

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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against it. "By their fruits you shall know them," and Restorationism has borne a particularly bitter and partisan kind of fruit for 150 years. To borrow an illustration from Carl Ketcherside, if a doctor gave his patients a particular remedy for that many years and each time the result was death, said doctor surely would begin to question his panacea.

When Galileo and others discovered heresy through their telescopes, it was hardly sufficient answer to them to avow that "obviously" the sun revolved around the earth and that they must have some strange motive for assuming otherwise.

Nothing seems so revealing about Reece's article as that he has marshalled exactly ZERO scriptural support for his point of view. But, he says, no scriptures are needed, since the apostacy had not yet occurred. However, the departure from the faith is predicted in the New Testament documents (Acts 20:27-32; 1 Timo-

thy 3:14-4:11; 1 John 2:18-25; 4:1-3; *et al*). In each and every case the remedy is indeed a restoration—of faith in the facts about, and Lordship of, Jesus! But it is NOT a restoration of the "sacraments, worship, polity, etc. of the Church" that is envisioned, for such things were never considered normative for all succeeding eras and situations by the apostles and prophets of the New Testament era. Moreover, it can very properly be debated whether there was total consistency in matters such as organization and liturgical modes, even in the 1st century. That the Restoration Plea is so obviously correct is far from clear.

The truck driver to which Reece refers probably never considered transporting his cargo via a horse-drawn wagon, even though that may well have been the way it was done hundreds of years before.

WAYNE WIESE
McGregor, Texas

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Mailing Address
8494 Bush Hill Court
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SOMETHING FOR PESSIMISTS

For reasons which we would do well to analyze, there seems to be a widespread inclination to agree that the difference between the optimist and the pessimist is that the pessimist is better informed. According to the way many of us measure the quality of life, there does not seem to be any way to win. I am now paying over 50% more for gasoline than I did at this time last year, and I expect to pay even more. And since I was already trying to conserve as much as possible, I have just about run out of ways to save. Of course, I could do more walking (and not just for economic reasons), but even if nearly everywhere I go was not beyond walking range (or so I think), I still have to face the prediction that the price of shoes will soon go up 30% because of shortage of leather. Such news is not at all encouraging to those of us who have had to learn to live on a little less each year.

Shortages seem to come in bunches. It has not been easy to buy paper for the last two issues of *Integrity*. (We are not alone; and, since misery loves miserable company, it is comforting to know that *Consumer Reports* has had a similar problem.) If your copy last month had a Vellum Bristol cover, it was because that was all we could get, hard on the budget though it was. At the last minute and at a hefty price increase, we obtained an acceptable substitute for this issue, only to have it damaged in falling off a skid. We will have to use it anyway.

It is helpful to think about how very insignificant these little problems are from the viewpoint of eternity. Have we forgotten that "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions"? Perhaps our current crisis of hope will teach us a disturbing lesson about ourselves. The person who is really well informed has a great deal going for him, and our present shortages will turn out to be a blessing if they cause us to align our estimate of the quality of life with the outlook of Him who really knows what life is. □

Hidden and Revealed— Jesus in the Gospel of Mark

DAN G. DANNER

Portland, Oregon

It is often inspirational as well as instructive to read the Gospels as independent witnesses to the faith of the early Christian community. Of course, there really is but *one* gospel and four canonical accounts of the "good news" as understood in earliest Christian times. Scholars believe, in general, that these accounts were written at least thirty years after Jesus of Nazareth died. More than biographies, they tell not only of the historical person of Jesus (although the extent of this knowledge is widely debated), but also of the *interpretation* of the life of Jesus for the Christian church.

The Gospel According to Mark is frequently misread and thus misunderstood. Mark was not writing a contemporary historical piece, but a theological portrait that often misses our minds unless we become sensitized to his central message. Mark's main concern was that rather than being clearly seen as the Christ or expected Messiah to redeem the world, Jesus was known only to the eye of faith. In fact, those closest to him were often the most blind, thus unable to see God's action in the Man from Nazareth. The paradox Mark understood was simply that things hidden are revealed only in faith.

From the very beginning Mark one knows who Jesus was: he was the Messiah (1:1) and Son of God (1:11). We know from the beginning the hostility of the Jews toward Jesus (2:20; 3:6). One

knows the plight of the Messiah's life from the early portions of the book: the Messiah must suffer and die. What an enigma! The expected savior of Israel who would inaugurate a New Age must be cursed among people by dying at the hands of his enemies. Who would have believed such a scenario? Yet three times it is repeated (8:31; 9:31; 10:33f) that the Son of Man, the apocalyptic, cosmic agent of Jahweh who would come in divine judgment upon the clouds, "must suffer many things, and be rejected . . . and be killed and after three days rise again."

