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BE FULL OF JOY NOW!

STEVEN SANDERSON

Delight yourselves in the Lord; yes, find your joy in him at all times. Have a reputation for gentleness, and never forget the nearness of your Lord.

Don't worry over anything whatever; tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer, and the peace of God, which transcends human understanding, will keep constant guard over your hearts and minds as they rest in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:4-7).

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord for such delightful words! Yet too often Christians fail to develop the joy Paul talks about. Maybe a closer look at joy in this and other passages will encourage a more joyful attitude in us.

Paul says rejoice in the Lord always. Why? Because the Lord is near. He is coming soon—praise Jesus!—just as he promised, to take all Christians home with him to glory. But there is also another promise in Jesus—that of answered prayers:

If you live your life in me, and my words live in your hearts, you can ask for whatever you like and it will come true for you (Jn. 15:7).

The very thought of such a promise probably brought shouts of joy from the Christians at Philippi. In fact, it should to every one who believes in Christ who made these promises. If a person, then, is truly “in the Lord,” he should “rejoice always.”

... in the Lord

The stipulation “in the Lord” is the key to the rejoicing. As the branches must be in the vine to receive the life it gives, so must we be grafted into Christ and live continually in that fellowship. The eunuch (Acts 8) is a good example of one who is perplexed and puzzled while on the outside, but goes

on his way rejoicing once he is in the Lord. The natural man has no joy in the fact that Jesus is coming soon, nor does he have the hope of glory or the promise of his prayers being answered. Such thoughts only cause him despair. But to the Christian they mean joy. So Paul is saying that a Christian should always be in the Lord, and, since he is, he should always have cause for rejoicing.

These are indeed beautiful thoughts, but mere observation reveals that many Christians are seldom truly joyful.

... joyful suffering

First, what about sufferings? Surely the Christian is not supposed to rejoice under adversity. The answer resounds, this time from the apostle James: a commanding *Yes!*

When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance (Jas. 1:2-3).

It is a joyful thing for the Christian to face trials because it shows that God trusts him—trusts him to be able to be steadfast, patient, enduring. It is also God's way of helping him to grow up. Praise God then. Joyful suffering is a normal part of discipleship.

It should be made clear that there is no implication that the Christian will never and should never suffer pain or feel sorrow. These emotions are a part of the Christian life as well as any other life; even the Lord wept and expressed sorrow. The reference here is to adversity brought about by the

Christian life and to the *overall* feeling and expression of joy that should be experienced by the Christian.

... the privilege of prayer

In the verses following those cited above joy is once again connected to prayer. What a privilege the Christian has, to be able always to talk to someone—no, not just someone, but God, his loving heavenly Father! What joy can be found in the release of one spirit to another, to feel love flowing like a tide back and forth! What tear-bringing joy to know that He hears the Christian's every sigh and understands!

The Spirit of God not only maintains this hope within us, but helps us in our present limitations. For example, we do not know how to pray worthily as sons of God, but his Spirit within us is actually praying for us in those agonizing longings which never find words. And God who knows the heart's secrets understands, of course, the Spirit's intention as he prays for those who love God (Rom. 8:26-27).

What peace comes to the child of God when he realizes that all things—all things—work together for good to them that love the Lord.

We know that to those who love God, who are called according to his plan, everything that happens fits into a pattern for good (Rom. 8:28).

Notice that all things—the good and the bad—work together; not the good to help and the bad to harass; no, they work together for good to them that love the Lord. Here is another promise which no human philosophy can validly claim. All the woes of Lazarus ultimately end in Paradise. Heaven is ultimately in store for every child of God.

We have already seen that God uses the bad as well as the good to bring the individual Christian to maturity. Suffering also

brings perfection to the church, the body.

So it happens that if one member suffers all the members suffer with it, and if one member is honored all the members share a common joy (1 Cor. 12:26).

As the individual parts of the body become strengthened, the whole body becomes stronger and healthier. Is that not a reason to rejoice? And, as a part of that body, by reason of his salvation, the Christian hopes to share in the glory of God at the coming of Christ.

Through him we have confidently entered into this new relationship of grace, and here we take our stand, in happy certainty of the glorious things he has for us in the future.

This doesn't mean, of course, that we have only a hope of future joys—we can be full of joy here and now even in our trials and troubles (Rom. 5:2-3).

Paul also says the Christian should rejoice because God's love and the sacrifice of Jesus have done for him what he could not do for himself: that is, justified him and reconciled him to God.

Nor, I am sure, is this a matter of bare salvation—we may hold our heads high in the light of God's love because of the reconciliation which Christ has made (Rom. 5:11).

