

*INTEGRITY is published each month and seeks to encourage all believers in Christ to strive to be one, to be pure, and to be honest and sincere in word and in deed, among themselves and toward all men.*

## Integrity

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the following relevant articles: Betty Haymes, "Turning from the Womb," 9/72; Norman L. Parks, "Response to Cecil May's 'Women and Prayer,'" 6/73, and "Integrity and the ERA," 3/75; Cecil May, Jr., "Women and Prayer," 5/73; Rosaann McArthur, "God's Men, Women, and Donkeys," 10/73; Michael Hall, "Women and the Assembly," 11-12/73; Sarah Nelson, "Correcting the Record," 1/74; Jean Salners, "Full Personhood for Women," 1/74; Janet Allison, "A Woman's Response to Women's Lib," 9/74; Lillian Ledbetter, "Amnesty for Apple-Eaters," 10/74; Lillian Holcomb, "A Study Relevant to Women, Religion, and Counseling Psychology," 4/75; Harold Key, "Another Look at Integrity and the ERA," 6/75; and Carol Frederick, "Another Look at Integrity and the ERA," 9/75. We have also printed a number of letters to the editor on the subject.

Last but not least, we have also published a small paperback, *Woman's Place in Church Activity*, by Norman L. Parks.

Back issues of *Integrity*, if still available, are free (although we welcome contributions), but we are charging \$1 (including mailing costs) for Parks' book. To expedite delivery, *all requests should be sent directly to Amos Ponder, 1269 Pickwick Place, Flint, Michigan 48507.*

### FROM THE EDITOR: THANKS!

We would like to thank the many of you who, during the last several weeks of 1976, sent your contributions, along with many gracious words. Having evidently assumed that we had all the support we required, you needed only a reminder to share with us an ever-increasing financial load. Of course, unless contributions continue to come in on a regular basis, we soon will be back in the hole, but we are confident that the greatest Giver of all will see that all needs are met. To Him, and to you, we say again: "Thank you!"

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1977

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# Integrity

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## EDITORIAL

### VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

Watching the recent NBC special on "Violence in America" was a somewhat depressing experience in that it offered abundant documentation of the problem but suggested no clear-cut solution. My initial response was that the gospel provides the missing cure, but that reaction may seem to be too simplistic because of the church's potential for stumbling in the crucial step of *applying* its resources to the situation. However, that possibility should not deter us from attempting to relieve our society of what appears to many to be an insuperable difficulty. Therefore I will venture some suggestions.

The etiology of violence is the subject of James 4:1-3: "What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions" (RSV).

In view of the explosive effect these "passions" have on human relationships, we should take a close look at this word. It translates the Greek *hēdonē*, "pleasure," and is the source of our "hedonism." Hedonism, which is defined as pursuit of or devotion to pleasure, aptly describes the attitude James has in mind, and one does not have to be very wide awake to see that he confronts a predominant de-

It is often said that love is blind, but in reality the very opposite is true, for nothing sharpens our vision like love.

fect in the contemporary American character. "Desire," or lust, is a different word, but it is related to pleasure in that lust is pleasure sought, while pleasure is lust satisfied. "Covet" in this text may be more fully rendered "strive with envious greed." Taken together, these words describe an aggressive pursuit of pleasure which will tolerate no interference. The one thus addicted will not only disrupt human tranquillity, but he may either break off all communion with God or else attempt to subordinate God to his selfish objectives.

Because those whose chief goal in life is pleasure will inevitably encounter frustration, they may be expected to resort to verbal and/or physical violence. Unsatisfied lust leads to murder, James says, and fruitless striving with envious greed results in all sorts of fighting. That the church can claim no immunity to this volcanic hedonism is underscored by the declaration that church-goers may attempt to use their prayers to further their pleasures.

The Christian answer to violence is a basic change in motives, to be brought about, in Paul's words, "by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Human objectives must be brought into line with God's purpose for man. Fundamentally this means that love of things must be subordinated to Christian *agape*—unconquerable good will toward others.

That this divinely inspired love is a potent antidote to violence is clearly stated by John, who says that "we should love one another, and not be like Cain who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous" (1 Jn. 3:12). But how does the fact that "his own deeds

were evil and his brother's righteous" account for Cain's homicidal tendencies? We do not know all we would like to know about Cain and Abel, but such information as we have seems to lead to one unavoidable conclusion, which is that Cain, in his "striving with envious greed," lost his ability to see Abel *as his brother*. It is often said that love is blind, but in reality the very opposite is true, for nothing sharpens our vision like love. Because Cain lacked love's perceptiveness, Abel became to him just a thing in the way of another thing, and therefore he could be swished out of existence. And the fact that this primeval conflict began in an act of worship is a significant warning that man's persistent tendency to depersonalize his fellows may follow him into the most hallowed places.