Thus Jesus becomes the Son of God. Mark did not understand this phrase in the sense it later came to bear. Under Hellenistic influence, "Son of God" came to mean a divine Man, one in full nature with God, endowed with divine or supernatural power. Such a view would belittle the humanity of the Christ. Mark's understanding was that Jesus was *like* God in His nature. He humbles himself and becomes obedient by enduring the cross. It is as if the real Christ is hidden behind the veil of a man cursed by a plot in history. Not many can see beyond the veil to understand that the cross was indeed the ultimate symbol of God's love for humankind; truly this man was the Christ, but only the eyes of those who believe are able to recognize him. Only those who have eyes to see the glory

of the Messiah behind the veil of the cross are members of his fellowship, the church.

Mark as an evangelist saw Jesus as worker of miracles and helper of the sick. These were signs of the New Age, but Mark knew false prophets could also perform such feats (13:22). The signs pointed not so much to Jesus as miracle-worker but to the advent of God's reign among his people. Nevertheless, the signs make it plain to those with eyes to see that Jesus is the Christ.

One of the distinctive features of Mark's Gospel is that Jesus often tells those he has healed to keep secret that the signs are signs of his messiahship. This motif, "the Messianic Secret," runs

... his miracles cannot be understood in separation from his death and resurrection.

throughout Mark's work. Why did Jesus command secrecy for signs that told the truth? And if the purpose was to keep secrecy, why did these sayings fail so completely (after all, they had the reverse effect and many "told" what Jesus had commanded to be kept secret)? Once Mark's purpose is recalled, the messianic secret becomes easier to understand: the Messiah who works wonders and healings is the same Messiah who must die, and therefore his miracles cannot be understood in separation from his death and resurrection. Only the cross makes clear that the miracles are signs of his messiahship; only those, therefore, who have believed in Jesus as the crucified and risen Christ can understand Jesus as the Messiah of God.

The Cursing of the Fig Tree (11:11-14) surely is an example of Mark's primary emphasis. In no other case did Jesus perform a miracle which was not of service or help. Yet as they approached Jerusalem in the last days, Jesus and his disci-

ples passed a fig tree on which there were leaves but no fruit. It was not the season for fruit, but Jesus cursed the tree anyway. The next morning the tree was totally withered. Mark sets the incident just prior to Jesus' passion; it is a symbol of what is to come which the reader has known from the beginning. Judgment is set upon Israel because it bears no fruit, it has rejected the Messiah of Jahweh, it has acquiesced to his accursed death on the cross. He who rejects this One rejects the living God, and withers away.

Still the unbelievers, as unbelievers inevitably do, demand a sign from Jesus which would make him Messiah without doubt. Jesus rejects their demand (3:22f). They had accused him of performing signs and wonders with the help of Satan. They will not believe a miracle; only believers believe. No, the miracles are not proofs which compel people to believe. They are signs of his messiahship and a challenge to faith; *only through faith* is it possible to see them for what they truly are.

Although there are more stories about the mighty works of Jesus than examples of his preaching in Mark, the two types of narrative go together, for often, the word that Jesus says becomes the focus or highlight of the event or miracle-story. His words indicate his authority and he always wins these battles of words with his opponents. With his disciples, however, the words are different; they are instructions to emulate his own plight.

Or, they are parables to indicate the Kingdom of God. The parable of the sower indicates that although three-fourths of the field seemed to produce a poor crop, a rich harvest is reaped. The word of God is never spoken in vain, and the Kingdom advances in spite of opposition to it (4:3-9). The seed growing secretly (4:26-29) indicates that the Kingdom comes of its own, not human, initiative—it is beyond our power and comprehension. The mustard seed (4:32) shows the greatness of the wonder of the Kingdom of God—it embraces all peoples.

Again, what human knowledge would have imagined or produced such a phenomenon!

Mark persists in showing his basic thesis even in accounting the parables. Only one who believes in Jesus as the crucified Messiah can understand what the parables are about: "To you has been given the secret of the Kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables" (4:10-12). God will open their eyes to recognize that the Crucified One is also the Redeemer of Israel. Unless God opens our eyes we are blind to the truth.

And then comes the passion. All of Mark's Gospel has led up to this zenith. From the opening line of Mark's portrait

Only one who believes in the crucified Messiah can understand what the parables are about . . .

of Jesus' mission (1:15) to the turning point (8:37) when the disciples prematurely recognize him as Messiah, necessitating Jesus no longer going to the crowds speaking about the Kingdom but withdrawing alone with the disciples speaking of the impending messianic suffering, all has been pointing as a sign points beyond itself to the "last days." It becomes clear that his death is not fate or a quirk of history; it is an obedient act by a son of his Father's will. The reader has known all along who the traitor will be. The last supper is fitted into a passover setting, thus making plain this is to be one of God's historic acts of salvation. A new covenant is about to be formed, from on high (outside Jerusalem), and a new order founded upon Jesus' death is in the making. The bread and wine assure his own that the new order is based upon his

death. The suffering Messiah inaugurates a new covenant of forgiveness which assures life for all peoples and nations (Jer. 31:31-34; Mk. 10:45). He overcomes temptation in the garden as an example to his persecuted followers. He is tried and scourged; the weight of the cross breaks him. Simon of Cyrene comes to his succor. Mocked and reviled, alone and abandoned, he hung upon the hoisted cross crying the Psalm, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1). Was it utter despair or obedient confidence in God almighty? He breathes his last, the Son of Man giving, of his own freedom, his life as a ransom for many.