... defending the faith

Another problem of finding joy centers, strangely enough, in the concept of “defenders of the faith.” Many a young person in Jesus has been put almost in a state of despair by the merciless verbal contests between opposing brotherhood gladiators. This kind of “defending” usually turns out to be a masochistic attack, a self-inflicting wound in the spiritual body which destroys joy. It is also pitiable to think of the great burden these leaders-turned-tail-chasers actually have on their back. Praise God that just

as Jesus conquered sin and death, he can keep his own from harm.

I have become absolutely convinced that neither death nor life, neither messenger of Heaven nor monarch of earth, neither what happens today nor what may happen tomorrow, neither a power from on high nor a power from below, nor anything else in God's whole world has any power to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! (Rom. 8:38-39).

. . . our kind of war

Some will surely reply, "But what about the armor of warfare? Aren't we here to do battle?" That is true, but we do not make war in the usual sense. Paul says the Christian is at war within his own body—

In my mind I am God's willing servant, but in my own nature I am bound fast, as I say, to the law of sin and death (Rom. 7:23) —

and against Satan in spiritual warfare—

For our fight is not against any physical enemy; it is against organizations and powers that are spiritual. We are up against the unseen power that controls this dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil (Eph. 6:12).

However, the victory is already won.

*When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive,
And gave gifts unto men (Eph. 4:8).*

The Christian need not attack; he has only to stand firm in the armor which God supplies:

Put on God's complete armor so that you can successfully resist all the devil's methods of attack (Eph. 6:11).

All the Christian has to do is put it on:

Therefore you must wear the whole armor of God that you may be able to resist evil in its day of power, and that even when you have fought to a standstill you may still stand your ground. Take your stand then with truth as your belt, righteousness your breastplate, the gospel of peace firmly on your feet, salvation as your helmet and in your hand the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Above all be sure you take faith as your shield, for

it can quench every burning missile the enemy hurls at you (Eph. 6:13-17).

The only offensive weapon the Christian has is the hand sword of truth, actually probably to keep Satan at a distance. He cannot get close to the well-defended Christian because the sword of truth, wielded by the Spirit, points him out as a trespasser:

We are God's children and only the man who knows God hears our message; what we say means nothing to the man who is not himself a child of God. This gives us a ready means of distinguishing the true from the false (1 Jn. 4:6).

Therefore Satan must from a distance make his aggression with fiery darts. The Christian is safely protected by his God-given faith. Praise the Lord for his completeness; he grants us amnesty from our friend-turned-enemy: Satan.

How humorous it then becomes to think of a Christian running around, waving his sword, and probably leaving his flank open. Christ is conqueror; he is Lord and King in the spiritual realm. Therefore, as Christians are in a spiritual warfare, they need not attack, but only stand on the land of their King. Again, praise the Lord that the Christian need not personally whip Satan. He need only stand in Jesus, believe the Lord, and rejoice.

The Spirit . . . produces in human life fruits such as these: love, joy . . . (Gal. 5:22).

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit must be present in order for the fruit to be present.

All praise to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Why should any Christian lack cause to praise and rejoice seeing he has so many promised blessings in the Lord, both now and for eternity?

Be happy in your faith at all times. Never stop praying. Be thankful, whatever the circumstances may be (1 Thess. 5:16-18). ●

THE CHALLENGE TO CHANCE IT

CRAIG M. WATTS

Recently in a small gift shop a friend of mine pointed out a greeting card that impressed me greatly. It was so simple, yet so profound. On the cover of the card there was nothing but a drawing of a small turtle. Inside were the words, "**Behold the turtle! He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out.**"

Christ wants men to stick their necks out; he calls us to chance it. When Jesus called Matthew from the profitable and secure position of a publican, he was saying, "Take a chance." When he told the ruler who asked about the inheritance of eternal life, "Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor . . . come follow me," he was in essence saying, "Stick your neck out. I have more to offer than you have to give. My promises are true. Take a chance."

Yet most people of the world certainly do not look upon the Christian life as being adventurous. Quite often they see the disciple's life as being nothing more than an existence centered in Sunday school and "being good." The believer seems safe enough in this world; he is neither threatened by nor threatening to the world. Christianity has been tamed. Rather than motivating thought and action, the Christian religion seems to stifle anything that contributes to an exciting, adventurous life. That's the way the world sees it. But even worse, that's the way many "average Christians" see it! Too many have their heads pulled safely within their shells, being very content with this lame, uneventful, but secure kind of life.