That people tend to lose their sense of importance in a technotronic society like ours requires no argument. Sociologists also recognize that violence follows on the heels of technological advancement. But what may not be apparent to many

#### NOTE

In keeping with a long-standing decision by the board of directors, the January and February issues are combined. We hope to have a special double-sized issue later this year.

of us is the connection between these two facts. The body of Christ, then, is challenged to neutralize the dehumanizing influence of our technological age. But how can this be accomplished?

First of all, it is time for judgment to begin at the house of God. It is no secret that church members sometimes fight like cats and dogs, in the home and even in the sanctuary. Although physical as-

## Brotherliness must assume, and seek to lighten, the burdens of fear and frustration which provoke violence.

saults are not unknown among Christians, they are very rare; but the seeds of more destructive violence are everywhere. Who can count the domestic yelling contests of Christian couples? Who can tally up the verbal abuse which echoes in church vestibules across the land? Who knows how many Christians have bought guns to protect their property against intruders? Church members—and their children—watch the most violent movies and TV programs. They pass adverse judgment on those in other strata of society, people whom they do not really see but only see things about. They make their peace with materialism and permissiveness.

Perhaps even more dangerous is the frequently inhumane attitude of the institutional church. "The sabbath was made for man," said Jesus, "not man for the sabbath." But this lesson is as much lost on many leaders today as it was on the Pharisees to whom it was first delivered. Nothing—*absolutely nothing*—is more important to God than man. Yet church rules and regulations often take precedence over man. Then man, whom God loves, becomes a thing—a *dispensable thing*—which can be cast out if it gets in the way of other things. James has a word for this attitude: "Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?"

The church must respond to its potential for violence with the utmost seriousness. This means that the "double mind" with which so many of us are corrupted must yield to the single-mindedness of discipleship. This purification entails a deep emotional response, as James says: "Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to dejection." How remote, how out of place, this sounds to us! But that is a key to our problem.

Having become "faithful men" our-

selves, we "will be able to teach others also." Our next step will be to herald the elevating gospel to a generation trapped in vanity. If this word—the good seed—finds soil where it will not be "choked by the cares and riches and pleasures [*note that word*] of life," it will renew our society by providing a new understanding of what has happened and a new purpose for the future. Let us not be timid about this task, for that gospel which stamped a high price on first-century man has not lost its redemptive power.

But this message cannot be in word only; it must be apparent also in the manifest brotherliness of those who declare it. This brotherliness must assume, and seek to lighten, the burdens of fear and frustration which provoke violence. "Let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth."

A significant fact for the church's ministry is that millions of Americans, with a great deal of justification, regard the social, political and economic system under which they live as oppressive. Although the apostles "would have us remember the poor," allocations for relief of poverty are not outstanding in most church budgets. If we are to leave this responsibility to others, then with the gospel as a frame of reference we should at least exert our leavening influence to make "the system" more responsive and to assure that those who control the institutions respect the essential dignity of all people. There is no reason why our responsibility to challenge "the system" should be less than that which the Old Testament prophets felt. And, again, such charity must begin at home, for the church has not always been able to see through the maze of institutional concern to recognize even its own as brethren.

Our brotherliness must also extend to the victims of violence, an excessive num-

ber of whom are also poor. It is a monstrous tragedy of our generation that so many of our people are afraid to leave their homes, or even to stay in them. This is especially true of the vulnerable aged. From the terrors of violence such people must be protected, and that protection will require punitive as well as preventive measures. "If we are to abolish the death penalty," said Alphonse Karr in 1849, "I should like to see the first step taken by our friends the murderers." Whatever our view of capital punishment (and I have some serious reservations about it),

the Bible makes it clear that the truth that "God is love" is in no way compromised by his appointment of authorities "to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer." Such authorities "bear the sword" because love dictates that the innocent members of society be protected.

Violence must be attacked from all sides, but the greater good of humanity will be served by removing the causes. Achieving that greater good is within the area of the Christian's expertise; it is his function in dealing with our national crisis. Let us not bury our talent. —HL

## ANOTHER APPEAL FOR AN ECUMENICAL MEMBERSHIP POLICY

DANIEL GRIGGS

*Bethel Park, Pennsylvania*

In his article "The Baptismal Limitation in Christian Fellowship" (*Integrity*, Sept., 1976), Craig M. Watts gave expression to the traditional "close membership" position of many heirs of Stone and the Campbells. This article is intended as a response to that statement.

