

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

(Continued from page 101)

including our daughters, indicate that they feel limited in what they can do with the talents God gave them. They all do work for the Lord in their homes, in the church, and out in society as their time schedule permits. They aren't elders or deacons or preachers and they do not feel slighted because they aren't. If they had to assume those responsibilities, they wouldn't have time to do what they are now doing. What you believe is up to you, but I question the accuracy of some of your "interpretations" of scripture and the soundness of some of your reasoning. I hope I have not been offensive to you.

Lowell E. McCoy
Springfield, OH

May I express my sincere appreciation for the insights and straightforward statements in your July/August 1991 issue.

The article by Alton Thompson ("Of Sacred and Secular") set forth a significant distinction which too few people understand . . . the differences between the Sacred, the Sinful and the Secular. It was made very plain that

to the Christian there are only two avenues: the sacred and the sinful. This must become the thinking pattern of the church today or we are in deep trouble in dealing with the society of which we are a part.

I was very much impressed (and in obvious agreement) with the article on "Women in God's Plan" by J. Bruce Kilmer. He has given a very direct and cogent expression to what many of us have been saying for some time now. It can be very well expressed in Paul's statement that in Christ "there is no male and female" but we are all one in Him. What is currently talked of as equality is little more than toleration, and even in that there are far too many "mental exceptions" to give us the right to say that we have restored the New Testament church. The plea for Biblical consistency is precisely set forth, and is a message much needed in our day.

Thank you for the inclusion of such insightful articles. I appreciate your magazine very much. May God bless you as you continue in His glad service.

James Earl Ladd
Professor of Ministries
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Integrity

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You Encourage Maturity!

You just completed another amazingly fast-paced, morals-challenging year! You were expected to know the appropriate Christian response — and live it — to everything from war to abortion to substance abuse to the S&L scandal to the homeless to Dr. Kevorkian by the time newscasters completed their reports. For another whole year you have attempted to apply the timeless principles of love and servanthood to the problems you have personally faced. If you have sometimes felt overwhelmed this year, we can empathize with you! But Landon Saunders would encourage us to “Never give up!” and our Best Friend promises “For lo, I am with you always.”

You *Integrity* readers encourage us and others through several expressions of fellowship. Thanks to all of you who have responded to our recent financial letter. We need your contributions in order to publish this journal. The *Integrity* Board are all volunteers, and we try to contribute half the cost of sending you the journal. If you have not made a donation recently, please do so. Thank you!

Many of you encourage people all across the country with your articles and letters! It has been said that a unique strength of the *Integrity* journal is the fact that a majority of its writers are lay people — people who work “in the marketplace,” who are diligent Bible students, who care deeply about living a God-glorifying life. Keep your letters and manuscripts coming! Encourage others who do not see themselves as writers to put on paper the special insight God has given them on a scripture or subject. Together we can test and refine our thinking in order to encourage Christian maturity.

Several *Integrity* readers pass the journal on to others, or use it for Sunday School study and discussion. Many of you pray for the unity *Integrity* hopes to foster. We board members appreciate all the encouraging threads you provide that can be woven by God into a network of hope, love, and service.

Bruce and Diane Kilmer

Rights and Responsibilities: A Christian Perspective

PERRY C. COTHAM

Since this year marks the 200th birthday of the Bill of Rights, thoughtful Americans have appropriately focused on the purpose and significance of those individual freedoms which, as spelled out in the core, first ten amendments to our Constitution, still form the most comprehensive protection of individual freedoms ever written.

The Bill of Rights emerged from a strong prerevolutionary sentiment for natural rights and a distrust of governmental power. After the American revolution, the states drafted their separate constitutions; many of them contained Bills of Rights. When the new U.S. Constitution was drafted and approved by the convention delegates, there was a natural apprehension among citizens in the thirteen states about the power that would be relinquished to the proposed national government.

