

Session to Session

... promoting the strengthening and
growth of Biblical Presbyterianism
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A Second Look at Church Planting in the PCA

by Robert W. Patterson

Since her founding in 1973, the Presbyterian Church in America has vigorously pursued the planting of new congregations as the primary means of growing into a truly national church. Aspiring to become within a few generations a denomination that can meaningfully and effectively challenge the Presbyterian Church, USA, as the acknowledged transmitter of the Reformed faith in America, the PCA has passionately labored to launch as many churches as possible as quickly as possible.

Behind the push to launch new congregations is the General Assembly committee, Mission to North America. While not nearly as powerful as Mission to the World, MNA commands the largest portion of the denomination's budget for U.S. Operations. In 1991, the committee spent nearly \$3.6 million, 43% of the askings of the six assembly committees and agencies that minister in North America.

The committee has worked around the clock throughout the 1980s, perfecting an assessment center that screens qualified church planters and analyzing demographics to locate communities conducive to new churches, yet it is shifting into an even higher gear for the 1990s. With a new century on the horizon, the committee has adopted Vision 2000, a strategy to establish (not just begin) 800 new congregations by the end of the decade. That number is more than three times the number of congregations (260) with which the PCA was founded and 80% more than the number of organized congregations (998) at the end of 1989.

To what extent Vision 2000 was drafted with stars in the eyes is not clear. But to the average elder or church member, the goal seems not only laudable but attainable. The young church is one of the most rapidly growing denominations in America; that her growth will continue through the Nineties is taken for granted. Furthermore, because it is assumed that MNA's church planting efforts have played a key role in the denomination's growth, many have high hopes for the committee's new initiative, anticipating an even greater harvest of new churches than anything before.

Covenant Seminary professor Philip D. Douglass, a leading advocate of church planting, believes, based on his church

planting experience in northern Virginia, that new church development is the most effective way to grow a denomination. Writing in the *PCA Messenger* (June 1990), he claims that 19 church starts in the Washington, D.C., area brought 1,393 "composite members" (his term) into the PCA, accounting for 66% of the growth in the Washington area from 400 members in 1976 to "2,500-plus" members in 1988. While he does not mention Vision 2000, he nevertheless supports the initiative and pleads for more money for MNA: "Investment in church planting," the professor claims, "returns handsome dividends in more people coming the Christ and into the PCA *than through any other method of outreach*" (emphasis added).

Few question the need for new churches, but some may wonder if Douglass and other church growth practitioners have overstated the role church planting has played or will play in the denomination. At the very least, the assessment by Douglass is as questionable as the research upon which it is based; he failed to consider the larger picture of what was going on in the entire presbytery at that time and avoided any comparison of church planting with other forms of denominational expansion.

The Washington, D.C., area was part of the old Mid-Atlantic Presbytery, which in 1974 claimed 7 churches with 2,482 members (defined throughout this article as communicants

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Tongues Today? Part V

by O. Palmer Robertson

A two-year-old may squeeze his food through his fist and eat his meal off his knuckles. But at some point, he needs to stop being childish.

In the same way, a gift of God may be used in a childish way. Paul urges the Corinthians to stop being childish in their tongue-speaking. He grounds his admonition in an Old Testament scripture that speaks about "other tongues." He says:

In the Law it is written: "Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even they will not listen to me," says the Lord (I Corinthians 14:21).

By this quotation from Isaiah 28, Paul sets tongue-speak-

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and baptized children). By 1989 the judicatory had expanded into 3 presbyteries consisting of 78 organized congregations and 3 mission churches representing 21,581 members.

As illustrated in Table A, the composition of the largest of the three presbyteries, Potomac, leads to a far more sober analysis of church planting, especially since its MNA committee rates among the most aggressive in the denomination. In 1989 Potomac Presbytery consisted of 40 organized churches and 2 mission congregations, representing 12,216 members. Fifteen of its churches had been organized since 1975. Combined with the 2 mission (unorganized) congregations, these 17 new church starts represented 2,507 members, 21% of total presbytery membership. A slightly smaller portion of presbytery membership (18%) was due to the reception of 4 established congregations from independency and the PCUSA, representing 2,164 members. The single most important factor in the presbytery's growth were 18 churches added in 1982 as a result of the joining and receiving of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod. These churches accounted for 6,881 members, 56% of presbytery membership.

