christians relating to one another in the simplicity and ardency of their faith. A lot of the ecclesiastical bulk will have to give way. I see considerable changes in the whole "church" situation, and what would be alarming to others is exciting to me. However, to rejoice in the shaking just because it is shaking is a vacuous operation. I am rejoicing in the shaking because it will leave a residue of something that is really valuable.

NW: What do you think of the attitude found among some Christians who are wringing their hands at the evil in the world, hoping that Jesus will return before things get too much worse—sort of an escapist mentality?

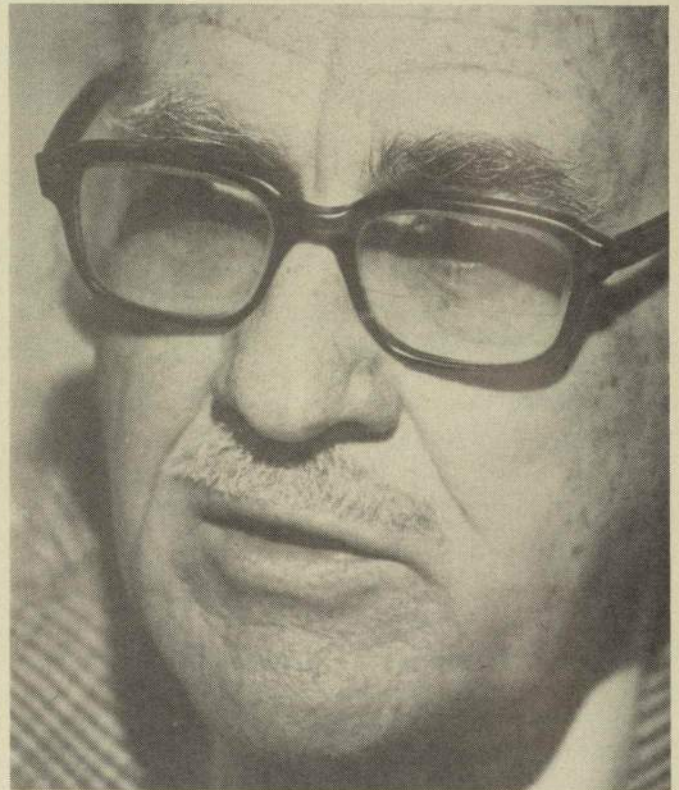
EB: I believe the Bible indicates that black gets blacker and white gets whiter, but the outcome is not in question. In John's Gospel he says, "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot arrest it." I believe the hand-wringing mentality comes from having the dark side constantly portrayed. It is not uncommon to hear Christians lamenting the darkness instead of celebrating the light.

The time has come for us to affirm the Lordship of Christ—the ultimacy of Christ's Kingship—the fact that the darkness has to go and the light has to become permanent. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. I feel there are serious lacks in the thinking of Christians who are so engrossed with the world's evil. I don't think that is the area we should glory in.

We have been put in the world as salt and light.

We are here to celebrate light and to celebrate the grace of salt; we are here to affirm that Jesus Christ is Lord and that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." God is victor and He will vindicate Christ. This is the note that I am sounding and the note I would like to hear sounded more clearly.

The second coming of Christ is not the *hope* of the world. The second coming of Christ is the damnation of the world; it is the hope of the believer. I don't find anything in the New Testament that says the second coming of Christ is the hope of the world. My Bible says the *gospel*, not the second coming of Christ, is the power of God unto salvation. He is coming again for those that look for Him but for those who are not looking for Him, His coming will be the end. So I think the escapist mentality is based on a false premise. I don't think it can produce the kind of hope, faith, and joy that God intends us to have as we celebrate the ultimate victory of Christ.



NW: Do you think it short-circuits a Christian's effectiveness?

EB: I can't see it otherwise. If I thought that the whole answer was getting out of here, then I would spend most of my time packing my bags. In the New Testament Jesus said to His disciples, "As the Father sends Me, so do I send you." Our mandate is to go into the *world*, not go to *heaven*. Heaven is only a part of the deal. Although I expect to go there

eventually, it is not my present order. My present order is to go into the world.

For instance, I recently listened to a half-hour musical program featuring religious quartets, and every single number they sang was about going to heaven. Every single number—without exception. There was nothing about the victory of the gospel, nothing about God's victory in the world. The whole impression was, "I'm a Christian, and I can hardly wait to get out of here."