Gerald Kennedy once related a story that illustrates very well the predicament of any Christian who has withdrawn from the adventurous life. He once knew a woman who was terrified of germs. She had read too many articles about how these beasties would sneak up and attack the unaware. She constantly waged a battle with bacteria, taking every precaution possible to avoid consuming any of these miniature monsters. Her house was filled with disinfectants and gargles. She sought to sanitize everything she came in contact with. For her, even eating was an ordeal. She was afraid to take a chance. She did not want to "walk by faith"; she wanted to walk by sight all the way. Fear had overcome faith in her life.

One can only wonder how many Christians there are left who have not let fear triumph over faith. Many have no understanding of Paul's words: "We walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage . . ." (2 Cor. 5:7-8). Too many are walking by the faith of another rather than a faith that they themselves have found. They shake with fear every time they take a step. The very idea of having an independent thought or doing an unorthodox act makes them quake. These people want to travel only on the well-beaten paths and safe streets. They want others to first clear the way. They want someone else to dynamite the spots that might be troublesome. They prefer to stay behind rather than to take a chance.

But there is a joy to be experienced by the man who chooses to find the way for

himself. He will gladly risk making a wrong decision, realizing that no one can lead an adventurous life without occasionally being misled. With courage he will accept the extra trials and temptations that an explorer must face. The adventurous man may stumble more often than the careful man, but he will make far more progress. The man who believes it is more important to draw closer to truth than to be free from error will not let his mind dwell upon the moments of despair, but rather he will set his eyes upon the days of delight. He will not spend his time weeping over the dead-end streets but he will constantly rejoice over the progress made in the direction of the Way.

The great church historian, Kenneth Scott Latourette, in his autobiography, compares his adventurous life to Kipling's *The Explorer*.

As, in my eighties, I look back across the years, I seem to see that, sometimes reluctantly, I have been breaking new trails. Again and again I have been on a frontier with others, but more than once mine began as a solitary exploration, and for me "a voice as bad as conscience" rang interminable changes on one everlasting whisper, day and night repeated thus: "Something hidden, go and find it; go and look beyond the ranges. Something lost beyond the ranges, lost and waiting for you, go."*

But why do so many who claim to be followers of Jesus reject his call to an adventurous life? I suggest three reasons:

(1) *Some men are simply lazy.* They just don't want to put out the effort required of one who chooses to blaze his own trail.

They believe in progress through patience; that is, they patiently wait for someone else to make the progress, then they follow with almost no trouble at all.

(2) Another reason many Christians do not accept Christ's challenge to live an adventurous life is that *they refuse to see themselves as foreigners.* They look upon this world as their home. Believers need to realize that we are not living in this world as natives, but we are, in a sense, invaders. Our mission is to overcome the world. Our home is with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8). While we live in this world we can rightfully be thought of as strangers in a strange land.

(3) A great hindrance to one who seeks to accept Christ's call is *a lack of knowledge concerning God's grace.* Without a sufficient knowledge of the grace of God one cannot accept the challenge of an adventurous life for fear that a mistake will result in destruction. We cannot live life courageously until we cease to look upon God as being what J.B. Phillips called the Resident Policeman. When we accept the call to take a chance, we need assurance that God is going to forgive us when we make a mistake. Without grace we dare not take a step; therefore, it is important to offer not only God's challenge, but also God's promise to forgive us as we stumble along the way (1 Jn. 1:7).

Jesus promises an abundant life, not a boring life. Yet if one stays withdrawn in a shell he can never hope to experience the joy and fulfillment that the Lord promises. The Way of Christ is a way of true adventure, but like the turtle, *we can never progress until we stick our neck out.* ●

* Kenneth Scott Latourette, *Beyond the Ranges* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1967), 5. Used by permission.

Community in Worship

HOY LEDBETTER

It is apparent that the early church regarded the establishment of community as a prerequisite to acceptable worship. Not only was it important to them that a common sentiment prevail, but it was thought necessary to involve each one present at the services as intimately as possible with all the others. "The thought that the Church at worship is an accidental convergence in one place of a number of isolated individuals who practise, in hermetically sealed compartments, their own private devotional exercises, is foreign to the New Testament picture" (Ralph P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, 135).

I have previously written of communication, particularly confession, as an essential of community. It is also, therefore, an essential of worship. Jesus himself required that reconciliation precede worship (Mt. 5: 23-24), and this was obviously emphasized in the early church. In this article I intend to discuss three elements of early Christian worship which are largely ignored today. Perhaps we will discover that their disappearance has resulted in our spiritual impoverishment. Although I do not believe that everything we do has to be exactly what the early Christians did, their success in achieving community challenges us to look carefully at their procedures.