The message was to come only three days later, "He is risen!" Here is the essence of the Christian *credo*. Mark is quite willing to leave the story here—what else was there? Yet as Matthew and Luke carry the resurrection accounts further, Mark's account is astonishingly abbreviated. In fact, it was so much abbreviated that some well-meaning copyists added Mark 19:9-20 to enhance and complete the picture. Perhaps Mark's real ending is lost. Or perhaps not. It is altogether consonant with Mark's purpose that only faith allows hidden things to be revealed. Additional corroboration of the resurrection does not help, he may have thought. Only believers believe anyway. Faith precedes understanding.

And so for us today. Mark's Gospel has a rich message for us. It is that human knowledge is limited and conditioned by human finitude. God transcends us and His ways are not our ways. To know Him, we must have our eyes opened. To see Him, in the form of His Son, the Man from Nazareth, we must allow Him to open our eyes. His Son was to die and in his death he showed Himself to the world. Only in faith can that become a reality; only believers can believe. □

Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore seek not to understand that thou mayest believe, but believe that thou mayest understand. —AUGUSTINE

Riches of His Glory

PART ONE

J. DWIGHT THOMAS

Elizabethtown, Kentucky

"I can buy all the Holy Spirit there is in the world for ten cents."

—Benjamin Franklin¹

If the body apart from the spirit is dead, can the body of Christ possess life, today, apart from God's indwelling Spirit? To answer this question in accord with the Bible, one would be compelled to say, "It cannot." Yes, just as the physical body is dead when separated from its spirit, so also is the body of Christ if it is separated from God's Spirit. And so it is with any movement spawned among God's people.

Why, then, have we heirs of the Restoration movement failed to develop a positive theology of the Holy Spirit? Why is there so little teaching among us on the subject? We have developed positive teaching on baptism, the Lord's supper, congregational autonomy, and the like. Are these matters more important than the Holy Spirit? Or is it because Bible teaching on the Spirit is so profound that we simply cannot understand it? Or could it be that the Bible doesn't provide us with positive teaching on the Spirit of God?

In this and succeeding articles, which are intended to promote serious thinking on the Spirit of God and his relationship to the church, I will attempt to persuade you that the indwelling Spirit of God is neither an insignificant nor an optional matter, but rather a vital source in God's redemptive plan; that the indwelling Spirit is, indeed, a matter of spiritual life and death; and that our current disregard is the result of both tradition and the phil-

osophies of men, and therefore a possible ploy of our eternal Adversary. But before searching for the truth in *The Book*, it may be beneficial for us to establish from whence we are coming by taking a brief look at our historical roots.

Reading the initial quotation from Restoration preacher Benjamin Franklin, one might conclude that our present state of understanding is simply the result of our Restoration heritage. But reviewing the writings on the Spirit by Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott will indicate that this conclusion may be an oversimplification.

Campbell, for example, believed "the soul of man is quickened, enlightened, sanctified, and consoled by the indwelling presence of the Spirit of the eternal God."² Referring to the indwelling Spirit in *The Christian System*, he asserted that without this gift no one could be saved, and further stated: "He knows but little of the deceitfulness of sin, or the combating of temptation, who thinks himself competent to wrestle against the allied forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil."³

Scott, in basic agreement with Campbell, viewed the Spirit as the very life of the church. In his *Discourse on the Holy Spirit*,⁴ he makes the analogy that just as the body is empowered and animated by our human spirit, so also is the church, the body of Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

While the foregoing statements place at a premium the ministry of the Holy Spirit and appear to offer a basis for a positive theology of the Spirit, no such

theology crystallized. Unfortunately, these affirmations of the Spirit were overshadowed by a particular doctrinal issue of that day: the work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of the alien sinner. As England has pointed out, our early pioneers' focus upon the Spirit dealt almost entirely with two related questions:

- 1) In conversion, does the Spirit work directly, or only through the medium of the word, as preached and read?
- 2) Does the Christian's assurance of his standing with God depend upon some 'experience', emotional in character and attributed to the Spirit or upon the testimony of scripture?⁵

Hence, most of our pioneers' writings on the Holy Spirit were polemic in nature, and were directed toward restoring the *word of God* to its proper authority. Historically, this emphasis was an echo of the great Reformation plea which sought to establish the Bible as the sole authority for the church.