Now, there is a certain validity in wanting to go eventually, but as Paul said, "If staying here is going to benefit people, then I'll stay here even though I want to go be with Christ." As far as I am concerned, when my work is through here, I expect to go. But in the meantime I'm not going to sit around wanting to go be with the Lord when He wants me to get out into the world, salt it, light it, and bring Christ's victory into expression.

NW: What redemptive attributes—I guess you could call them antidotes—do you see developing among God's people in response to negative trends in the world?

EB: Before answering that directly, I would like to refer to a book called *An Evangelical Agenda* which is a report of the second *Future Evangelical Concerns Conference*. The first book that came out from this source was excellent and the second one is equally good. In one of the talks entitled, "Nurture, Form and Function," there is a quotation from a book by a man named Edge in which the life of a movement is described. I think it's done very well. Point number one says a movement generally is born as a violent reaction against errors, abuses and the injustices in the status quo. The second stage of the movement is that, to survive opposition, it must eventually organize its own institutions. In the third stage, the movement passes from rejection to toleration, and finally to acceptance by society. In stage four, the movement does not merely experience acceptance; it becomes popular. Stage five records how, for the sake of efficiency in organization and administration during this period of popular growth, there's a definite trend toward centralization of authority. In the sixth stage, beliefs become crystallized into dogma demanding acceptance. In the seventh and final stage, a new movement must break through these shackles with new ideas, new beliefs, new values and a new way.

JUST AROUND THE CORNER

PRAYER: The Ultimate Weapon

An issue examining the mightiest force available to mankind.

Now, before I say anything else, let me say this: I cherish a hope that we may be at that point in history where we will avoid some of these historical trends so that what is happening now in terms of restoration and rediscovery of primitive Christian principles may not fall victim to this process. It is my personal belief that as we come toward the end of history (and I believe history has an end), there will be a generation that will avoid this trend and will remain primitive and pristine and pure. To that generation Jesus Christ will be able to return.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "The things that you've heard of me among many witnesses, the same declare to faithful men, or loyal men, who in turn will teach others also." Paul put personal character at that point above gift, charisma, oratorical ability and academic attainment. He said, "If we don't have loyal men, men of character, men of integrity, regardless of whatever else we do have, we haven't really got what we need."

When we go back to the New Testament, we find such things as loyalty, integrity, covenant relationships, community, bearing one another's burdens. These traits are the warp and woof of the kind of Christianity which must ultimately demonstrate Christ to the world. There is a strong movement among men of various doctrinal and ecclesiastical backgrounds around the world to return to some of these primitive principles. I feel this is "where it's at."

*** Don't forget: January 4th is a national day of prayer and fasting.**

NW: *Do you feel these developments are pretty much cross-cultural or cross-denominational?*

EB: I think so. The rampant disillusionment in society at large is causing men either to fall into despair or to turn to other options. Many of them are researching the Scriptures again. It's like the old search to rediscover the historical Jesus. We're searching for the historical Christian. What was the original Christian like? To what degree are we caricatures?

If we go back to the original Christian, we find interpersonal relationships and loyalty and integrity and covenant as the important things in his life. As I travel across the world, the healthiest signs I see are where men are finding one another in Christian covenantal relationship and starting to work out some meaningful life situations that go beyond Christian profession, right down to the nitty gritty of Christian life.

In the larger perspective I feel the ultimate form of evangelism is what Jesus described in John 17 when He said, "Father, I pray that they may be one as You and I are one; that they may be one in Us, that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me." Now if we work that back negatively, what He said was, "Until the redeemed community becomes one, the world will not know that You have sent Me."

The kind of unity that must come cannot be contrived. It must be Christian people finding one another in the genuine pressures of everyday life within a Christian context. This is happening, and I see it as a genuine hope for the future. When many of the ecclesiastical trappings start to crumble and fall, people will be looking for this sort of relationship. There is a vanguard now in preparation to be ready to give that option to people when these times come.

NW: *Isn't this quite a departure from "traditional" Christianity?*

EB: Yes. There's a considerable concern now about what is referred to as para-church groups. I think many para-church groups are the product of a sincere attempt to realize a restoration of the kind of simple primitive community that seem to be the genus of the early church. [That these para-church groups are not interrelated in any way is less than ideal, but nothing is ideal right now.]