There are a number of difficulties in brother Watts' paper, some of which are quite serious. On the first page, he properly states his assumptions: "... that baptism is immersion ..." and "... that baptism is vitally related to the forgiveness of sins ..." This second assumption he clarifies to mean that baptism "is for the forgiveness of sins whether the baptized is aware of it or not." As long as "traditional" or "conservative" restorationists confront these issues with these assumptions, only one conclusion can be reached: the logical conclusion based upon "the traditional restorationist teaching that believers' baptism (immersion) is for the forgiveness of sins," will always be that

fellowship and forgiveness must derive from immersion for the remission of sins. It is a tautology. This is the way debaters have traditionally stacked the cards in their favor, but the real question of Christian fellowship is prior to the assumptions made. Once these statements are made the conclusion has been reached. Not every restorationist will accept as biblical brother Watts' interpretation of baptism as a regenerating act. This is no "artificial issue," because if "being baptized" does not cause salvation (and many restorationists do not understand that it does), then the "traditional" viewpoint must undergo thorough re-evaluation. If immersion is removed as the center of the Church's fellowship, then the whole house of cards collapses. Further, if in Scripture the forgiveness of sins is but one of a plurality of ends achieved in baptism, this "traditional" stance again must bear re-evaluation.

Another difficulty in brother Watts'

## The task of the restorationist is to call the Church back to the Bible, not to decide what is not the Church.

theory of closed membership is that he merely draws out the Biblical teachings regarding baptism, and not all of those. This is insufficient for the debate, because nowhere does the New Testament discuss any subject remotely related to the modern question of "open membership" (more properly "ecumenical membership"). Further, what analyses of the New Testament passages appear, do not deal with the possibility of a plurality of views in the New Testament, or with the origin of baptism as a Christian rite of initiation.

In a short article no attempt can be made to work through all the above problems. In fact, instead of accepting brother Watts' chosen field for the debate, this writer prefers to define another (as did Thomas Lane, "A Conservative Basis for Open Membership").

Robert S. Paul, in his book *The Church in Search of Its Self*, has used the triple-pronged analysis of modern Christian churches and sects propounded in classic form by Ernst Troeltsch (*The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*), to propose an ecumenical basis of religious authority. Each of Troeltsch's types of ecclesiastical ethic relates to one channel of authority by which the Holy Spirit leads the Church of God: the Bible (sect-type), two millennia of a continuous gospel tradition (church-type), and the personal experience of faith (third-type). It is clear that brother Watts' analysis employs only one channel of authority, and this method typically leads to a conclusion more exclusive than an "ecumenical conservative" such as brother Watts can fully feel comfortable with. In fact, a similar exclusivism arises within each of the three types when one is isolated from the others: for examples, Catholic traditionalism, and charismatic tests of spirituality. This is precisely the greatest non-

emotional barrier to the reunion of the church.

The question of immersion and fellowship is not answered by the Bible. Nowhere in Scripture can brother Watts find a direct assertion of "... baptism (immersion) to be a limiting factor." It was as he quotes from G.R. Beasley-Murray: "*In the New Testament* faith and baptism were viewed as inseparable whenever the subject of Christian initiation is under discussion . . ." (*Baptism in the New Testament*, p. 272, italics DG). Only if "baptism" means more in modern theology than "immersion" can this be true today. The task of the restorationist is to call the Church back to the Bible, not to decide what is not the Church.

So for this writer the question comes down to one of whether it is the right and responsibility of anyone other than Christ himself to deny standing as a Christian to anyone who has come to faith in Christ as he/she has been instructed, and who is not in violation of some doctrinal or moral standard requiring excommunication. If those who were initiated into the faith by sprinkling are in any sense Christians, then they are "members" of Christ's "body" and ought not to be denied full fellowship in the local assembly of believers. The only exception to an ecumenical membership policy might be a congregation's united commitment to demonstrate a clear New Testament form of communal life, or to demonstrate a pure form of mystical faith, or to demonstrate an unadulterated tradition going back to an apostle; and even in these cases the model churches would not deny the Christianity of the rest. Admittedly few have attained anything close to this ideal, but we all should put aside preemptive categories within our very presuppositions, which force us to reject practical and ecumenical progress. □

## WILLIAM TYNDALE'S CONCEPTION OF SCRIPTURE

ROBERT L. DUNCAN

Normal, Illinois

At the heart of the reformers' attack on the Roman church was the denial of church tradition as the authoritative principle in religion. In place of tradition they offered Scripture as the only means by which God has addressed mankind. The papal church itself accepted the authority of Scripture but with the important qualification that only the Pope (aided by a consensus of the Church's doctors and bishops) could interpret it infallibly. The reformers sought to destroy this position by contending that the common man can comprehend Scripture through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Recognizing that Scripture addresses man on various levels, the reformers further took the position that the Bible was divided into law and gospel and that the former prepares man to receive the latter. Thus man is not justified by law—not even the laws of the Bible, let alone the laws of men. Rather he is justified by the grace of God operating through faith in Christ. Good works, therefore, are not the basis of salvation. But good works, especially Christian expressions of charity, do flow out of the believer's new relationship with God. Luther, commenting on the locus classicus in Romans 1:17, puts it this way:

The righteousness of God is the cause of our salvation. This righteousness, however, is not that according to which God Himself is

righteous as God, but that by which we are justified by Him through faith in the Gospel. It is called the righteousness of God in contradistinction to man's righteousness which comes from works. This human righteousness of works Aristotle clearly describes in the third book of his *Ethics*. According to his view, righteousness follows man's works, and is brought about by them; God's judgement, however, is different, for according to it, righteousness (*justification*) precedes works and good works grow out of it.<sup>1</sup>

The writings of William Tyndale, sixteenth-century Protestant martyr whose lively English translations became the basis of both the AV and the RV, reflected these characteristic Protestant views and conveyed them to the England of his day. And "he being dead yet speaketh."