The Founders could not ignore the cry for a Bill of Rights. In early American political thought, a right was first and foremost a *limitation* on any government's ruling power. To obtain ratification by the necessary nine states, the Federalists dealt with the colonists' fears of a national government which would emerge as too powerful for the general welfare and safety. The result was the Bill of Rights. As ratified in 1791, the Bill of Rights protected individual rights from violation by the *federal* government, not from violations by states. Not until after the passage of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments did the Constitution begin to protect individuals against state power. Only gradually, and never completely, did the Supreme Court accept the *incorporation doctrine* — that no state could act in violation of the U.S. Bill of Rights.

While the U.S. Bill of Rights is a comprehensive listing, it has not been a unique listing. As suggested, its drafters borrowed from early state listings. The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen emerged from the same time frame. In 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration on Human Rights to guarantee basic rights to all the citizens of the world (a symbolic statement of world opinion with no real power of sanction).

Strength Based On Those In Power

Preambles and lists of rights are symbolic statements — they indicate the values, ideals, and goals which seem to best express the spirit of the national political culture. The existence of a constitution and bill of rights does not, in and of itself, insure a decent, humane society. These documents depend, to a great extent, on the interpretation given them by whoever is in power. For example, despite a Soviet constitution that reads much like our own, in the 1930s Joseph Stalin imprisoned nearly twenty million Soviet citizens in labor camps; another ten to fifteen million were killed for resisting his agricultural collectivization program. In this country, in 1942, some 120,000 Japanese-Americans on the West Coast were interned without due process under the infamous Executive Order 9066.

Despite the passion that most Americans express for their personal freedoms, a 1987 newspaper poll indicated that 59 percent of Americans could not identify the Bill of Rights. A 1990 poll verified that high percentages of Americans said they would support restricting

the right of the press, the public's watchdog, to criticize government. They also expressed a willingness to limit or prohibit forms of communication with which they did not agree.

As late as our nation's involvement in Desert Storm, the current administration moved to curb the news media's access to information about the conduct and impact on civilians of our military strategy in Iraq. What seemed obvious to most observers was that the abridgement of First Amendment rights was designed, not to protect American lives and serve the public interest, but to maintain support on the home front for the war.

Rights and Controversy

Controversy regarding the Bill of Rights is not limited to the press and free speech, of course. Sometimes Christians complain about Supreme Court decisions concerning class prayer and oral Bible reading in public schools. They also have expressed concerns about defendants who have been released because evidence or confessions were obtained by law officials in a way which violated the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Bill of Rights. The issue of flag burning as a means of expressing dissent also stirs many patriotic citizens.

Thoughtful Christians have also expressed strong concern over the vulgarity, sacrilege, and violence which masquerade as art or entertainment. Clearly, such works as the controversial photographs in a recently exhibited Robert Mapplethorpe collection or 2 Live Crew's album, *As Nasty as They Wanna Be*, are offensive to Christians. How can the Bill of Rights be used as a shield against the criticism and censorship hurled at these performers by clear-headed citizens deeply concerned about the fabric of our society?

American Christians will generally offer support and praise for the rights and liberties they enjoy under the U.S. Constitution, even when disagreeing sharply with certain Supreme Court decisions. Most have heard several horror stories of Protestant groups that experienced harassment and severe persecution in communist-controlled countries where the freedoms of speech, assembly, and religious

practice were not protected as they are in the U.S.

Censorship

Of the various issues American Christians have found troublesome, perhaps none, with the possible exception of religious rituals in public schools, has been as vexing or controversial as the issue of censorship when related to obscenity and pornography. Regrettably, many Christians have approached the issues of obscenity and censorship with great zeal but with little balance and a short-sighted perspective.

To focus on this issue in some detail will provide an example of how Christians may respond to controversy which falls under the broad umbrella of the Bill of Rights. After all, while most religiously devout citizens consider obscenity and pornography to be twin evils, even works of the devil, there is no precise consensus within the Christian community as to solutions to the problem and appropriate measures for society to take in combatting an increasing problem.