I believe in the Church. By that I mean I believe in Jesus' statement that He would build His congregation, His people—the people of God. I believe in that and I don't want to be considered as somebody outside of the mainstream of the divine thrust in history. But in being a part of that mainstream, I am

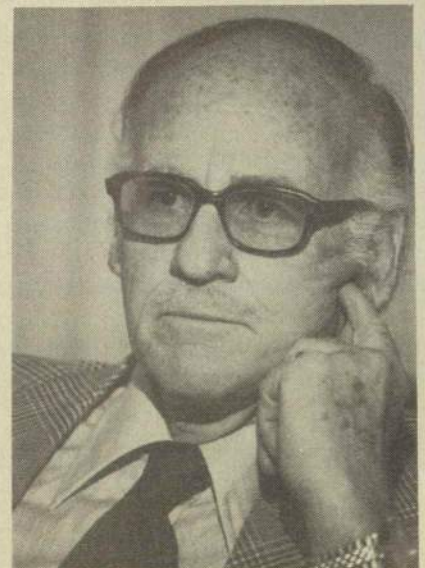
responsible to speak out concerning the maintenance of the simplicity of original Christianity.

I believe that the New Testament has in principle everything necessary for us to maintain a sound Christian life and witness to the end of time.

Many of the things we have invented in an attempt to help the Lord with His situation were unnecessary and have only cluttered it up. The story of Mary and Martha comes to mind. Martha was not getting lunch for the devil; she was getting lunch for Jesus. But Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet and hearing His word.

After Martha had labored long in the kitchen getting lunch ready, she stormed into the room, whirled upon Jesus and said, "Master, don't You care that I'm out there getting lunch while my sister is sitting here doing nothing?" What she was saying in essence was, "I *know* You didn't ask me to fix lunch, and I *know* that lunch is probably not in Your will, but I'm doing the best I can for You. Bid my sister to come and help me." Or in other words, "Have my sister help me in *my* program for You." We need to keep this in the proper context.

Jesus' answer was beautiful. He said, "Martha, Martha, you're troubled and concerned with many things, but Mary has chosen the better part." Dr. Moffat translates that, "the better dish." And Jesus said, "It shall not be taken from her." In other words Jesus said, "Mary is sitting at My feet and listening to My word. When I want lunch, I'll tell you. In the meantime, don't get Me lunches I haven't ordered." I think that we've gotten Jesus a lot of lunches He never ordered.



NW: What do you see as the ultimate destiny of the people of God?

EB: I personally see the people of God in the earth as the manifestation of Christ's ultimate victory and the demonstration of His Lordship. I believe "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" and that the gospel must ultimately be successful. I believe that the redeemed community in every geographic locality is also the governmental center of the Kingdom of God. I also believe that unfortunately the people of God have failed in their spiritual government over the earth.

1 Timothy 2 gives us the apostolic command as the redeemed community for when we're together in our common gatherings: First of all (or "most important of all" says one translation), we must pray for all men everywhere, for rulers and governors and those in authority over us that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, for God would have all men to be saved."

I don't believe that's optional, yet in the last few years, when teaching in large conferences, I have asked audiences, "How many of you in your gatherings have obeyed this apostolic injunction?" In conference after conference, among thousands of people, the number of hands raised would be only eight or ten.

I don't think this is just a peculiarity that can be treated lightly. If God's people are to exercise spiritual authority and rule, and the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God—if our power doesn't lie in the bullet, or the ballot—then it lies in the spiritual realm. But it is no less a power because of that. In fact, it is a superior power. But if it's not used, it's useless. I don't care how good a sword is, if it doesn't get into the soldier's hand, it wages no warfare.

If God's people have not picked up the divine mandate to govern the world through their corporate life and prayer, then we really can't complain too loud at conditions. The world is waiting for a demonstration of Christian authority through community life and intercession. As I read the New Testament, there is no question but that the people of God are to exercise Christ's risen authority and bring the Lordship of Jesus Christ into the world so that nations are literally brought under the thrall-dom of Christ's government.

I know that what I have just said would be received almost with holy horror by thousands of Christians who have been trained and taught that the world is going to get worse, and that the Church will go out of history with a whimper. But as I was recently thinking about these things, I thought about the element of surprise that God has manifested in His activities throughout history.

Presuming that the angels were created before the material universe as we know it, when God spun the planets off His fingers and created the material universe, the angels must have been so surprised that they burst out spontaneously into singing and applause, because they had not been party to the mind of God. The angels had no idea what a material universe looked like, and then suddenly it appeared by a fiat of divine creation. What angel could have anticipated that?