THE AGAPE

Oscar Cullmann is certainly right in saying, "It may be taken as agreed that the oldest celebrations of the Lord's Supper took

place in the setting of an actual common meal" (*Early Christian Worship*, 14). Hence I feel no particular obligation to argue the point. This common meal later became known as the Agape (or Love Feast); and, although it is mentioned by name only once or twice in the New Testament (Jude 12 and possibly 2 Pet. 2:13), its existence is implied in every passage that implies the Lord's supper. It was called a love feast because it was the means by which brotherly love could be manifested in sharing a common table.

The Lord's supper, of course, began during a meal, the Passover. The two passages in Acts which refer to it (2:42-46; 20:7-11) are quite clear that a similar connection was maintained in the church. Acts 2:46 says that "breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food . . ." Commentators are generally agreed that this refers to the Agape in connection with which the Lord's supper was celebrated. In Acts 20:11 the words *and eaten* are almost invariably taken to indicate something different from what the preceding *had broken the bread* means. F.F. Bruce is typical of many: "This refers to their taking food in addition to the eucharistic breaking of bread."

But the fullest account of the Agape is found in 1 Cor. 11. To those of us who are unaccustomed to linking the eucharist with an ordinary social meal the Corinthians may appear to be intolerably irreverent. But their behavior, wrong though it was, makes more sense when it is viewed in terms of the Agape. At any rate, some of them were arriving at their meetings earlier than others.

Since they had brought their own supper (the usual practice), they began eating before the tardy arrived. Perhaps they were wealthier members with a touch of selfishness who saw nothing wrong with going ahead and eating the food which they, after all, had provided. Possibly some were too eager to begin the more exciting parts of the service such as speaking in tongues. Or it could be that there were certain people they just did not care to eat with, even if they were their brothers in Christ. Whatever the reason, by the time the tardy arrived the supper was gone and some of the punctual were actually intoxicated.

Paul's condemnation of this situation was not based on the fact that they had a supper, but rather that the supper they had was not a *Lord's* supper. They had forgotten the host, and they were despising his body. "When you meet together," he said, "it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?" The last question exposes their problem: they despised the church.

Paul says later, "Any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself." Since the Corinthians were "without a proper sense of the Body" (as Moffatt translates), they were in no position to recognize the Lord as host and therefore could not eat the *Lord's* supper. I cannot avoid the conclusion that *the body* in this passage has a twofold meaning. It would suggest first, in a eucharistic context, the body which suffered on the cross. But the body is also the church, as the next chapter shows, and that interpretation is

particularly appropriate in this context.

Christ was represented among them by the elements of the supper, but he was also present in the persons of other Christians, whom they were despising. They needed to understand that the Lord's supper could not be a private meal for their own little groups. In eating it they had to recognize and manifest their involvement with the rest of the church. The solution Paul proposed was this: "When you come together to eat, wait for one another" (v. 33).

If in our eating today we fail to respect the fellowship aspect of the church—if we fail to see Christ in all the other members of the body and to respect his presence there—we will bring condemnation upon ourselves. There can be no love feast without manifest love of the brethren. There can be no Lord's supper without an awareness of the Lord's presence—in the members of his body. If we will enter our worship with an appreciation of the significance of our fellow worshippers as temples in which the Lord dwells, we will avoid the factiousness of the Corinthians and find our services more thrilling experiences.

Unfortunately the Corinthian abuse of the fellowship meal was not the last. Jude speaks certainly, and Peter probably, of those who further disgraced the love feasts by their licentious behavior. Finally the Agape and the Eucharist were separated, and the Agape practically disappeared. (William Barclay thoroughly documents this decline in his *The Lord's Supper*.) But although such abuses were undoubtedly damaging, I do not believe they were the fundamental reason for the decline of the Agape. Of much greater significance was the fact that well-meaning Christians began to move the Lord's supper from the table to the altar. Tragically it became a sacrifice instead of a

meal. J. C. Lambert is correct in saying: the strongest influence of all would come from the growth of the ceremonial and sacerdotal spirit by which Christ's simple institution was slowly turned into a mysterious priestly sacrifice. To Christ Himself it had seemed natural and fitting to institute the Supper at the close of a social meal. But when this memorial Supper had been transformed into a repetition of the sacrifice of Calvary by the action of the ministering priest, the ascetic idea became natural that the Eucharist ought to be received fasting, and that it would be sacrilegious to link it on to the observances of an ordinary social meal (*International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, I, 70).