Tyndale argued that all religious writings are to be tested by the Bible.<sup>2</sup> Only Scripture is wholly true; thus the books of men must be assayed for error. The Word of God is a "meteyard" by which the "cloth" of the doctors must be measured, not vice versa. The "first church" taught only what had been confirmed by miracles, he contends against Thomas More, until "Scripture was authentically received."<sup>3</sup> And the "church following" required nothing to be received as an "article of faith" except that which "scripture proveth and maintaineth." Moreover, Augustine urged men to compare his writings with Scripture and to re-

1. Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. J. Theodore Mueller (Grand Rapids, 1954), p. 25.

2. William Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures*, ed. Henry Walter (Cambridge, 1848), p. 149ff.

3. William Tyndale, *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue, The Supper of the Lord after the True Meaning of John VI. and I Cor. XI. and Wm. Tracy's Testament Expounded*, ed. Henry Walter (Cambridge, 1850), pp. 135-36.

**Tyndale makes understanding of Scripture contingent upon an earnest search for truth.**

ject those things that Scripture disallowed.

And therefore they that will be believed without Scripture are false hypocrites, and not Christ's church. For though I know that the messenger which Christ sendeth cannot lie; yet in a company where many liars be, I cannot know which is he, without a token of scripture or of miracle.

Tyndale makes understanding of Scripture contingent upon an earnest search for truth: "If any man thirst for truth, and read the scripture by himself, desiring God to open the door of knowledge unto him, God for his truth's sake will and must teach him."<sup>4</sup> Even the humble Christian may read and comprehend the Word, for he is guided by the Spirit of God.<sup>5</sup> He quotes the statement of Christ, "He that is of God heareth the word of God" (Jn. 8:47), commenting that to be of God is to have the Spirit of God. Contrariwise, those who do not possess the Spirit cannot understand the Word.

Forasmuch then as the scripture is nothing else but that which the Spirit of God hath spoken by the prophets and apostles, and cannot be understood but of the same Spirit; let every man pray to God to send him his Spirit, to loose him from his natural blindness and ignorance, and to give him understanding and feeling of the things of God, and of the speaking of the Spirit of God.<sup>6</sup>

Any member of a congregation, according to Tyndale, has the right to reprove the preacher who teaches falsely.

Whosoever's heart God moveth, to the same it shall be lawful to rebuke and improve the false teacher with the clear and manifest scripture; and that same is no doubt a true prophet sent from God. For the scripture is God's, and theirs that believe, and not the false prophet's.<sup>7</sup>

Tyndale's teaching was a frontal attack on the Roman Catholic contention that authoritative interpretation of Scripture came from the hierarchy.

According to Tyndale, all Scripture can be broken down into two categories: law and gospel. "All the scripture is either the promises and testament of God in Christ, and stories pertaining thereunto, to strength thy faith; either the law, and stories pertaining thereunto, to fear thee from evil doing."<sup>8</sup> Like Luther, Tyndale believed that the law of God revealed the sinfulness of man that his heart might be readied for the gospel. "When the law is preached, all men are found sinners, and therefore damned: and when the gospel and glad tidings are preached, then are all, that believe and repent, found righteous in Christ. . . ."<sup>9</sup> Commenting on the nature of the law and the "evangelion," he says that the former is the key that binds and damns all men, whereas the latter is the key that looses them.<sup>10</sup> The preaching of the law precedes the preaching of the gospel, for the preacher first binds men's consciences by preaching the law, then looses them by preaching the gospel.

These two salves (I mean the law and the gospel) useth God and his preacher, to heal and cure sinners withal. The law driveth out the disease and maketh it appear, and is a sharp salve, and a fretting corosy, and killeth the dead flesh, and looseth and draweth the sores out by the roots, and all corruption.

The law destroys the confidence that a man has in his own works, Tyndale continues. "It killeth him, sendeth him down to hell, and bringeth him to utter desperation, and prepareth the way of the Lord, as it is written of John the Baptist." For Christ cannot come to a man as long as he trusts in himself or the world.

Then cometh the evangelion, a more gentle pastor, which suppleth and suageth the wounds of the conscience, and bringeth health. It bringeth the Spirit of God; which looseth the bonds of Satan, and coupleth us to God and his will, through strong faith and

**According to Tyndale, justifying faith and the neighbor-love that springs from it are the keys to understanding the will of God in all areas of life.**

fervent love, with bonds too strong for the devil, the world, or any creature to loose them.