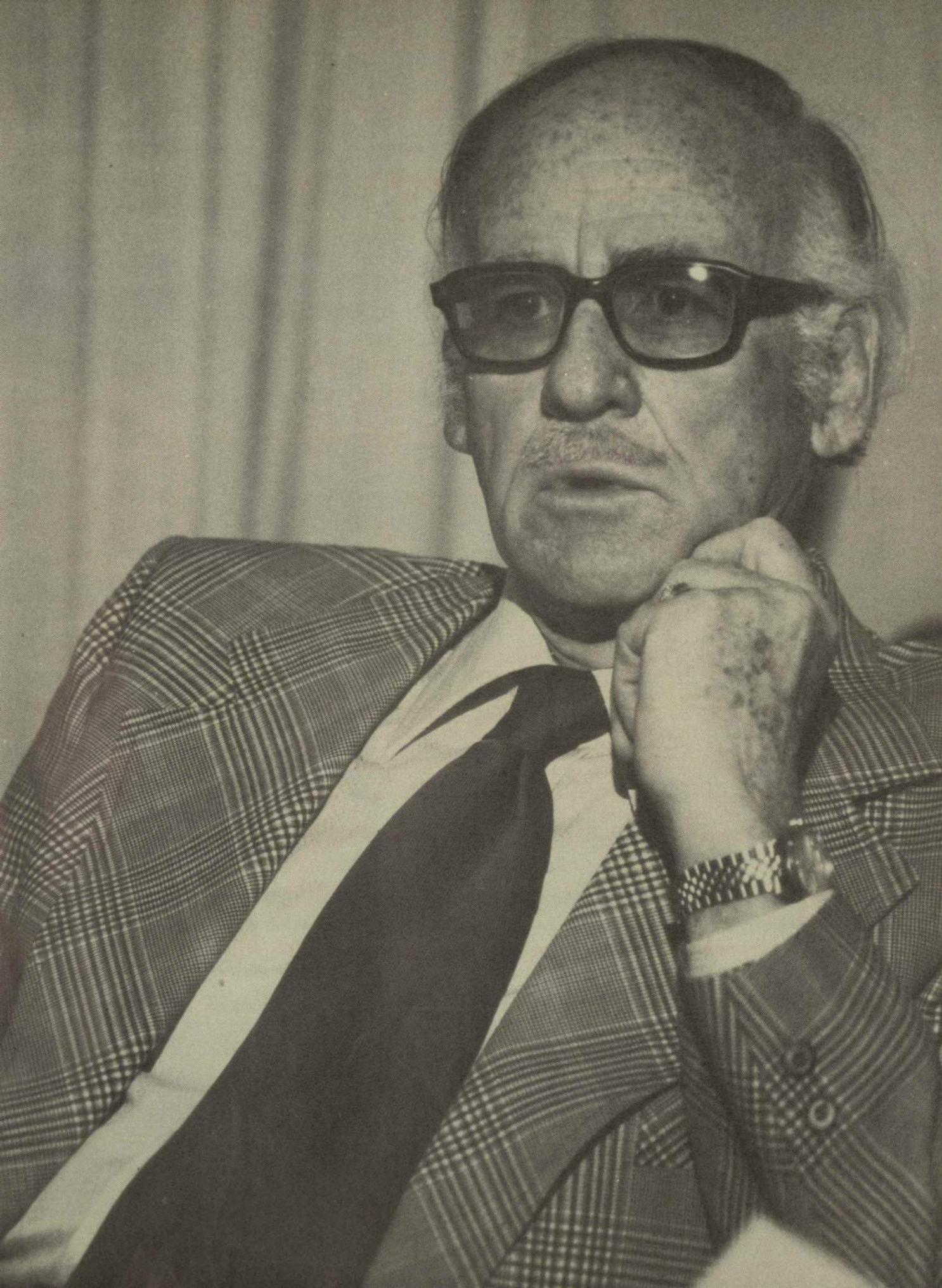
Or consider Adam in the garden without a companion: to be put to sleep and then awake to find this exquisite creature awaiting him. How could Adam ever anticipate a thing like that?

Who could have anticipated the flood in Noah's day, or the separation of the Red Sea, or the manna from heaven, or the water out of the flinty rock? Or if you like, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead?

Now, people say, "But Baxter, you must not read the newspapers. You must not be up on current events. What you're talking about is balderdash. It can't happen, given our current situation." But *I don't accept that situation* as final. The situation I'm functioning in is the situation of divine decree and power expressed in the character of God. It just seems out of character for God to allow history to finish up with Satan winning the day. If the best God can do is to come back in a fiat way and demolish the devil by the Second Coming, then He's saying, "My gospel wasn't the power of God. I had to come in and rescue My gospel."