But whatever the reason, the church has lost — perhaps irrecoverably — a valuable vehicle for expressing Christian brotherhood.

THE AMEN

In my opinion the congregational Amen, which was an important feature in the early Christian meetings, is urgently needed in the churches today. Its importance may be derived from 1 Cor. 14:16: "If you bless with the spirit, how can any one in the position of an outsider say the 'Amen' to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying?" The definite article ("*the* Amen") shows that it was the customary response of the congregation to what was said, by which the members gave their assent and made the words of another their own. J. H. Thayer (*Lexicon*) comments:

It was a custom, which passed from the synagogues into the Christian assemblies, that when he who had read or discoursed had offered up a solemn prayer to God, the others in attendance responded *Amen*, and thus made the substance of what was uttered their own: 1 Co. xiv.16 (*to amen*, the well-known response *Amen*).

But Amen was more than a response to prayer; it was, in keeping with the Old Testament examples, the worshipper's assent to whatever he heard from the lips of other be-

lievers, and it had the meaning of "so it is" as well as "so be it." So by the Amen all the members of the church took part in the liturgy; and this involvement of the whole church in the worship was important. Compare the following description of a church service by Justin Martyr:

. . . the Memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the Prophets are read as long as time allows. When the reader is finished the leader delivers an address through which he exhorts and requires them to follow noble teachings and examples. Then we all rise and send heavenwards prayers. And, as said before, as soon as we are finished praying, bread and wine mixed with water are laid down and the leader too prays and gives thanks, as powerfully as he can, and the people join in, in saying the "Amen"; and now comes the distribution to each and the common meal on the gifts that have been brought and to those who are not present it is sent by the hands of the deacons (*Apology*, I, 67).

Jerome later describes the loud congregational Amen as "resounding like thunder," which corresponds to the synagogue custom of saying the Amen with the full power of the voice.

It is clear from these references that going to church in the early centuries was anything but a spectator sport. In contrast, our congregations, instead of "resounding like thunder," are often as quiet as the falling dew. How much more rewarding the services would be for us if we participated with the Amen, thereby expressing our concurrence with and making our own the prayers, sermons, comments, readings, and songs!

THE HOLY KISS

The kiss as a sign of brotherhood may be much more difficult for us to accept than the Agape or the Amen because it involves action which many will find distasteful in

itself. As a greeting it is not only rather uncommon in our society, but it can easily be misinterpreted because of erotic implications. Nevertheless, one is inclined to agree with John Murray: "It betrays an unnecessary reserve, if not loss of the ardour of the church's first love, when the holy kiss is conspicuous by its absence from the Western Church" (*Romans*, II, 232).

The "holy kiss" (or "kiss of love") is commanded five times in the New Testament: Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; and 1 Pet. 5:14. The scriptural authority for it is therefore substantial.

In addition to the New Testament references, the holy kiss is supported in other early Christian documents. For example, Justin Martyr says, "When we have ceased from prayer, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the presiding brother bread and a cup of wine" (*Apology*, I, 65). This puts the holy kiss directly in the Christian worship. However, the New Testament does not connect the kiss with worship (at least not in the liturgical sense), although it does not rule it out either. If it was not at first a part of the service, it was at least used as a greeting when the saints met.

The exact nature of the kiss is not known. Views range from members of the same sex kissing on the cheek to indiscriminate kissing on the lips.

The kiss was obviously an important means of establishing community, in order to prepare the church for acceptable worship. Plummer quotes Cyril of Jerusalem: "... this kiss blends souls one with another, and solicits for them entire forgiveness. Therefore this kiss is the sign that our souls are mingled together and have banished all remembrance of wrong (Mt. v.23). The kiss therefore is reconciliation, and for this rea-

son is holy." Although he is much later, his comments seem to reflect the New Testament teaching.

It would be hard to deny that the need which the holy kiss supplied for the early church exists today. Then why is it not used? It may be argued that its erotic implications would make its reinstatement of questionable value. But surely the early church was aware of this. We may say that the kiss was merely a convention of time and place and that it has been adequately replaced by other conventions in keeping with social changes. This is reasonable, but it raises some questions of exegesis and authority. If we are to ignore five direct commands on the basis of social change, what else in the New Testament may we set aside on the same basis? Could the manner and time of eating the Lord's supper, the functions of church leadership, and even baptism be altered or replaced by our own indigenous conventions? These questions cannot be ignored.