It would appear, then, that in the beginning of our movement the paucity of teaching on the Spirit was unintentional in nature. There was not an absence of Biblical knowledge or belief on the part of Campbell or Scott, but rather it was a matter of debate and argument, which inherently forces one to focus his intellect and his energy on specific and well-defined propositions and not infrequently to neglect other aspects of the same subject.

Two Fundamental Attitudes . . .

Two fundamental attitudes have developed from our historical roots. One is depicted by Franklin's statement which equates the Holy Spirit with the New Testament. This erroneous notion may have evolved as a misinterpretation of the ideas of Campbell and Scott, or as an uncritical overgeneralization of what they were saying. These two pioneers had come to agree that in the conversion of the alien sinner the Spirit works solely through the word, i.e., faith comes by

hearing or reading the word of God. This proposition was used to argue against the Calvinist's doctrine which asserted that man was so depraved that he was incapable of saving faith and therefore required a direct intervention by the Spirit in order that faith could be produced. It is conceivable that some of our pioneers failed to discriminate the context of these arguments; that is, they failed to realize the arguments were applied only in the case of conversion. Campbell and Scott were not focusing on the indwelling Spirit in the individual Christian or the church in general, but rather on the Spirit's work upon the alien sinner. Furthermore, while concerning themselves with the Holy Spirit, they did not teach that the Spirit is the word of God, but rather that the Spirit utilizes the word of God *in conversion*. Contrary to many of our brethren today, they taught that a person receives directly the "promised Spirit," but as a baptized, penitent believer, not as a sinner prior to faith.

The second attitude which appears to have historical roots in our early Restoration effort is characterized by varying degrees of *intellectual assent* to the efficacy of the indwelling Spirit, while its major domain has been directed toward dogmatizing what the Spirit cannot do today. This latter attitude views the Spirit primarily as the agent of divine revelation and inspiration, as exemplified by the writings of the New Testament. It has not fully grasped the impact of the indwelling Spirit nor has it come to understand "The Lord is the Spirit." Consequently, *The Book* is often given more deference than its Author. In many instances this approach to the Spirit confuses the relationship of the Spirit to his "sword," the "word of God," and thereby creates the absurdity of the Spirit being wielded by the "sword of the Spirit," instead of God's Spirit wielding his "sword" from within the body of Christ.

While the former attitude has tended to neglect the subject of the Holy Spirit,

as such, viewing the Spirit as the influence of the New Testament, the latter attitude has had the tendency to create a negative theology of the Spirit, which is concerned more with prescribing the limitations of the Holy Spirit today than it is in affirming through faith what the Father would have him to do in his church in the 20th century.

Both of the foregoing attitudes have contributed to a depreciation of the Spirit of God. Many Christians today see no need for God's indwelling Spirit: "We have the Bible." Ironically, this sentiment runs counter to the Bible and bespeaks ignorance of God's design of salvation and the nature of our relationship to him. Furthermore, this sentiment has produced a religion of the letter, not a way of life of the Spirit. It has espoused a "form of godliness," but has denied the very power of God within the lives of his people. It has made our commitment to Jesus merely a matter of morals, not a matter of trust. Our faith has become intellectual and mechanical rather than experiential and spiritual. While affirming God's great redemptive act in Jesus some 2,000 years ago, and while acknowledging the Lord's return at the end of this age, this sentiment has encouraged us to rely on our own ability to live the truth of the Bible during the interim. It is as if God has given us the Bible and said:

O.K., my children, *this* is "the way, the truth, and the life." Now go to it! I'll be back at the end of this age to see how well you have done.

The delusion of this kind of thinking lies in the assumption that if man could but intellectually grasp the truth of the Bible, he could live it. He could be a son of God! Of course, this denies the apostle Paul's experience as expressed in the latter part of Romans 7, not to mention our own. But the tragedy of it all is that by looking to ourselves instead of God's indwelling Spirit, we have turned the *good news* of the Messiah into a New Law of the New Testament and have reaped enslavement instead of freedom, impotence instead of power, and death instead of spiritual vitality. □

1. England, Stephen J., "The Holy Spirit in the Thought and Life of the Disciples of Christ," in *The Reformation of Tradition*, ed. Ronald E. Osborn (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1963). Franklin was reported to have made this comment during a revival as he held forth a pocket New Testament.

2. Campbell, Alexander, "The Influence of the Holy Spirit on Conversion and Sanctification," in *A Symposium on the Holy Spirit* (St. Louis: John Burns, Publisher, 1879), p. 118.