Faith only is the means whereby man is freed from the damnation of the law and becomes the beneficiary of God's promises.<sup>11</sup> "Faith only before all works and without all merits, but Christ's only, justifieth and setteth us at peace with God. . . ." Because of man's innate sinfulness it is impossible for him to consent to the will of God or to fulfill the law. Thus, though the law commands man not to lust, it provides no power to keep the command and damns him for failing to do so. Faith, on the other hand, "bringeth pardon and forgiveness freely purchased by Christ's blood, and bringeth also the Spirit; the Spirit looseth the bonds of the devil, and setteth us at liberty." Thus the heart is freed and receives power to love the will of God.

But the mercy shown the believer by God does not result from this love but rather from faith alone.<sup>12</sup> Both love for God and love for the neighbor spring from this faith, says Tyndale, and neighbor-love is the outpouring of "that goodness which I have received of God by faith." Good works are the fruit of faith, "whereby our neighbour is the better, and whereby God is honoured, and our flesh tamed."<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, works are "tokens" by which one is enabled to determine the genuineness of his faith. Through His Spirit God has written two "conclusions" in the heart of the Christian: faith in Christ and the love of his neighbor.

For whosoever feeleth the just damnation of sin, and the forgiveness and mercy that is in Christ's blood for all that repent and forsake it, and come and believe in that mercy, the

same only knoweth how God is to be honoured and worshipped, and can judge between true serving of God in the spirit, and false imageserving of God with works. . . . And on the other side, he that loveth his neighbour as himself, understandeth all laws, and can judge between good and evil, right and wrong, godly and ungodly, in all conversation, deeds, laws, bargains, covenants, ordinances, and decrees of men; and knoweth the office of every degree, and due honour of every person.

According to Tyndale, therefore, justifying faith and the neighbor-love that springs from it are the keys to understanding the will of God in all areas of life.

Tyndale's position that moral and spiritual factors regulate the interpretation of Scripture is typical of the Protestant reformers. Luther, for example, contended that the Holy Spirit, by which the Church hierarchy claimed to be guided in its decisions, dwelt "in pious souls only."<sup>14</sup> And he interpreted Christ's quotation from Isaiah, "And they shall all be taught by God" (Jn. 6:45), to mean that all "true Christians" will be instructed by God in the truth of Scripture.

Although this Reformation doctrine may be easily abused so that we see ourselves as "true Christians" because of our particular view of Scripture or some aspect of Scripture, it nonetheless serves as a safeguard against the notion that anyone and everyone can comprehend the deeper truths of the Bible by simply reading it. This is a serious distortion of the Reformation view. For the reformers, comprehension *follows* commitment as works follow justification. Thus the profoundest understanding of Scripture's meaning for life is reserved for those who earnestly undertake to do God's will: "If

4. *Doctrinal Treatises*, p. 156.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 283.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 310.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 107-8.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 269.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 46ff.

12. *Answer*, p. 196.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

14. Martin Luther, *Martin Luther, Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1961), p. 413.

**One cannot simply read the Bible, like other books.  
One must be prepared to really enquire of it.**

any man's will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority" (Jn 7:17).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's brother-in-law once wrote to him asking, ". . . How can I live a Christian life in this actual world, and where is the final authority for such a life, which alone is worth living?" Bonhoeffer, who was to become a twentieth century Christian martyr, replied:

I believe that the Bible alone is the answer to all our questions, and that we need only to ask repeatedly and a little humbly, in order to receive this answer. One cannot simply read the Bible, like other books. One must be prepared really to *enquire* [italics mine] of it. Only thus will it reveal itself. Only if we expect from it the ultimate answer, shall we receive it. . . . Of

course, it is also possible to read the Bible like any other book, that is to say from the point of view of textual criticism, etc.; there is nothing to be said against that. Only that that is not the method which will reveal to us the heart of the Bible, but only the surface, just as we do not grasp the words of someone we love by taking them to bits, but by simply receiving them, so that for days they go on lingering in our minds, simply because they are the words of a person we love. . . .<sup>15</sup>

Why should the Bible be read differently from any other book? Bonhoeffer's answer is short and to the point: "because in the Bible God speaks to us. And one cannot simply think about God in one's own strength, one has to enquire of him. Only if we seek him, will he answer us. . . ." □

15. Quoted in Mary Bosanquet, *The Life and Death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York, 1968), pp. 109-10.

**REGRETS**

It's part of Adam's curse  
That here the past is never quite forgot;  
Though God can blot it out,  
We humans find the bitter-sweet of past events  
To be the ever-present evidence  
Of our mortality.  
The Lethe of God's forgiveness  
Is imperfectly imbibed  
In this domain of time;  
But even diluted doses  
Bespeak an unstained "now"  
In another clime.