The relatively high number of RPCES congregations in the presbytery may have skewed the data, but an analysis of the entire denomination confirms the Potomac pattern: the key source of growth in the PCA since 1975 has not been, as some claim, church planting, but the reception of already established congregations from other Presbyterian denominations, including the RPCES and from independency.

As Table B illustrates, the PCA grew by 154,574 members from 1975 through 1989, much of which resulted from the addition of 652 congregations and 120 mission churches. The major source of growth (36%) was the reception of 173 already established congregations, and 1 mission church, from other Presbyterian denominations or independency. The second source of growth (34%) was the reception of 225 RPCES congregations in 1982 along with growth of original PCA congregations. New church starts (254 organized congregations and 118 mission churches), accounted for 30% of the growth.

The findings are not the only factor that raises questions about the role of church planting; so does the character of churches being organized. While a full study is needed, those 254 church plants do not generally represent the large, vibrant congregations historically associated with Presbyterianism. To the casual observer, many could pass for a generic Bible church in terms of worship, liturgy, and music. In all probability, not many will stock their pews with the new *Trinity Hymnal*.

Success stories are not hard to find, whether they be super churches like Orangewood in Orlando, Perimeter in Atlanta, and Trinity in Charlottesville, or those more modest in size. But a good portion of new PCA churches are struggling operations. More than 44% (111) of the 254 newly-organized churches have less than 100 members; nearly 78% (197) have less than 200 members. Furthermore, many of these young

churches, because of their limited history, struggle with high membership turnover and identity crises. Few own property and even less have the resources to construct a building to project visibility in their communities. These characteristics are more pronounced in churches organized by presbyteries outside the South, where the average size of newly-organized congregations excluding missions (99 members) is less than half that of their southern counterparts (204 members). Only 5 of the 73 congregations organized outside the South claim 200 or more members.

On the other hand, churches that have transferred from independency or other Presbyterian denominations tend to be substantially larger, more viable, and more established. They seem and feel more "Presbyterian." They not only have visibility (property and a building), but in more cases than not, these congregations, because of their history, are woven into the social fabric of their communities in typical Presbyterian fashion, providing the kind of vital witness and meaningful community presence for which the Reformed tradition is known.

Table C highlights the geographic distribution of churches organized by the PCA from 1975-89. While the denomination is no longer confined to the South as it was in 1974, the table reveals that southern presbyteries account for 77% of members welcomed into the PCA through new church starts in the last fifteen years. This may simply confirm that church planting is more effective in areas where strong churches already exist, but it also reveals that the PCA has a long way to go before shedding her regional identity.

All three tables suggest that building a national church means more than simply starting from scratch as many congregations as possible. Church expansion requires a more comprehensive strategy, not inspired to some extent by the contemporary Willowcreek phenomenon, but one nourished by the classic Westminster tradition, embracing the channel of growth proven more fruitful for the PCA: engaging denominations and already established churches in the Reformed tradition.

Potential sources of merger with the PCA are the four remaining branches of conservative American Presbyterianism: the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, North America. These denominations represent nearly 600 established congregations and more than 110,000 communicants and baptized children. Each denomination has its own strength. The ARPC and EPC both have many large, well-established congregations with deep roots in American Presbyterianism. The OPC is known for her earnest quest to articulate the theological heritage of the Reformed faith. Aside from the ARPC, these denominations are centered in geographic regions where the PCA is virtually unknown, the North and Midwest. Two denominations, the ARPC and RPCNA, sponsor two seminaries and a liberal arts college.

Hurdles do stand in the way of a consolidation of the PCA

with these churches, particularly the ordination of women as ruling elders in the EPC. But the cause of strengthening biblical Presbyterianism in America calls for a resolution of differences to enable conservative Presbyterians to join forces. Such a bold move would also demonstrate their fidelity to the Apostle Paul, who admonished the Romans to live in harmony, "so that with one heart and mouth [they] may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:6, NIV).

Such a consolidation of denominations would not preclude the launching of new congregations, but enhance it. New congregations are only as strong as the resources behind them. Witness the church starts in the Potomac Presbytery after 1982 when the presbytery gained the resources of several large, RPCES congregations. The four denominations mentioned above could multiply similar results for the PCA in other parts of the country.