3. Campbell, Alexander, *The Christian System* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication), p. 64.

4. Scott, Walter, *A Discourse on the Holy Spirit* (Bethany, Va.: printed by Alexander Campbell, 1831).

5. England, p. 119.

son." Heaping such opprobrium upon Willbanks is hardly conducive to the possibility of open discussion of differing points of view in our brotherhood.

There really are a number of us who question the appropriateness of the Restoration Plea, not because of bad experiences with its adherents, but because the evidence seems to be

(continued on back cover)

ON THE ORGAN INCIDENT AT THORP SPRING, TEXAS

"... that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."
John 17:21

"Conquering now and still to conquer,
Rideth the King in His might,—"
The notes of the organ rang out sweet and clear
Thru' the Thorp Spring Church that night;
And E.M. Douthitt stood on the stage
With his baton in his hand
To direct the singing, when "Father"
Clark
Arose and walked to the stand.

He thumped with his cane for silence,
And the sound of the music was stilled;
He took out his folded petition,
Which the end of the music willed.
And the girl who played the organ that night,
When half of a century had run,
Would still see the face of the aged Saint
As he pled with his oldest son.

Then Randolph took the petition,
And looked in his father's face,
And said that if only himself were concerned
To his wish he would gladly give place;
But that he must also consider the youth
Who the use of the organ had pled,
And then, in words that still ring down the years,
"Play on, Miss Bertha," he said.

"Conquering now and still to conquer,
Rideth the King—" and hark!
And now the tears are streaming
Down the face of "Father" Clark,
As, shoulders bent with the weight of years,
And hair like the driven snow,
He slowly turns, and, followed by half
Of the Congregation, goes.

"Conquering now and still to conquer—"
But our plea would conquer no more;
And the Restoration is broken now
Like a ship run aground on the shore;
For the hope of a great united Church,
With the ancient faith burning bright,
Was slowly strangled, and killed, by the hand
Of the spirit that triumphed that night.

And the years that have gone like the tumbleweeds
That roll down the Texas plains
Could not undo the thing that was done,
Or make us one people again;
And lo! from Kentucky the voice of Stone
In sorrow and anguish now calls;
And over the hills of Virginia, like rain,
The tears of the Campbells now fall.

*And it's not so much an organ,
Or the absence of one again,
That fills my soul with sorrow and woe,
And stabs it with anguish and pain;
But it tears my heart to the very core,
And it chills me through and through,
That in a dispute over organs we've torn
The Body of Christ in two.*

"Conquering now and still to conquer—"
O Lord, in heaven, forgive!
Thy dying prayer we have sacrificed
That our own wants and wishes might live;
Forgive us the eyes that refuse to see
Our pride, and our sin, and our dross,—
We who, in the name of our own Holy Wills,
Have nailed you again to the Cross.

—DON REECE

LETTERS

Is It Really That Obvious?

I must really take issue with Don Reece's reply to Barry Willbanks about the validity of the Restoration Plea (May, '79). Willbanks' carefully researched thesis deserves more credit than the charges that he is engaged in "unmitigated sophistry," is "confusing the issues," and cannot see what is apparent to "any sane per-

Answers for Conservatives

HOY LEDBETTER

A while back a Methodist minister, having heard me identify myself as a conservative, remarked, "Hoy, you don't sound like any conservative I ever heard." I suspect that those within the right wing of our brotherhood who know me would readily assent to that comment. As a rule, the farther one moves to the right, the more exclusionistic he becomes, and the view from that side is that people with an ecumenical outlook must be liberals.

Since there is usually no advantage in placing people in theological pigeonholes, except that they may be useful for emotional effect when rational argument fails, and since we never win a person over by attaching to him a label which he disowns, we should mark ears cautiously. However, if I refer to those whose questions are dealt with in this article as "conservative" and "exclusionistic," I suspect they will be pleased and not offended.

If for no other reason than they belong to Christ (there are, in fact, other reasons), I should love, respect, and try to understand my conservative spiritual siblings. Consequently, I try to have fellowship with them as much as they will let me, and I listen to what they say, usually through their journals. I am sometimes pleased, occasionally astonished, and often troubled by what they say, but I am never disposed to disregard them. That is why I am giving some attention to their anxiety about those of us who have a broader view of fellowship than they can tolerate in answering the questions which follow.

1. Do you not believe that the wearing of human names will separate a person from the grace of God?

Brooks Hays once told of an effort in an Arkansas community to merge the

Baptist and Christian churches. One of the Baptists vigorously resisted this attempt, insisting, "I have been a Baptist all of my life, and nobody is going to make a Christian out of me!" Hays, a Baptist, told this as a joke, but the humor depends on the recognition that a person is no less a Christian because he calls himself a Baptist.

One of the well-known prophets in the New Testament is called "the Baptist," which evidently did not damage his standing with God. No early Christian writer viewed John as *only* a "Baptist," but the term did signify an important aspect of his service to God, and therefore was suitably applied to him.