The thoughtful Christian will begin with the biblical texts. Admittedly, there are biblical narratives and statements which, if explicitly dramatized or depicted, would seem pornographic or degrading to women. At its highest, biblical theology understands our bodies and sexuality are gifts from God and contends that human love and sexuality may be celebrated within marriage, although individuals are free to remain single. All humans are created in the image of God and, therefore, deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. Our purpose in life is to seek and know God and live in relationship with God.

Though we are created to be whole and healthy, our human nature leads us to act in ways that lead us to alienation from God, from others, and from ourselves. Biblical theology speaks out against such practices as lust, immoral sexual behavior, and public lewdness, and directs us to avoid any environment which renders us vulnerable to evil influences.

Pornography is indeed a serious, concrete manifestation of the fallenness of humankind and the pervasive nature of sin in all humanity. It must be clearly opposed in public forums,

pulpits, classrooms, and in private family teaching and modeling because it is essentially anti-human and anti-love. Most pornography is anti-female.

Building a case against pornography on the basis of any link between erotica and sexual deviance and sexual violence may not be productive. The world is complex and most consequences we deplore are "caused" by numerous factors. One can adduce studies and "evidence" for both sides of this debate and, though it seems counterintuitive, there is strong evidence that people who are exposed to sexually explicit materials, be they art or pornography, are *less* rather than more likely to become sexual abusers or other deviants. It's much more productive to consider the subtle signals conveyed by pornography.

Among the distorted, even perverse, messages of pornography are the following: women can be sexually abused; women actually enjoy rape and other sexual aggressiveness; sexual pleasure is life's highest value; relationships may be based on power, greed, and selfishness; physical beauty and size of body parts are vitally important in determining human worth; and the eccentric and the bizarre in satisfying normal appetites constitute normal behavior.

Christian Responses

Christians have responded to objectionable materials and performances in a variety of ways — special sermons, campaigns, bumper stickers, advertiser boycotts, even forming lobbyist groups to pressure the National Endowment for the Arts to withhold funds from objectionable exhibits and performances. Despite the fact that such responses usually gain heavy media attention, concerned Christians should question the validity of some of these approaches to the most offensive and objectionable materials, exhibits, and performances. I will attempt to state my reasons briefly.

First, despite the wide availability of "hard-core" materials, obscene performances, and questionable exhibits, surely these phenomena do not constitute the most dangerous threat to the moral fabric of our society. True, adult magazines and X-rated videos are seen by increasing numbers of our citizens, but only a

relatively small number of Americans will be exposed to controversial collections such as the Mapplethorpe collection. On the other hand, millions of our citizens will be exposed to gratuitous violence and sexual exploitation in general release motion pictures, movies which later make their way into our homes via cable or videotape. (One study concludes that by age 18, the average American child will have seen 200,000 violent acts on television including 40,000 murders.) The subtle messages of pornography to which we have alluded come across much more powerfully to our youth in what may be called "pious pornography" — exploitation movies, advertisements using sex appeal, tabloids which wallow in scandal and rumor, magazines, romance novels, even prime-time television programming and beauty pageants.

The recent, well-publicized success of Kitty Kelly's biography of Nancy Reagan, to the tune of 600,000-copy first run by a respectable publisher, reveals several unsettling traits of many of our fellow citizens: one, that far too many of us cater to our interest in the salacious details of the private lives of public figures and care too little about the public policies and principles those same leaders have advanced; second, that biographies which have little if any perspective, balance, empathy, justice, or depth, will otherwise, as Norman Schwarzkopf might say, make great history for the masses. The "kiss and tell" tabloids, already enjoying robust profits in this country, as well as the recent autobiography of Geraldo Rivera, fall into this general indictment.