—ELTON D. HIGGS  
Dec. 29, 1976

**DECISION MAKING  
OR DECISION YIELDING?**

**NELSON C. FONG**

*Sinclair, Maine*

Knowing the will of God and doing the will of God, although one does not necessarily lead to the other, often go together as Jesus said in John 10, "My sheep hear my voice . . . and they follow me." Our Jesus is the living Christ, and Christian faith is not only believing in the Bible, it is a relation with this living master. Does God give us the mind to make decisions for him? Or does he give us the mind to yield to his decisions? These are two very different ways of life.

In making decisions for God, one quickly proceeds to analyze the pros and cons of every decision-making situation, depending on his values, his understanding of the Scripture, and a bit of his common sense. In this approach, one often reflects the attitude of "God, I will do your will as long as it makes sense, but don't ask me to take a step in the dark." Thus his mind becomes the governor of his actions. I am convinced that God does not need me to make decisions for him. He gives me a mind to yield to his decisions. Or why should I seek his will? To obey or not to obey, that is my decision. If I obey, God becomes the governor of my actions. "The steps of a man are from the Lord" (Ps. 37:23).

How do we learn what the will of God is? Seeking the will of God is not a matter of method and procedure, it is yielding. Before we consider any consequence of a course of action, we first come to a "neutral position" where our preferences are completely disregarded. Before evaluating the advantages and disadvantages in

taking the job in Grand Rapids, we need to reach the "point of zero" as far as our will is concerned. Until we surrender our right to ourselves and until we stop considering how much it would cost others for us to obey God, our spiritual eye will be blurred and our ear dulled to the Lord's voice. A partially-willing heart results in "a heaving sea ruffled by the wind" (Jas. 1:6) or jumping to a conclusion based on human reasoning or our own desire.

God made a promise to his people in Isaiah, "And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself any more, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you saying, 'This is the way; walk in it,' when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left" (Is. 30:20-21). Why then don't we hear God's voice clearly? The voice of God is expressed in God's nature, not in ours. We can only recognize the voice if God is in us. Thus Paul taught us to "be filled with the [Holy] Spirit" (Eph. 5:18) and to "live and walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25). To be brought into the zone of God's voice is to know God, not merely knowing about him. A Christian once said, "As long as I consider my personal temperament and think about what I am fitted for, I shall never hear the call of God" (*My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chamber, p. 16).

Personally I have also found that I learn to recognize God's voice by practice. When I hear my wife's voice I know it at

once because I know (not just know about) her and she and I are one. God's voice became clearer to my spiritual ear when I began to listen. I used to "pray about" many of my problems and never gave God a chance to direct me. As soon as the prayer was over, my mind went to work for my decision. If we don't listen, how can we hear? "Be still before the Lord, and wait . . ." (Ps. 37:7).

When I found that God gives me a mind to yield to his decisions rather than making decisions for him, when I asked him to fill me with his Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Lk. 11:11-13), when I learned to set aside my desire, and when I learned to walk with the Spirit and listen to him, I began to experience his voice in my daily big and small matters. My mind is not programmed, to say the least. Instead it is functioning at a higher level with the

Spirit controlling its activities. Although I am far from perfection and am learning to be led by the Spirit, my intelligence, sensitivity, and responsibility have been greatly enhanced since I moved from the outside of God to the inside of him. I reached a new understanding of the Scripture "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10).

God is not only real and near, he is clear. If we do not hear, we have either not taken time to listen after asking (Ps. 37), or we do not have his Spirit within us to enable us to hear (Acts 19:1-6; 1 John; Heb. 6:1-5), or we do not believe he cares and answers his children today (Heb. 13:8; Jas. 1:7-8, 17), or something in our lives hinders our prayers from being answered by God (1 Pet. 3:7, 12).

How do we learn what the will of God is? Let go and let God! □

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## SALTNESS AND LIGHT

J. DWIGHT THOMAS

Augusta, Kentucky

Almost two thousand years ago a multitude of people gathered at the feet of a Galilean, as he sat upon a hillside. Who was this man? What was the occasion? What relevant truths can the people of our era abstract from this happening?

This Galilean had no special "form nor comeliness" and when people saw him, there was no unique physical attraction that they should desire him. But when he spoke, it was not as the scribes and Pharisees. His speech was convincing; it had a ring of truth. His name was Jesus, a very common name. But some were saying he was the Prophet, Elijah, Jeremiah, or maybe even the Messiah.

The crowd was spellbound. Although it was diverse, it consisted mostly of ordinary folk, "not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble"; but there was some representation of the religious leaders of that day. Some were there by special invitation. They were his disciples, mostly fishermen, one tax collector and even a political activist. They had answered his call, "Come follow me." Others were there out of curiosity; some were present to find fault. All were sinners, weak, insecure, and frail; all stood in need of a Savior. He knew their motives and spoke to their needs.