Rather, God has declared that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and that in this age, in the fulness of time, He is going to gather together all things in one in Christ. God has declared that He is going to take out of the Kingdom all things that do offend. God has declared certain things He is going to do. I don't know how He's going to do them. But as I look back at the history of God's activity, I'm just excited and on tip-toe to see what God is going to do. It almost seems like God's got a twinkle in His eye as He says, "These folks will never learn that when things are the blackest, I do my best job."

I believe that God wants us to fulfill the implications of the gospel and carry it to its intended conclusion. It is intended to change all of life, and it must change it first in the redeemed community. When we become an example of a gospel life-style and a Kingdom life-style, then we will have something to demonstrate to the world—that the government of God, the will of God, has come to us in response to the 2,000-year-old prayer: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." ♥



UPDATE

Recent events in Ern Baxter's ministry.

As you know, I took on a special assignment the first of the year to serve in a teaching capacity in San Diego. About ten days before my sixty-fifth birthday, I was getting ready to go to my morning teaching assignment and became aware of pressure in my chest. I'd had the first indications of difficulty a few weeks before, but this particular morning it persisted, and Ruth sent for the paramedics. They found my blood pressure alarmingly high and my pulse erratic, so I was taken by ambulance to the hospital where I was thoroughly checked.

A cardiologist was called in, and I was put on a telemetry unit—night and day my heart action was monitored. They assured me that I had not had an attack as such, but that all the preliminary symptoms were sufficiently alarming that they wanted me to restrict my activity and to follow a certain regimen. They felt that if the angina (chest pain) continued, it would be advisable for me to submit to an angiogram. If the angiogram was sufficiently severe, I would remain in the hospital and undergo a bypass, a procedure where they take a vein out of your leg and bypass the clogage.

The angina persisted and I went in for the angiogram, the results of which indicated that the anterior artery in my heart was 70% clogged. The other two arteries—I understand there are three—were in remarkably good shape, but the anterior artery was clogged. However, at that point they didn't feel open-heart surgery was advisable.

After the angiogram, I continued to feel badly and to have angina. I was also under a lot of mental oppression knowing that I had

arterial clogage. You know, when we pass certain milestones in life that have been made famous by tradition, like turning 40 or 50, it can cause stress. I managed forty with a great flourish, and at fifty, my father sent me a fifty dollar bill and said, "Welcome to the fifty club." I handled that great. Sixty didn't seem to be any great problem, either.

But as I approached 65, I came under the influence of the rather universal syndrome of "You're all finished at 65." And to have all this happen ten days before I was 65 only aided and abetted that. So I got caught in that syndrome of hopelessness and futility when you wonder "Should I retire and just sit by and wait."

Interestingly enough, prior to this incident, a brother in northern California, whose wife had had angina as a young woman, had urged me to go to a treatment center called the Weimar Institute because they had helped her tremendously. Ruth and I had agreed to go, and had already made our deposit when I took sick.

So I went to Weimar Institute as kind of a last hope. I had no idea what they were going to do there, only that they had helped my friends. But I wasn't ready for the kind of radical procedure I found.

Weimar Institute is headed by a group of Seventh Day Adventist doctors who are highly trained. They believe that a combination of natural methods can do more to heal a man's problems, promise him longer life and better health, than the more usual route of drugs and surgery. I learned to appreciate these men as highly dedicated, well-qualified men who, in this rather cynical age of ours,



demonstrated a degree of dedication above that usually found.

Ruth, incidentally, decided that she would go along and take the treatment as much for my sake as for her own, just so she could help me. And she has been a tremendous help.

When we arrived at the Institute, the first two days were given to orientation. They did blood work and treadmill tests and the whole thing. My blood pressure was elevated, which indicated some problems in that area. I didn't do too well on the treadmill or the cardiogram under stress. Of course, I had been diabetic and was taking insulin by needle, so naturally, when my blood work came back, it indicated that my sugar was elevated, and also that my cholesterol and triglycerides were high. My blood work generally indicated that I had a combination of physical problems.

The next step after the tests was to set up a regimen for me to follow in which my entire day was mapped out for me. The regimen started at 6:30 A.M. with breakfast. There was a medical lecture every morning and devotions. There were some very fine features to this Institute. For example, whenever a physical therapist or hydratherapist or a medical doctor or a nurse had any occasion to deal with you or do you a service, when they finished, they would have prayer with you, which is rather unique.

After you worked out with the physical therapist and he had given you a rubdown, he would say, "Shall we have prayer?"