Second, employing the Mapplethorpe collection as an illustration, one may suspect that political and personal factors influence many calls for censorship or for withdrawal of federal funding. It is not convincing that sexual explicitness was the major factor in this controversy; nor that any threat to religion was a factor. Race may have been a factor. One may suspect that it was not the *explicitness* of the collection but its *theme* (admittedly a difficult and controversial one) that provoked the outcry. Had *heterosexual* activity been depicted in the exhibit, perhaps few voices of objection would have been heard. The one calling for censorship, or at least strong control, most likely fears

“differentness” and the willingness to be different. We are feeling the most secure when artistic depictions and performances confirm and reinforce how we already think and act. Foundations funded by public money must not be allowed to attach conditions to genuine art, lest we move down the road to a regime where art must serve some dominant ideology — a reality in 20th century Nazi and Communist regimes.

Third, when Christians get into the business of censoring or controlling, we run the risk of silencing an important message of an artist, even if it comes to us obscenely packaged. Some of the art forms are truly anti-religious and offensive to many Christians; on the other hand, to feel angry at God, angry toward religious authorities, or toward religious institutions is a fairly intense and widely shared emotion and as such deserves depiction. While I may not appreciate certain depictions of Jesus, Mary, or the cross, one may understand them. True, there are performances that masquerade as art but are only charades. There is art that grabs attention but neither warms the heart nor addresses mind or spirit. One person’s art is another person’s poison. But I had rather err in generosity on the side of the artist than in caution on the side of the censorious public.

Fourth, the dispute over NEA funding does not involve a great number of artistic works or a great deal of money. As of last year, the NEA had distributed 85,000 grants (and dealt with one million images in the visual arts) and fewer than twenty of these have been controversial. The total NEA budget is about \$175 million, less money than is spent on keeping the “oompah” in the nation’s military bands. If in the recent Iraqi war, each “smart bomb” dropped on the enemy cost \$150,000, and each Patriot missile deployed cost at least a million dollars, surely we can afford the luxury of investing a few funds on art and risk funding some work which comes up a little short of the highest artistic standards. (Of course, the issue is about principles and values and not about the federal budget.)

What is the Answer?

Christians have no simple and easy answers to the complex issues related to First Amendment rights of free expression. Who among us can formulate a plan of action which can be claimed as *the* Christian solution. While Christians are called to preserve, perpetuate, and share moral values drawn from their families of faith, as well as issue prophetic judgment against severe threats to those values, they may also believe in zealously guarding the open American marketplace of ideas and free expression.

Christian citizens should be informed, discuss moral issues, and take action which, in ways either real or symbolic, will clearly communicate their opposition to objectionable performances, materials, and exhibits. The entertainer who conscientiously withdrew from a “Saturday Night Live” production which featured a comedian notorious for lewd and sexist remarks is one example of such personal, positive protest.

Perhaps the best solution for concerned Christians is merely to ignore that to which we object. If, for example, a publisher is exercising poor judgment in publishing a book which unnecessarily offends, the best way to register disgust would be to ignore the book. To be ignored is more painful for an artist than to be banned. A call for a boycott or demonstration can become self-undermining, sending unsympathetic readers or viewers straight to bookstores, theatres, or museums to buy the book or see the production or exhibit.

We can truly vote with our dollars for works of art which celebrate and advance humane values rather than desecrate and undermine human worth and dignity. And we can make wise personal choices for ourselves and for our families which move us even closer in the direction in which our Lord is leading us.

Perry Cotham works as a training specialist for Tennessee’s Department of Human Services, and serves as a part-time minister and college professor in the Nashville area.

Grace Confounding

A meditation on the poem by
Amos N. Wilder

ELMER PROUT

He came when he wasn’t expected
as He always does,
though a few on the night-shift had the
release early.

He came where he wasn’t expected
as He always does,
though a few mages were tipped off.

He came where even the Apostles
couldn’t go along,
in Nazareth of all places, on the edge of
nowhere;
they had to place it in David’s home
town.

