

By Paul S. Williams



## The Power of Symbol

**T**he baptistry was underneath the stage at the Noble Avenue Church of Christ in Akron, Ohio. Several elders removed the carpet-covered plywood, and there it was, eager to accept the weary traveler.

As a child I appreciated the symbol of baptism. When I was 5 I fell in the water at Round Lake Christian Assembly. It was the first time I remember having my head under water. About the time I came to the awful realization I couldn't breathe, Dad reached in and pulled me out. I was grateful. From that point on I had no difficulty appreciating baptism. A death and a blessed resurrection.

Several years later, when I went down below that stage floor and into the warm water, it was again my father who brought me up from the unbreathable deep. He gave me a hug, and after I was dry, little old ladies kissed my cheek and wiped tears from their eyes. The very next Sunday I partook of the Lord's Supper. Two more symbols whose meaning was not lost on an inquisitive child. Flesh and blood.

It is now 40 years later and my understanding of baptism and the Lord's Supper remain essentially

unchanged. Two beautiful pictures of one marvelous reality—the utter and absolute undoing of death.

The Restoration Movement is still in its adolescence, relatively speaking. We are a young fellowship. Adolescents sometimes jettison the family markers at the foundation of their identities. They want to blend in with their peers, with little regard for the rich history in their own DNA. Some in the Restoration Movement seem to have forgotten the incredible power embedded in two simple symbols—symbols that hold their meaning whether you're 5 or 95.

Not long ago I spoke at South-east Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky. It was a

very busy Sunday. In addition to my short presentation, Dave Stone preached, two separate offerings were taken, a men's choir sang, Communion was served, and people were baptized. All in one hour and eight minutes.

It can be done. A meaningful service that doesn't send the symbols packing to some hidden corner. I was very glad, because I figured somewhere in those services a 5-year-old child was, through those symbols, beginning to understand the very essence of the greatest story ever told.

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### Seen & Heard

Compiled by S. J. Dahlman

**Wheaton College**—Billy Graham's alma mater in suburban Chicago—adopted a new "community covenant" in February that allows social dancing on campus and permits faculty and staff to drink alcohol and smoke off campus. Alcohol and tobacco are still forbidden on campus, and dances must avoid "immodest, sinfully erotic, or harmfully violent" behavior.

—The Associated Press

**About 10 percent of American teens named Christian music as**

**their favorite genre** on the radio, according to a survey by Teenage Research Unlimited. That's about the same number as for classic rock, but is behind styles such as current hits, hip-hop and rap, R&B, alternative and hard rock, and country. CCM is more popular than oldies, dance/techno, soft rock, and jazz.

—American Demographics magazine, December 2002–January 2003

**In every year since 1840, life expectancy has grown.** In 1840, Swedish women had the longest life

expectancy, at 45 years. The longest today is 85 years, among Japanese women. The number of people in the United States older than 100 has been increasing by more than 7 percent per year since the 1950s. Half of American girls born today may live to be 100 years old.

—The Washington Post, January 2003

"I know God will not give me anything I can't handle. **I just wish that He didn't trust me so much.**"

—Mother Teresa, Albanian nun, 1910–1997