Churches may receive names because of viewpoints held, service rendered, tradition inherited (we all inherit tradition), or Biblical passages stressed. All such terms may be regarded as "human names" because Jesus gave no name to his people; he neither told them to call themselves Christians nor specified the name of their community. If we must name the church today—and we would find it difficult to avoid doing so—we may make a name out of a Biblical possessive ("church of God," "church of Christ," etc.), or we may choose a term which relates to some distinctive feature of the church, so long as we are not sectarian in what we do.

Sectarianism, not human names, was what Paul fought in the well-known statement to the Corinthians, who were tying the names of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas to their parties. Paul's response to those who used his name for such a purpose was: "Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of [*eis to onoma* = to become the possession of] Paul?" And to those who boasted, "I belong to Christ," Paul immediately re-

sponded, "Is Christ divided?" Let's read that again: "*I belong to Christ.*" *Is Christ divided?* Obviously one may be sinfully divisive in saying, "I belong to Christ." The Corinthian problem was not what they called themselves, but what they *meant* by what they called themselves.

If the sectarian attitude is absent, we need not assume that the various distinguishing terms dishonor the Lord. We may be called Mennonites without putting Menno Simons in competition with Christ, Baptists without attributing salvation to water, Presbyterians without regarding a particular form of church polity as our means of redemption, or Lutherans without elevating Luther from servant to Savior. We may also be Congregational if we are identified with that form of organization, Evangelical if that is our theological outlook, or Reformed if in fact we are. These are all human names, and they may be sinful if we *mean* them to be, but they are not wrong *per se*. We may indeed "belong to Christ" without rejecting others who, notwithstanding the fact they claim to belong to Paul, Apollos or Cephas, are judged to be "the church of God" and "saints." But, on the other hand, the very name of Christ may be a "human name" if it is made subservient to a human purpose. It all depends on whether such terms are used as a basis for divisive exclusionism.

2. Does not allegiance to human creeds separate one from God?

Since every creed is what at least one human believes, all creeds are human; and every human has one. Furthermore, no church will long exist without one. It may not be written in a discipline, but it will be written on hearts and reflected in the church's educational materials and journals. It will become the basis—*for there is no other*—of determining who will be allowed to speak in the pulpit, and of who will be regarded as a false teacher.

A few days ago a man who was an elder in a church with "no creed but

Christ" told of a brother asking him, "Do we really believe what the preacher said this morning?" This incident illustrates how a creed *may* separate one from God. If a person allows his "belief" to be determined by someone else, even by a scholarly council, he does wrong. This is clear from Romans 14, where the question of what to do when individual creeds differ is dealt with. According to that passage, not only must we have our own creed, but it is also our duty to accept our brother whose creed may differ from our own. Paul tried to convince the Romans that there is a difference between fellowship and endorsement—that one does not necessarily agree with a person's foolish notions when he accepts him as a brother—but his lesson is lost on a good many Christians today.

A question related to the one above is this: Can one be a member of a church without subscribing to everything that church—or its leaders or founders—believes? If not, then most of us would have to withdraw our membership. But if the church permits diversity, and encourages an open mind and a searching attitude, then certainly one in no way surrenders his integrity by associating with it, even though its members, as a whole, subscribe to a creed which he cannot fully accept.

3. Are you not opposed to perversions in the organization of the church?

As a matter of fact, there is one perversion, prominent in my own communion but by no means peculiar to it, that has disturbed me for years. That is the disposition to permit, and even encourage, the development of an authoritarian hierarchy which is directly opposed to some very plain statements of the Lord. But this question is not concerned with that sort of perversion; it is rather related to the issue of whether or not the New Testament establishes an invariable pattern of church polity which all churches must follow or else be doomed.

The problem here, apart from the fact

that the New Testament nowhere claims such a pattern, is that we run into difficulty in trying to determine exactly what the so-called pattern is. If you do not see this difficulty, I suggest you try a little exercise. The three fullest statements regarding church functionaries are in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:28-30, and Ephesians 4:11-12. Take a sheet of paper and write in three columns the various "offices" mentioned in these passages. Then draw lines connecting the corresponding ministers in each column (be careful not to cheat by assuming equivalence without Biblical evidence). You will find that of the sixteen functions mentioned, only two appear in all three lists, one other appears in two, and each of the others appears only in one. Can you discover a pattern here that you can in good conscience bind on others? Next, using only Biblical statements, write out what each of the ministers mentioned in these and other passages is supposed to do. Finally, make a list of the "offices" in your own congregation (including the preacher, trustees, bus minister, etc.) and then, with the help of a good concordance, try to find them in the New Testament. You will discover that, unless you are exceptionally skilled in deductions and inferences and have a very vivid imagination, it is impossible for you to obtain a pattern which precisely coincides both with the New Testament and our actual practices. This little exercise has helped me to appreciate the fact that what I call a "pattern" may be someone else's "perversion," and that his disagreement with me is not necessarily a hanging offense.