He is always one step ahead of us;
the space-age calls for new maps
and its altars and holy places are not yet
marked.

What did those shepherds expect to see that night? It was just another night, another ten hours to put in. What could possibly happen that was any different from all the other night-shifts before? Same old fields, same old sheep, same old routine. . .

But, then, “the angel said, ‘Today in the town of David a Savior has been born’ ” (see Luke 2:8-20).

How far did the Magi expect their journey to take them? And what would they find when the destination was reached? The road went on and on and on. Finally they came to Palestine. They found themselves among those strangest of all people — the Jews. No signs were posted. No guides waiting to direct them: “This way to see the new King of the Jews.”

But, then, “the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They saw the child. They bowed down and worshiped him” (see Matthew 2:1-12).

Nathanael knew all about Nazareth — miserable, dirty, back-country fishing village. He’d used the town’s name more than once as a scornful put-down. He used it this time with more than usual force. How in the name of common sense could Philip mention the Messiah in the same breath with Nazareth? Did he not have any sense of propriety? Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah — what stupidity!

But, then, Jesus of Nazareth spoke. “Here is a true Israelite. I saw you under the fig tree.” Looking into the eyes of that unexpected Christ, Nathanael was carried beyond all his pre-judgments to the cry of faith. “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel” (see John 1:43-51).

The unexpectedness of the Christ did not end in the first century. “He is always one step ahead of us.” He continues to turn up in the oddest places. He walks among the most unlikely people. He is and always will be the Christ to whom people say, “Lord, when did we see you?” (see Matthew 25:37).

“Silently now I wait for Thee,
Ready, My God, Thy will to see:
Open my eyes, illumine me,
Savior divine!”

Charles H. Scott

Elmer Prout, a minister and missionary in the Stone-Campbell movement for many years, presently ministers to the Church of Christ in Shaftner, California.

“He who walks in integrity walks securely.” Proverbs 10:9

Born Of A Woman

TERRY HERNDON

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, . . . so that we might receive adoption as children” (Gal. 4:4,5 New RSV).

Why should the clause “born of a woman” be included in this passage? What possible inspired purpose is served by these parenthetical words? Most assuredly, it is a point with a substantial bearing on our understanding of the whole business of becoming the heir of God because that is the point of the message.

Many have said that the point is merely to establish the Lord’s kinship with humanity. I strongly believe that they are wrong for two reasons. First, there is no reason to believe that this audience or any other doubted the humanity of Jesus. The problems that he and the apostles regularly faced were challenges to his divinity rather than his humanity. More specifically, his maternity was not questioned, it was his paternity that was and is an issue. Hence, the “establishing kinship with humanity” argument is irrelevant and more a fabrication than a conclusion.

Second, the kinship point is often made in scripture, and, when that simple point is intended, it is simply and clearly made. It is not complicated. The point here must be different than that simple statement by John when he said, “The word was made flesh and dwelt among us. . . (John 1:44)” It must also be different than Paul’s own words to the Philippians with which he said quite clearly, “(Jesus) . . . took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man (Phil. 2:7).” Even when the point was extended to establish that Jesus had shared the human experience, it was clearly put, as in Hebrews 4:15: “(He) . . . was in all points tempted like as we are.” There must be a still different point being made here, and it can be found if one is only literal and

simple: He was “born of a woman.” Paul is simply saying to the audience: “Keep in mind that Jesus’ link to humanity is his female parent.” This little parenthetical clause directly establishes and emphasizes the strong and clear association of Jesus with *femaleness*.

Femaleness and the Son Of God

Please do not confuse my point with “femininity,” which is a wholly different matter. I am not speaking of the behavior patterns that a male-dominated culture assigns to or prefers to see in its female members. The culture’s specific concepts of “ladylike” and “womanly” bear no relationship to what I am talking about. Cultural bias has, in fact, helped obscure Paul’s point.