Perhaps Vision 2000 will become reality without a merger of the PCA with her sister communions. But the PCA will enter the twenty-first century with less of a national presence and with several hundred more small, struggling congregations meeting in public schools. She will lack the ecclesiastical and cultural muscle to displace the PCUSA as the recognized heir of historic Presbyterianism, obscuring for another century the rich faith and grand tradition of John Calvin, John Knox, and John Witherspoon. If the PCA is serious about a mission to North America, of raising high her Reformed heritage, she will need to broaden her focus beyond starting individual churches alone and project a vision for maturing into a serious denomination, a national church, worthy of her name.

TABLE A
ORIGINS OF CONGREGATIONS
IN POTOMAC PRESBYTERY, 1989

Source	Number	Members*	Percent
Received from RPCES	18	6,881	56%
Received from PCUSA and independency**	4	2,164	18%
Organized by presbytery**	15	2,467	20%
Missions	2	40	1%
Other	3	664	5%
TOTAL	42	12,216	100%

*Communicants and baptized children, as reported in 1990 PCA yearbook

** Consolidated from annual reports since 1975, when the PCA yearbook began identifying sources of new congregations.

TABLE B
CONGREGATIONS ADDED TO THE PCA, 1975-1989

Source	Churches	Missions	Members*	%
Received from other Presbyterian denominations and independency**	173	2	56,388	36%
Congregations received from RPCES in 1982	225	***	51,931	34%
New church starts**	254	118	46,255	30%

Total growth, 1975-89	652	120	154,574	100%
1974 statistics	346		61,470	
1989 statistics	998	120	216,044	

*Communicants and baptized children, as reported in 1990 PCA yearbook

**Consolidated from annual reports since 1975, when the PCA yearbook began identifying sources of new congregations.

***Figure was calculated by subtracting membership of new church starts and churches received from the difference between the 1989 and 1974 membership statistics. Therefore, figure includes the assumed growth of the original PCA churches.

TABLE C
GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF NEW CHURCH
STARTS IN THE PCA, 1975-1989

Region	Number	Members*	%
Southern Presbyteries**			
Congregations	170	34,617	75%
Missions	43	1,016	2%
Combined	213	35,633	77%
Presbyteries outside the South			
Congregations	73	7,222	16%
Missions	52	1,138	2%
Combined	125	8,360	18%
Korean presbyteries and churches			
Congregations	11	1,864	4%
Missions	23	398	1%
Combined	34	2,262	5%
Consolidated totals			
Congregations	254	43,703	94%
Missions	118	2,552	6%
Combined	372	46,255	100%

*Communicants and baptized children, as reported in 1990 PCA yearbook.

**Defined as those south of and including the former Delmarva, New River, Tennessee Valley, Covenant, and Mid-America. For comparison, these 25 presbyteries account for 79% of the denomination's members.

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ing in the context of the history of redemption. He demonstrates an accurate understanding of the context of his quotation. The prophet had asked: "Who is [God] trying to teach? To whom is he explaining his message?" (Isa. 28:9a) Then the prophet answers his own question: "Those just weaned from their milk, those just taken from the breast" (Isa. 28:9b).

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The people of God in Isaiah's day had anticipated the problem of childishness that was so obvious to Paul among the Corinthians in their use of spiritual gifts. The prophet then had depicted vividly the rudimentary way in which instruction had to be communicated from the Lord to his infantile people:

"For it is:
Line upon line, line upon line,
rule on rule, rule on rule;
a little here, a little there" (Isa. 28:10).

Because of their childishness, God must speak to his people like children. A rule here, a command there. Don't run in the street. Put your napkin on your lap. Go make up your bed.

Then the prophet had pronounced God's judgment on the people for their folly:

Very well, then, with foreign lips and with strange tongues I will speak to this people (Isa. 28:11).

If you will not hear the plain word of God in your native tongue, then God will speak to you in a foreign language. He will speak to you so that you will hear words just as an infant hears the conversation of the adult world. If you're going to act like a baby, then God will speak to you like a baby.

The baby sits in the middle of the floor with his cookie and milk. He bites his cookie and pours his milk on the floor. Mother returns to the room. She begins to talk to the baby.

What does the baby hear? The baby hears what sounds like gobbledegook. Because the baby cannot understand the language of an adult, he hears the words of his mother as though they were babblings.