Those who heard and understood were

## Those ordinary folk lived and died and suffered persecution for the name of Jesus.

edified as he spoke of the "poor in spirit," "those that mourn," "the meek," "those who hunger and thirst for righteousness," "the merciful," "the pure in heart," "the peacemakers," and "the persecuted." Most of them could give their intellectual assent to such lofty ideals. Some unknowingly were destined to be shaped into that awe-inspiring mold, by a power greater than any that they had previously experienced. But in a word, the discourse became very personal. Jesus shifted from the lofty ideals of "The Way" and spoke directly to his disciples. He spoke of persecution, salt, and light. He said: "You are the salt of the earth." "You are the light of the world."

How could he describe these common Jews in such terms? What did his words mean? The disciples knew, in their more sober moments, that there was no extraordinary quality within themselves which made them worthy of the accolades "salt of the earth" and "light of the world." Unless maybe it was their simple trust in this man. Yes, that must have been it. It was their relationship to him, their discipleship, the answering of his call; it was Jesus himself who made it so!

The disciples must have been awed by this glimpse of the kingdom and their related mission. They must have felt a deep sense of personal worth as they realized their role in the eternal purpose of God, a purpose which had manifested itself to their patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, a purpose which would be inevitably accomplished in victory!

But Jesus knew it would not be easy for the disciples to be salt and light in the world. He knew that they would be tempted to conform to the world, to lose their distinctiveness, to become ineffectual in their functions of penetrating, purifying, and saving the world. He knew that they would be tempted to hide their

light. So he prefaced his comments with words concerning the value of persecution and he spoke of the worthlessness of salt that has lost its saltiness and the absurdity of light that is hidden under a basket.

The disciples must have been convinced. It was they who later went from that hillside to "turn the world upside down." It was they who preached the good-news of Jesus to the entire known world at that time. It was those same ordinary folk who lived and died and suffered persecution for the name of Jesus.

But what has happened since then? Where are we today? Hundreds of years have passed since Jesus spoke these words to his disciples. And those disciples have long since ceased to function as salt and light in the world. Who are his disciples today? We are called to be salt and light in the present world, to take up our cross and follow him.

The challenge is great. But his grace and power are more than sufficient to the task. As we approach the year 2000, as we live in an age that has been described as the "post-Christian era," as we witness the waning influence of Christianity in our society, we need to honestly ask the question:

*HAS THE SALT LOST ITS SAVOUR?*

May our Lord and Savior, the risen Messiah, grant to us the courage to rise to the challenge of a self-deluded world in darkness. May he give to us the objectivity to evaluate our personal discipleship as well as the effectiveness of our collective efforts. May he give us the wisdom to implement more effective ways in which we can penetrate, purify, and save this world. May he fill us with his power that we may emanate his light, to the end that the church will cease to be a part of the problem and become a part of God's cure.

O Lord, make us your salt and light in this world today. □

## LETTERS

### The Debate of the Century Debate

Due to the obvious lack of objectivity which permeates "The Debate of the Century" (October, 1976 issue), it would have been more fortunate if the assessment of the Warren-Flew encounter by Jim Sims had not been styled a *report*.

This aside, however, I would express appreciation for Jim's observation about us and philosophy.

Our ambivalence with regard to the relation of faith and reason would be amusing if it were not so serious. (I'm quite aware of the fact that some might charge this same ambivalence against the New Testament writers—e.g., 1 Peter 3:15; 1 Corinthians 1:18ff.)

The proper relation of faith and reason gave rise to the schismatic problems of the primitive church. Sporadic outcroppings have been seen ever since and the problem is still very much with us. It would seem that considerations of epistemology must come before those of ontology. And, though Roman Catholic epistemology has its limitations, it might help us to get at the matter and also help us see that faith and reason are not inherently inimical to each other.

The question of relationship between philosophy and theology is not so much which shall be handmaiden to the other, but how can they be brought into companionship. It might be if we gave more attention to philosophy we'd have fewer people scandalized by their faith unnecessarily. I recall Bacon's remark that depths in philosophy lead men's minds back to religion.

ROBERT W. LAWRENCE  
York College, York, Nebraska

I read with amazement your absurd article about Bro. Thomas B. Warren and his debate with Antony Flew. I consider it to be the most profound example of shallow journalism to come out of the twentieth century. Yet you spoke insultingly of Bro. Warren because you

folks are out to get him because he doesn't rave and rant like you do and say let's just love everybody and everything will be alright. You weighed his debate with a thumb on the scale.

Yes, your article (by Jim Sims) was vicious, untruthful and abundantly unnecessary. I no longer wish to receive your magazine. Don't say I'm not open-minded because I've taken *Integrity* several years now and have watched it perceptibly degenerate. I've given you folks the benefit of the doubt more than once. The preposterous assessment of the Warren-Flew debate was the last straw. The profundity of your prejudice is unimpeachable and is exceeded only by the profundity of your prejudice.

JAMES D. MAYBERRY  
Nashville, Tennessee

In reference to Jim Sims' disparaging report of the recent "Debate of the Century," I feel compelled to remind Brother Sims that there is ample Scriptural precedent for slaying unbelievers with the jawbone of an ass!