Quite simply, I am referring to the biological concept, the representative of the human species that is biologically equipped to produce the larger of the gametes (the ovum or egg), to gestate or prenatally nourish and protect the developing embryo, and to produce and deliver required nourishment to the newly born but still totally dependent infant. Only those behavioral and social implications which derive directly from this biological concept are in any way relevant.

An appreciation of femaleness and Jesus’ relationship to femaleness is important for at least the following reasons:

- It is an important part of the *image of God*.
- It is an important part of the redemptive process.
- It is an important part of redemption’s goal.

Each of these reasons deserves careful consideration.

Femaleness and the Image Of God

Genesis 1:26-27 reports that “God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let *them* have dominion. . . And so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he *them*’” (RSV). Even though many writers and teachers over the ages have evaded and obscured this point, a simple and honest reading of the word binds one to the conclusion that the term “man” is not gender-specific. It, in fact, must be a plural noun accurately translated as a collective “humanity” in our modern vernacular. The image of God was not attributed to either maleness, femaleness, or the smallness of any individual as much as it is attributed to the collective *humanity* — a family of male and female nurturing both one another and the creation of God in which they found themselves.

In this family of two, one may have been small and one large, one tall and one short, one dark and one light, one brilliant and one slow, but *they* as a whole reflected the “image of God.” Therefore, the “image of God” cannot be found in their differences. If both male and female are created in the image of God, as Genesis states, then the image of God must be found in what they have in common, not in what they have that is different.

The special emphasis Genesis 1:27 gives that “male and female created he them” does not lead to the conclusion that one or the other reflects the image of God, but that what they have in common in their union reflects the image of God. “God is love,” said John in I John 4:8, and the image of such a God is to be found in people who are different being bonded together in a family sanctified for a holy purpose. “Male and female” was man created so that male and female might “have dominion” over creation in a loving partnership that reflected the loving nature of the Creator.

This point is reinforced by Jesus’ very direct pronouncement that “God is spirit” (John 4:24). That Spirit, while lacking physical form, shows itself in its influence on physical things as when the wind is seen and heard because of

that which it moves (John 3:8). The image of God, then, is not to be seen in Adam’s maleness, Eve’s femaleness, the physical requirements of gender, or other physical attributes of humanity. It is to be found only in both maleness and femaleness bonded into loving partnership, which is humanity, lovingly and peacefully about the business of tending creation and one another.

This first relationship is what we must look at for truth as to the image of God. It was not the maleness versus femaleness that dominates both our literature and our reality, but rather maleness and femaleness together making *oneness* in fulfillment of God’s eternal will which Paul asserts: “(God) purposed in Christ” and which is “to bring all things in heaven and on earth together. . . (Eph. 1:10).” The unity and peace of a creative humanity reflects the image of God. “Femaleness” is an indispensable part of the image of God.

Femaleness and the Redemptive Process

The importance of femaleness in the redemption process is suggested when Paul said, “My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you (Gal. 4:19).” Here are two powerful metaphors involving femaleness. In the first, the evangelist’s work of bringing the lost to spiritual victory is seen as a painful birthing process. The second metaphor is of particular interest in our discussion. Here the process of spiritual growth is equated to Christ being “formed in [us],” a sort of spiritual pregnancy.

The woman of Galatians 4:4 — Mary, the mother of Jesus — lived a type of this metaphor. In response to the angel Gabriel, she said, “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.” Surely this obedient spirit was the basis of her “favor with God,” and her selection for this Holy work. This attitude was a necessary condition for the Holy Spirit to come upon Mary and for the power of God to overshadow her. Consequently, the Son of God Most High, whose kingdom will never end, was formed in her womb (Luke 1).