But more particularly, the baby hears words of judgment. Isaiah says that the "tongues" of foreigners will represent the arrival of God's judgment for Israel. When the unrepentant nation hears men who have invaded their land speaking in foreign languages, they must recognize it as a sign that God has brought his judgment of an alien army on them. The army of the "babbling Babylonians" represents for Israel a return of the judgment that first brought the confusion of tongues at the tower of "Babel."

But eighth-century Isaiah was not the first to speak of foreign languages as a sign of judgment for God's people. As far back as the time of Moses, foreign tongues represented the arrival of God's judgment. One of the most awesome passages in scripture describes the curses of the covenant that would come to a disobedient Israel. Among these curses that were sure to fall on the covenant-breaker was the following:

The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away,

from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, a nation whose *tongue you will not understand* (Deut. 28:49).

In this prophetic context dating back to the days of Moses, the significance of tongues is clear. Tongues serve as a sign that judgment has come for Israel. The threat of covenantal curses must be fulfilled because Israel will fail to hear the word of God.

This same message recurs once more a hundred and fifty years after Isaiah in the days of Jeremiah. From Moses to Isaiah to Jeremiah the significance of tongues for Old Testament prophecy is the same.

Jeremiah lived in the day of the Babylonian conquest of Palestine. The prophet anticipates the judgment that was to fall in his day:

"O House of Israel," declares the Lord, "I am bringing a distant nation against you—an ancient and enduring nation, a people whose tongue you do not know, whose speech you do not understand" (Jer. 5:15).

Once more tongues serve as a sign of covenantal judgment on a disobedient nation. When the "babbling Babylonians" invade Israel, speaking their strange dialect, then God's covenant people will know that judgment has come on them.

So scripture presents a unified testimony about the significance of tongues. Prophecies from the 15th century B.C., from the eighth century B.C., and from the sixth century B.C. all unite to make the same point. When foreign languages overrun Israel, they will be a sign that God's judgment has come.

In light of this larger Old Testament context of specific prophecies concerning tongues, Paul's explanation of the passage from Isaiah becomes more understandable. "Tongues," he says, "are a sign!" (I Cor. 14:22).

Tongues are a sign, and a sign is not to be regarded as an end in itself. A sign points to something else. A sign serves as an indicator, highlighting another object worth noting.

A sign may indicate a change in the direction of the road ahead. It may indicate a curve in the road which will force a turn toward a different direction. In this case, tongues function as a sign in the history of redemption indicating that God is making a change.

What is the change that God was making when he introduced tongues at the beginning of the new covenant era? God was indicating that he no longer would speak a single language to a single people. At least since the time of Moses, he had spoken one language to one people. But now, by the gift of tongues at pentecost, God indicates that he intends to speak in many languages to many peoples. He will speak in all the languages of the world to all peoples of the world.

Tongues therefore mark a point of drastic change in the

direction of God's work in the world. On the one hand, tongues signified a distinctive judgment for Israel. Jesus speaks of this same judgment when he says, "The kingdom shall be taken from you and given to a people bringing forth the fruit thereof" (Matt. 21:43).

When Israel heard the foreign tongues of the Babylonians in the streets of Jerusalem, they were experiencing the fulfillment of the prophecies of old. They had persisted too far and too long in the rejection of the words spoken so clearly by God.

In a similar way, the foreign tongues spoken on the day of pentecost were a sign of covenantal curse for Israel. No longer would God speak exclusively to them in contrast with all the nations of the world.

But at the same time, tongues at pentecost served as a sign of the great blessing of God to all the nations of the world, including Israel. Tongues were a sign of the extension of the blessing of the covenant to all the nations of the world. For even though God took the kingdom from the Jews, he also grafted believers from among them back into the kingdom by his mercy and grace.

For this reason, tongues should be seen as a dramatic sign at a very specific point in redemptive history. They marked the transition to a truly world-wide gospel. For this reason, tongues played a significant role in the history of redemption.

But inherent in the nature of a sign is its temporally limited character. A sign marking a curve in the road is no longer needed by the traveller once the change of direction has been made. The traveller does not grasp after the sign so he can take it along with him. Once the turn has been made, the sign has completed its usefulness.

Once the world might have presumed that Christianity was a Jewish religion. Christianity began with a Jewish messiah and twelve Jewish apostles. But God gave an indicator to the world in the foundational age of the apostles that made it plain that any man from any nation who called on the name of the Lord could participate equally with Israel in the blessings of the messianic kingdom. God spoke in many languages so that everybody could hear. Gentiles as well as Jews had the opportunity to understand in their own tongue that they too were invited to participate in Christ's kingdom.