Right away they put you on a highly personalized nutritional regimen so that everything you eat is monitored by them. I was put on a thousand calories of selected food. They are quite opposed to sugar and all kinds of refined foods and oil. To put it more positively, they major in fruit, vegetables, legumes, and grains.

Probably the best explanation is to give my normal daily menu. My breakfast consists of a good portion of hot cereal, toasted specially baked bread and fruit. My lunch consists of vegetables, probably with a bean dish of some kind. My supper consists of fruit and toast (Ruth makes our bread without sugar and without oil, and it's very tasty). There's no eating between meals and no drinking with meals. I can only drink water up to half an hour before I eat, and I don't resume drinking until an hour after. They have a little saying: "At breakfast you eat like a king; at lunch you eat like a queen; and at supper you eat like a pauper." And there's no coffee, of course; no stimulants, no drugs. Between meals, also, we probably drink 7 to 8 glasses of water a day.

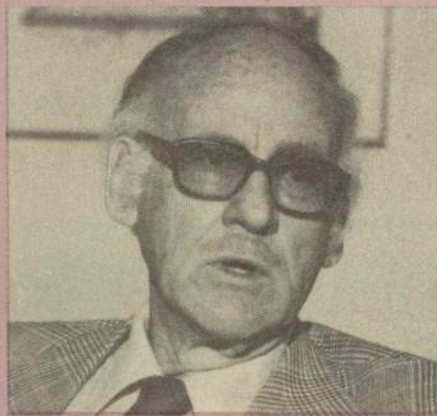
With this regimen, within a week or ten days my blood pressure had come down considerably, my weight was starting to come down, and they took me completely off insulin. They took me off all medication, and the only thing now that continues to be somewhat bothersome is a little remaining angina.

At the end of the twenty-sixth day, the length of time spent there, blood work was done again. My sugar was down to almost normal. My triglycerides were normalized and my cholesterol was a little below normal. I had taken off ten or twelve pounds and was walking fast four or five miles a day. I was off all my medication, and I was

highly motivated. I wanted to live again.

Since leaving there—we've been away about two months—Ruth and I have maintained what they call the therapeutic regimen. We continue pretty much as we did when we were under the treatment at the Institute.

There was one interesting aspect of Ruth's being with me at the institute. Ruth has always taken good care of herself, being a registered nurse, and has maintained a healthy weight level. But we had been pretty heavy meat-eaters and drank a lot of coffee, and one of



the alarming things was when they did Ruth's blood work, they found that her triglycerides and cholesterol were higher than mine, and she was bordering on a heart attack. But at the end of our stay at the Institute, her situation had changed considerably.

We're deeply indebted to this program. Although it may be construed as radical or fanatical, anyone who is at all perceptive and informed knows that there is considerable alarm across the nation over the number of heart attacks and strokes and so on. There's a growing concern about the whole nutritional thing.

One other side benefit I experienced has to do with sleep. My sleep pattern had been very bad for several years. I generally went to sleep between 12:00 and 1:00 A.M. and woke up at 3:00. Then, if I slept at all the rest of the night, it would be catnapping. Now I go

to bed and get six or seven hours sleep which is good for me. I get up in the morning and walk and jog for three miles.

I realize that at sixty-five I can't be twenty-one again, but with this kind of information, I have a desire to use my body—it's kind of a challenge to see how much ground I can regain.

That's pretty much the story of our health pilgrimage. If I may inject a little sermonizing here, my concern would be that young people would do something preventative. It was rather significant to me that all of my fellow patients at the Institute were like myself: they were there because they had either had bypass operations or inoperable heart situations. But isn't it a tragedy that you have to be almost dead before you want to live?

The staff consisted of around ninety people, many of whom were young. They were walking examples of what they were teaching. They were like a bunch of greyhounds. When I looked at those young people who were into this regimen, I thought, "What an opportunity for them in terms of a long healthy life." I wish young people could see this, because I abused my body as a young man. I got away with it for awhile, as most people can, but it finally catches up to you.

During one of the lectures, I mentioned to the doctor that I had heard that a famous professional tennis player—a Wimbledon champion—had had a heart attack at the age of thirty-one. They made it clear to us that being in good physical shape wasn't the total answer. Very simply, the kind of fuel you put into your body determines the internal condition of your body organs. So if I'm going to sermonize a little, I would urge young people to take preventative steps which will promote their physical health and nullify the illnesses that can come as a result of neglecting or mistreating their bodies. ♥