It is well to pause here and remember that we are discussing an Almighty God. As Gabriel said in response to young Mary's confusion about the ways and means of the event, "Nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37)." This God did not need a virginal woman to bring forth his Son as flesh. He had earlier created a universe from nothing, a man from dust, and a woman from a rib. He had mysteriously produced the priest Melchizedek "without beginning of days or end of life (Heb. 7:3)." He sent angels indistinguishable from people on several occasions, and he revitalized the wombs of Sarah and Elizabeth when they were long beyond child-bearing. God did not need, but rather chose for his son to be born of a woman. He created this relationship between our redemption and femaleness.

A more detailed scriptural study on redemption would show that just as Mary stood before the Lord, heard his message, and replied, "I am the Lord's servant. Be it unto me as [he has] said," so does the contemporary believer stand before the Lord. We hear the word as proclaimed by Peter: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)." Surely Galatians 4:19 shows the gift to be Christ "formed in us." The point is made again in Colossians 1:27 as Paul explains that his work is to present the Word so as to open the eternal mystery which is "Christ in [us], the hope of glory."

As we imitate Mary's humility and obedience, the Holy Spirit will come upon us and the power of God will overshadow us so that the process of forming Christ in us can begin. Much scripture, including Romans 8 specifically, tells us that the process will transform us completely. Not only will he find both life and peace, but we will become "heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ" in the process.

Femaleness And The Goal of Redemption

The goal of redemption is for us to become "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works. . . (Eph. 2:10)." How does this transformation reflect in a believer's life and behavior? Paul said that this "renewal of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5) will produce the development of such characteristics as compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, mercy, and love — so that relationships might be peaceful (Col. 3:12-14).

These traits are most often valued in our culture when seen in women rather than men, and are commonly associated with femaleness. If, for example, I were to take a survey to determine who are America's leading male heroes today, who would be identified and why? Would many heroes be chosen because they are compassionate, kind or humble?

In general, our culture deems it unseemly for a man to weep with those who weep, to turn the other cheek to his attacker, to offer the cloak when the coat is taken by the abuser, to love one's enemy while leaving vengeance to the Lord, to wash feet, and to submit to his own wife. That the Word sets these expectations for Christians does not always offset the need to be "manly" in our own eyes and those of our neighbors.

The world preaches that real success is measured in military, political and commercial terms. This requires ambition, aggression, and domination — attributes of a "real" man. Even Jesus' disciples were prey to this powerful lie, and expected "manly" behavior by their leader. They were evidently very disappointed when, as recorded in Mark 8-9, Jesus responded to his persecutors and soon-to-be-murderers with gentleness rather than hostility and counterattack. The "shame" that Jesus warns them against is most certainly related to his refusal

to behave in the culturally defined "manly" way that they wanted and sorely hoped for. Godly men must heed the warning.

When Paul wrote that the Son of God was "born of a woman," he was purposely reminding us of Christ's relationship to femaleness. All of us, males and females, must find the faith and the courage to live with vulnerability and determine to be ever more female in perspective and behavior in order to show forth the im-

age of God. "Maleness," as the world has defined it, denies the spirit of God breathed into God's creation. "Femaleness," properly understood, can make all the difference.

Terry Herndon is president of an insurance company which specializes in health insurance. He has served as an elder in both the Churches of Christ (non-instrumental) and the Christian Church (independent).

Intercepted Correspondence

The following "Intercepted Correspondence" is a continuing feature begun in the January/February 1988 issue of *Integrity*. These letters are *Integrity's* version of C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters* and Os Guinness' *Gravedigger Files* and are written by two different *Integrity* board members.

To refresh your memory and inform new readers, our imaginary setting has Bruce

attending Word Perfect classes, where he accidentally begins intercepting subversive communication between two devils on his computer screen. The *Integrity* board decides that we must inform Christians everywhere of the destructively evil plots of the nefarious teacher Apollyon and his young student Ichabod by publishing the letters for as long as they can be intercepted.