Even if the pattern concept is correct, it can only be sustained by deductions and inferences; and Thomas Campbell was certainly right in insisting that "inferences and deductions from Scripture premises . . . are not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so." We all use inferences and deductions to arrive at

our respective positions, and we should, but we cannot make them a condition of fellowship with others without frustrating our purpose as God's reconciling body.

4. Does not your view of fellowship mean that one can be saved without faith, repentance, and baptism?

These responses to God's grace are actually three ways of looking at the same thing; and insofar as neglect of them constitutes disobedience, they are the difference between being saved and lost. But we all make some sort of concession to immaturity. A good example is the so-called "age of accountability." Although this phrase is not in the Bible, it is a necessary invention of love, and love is, after all, faith at work.

But maturity is restricted by more than chronological age or mental retardation. Most of us are not the open-minded Bible scholars we think we are. Because of our emotional attachment to our religious upbringing and because of the deep impressions lessons from respected instructors have made on our minds (not to mention our possible aversion to the sheer ugliness we have encountered in others with different viewpoints), we have a great deal of difficulty in altering the ideas with which we have been reared. The extent to which our church affiliation and our creed are determined by the influence under which we have fallen is considerable. It is not that we do not want to do what is right, or that we do not acknowledge Jesus as Lord, but that we are normal human beings.

This problem is particularly acute with regard to baptism. Representatives from every side of this controversial question can cite reputable scholars to support their view. The layman, notwithstanding his good intentions, is poorly qualified to sift through the arguments and arrive at the truth (there is, of course, a true position). Those who have the truth—or at least think they do—must allow others the necessary time to arrive at their own

firm convictions. To equate hesitancy on this issue with infidelity, as some do, manifests ignorance of both the Bible and psychology.

Immersion, as a means of initiation into Christ, is important, but it may not be most important. According to Romans 2:26-29 and Matthew 5:28, what one *means* to do, whether good or bad, is as great as what he actually does. If in his heart one acknowledges Jesus as Lord, his shortcomings due to ignorance or cultural entrapment do not constitute disobedience. But if his heart is rebellious, what he does, though technically right, may be no more than "a form of godliness." To paraphrase Paul, "He is not a real Christian who is one outwardly, nor is true baptism something external and physical. He is a Christian who is one inwardly, and real baptism is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal."

If we are to judge others, we must do so on the basis of their general devotion to the Lord, and not on any one point. This attitude enabled Alexander Campbell, a resolute immersionist, to say, "Should I see a sectarian Baptist or a paedobaptist more spiritually minded, more generally conformed to the requisitions of the Messiah, than the one who precisely acquiesces with me in the theory or practice of immersion as I teach, doubtless the former rather than the latter, would have my cordial approbation and love as a Christian." I agree.

5. Do you not believe that perversions in the worship of the church will separate a person from God?

I do not see how anyone who has read Hosea (to mention only that book) could say that perversions in worship will not separate one from God. Yet, as Hosea indicates, it takes a great deal of perversion to bring about such a separation, simply because God, as the heartbroken husband, will put up with so much infidelity. But the perversions contemplated in the question above are hardly on a par

with the gross paganism of Hosea's time. They are, on the contrary, in our right-wing circle, such "corruptions" as: eating the Lord's supper on some day other than Sunday, having a choir instead of congregational singing, using mechanical instruments of music, and practicing tithing instead of freewill offering.

There are two problems with this sort of thinking. In the first place, it is based on the assumption that a specific pattern of worship is outlined in the Bible. No more divisive and unfounded notion has ever originated within our ranks.

In the second place, even if we concede the pattern concept, the Bible nowhere stamps "rejected" on the so-called perversions mentioned above. The evidence weighs heavily in favor of the view that the church in Jerusalem ate the Lord's supper every day, and had it in connection with a larger meal. Except in one instance, at Troas, when the disciples met *at least one time* on the first day of the week to break bread (which we infer to mean they ate the Lord's supper), the supper is never tied to Sunday, and certainly never to Sunday only.

Regarding congregational singing, if that is the exclusive pattern, it would have saved us a lot of trouble if some New Testament writer had just said so. As it is, we have to deal with the fact that at the Corinthian assembly "each one [note the singular] has a hymn," with no hint that such solo performances, as such, were out of place. Other than that passage, which some of us would just as soon forget, where is the New Testament text which unquestionably places any kind of singing in the worship service?

The only way one can rule instrumental music out of the worship is by using inferential arguments that are so complicated that even the faithful usually are unable to articulate them. If lack of conviction here separates one from God, who then can be saved?