Tongues illustrated dramatically the universalistic character of Christianity. God was not limiting himself to one people. His wondrous works could be heard in all the languages of the world. Tongues were a dramatic sign of change of direction. Christianity was not exclusively a "Jewish" religion, despite its clearly Jewish origins.

Once the need for a sign to indicate the universal characteristic of Christianity was obvious. But who today would be in danger of thinking that Christianity was a "Jewish" religion?

The need for a sign of transition exists no longer. By the gift of tongues God made it obvious to all that he had moved from speaking one language in the world to speaking

all the languages of the world to all the peoples of the world.

Tongues are a sign, a sign that is no longer needed. Indeed, in its day it also served the purpose of being a mode of revelation. For tongues interpreted were equivalent to prophecy. They were the very words of God which could edify the church of God when rightly understood.

But just as the church no longer needs a sign establishing its world-wide character, so neither does the church need the revelation of new divine truth that tongues might supply. No further prophetic word is needed because the fullness of the word of prophecy has been preserved in scripture.

The church needs neither pseudo-prophetism nor pseudo-tongues. It needs no diversion from the plain declaration of the divine mystery that now is revealed in all its fullness. The one thing the church and the world needs so desperately today is the faithful proclamation of the word of God once given. It needs no more.

This continuing need for the clear proclamation of the prophetic word now found in scripture is brought out by Paul as he continues his explanation of the phenomenon of tongues as predicted in the Old Testament: "Tongues are a sign, not for believers but for *unbelievers*" (I Cor. 14:22). Tongues clearly indicate God's judgment on unbelief. If the Lord would bring such devastating judgment on his old covenant people as the Babylonians brought on Israel, then he surely will bring a finalizing judgment of even greater proportions on all who hear and reject the gracious message of the new covenant. This new covenant judgment was demonstrated to all when by the gift of tongues God turned from speaking one language to one people and dramatically demonstrated his intention to speak many languages to many peoples.

But the gospel of the new covenant cannot rest with communicating a symbol of God's righteous judgment. It must move on to the clear proclamation of the message of salvation in words calculated to lead men to repentance.

So Paul continues. The assembly of Christians must not rest contented with the manifestation of the gift of tongues, the sign of judgment given over the unbeliever. If the unbeliever is to be convinced that he is a sinner, the spokesmen in the assembly must move on from tongues to prophecy (I Cor. 14:24). Then the secrets of his heart will be laid bare, he will fall down to worship God, and will perceive the presence of God among the people (I Cor. 14:25). It is prophecy, not tongues, that ultimately will make believers out of unbelievers (I Cor. 14:22b).

For this reason, prophecy (in its finalized, inscripturated form) will continue its active role in the life of the church throughout the present age. Until Christ returns in glory, the "more sure word of prophecy" found in scripture serves the church as the divine instrument for the conviction and conversion of sinners (II Pet. 1:19). It is that living and powerful word, the two-edged sword that pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

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A Christian Perspective on AIDS*

by O. Palmer Robertson

"Slim" is on the rampage in Uganda. A few years ago it was Idi Amin, the butcher of East Africa. But today the murderer is "Slim." That's what they call him. Slim is the name for a disease that causes you to become very slim, and then to die. The rest of the world calls this disease "AIDS": Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome.

The first reported cases of AIDS came from the country of Uganda, and today the hospitals of that country routinely test for AIDS. They have now found that seventy percent of women who come into the hospitals of Kampala for pre-natal care have the virus that causes AIDS (*Messenger*, Mar. 1992, p. 14). If this report is accurate, it means that seventy percent of the women who give birth in that country will die before their children have reached ten years of age.

How is the Christian to respond in the age of AIDS? Consider the cause, the course, and the cure of AIDS.

I. The Cause of AIDS

Why is it that we have AIDS in this country? Why are so many people infected with the disease of AIDS? Is it a judgment of God on the sin of homosexuality? Is that why this terrible plague of AIDS curses the earth?