DON HAYMES  
Memphis, Tennessee

After having written the body of this letter I held it for more than two weeks, rereading it at intervals in an effort to guard against early impulse leading to intemperate language or the expression of unkindly thought. It is submitted in what I intend shall be the very best interests of *Integrity*.

From nearly any point of view the response to readers' reaction to the Jim Sims report is a great disappointment. This is true if one appreciates the magazine and wants its best interests served. It is true if one credits *Integrity* with integrity. It is, above all, true if one wants the truth and right advanced. The response of *Integrity* was petulant, self-defensive and complaining, as if *Integrity* were unfairly wounded by the criticism. *Integrity* would have served its own interests better by contrition than by pettishness.

Was it not obvious that publishing Sims' report was a great mistake? Sims took the trendy course of satirizing a straightforward defense of truth, and the dubious one of assailing logic and reason. He was sarcastic concerning Warren's forensic correctness and defensive of Dr. Flew's failure to debate. Simply put, he defended atheism and dealt contemptuously with faith and reason.

There are many of us who feel a pervading sense of frustration when atheistic theories are given the advantages of all communication media while simple faith is treated scornfully. (Have the editors of *Integrity* read *Time-Life's*

current advertisement of its new series, "The Emergence of Man"?) Then, when a spokesman for atheism or evolution is finally persuaded to debate, he makes a mockery of the process. This frustration turns to dismay when those whom the Christian counts as brethren lend their support to the exponents of error.

I can find no ground whatsoever for the acceptance of the rectitude of Jim Sims' report, and less defense for *Integrity's* petulance when brethren protest. A balanced good sense would have ruled out the kind of reaction as that in the December issue. I yet pray for a better response.

VERNON W. SMITH  
Nashville, Tennessee

### In Appreciation

I just want you to know that I greatly appreciate *Integrity*. Please keep on being as positive as you have been. It is encouraging to read articles that are designed to uplift the Body to the purpose Christ has established for it.

Please don't let criticism get you down. You are necessary to the Body. We need men and women with your strength to guide our Body.

GEORGE HART  
Valdosta, Georgia

### Women: Responses to Responses

Among my blessings I must count *Integrity*. Every copy is immediately read upon arrival and I always find a word of comfort or exhortation, a new idea about an old "doctrine," and often a few chuckles.

I was greatly moved by Lillian Ledbetter's "Response to a Letter" in the Nov. issue. Her perception and sensitivity are great. Bobbie Lee Holley's "Response" was also appreciated.

NORMA LEMLEY  
Allentown, Pennsylvania

You and your colleagues are doing a superb job with *Integrity* and I have especially appreciated your opening up the subject of women in the church for serious discussion.

EDWARD G. HOLLEY  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

I originally wanted to write when the new contributing editors were announced (in Jan. 1976) along with the apology that no women were included. Your interesting statement that our fellowship has not encouraged women to prepare themselves intellectually to contribute

to a publication like this strikes me as altogether too true.

In May 1977 I will graduate from Harding Graduate School of Religion with an M.A. in Counseling. I am also emphasizing Greek in order to be able to use the Greek Text responsibly. I do not want to be a preacher and am tired of people asking me jokingly if I do (they inevitably think they are the first one to think of this clever line). However, I do wish it did not seem ludicrous to so many for a female to do graduate studies in religion.

I am now confronted with possessing some valuable tools that I am largely unable to use in the church, and was, therefore, deeply moved by the letter and the two well-written responses that you printed.

KAY CRAWFORD JACKSON  
Memphis, Tennessee

I just finished reading your November, 1976 issue, and although I had never before seen one of your issues, I was *thoroughly* impressed. Especially, your "Letters" section impressed me since I am so concerned about what we have done, and continue to do, to our women and girls in our congregations. . . .

I am grateful when I see brotherhood papers such as *Integrity* take up this issue! Indeed, my research thus far has convinced me we in the church have not generated any significant amount of material in this area. The majority of the materials I've found have been restrictive and traditional. I am *eager* for some of my brothers and sisters who are also doing their own research and who are tackling this issue to begin publishing articles and books! Who is Lillian Ledbetter's minister? I would like to share his findings.

NAME WITHHELD

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Because many of our readers have been added to our mailing list since we began discussing the role of women in the church, it seems wise to review past articles. First of all, the editor confesses to being Lillian Ledbetter's minister *and* husband. Some of his views have been set forth in past issues, to wit: "Women and Slaves," 9/70; "The Prophetess," 1/73; "The Duty of Deference," 7/73; "When Right Is Wrong," 11/75; and "In the Garden," 4/76. The 1/73 article was a supplement to Norman L. Parks' excellent and thorough "Set Our Women Free." This special issue, entitled "Women in the Church," has gone through two printings.

In addition to the 11/76 responses by Bobbie Lee Holley and Lillian Ledbetter to "A Request for Reassurance," *Integrity* has printed