With regard to the collection, why must we assume that tithing is not free-

will giving? But that is a minor question when placed alongside the fact that there is no known instance of a New Testament church having a standing treasury. Isn't it a marvel that we have had so many wars over establishing a pattern on how to use something for which there is no pattern! I am aware that the proof-text which adorns the tracts is 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. But the treasury which that passage enjoins is the one which the individual *saver* sets up privately. If we really want to "do Bible things in Bible ways," why do we not take seriously Galatians 6:6: "Let him [singular] that is taught in the word communicate [i.e., contribute a share—A-G] unto him that teacheth in all good things" (KJV)? Or else we can admit that we maintain a church treasury for the very practical reason that we cannot carry on the way we do without it, and concede that if we can decide to have

one, we can also decide how to use it.

These answers represent my understanding of what the Bible teaches, but, since people who listen to the Lord with open hearts often learn truths that have long escaped them, they may change in the future. Because I know from experience how hard it is to turn loose of the pattern concept, I can understand the view, as expressed recently by one conservative, "that one gives up the Bible as his objective standard for determining right and wrong when he decides to deviate from the Bible pattern in one point." I suppose this troublesome theory will be with us for a long time to come, but I do hope that those who espouse it will eventually find it possible to believe that they are not the only ones who respect the authority of the Scriptures, that we, too, take the Bible seriously. □

A PRAYER FOR EXORCISM

Lord, spare me from the ghosts
Of work undone;
The year has run its course,
And once again I find
Unfinished what I had designed.
No doubt you hoped for more as well;
But, truth to tell,
I doubt my sense of falling short
Arises from the faults you see.
I prefer those sins whose guilty shades
Are quite definable,
And limit my lament
To my own thwarted ends.
Your design transcends my pride;
I cannot hide beneath the guilt
That comes from You,
For it speaks of new beginnings,
And brooks no misty sentiment
For what I've failed to do.

—Elton D. Higgs

the signs of the times

NORTH'S INVITATION

When Ira North was appointed to the helm of the *Gospel Advocate*, with Guy N. Woods as his first mate, James W. Adams remarked in the pages of the *Gospel Guardian* that the new partnership would surely violate the Biblical injunction against yoking an ox and an ass together. In a *Vanguard* editorial, Yater Tant summed up Dr. North in one sentence, as "Elvis Presley, Oral Roberts, Evel Knievel, and Ali Muhammad all rolled into one."

These pleasant sentiments reflect, I think, the strong suspicion, if not outright contempt, in which Dr. North is held among the "non-institutional" Churches of Christ. Now comes Dr. North with a modest proposal in the May 10 issue of the *Advocate*, in which he summons those whom he calls "'anti' brethren" to "come on back home."

"Come back to the old paths," Dr. North pleads, "and again send your children to Lipscomb, Abilene, Freed-Hardeman, Harding, Alabama Christian, Oklahoma, Michigan Christian, Northeastern Christian, Pepperdine, Ohio Valley, Lubbock, York, Crowley Ridge, etc. Come back home and preach again in the great churches, such as Hillsboro, West End, Granny White, Searcy, Walnut Hills, Bammel Road, Memorial Drive, etc."

There is irony in the above paragraph, but its impact has, apparently, escaped its author. Quite similar invitations were issued by James H. Garrison at the turn

of the century, to call the adherents of Dr. North's eminent predecessor, David Lipscomb, back into the Disciples fold. Dr. North is not the first to misread the mechanics of the non-institutional schism, nor is he the first to miscalculate the depth of the breach between "mainliners" and "antis." Such astute politicians as J.D. Thomas and Reuel Lemmons have been trying for years, without success, to achieve reconciliation with the non-institutional movement, in order to create a coalition against those whom *they* conceive to be "liberals." Among the more elaborate of their efforts was the carefully-orchestrated "Arlington Meeting" more than a decade ago.

The roots of this schism run much deeper than the doctrinal issues which are said to have caused it. Both factions believe in "caring for the widows and the fatherless," but few members of either group take this admonition personally. Most members of the "mainstream" believe in paying someone else to do it for them—realizing, not coincidentally, that herding orphans and old folks into elegant concentration camps will create captive audiences for indoctrination.

For Dr. North and many other leaders of the mainstream, "true and undefiled religion" is embodied in "great churches" with great buildings, great budgets, great attendance figures, and great programs; in turn, these great churches support great institutions, with great concentrations of money and power. For the antis, true and undefiled religion consists in fulfilling every clause of a law code plainly spelled out in the pages of the Bible. In my opinion, both of these positions are mistaken. But if, in some now unforeseen Purgatory, I should be required to choose between them, I would take the antis. They are, after all, no more rigid and legalistic than their counterparts in the mainstream, and they are not forever trying to manipulate the faithful in order to sell something, take the money, and run.

—DON HAYMES