The answer to this question is not as easy as might first be imagined. When AIDS first appeared in the United States, it seemed to be isolated to the homosexual community. But now it has become clear that AIDS can be communicated through heterosexual activity as well. It can be communicated through the sharing of intravenous devices and through blood transfusions. Hemophiliacs can become the victims of AIDS. Infants can be born with AIDS if their mothers have the disease. Even through the purest of all products, a mother's milk, AIDS can be communicated if the mother is infected.

You cannot look at a person with AIDS and automatically conclude that the judgment of God has fallen on him because of his sin. It may or may not be the case. Remember what Jesus said about judging those who experience calamity: "Do you think those people. . . were more sinful than all the others. . . ? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:4,5). Is there anyone who has not sinned? Yet the wages of every sin is death. Every sinner deserves a death far worse than the death that the AIDS patient experiences. Remember the perspective of Paul the

apostle: "You who pass judgment do the same things" (Rom. 2:1). The homosexual violates the seventh commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." But is there any living adult who has not broken the seventh commandment in one way or another, by thought if not by deed?

God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world. That is not the reason Christ came into the world. The work of the gospel is not to condemn the world. Men stand condemned with or without committing the specific sin of homosexuality. Instead, God sent his son into the world to save the world. Christ came that the world through him might be saved from sin and all its consequences.

In a way similar to John 3:16 it may be said that God did not send his sons into the world to condemn the world. God does not send those who are his sons into the world to execute the judgment of condemnation on men. Instead, he sends his sons into the world that the world through their instrumentality might be saved.

In considering the cause of AIDS from a medical perspective, it may be said that AIDS is primarily a sexually communicated disease. By coming into intimate sexual relationship with a person who has the virus that causes AIDS you can acquire AIDS. The disease can be communicated whenever the virus that causes AIDS comes into contact with the mucous membrane of a person that does not have AIDS. If the soft, moist tissue in your mouth or in any other place on your body comes in contact with the virus of AIDS then you are in danger of contracting AIDS. In part, it is a matter of statistics. The more times you have intimate sexual contact with different people, the more likely you are to contract AIDS. The reason AIDS spreads so rapidly in the homosexual community is that homosexuals very often have many partners. Through being exposed intimately to a number of partners, the homosexual eventually contacts someone that has the AIDS virus. So medically speaking the source of AIDS is to be located primarily in any intimate sexual contact with another person who has the AIDS virus.

For this reason, it is actually the virus that causes AIDS that should be the point of concentration. A commission appointed by President Reagan reported in the late 1980s that the term AIDS should be regarded as obsolete, insofar as the source of this national problem is concerned. Attention must be focused instead on the Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus, or HIV. This virus that ultimately leads to AIDS attacks the immune system, and creates a deficiency that makes the victim vulnerable to other diseases. This observation leads to the second matter of concern, which is the course of AIDS. Having some understanding of the cause of AIDS, what can be said about the course of AIDS? What course does it follow both in the experience of the individual and in the experience of society?

II. The Course of AIDS

As the first cases of AIDS came to public attention, the

*The author is indebted to Christians in the Age of AIDS by Shepherd Smith and Anita Moreland Smith (Wheaton, IL 1990) for a great deal of the material in this article.

relation of the virus of AIDS itself was not immediately known. Adequate time had not elapsed for scientists to observe the full course of the disease. Now it is clear that once a person tests HIV positive, he eventually will have AIDS. If you have a cold, you will have a runny nose and a scratchy throat. If someone slugs you on the arm, you will have a purple bruise the next day. If you test HIV positive, then you will eventually die of AIDS or a related disease.

The major difference between AIDS and most other human diseases is the length of time it takes for the symptoms of the illness to manifest themselves. Typically it takes approximately eight to ten years after a person has contracted the virus for the symptoms to appear. A person may be the picture of health. He can run five miles, swim endless laps, participate vigorously in athletic competitions, and look great, strong, and attractive. But if that person tests HIV positive, in eight to ten years he will manifest the symptoms of AIDS. Barring a discovery of a cure, eventually he will die of the disease. If you have intimate sexual relations with this vigorous person at any time during those eight years, you have exposed yourself to the AIDS virus. You too could become an AIDS victim.

It is particularly important for young people to understand this aspect of the course that AIDS follows. The teenager naturally says, "Why should I worry about AIDS? None of my friends have AIDS, and I know some of them are sexually active."