The most distressing possible reason for the decline of the kiss is that we just do not love our brothers enough to want to kiss them; that we know that our kisses would not be holy but hypocritical; that our affections are too narrow to permit us to release ourselves to unfeigned brotherhood and unrestrained worship. Let us pray that this will not be true.

Scriptural and satisfying worship requires the greatest participation and fellowship of which we are capable. Our generation has not chosen to employ some of the practices the apostolic church used to achieve and maintain this fellowship. Perhaps we have succeeded well enough. But if we feel ourselves to be somewhat behind them in terms of community, we might do well to "get back to the Bible." ●

To Whom Shall We Go?

JOHN SMITH

Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

The ultimate realization of the futility of man's attempt to turn from himself to something greater or higher, without that greater or higher something being God, is here expressed by Peter. Throughout literature, philosophy and even science we see man's attempts to transcend himself, to grasp the ultimate ethic, to solve the basic problems which plague his society. Many plans have evolved and many solutions have been offered, but, strangely enough, those which appear most workable and appealing always closely resemble that with which every Christian is familiar: the plan of God.

When man realizes that he is stuck with himself and that for better or for worse he cannot be more than man and therefore can only offer a man's solution to a man's problem, he consequently either despairs of his salvation or turns to something greater than himself. When the disciples of Christ began to turn away from him because his teaching had offended their sense of reality and propriety, he turned to his most dedicated followers and asked if they too would go away. Peter immediately saw what too few have cared to see: that there was no place to go, no one to turn to, except another man's philosophy. And what possible comfort could lie in a man's philosophy?

No man can transcend his tie with humanity and his consequent inabilities. Al-

though he can consider life, and death, and eternity, he cannot give any reliable information about either of them. What man has lived enough and experienced enough to tell another about life in a clear, knowledgeable and consistent way? More important, what man can tell another about death, seeing that all who have experienced it are strangely silent about its effects? And eternity—what man can grasp it, much less clearly instruct others concerning it? Many have chosen to say that eternity doesn't exist, or that death is the final conclusion to every man, but is this testimony to be accepted as credible from a creature so prone to mistakes as man? Shall one who cannot solve life's simplest problems be relied upon to give unequivocal answers concerning matters which transcend him as light transcends darkness?

Although many great minds have suggested much that seems plausible, the fact that the greatest do not agree with each other destroys the confidence we might have placed in them. In addition, when we begin to investigate the personal lives of great philosophers and discover the enormous inconsistencies which exist, realizing the gap between their philosophy and their life somehow lessens the force of their teachings. In contrast, everything we know about Christ's life harmonizes so clearly with all that he taught that it is impossible to separate his words from his example. Christ not only taught a good philosophy, but he proved that it would work by living it.

The simple but profound truth that Peter realized was that in turning from the Lord he could only turn to himself; and he knew too well what an exercise in futility his own philosophical wanderings were. He realized his failings as a husband, as a father, and even as a fisherman. If he could not ac-

complish these tasks with great competence, how could he hope to deal with death and eternity with any degree of assurance? Peter's reality was that the Lord had "the words of life." Blessed is he who seeks for truth where truth may be found, and for life where the source of life is. ●

Who Will Put the Streams Together?

RAY YEARWOOD

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article is valuable, not just because it presents an ecumenical challenge, but because it reflects a situation that is quite common. By sharing the experience of the Yearwoods, perhaps we can appreciate a little better what is happening to some of our brethren.

The following is written not just because my wife and I find ourselves in a particular situation but because many others face the same dilemma and must feel the same uncertainty. I write trying to express the mental turmoil that results from attempting to be truly faithful to God and to one's own conscience and convictions while at the same time trying to remain in a church he loves and has been raised in — the Church of Christ.

My present search for God really began in my early childhood. Although I thought of

preaching during adolescence, I pursued engineering and obtained a B.S. degree in electrical engineering. While in the army, two years after the B.S., I finally decided that I must preach, because I saw a church that seemed to be dead and indifferent, and which needed to be brought closer to what I saw in the New Testament.

After two years at David Lipscomb College and a B.A. in Bible and three years at Vanderbilt University Divinity School and a Master of Divinity, I set out with my wife to our first fulltime work with a Cincinnati congregation.

Things were going well until I was asked by the elders to do a series of sermons on the Holy Spirit. This occurred about two months after I began preaching. I had studied the Spirit only shallowly before, and

I knew I needed a great deal of study before I could present a good series of sermons. After three or four months my eyes began to open to the fact that what I had always been taught about the Spirit did not appear to be true — tradition was falling and God was showing me that the dead, indifferent church that had drawn me to the pulpit in the first place was only to be renewed by the power of the Spirit, including all of the spiritual gifts discussed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 through 14.