Well, of course they do not manifest the symptoms of AIDS. A person may become sexually active between twelve and eighteen years of age. He contracts the AIDS virus, but doesn't know it. He continues in vigorous health until his middle or late twenties. He gives no sign that he has AIDS until he is well out of his teenage years. Yet during all that time, he may be infecting others.

You cannot conclude you are safe from AIDS on the basis of what is happening to your teenage friends. They may display all the vigorous characteristics of a healthy young person, and yet may be carrying the AIDS virus that can infect others.

Someone has appropriately said that the disease of AIDS is almost satanic in its manner of operation. Satan appears as an "angel of light," and the carrier of the AIDS virus masks as the picture of health for eight to ten years.

This "satanic" character is also seen in the way in which the AIDS virus attacks the human body. In a most insidious manner, it assaults the body's defense system. Normally the white blood cells act like the marines of the human body. They strike first against any threat to the body's systems. But the AIDS virus has the unique capacity to enter the white blood cells themselves. From that point of advantage it gradually begins to multiply. It's something like the Terminator. The enemy takes on the voice, the form of a friend. Aligning itself with the defenders of the body system, the AIDS virus actually is public enemy number one. Like an enemy wearing the uniform of a sentry, the AIDS virus po-

sitions itself so that it can host other enemies that will take over the fort.

So once a person tests HIV positive, the subsequent course of events are disastrous. As other viruses enter the body, the white blood corpuscles get excited. They multiply themselves as the first line of defense. But the effect of their multiplying actually is to increase the AIDS virus. The natural bodily reaction which should enhance the defense system of the body actually ends up multiplying a destructive element within the body.

The last stages of outworking of the AIDS virus is not pleasant to contemplate. The victim undergoes twelve to eighteen months of the worst kind of physical and emotional agonies that a human being can experience. That is AIDS! That is SLIM! That is the murderer!

The course of AIDS may be viewed not only from the perspective of its progress in the individual. It also may be viewed in terms of its advances throughout society.

All through history humanity has suffered from a number of different kinds of plagues. Mankind has suffered with the black plague, the bubonic plague, the yellow fever plague. In his novel entitled *The Plague*, Albert Camus analyzes the human reaction to a plague:

Everybody knows that pestilences have a way of recurring in the world; yet somehow we find it hard to believe in ones that crash down on our heads from a blue sky. There have been as many plagues as wars in history; yet always plagues and wars take people equally by surprise.

A pestilence isn't a thing made to man's measure; therefore we tell ourselves that pestilence is a mere bogey of the mind, a bad dream that will pass away. But it doesn't always pass away and, from one bad dream to another, it is men who pass away. . . no one will ever be free so long as there are pestilences (Albert Camus, *The Plague*, New York, 1948, pp. 36f. Cited in Shepherd Smith and Anita Moreland Smith, *Christians in the Age of AIDS*, p. 43).

Men today may refuse to recognize, it, but AIDS is a twentieth century plague. Already more Americans have died of HIV infection than all the Americans who died in the Viet Nam and Korean conflicts combined (Smith, op. cit., p. 43). Confronting a plague like AIDS humbles modern man. It brings us very low. How many millions will die before a cure is discovered? Calamity already is set for the next century. Those who are to die of AIDS in the year 2000 already have the seed of the pestilence planted in their system. A regular estimate is that approximately one million people in this country are now infected by the AIDS virus. The total population of this country is between two and three hundred million. That means that on the average, in a gathering of two to three hundred people, one of those people would test HIV positive. By the year 2000 that per-

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son would be dead of AIDS. In the meantime, everyone who had intimate sexual relations with him would be exposed to the AIDS virus.

The course of AIDS in society today is frightening to contemplate. It has been estimated that as much as half the population in some parts of the world will be infected by the AIDS virus. Yet until a cure is discovered, this modern-day plague will run its course. Ω

This article will be concluded in the next Session to Session.

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Conclusion

Tongues, as in the case of all the other workings of God in the world, finds its greatest significance when located properly in the history of redemption. The barrier-breaking experience of the apostolic church at pentecost allowed it to proclaim the gospel in all the languages of the world. When seen in its unique historical setting as a sign of transition to a world-wide gospel, tongues gives greatest glory to the universal gospel. While tongues served as a sign, the fuller role of inscripturated prophecy now must be allowed its permanent place of continuing priority as the church progresses from age to age, proclaiming the message of the prophetic scriptures in the power of the Holy Spirit to men of all nations. Ω

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