Once the subject was discussed with the elders, I was forced to resign. After a period of job seeking and changes, I have now settled into a most rewarding job with a county welfare department adjacent to Cincinnati. For the last year my wife and I have continued to worship with a small Church of Christ in Cincinnati but have become increasingly dissatisfied with the lack of spirituality and real love and trust in God.

A short while ago, a year after resigning here in Cincinnati, we were disfellowshipped because we continued to teach, with a group of friends, that God can still give tongues, heal, etc. Thus we faced another milestone—should we continue to stay with the church or search further?

God, I believe, finally made me see that we must leave. Many times I had said that I could not teach people around me what I believed the Bible said and then take them to the Church of Christ to be disfellowshipped; thus, for a while, in limbo, I was doing no teaching. A small voice within finally said, "If you cannot teach, you have no business staying with the church. A Christian has no business tying himself to a situation where he cannot teach others about Jesus."

So my wife and I left the church we love — the church in which we thought we

would spend our lives and raise our children. But now we face the same decision all others like us face — where shall we go? Shall we try other groups or shall we start a house church of our own?

At present, though we are still searching, we have chosen to worship with the Assembly of God. Oh! how these people bless our soul. Oh! how they are teaching us to praise God. Oh! how they are showing us what faith is all about. Oh! how God thrills my soul when I speak and sing in tongues!

But we face a dilemma — because of our background and because of Biblical understanding. We agree with all the major teachings of the Assembly except that of baptism. You can see why this would bother our whole being, because of the importance the Church of Christ and the Bible places on that act of faith. The Assembly baptizes to be obedient to Christ and because they are already saved — not for remission of sins (Acts 2:38) or to become a part of the body of Christ (Rom. 6 and Gal. 3:26-27).

Thus I find myself standing at the junction of two great religious movements in America — the Restoration and Holiness. *Why can't someone put them together?* The Biblicism of the Restoration stream flowing together with the faith and spiritual gifts of the Holiness stream would result in a truly restored New Testament church. Why doesn't someone pull the two streams together? Maybe God is waiting for Isaiah: "Whom shall I send? Who will go for me?" Who will say, "Here I am; send me" (Isaiah 6:8)?

There are many Isaiahs in this generation who stand at the junction of the Restoration and Holiness streams. Who will put them together so that the streams can flow into an ocean for God—an ocean of a truly restored church? Who will answer the call of God? ●

Letters

NOTE: Since it is impossible for us to print all the letters we receive, they should be as brief as possible. Anonymous letters will not be considered, but names will be withheld on request.

The role of rock

I was considering submitting an article along the same lines of Allen Holden's "Christ Is Proclaimed in Rock Music" but did not mind finding myself opted by his piece. His thesis was much the same as mine, my only addition would have been mentioning that modern rock has its roots in gospel music.

The article, strong in concept, was somewhat weak in content. I agree with his spotlighting of the two Webber-Rice albums, *Joseph* and *Superstar*, but I question his use of the other three selections. The reference to Jesus in James Taylor's "Fire and Rain" is only peripheral and in the context of the song (Taylor's stay in a mental institution) is probably not a conventional appeal to Jesus for help. "Put Your Hand in the Hand" is intrinsically an acceptable song, but it has been scored by the underground press (Los Angeles Free Press, June 11) as just another commercial effort making it on the "Jesus bandwagon."

Allen should have ignored "One Toke Over the Line" completely. A toke is a drag on a marijuana joint, and Mary, of course, is the common euphemism for grass. The song was banned on a number of AM stations. In the tricky innuendos and euphemisms so common in rock music, one should be careful of imposing pedantic interpretations on lyrics that seem "not very specific" and to which an interpretation can be applied that is "conjecture at best." Yes, attention is being drawn to Jesus, but is this the kind of attention we need? I think Allen should have devoted this space to some of the songs in his footnote, as well as mentioning songs like "Let It Be," Dylan's "Three Angels" or "Father of Night."

Even with these shortcomings, the article was refreshing, and perhaps as much as any article in any of our publications indicates that the churches

of Christ are at least coming into the '60's now.

Perhaps your readership would be interested in Virgil Caine, a new rock group with three members belonging to the church of Christ. Their first album should be released late this year. Some of their religious songs are as profound and beautiful as anything getting airplay today. They have the potential of becoming a significant, minor force in the rock world.

AUGUST SPIES

Religious Editor, *Global Village*
Riner, Virginia

Before you publish articles such as "Christ Is Proclaimed in Rock Music," it would be well if you learned if the Christ of the inspired Word is the Christ being presented. Before approving such rock operas as *Jesus Christ Superstar*, you should be informed about its origin, its blasphemous and sacri-religious utterances.

BOB COOKE

Louisville, Kentucky

Pommeling Pamela

Thanks very much for Noel Lemon's article "Even My Hands . . ." and for Perry Cotham's "I Must Care." They are truly excellent articles—positive, beautiful, meaningful—and I appreciated them.

No thanks for articles like Pamela Kemp's. Some will laugh and enjoy it, but I doubt that it will help any one. I think sarcastic, bitter toned articles tend to polarize us rather than bring us together. I just do not think her attitude is Christian, but I do understand, because it was once my attitude. She is probably in her 20's as I was 20 years ago when I first discovered all those narrow minded, conservative "dum dum" people in the Church of Christ with whom I had grown up! [She should] look around her among other denominations of the Lord's people (whoever they are) and look well. . . . to see if she can find some perfect group of people with which to associate herself as she worships and serves her Lord. . . . it is a hopeless search on this earth, even if she should try to worship in a room full of mirrors!

All I can really say is to God when I ask him to please extend his mercy toward all of us who believe ourselves to be His and toward all other poor creatures as well, and to Pamela I would say, "Find a group with whom you can worship

and serve compatibly and love them anyway in a positive, constructive way in spite of their faults as Christ loves you, and don't make fun of them for it will only alienate them and emphasize the difference between you and them." It is better to build on what we have in common. Unity in every point of doctrine is not really necessary, but unity of love in our hearts is vital. Thanks to God's grace we do not always have to be right about every point of doctrine, but without the harmony of love in our hearts, we are doomed to discord and death.

Thank you for *Integrity*. I will enclose a check to help express my appreciation.

BECKY SMITH

Library, Middle Tennessee State University
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

In your June-July, 1971, issue of *Integrity*, Pamela Kemp said many things that need consideration. I agree with her viewpoint almost without exception, but I question her wisdom in selecting satire as her mode of expression. Her purpose in writing the article was, I hope, to reach people who are actually following these guidelines, consciously or not, and to demonstrate to them the ridiculous logic of them. Was she successful? I seriously doubt it. To persons like myself, who are in agreement already, the article was well-written, amusing and read with condescension, chuckling over the poor, simple folk who do such things without being able to see their inconsistencies. If Miss Kemp hoped to reach the persons who need to alter their views, however, I doubt that they were reached. Making fun and biting sarcasm rarely change a person's thinking. It does further antagonize those who are following a practice for which change is sought, however. Christ's way is still the best way — admonish and correct error in love. Honey attracts better than vinegar every time.

JERRIE JOHNSON

Flint, Michigan

. . . if she addresses herself only to certain excesses and unfortunate positions on the part of some, I am inclined to be sympathetic. I would advise, however, that her provocative method of presenting her views, while surely finding favor with those who already agree, is hardly likely to convince those whom she would (presumably) like to persuade.

VAN LEDBETTER

Russellville, Arkansas

In favor of

The lead editorial for June-July was very well stated. You have come up with an analysis of problems in the present Church of Christ which will be difficult to refute. In fact it is difficult to suggest any future themes for *Integrity*, for you have done a remarkable job.

RALPH SINCLAIR

Cincinnati, Ohio

Since learning of your publication through an ad in *Mission*, my wife and I look forward to each and every issue. The format of *Integrity* has filled a slot that has been vacant. We are inspired and uplifted by the articles and admire the frank and mature approach presented.

The Lord has blessed us through your works—may He bless you richly in continuing them.

RICHARD N. WATSON

Edwards, California

Although it would probably be forbidden to put your magazine in the tract rack in my congregation, it is nevertheless a real breath of fresh air to me and my family who wish to be just Christians. Your articles serve as proof that we do have men of "integrity" in the Lord's Church who do not fear facing truths and opinions in a most objective manner. Thank you for one of the most informative and enjoyable pieces of literature that I receive.

NAME WITHHELD

Maryland

Advice to our writers

I now regularly receive your publication and appreciate much of what you have to say. May I add, however, that along with the integrity you strive to maintain, that you maintain a spirit of love—lest you become guilty of the same misdeed you (and many others) frequently point out in our forefathers in the church. It is no credit to criticize another's lack of love, unlovingly.

I appreciate your work and pray that you will be blessed in all things, giving God the glory.

MIKE SPRADLIN

Smyrna, Georgia

● *We promise to do our very best — Editor.*