My dear Manipulator of Mayhem,

Again I must say that I am well pleased with your progress in our infernal attack on Broad Way Church of Christ. You have brought about a state of agitation for which I can rejoice. I can tell you now that your labors have met with much greater success than those of your three immediate predecessors combined. They lacked both your innovative schemes and your disruptive traits, both of which seem to come quite by nature to you. But, of course, you have a superior blood line. Those three fellows made no appreciable inroads for our cause in nearly a decade and a half. I would not even hint at their present state.

The perversity of Preacher Whitesoul is not exactly rare, but it is unusual. We have attempted all types of personal attacks upon him and his work: lying against his character, luring him into circumstances where his honor and moral status could easily have been compromised, subverting his leadership through lukewarm response, keeping him on a relatively meager and sometimes inadequate salary, stirring up all types of internal confusion, strife and even feuding among the membership — the list is lengthy. But the rascal remains untainted (except, if you can consider this a taint, by our planted rumors, incited internal strife, and

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hypocrisy within the "flock").

Acting in your new capacity as a city councilman, you will be able to exercise a vast influence upon the physical and social development of the local community, and the city of Topeka at large. Of all your duties, the easiest may be the course you note in preserving the church neighborhood for the socially elite, the "haves," and the "upwardly mobile" segments of the city. Now, continue your reforms within the congregation. Incite some of the more affluent and influential ones to cluster together in the prime pews, making it clear that social status is the criterion for this favored right. Now and then, plant a look of smug disdain on the faces of some "haves" here and there upon meeting a less-fortunate one. Look to one side in passing one of "them," slightly crinkling the brows to show disapproval. Speak derogatorily of "those people" in tones just loud enough to be overheard by them. These are just some of the tried-and-true methods of promoting a social and spiritual "caste system" as clearly designated as in India's past.

Regarding that "maligned youth worker," he was most vulnerable. Since he was commonly known to consort with young girls who, presumably, were discussing problems of drugs, or sex, or whatever, you should now press the matter to include any others on the church staff. Include those actually employed at Broad Way, but encompass their numerous volunteer workers in any capacity. Careful, diligent observation should result in the discovery of a number of them who innocently, and perhaps often or regularly, find themselves in proximity of members of the opposite sex. You will certainly discover when some untoward act could have occurred. And, in your capacity, what might have been may easily become what certainly did occur. Just be sure that dear old Snugrug is informed first. Gossips are most highly flattered this way.

I shall be awaiting word of your further successes. Never cease your dastardly commitment to diabolical deeds!

Your devious and devastating deceiver,

Uncle Apollyon

Dear Uncle "Polly,"

I'm glad you recognize that I have had to clean up the mess left here by my immediate predecessors. Of course, I recognize that they operated among a less materially prosperous flock, and that they were thus deprived of some of the advantages I have had through the fairly well-heeled (and thus more spiritually flabby) group now at Broad Way. But there is no excuse for their letting so many of the older members of the congregation get into dangerous habits, like regular prayer and Bible reading and sharing their spiritual struggles with each other. Some of those people, even though they're not particularly prominent in the public operation of the church, are troublesome prayer-warriors; I think their vigilance is one of the reasons that Brother Whitesoul is so hard for us to get to. I've felt the power of their protective intercession more than once when I wanted to shoot a fiery dart of temptation or discouragement at him.

Otherwise, things are going fairly well for us. The youth worker I spoke of has resigned from his work in order to prevent more scandal, and I think I detect some bitterness toward the Enemy for letting this happen to him. Happily for us, not many people have rallied around to help him through his difficulties, either because they think he's guilty and don't want to be contaminated, or because they don't think his problems affect them one way or another. I look on gleefully when Christians who are quite bold about spreading gossip develop acute timidity when it comes to dealing in any direct way with someone wounded — rightfully or wrongfully — by a bad development in his life. One good side-effect of this incident is that it reinforces people's natural tendency to rock along in the church comfortably detached from trouble, whether inside or outside the congregation.

And, as I mentioned, the power of Mammon is gaining ground at Broad Way. It's wonderful how perversely the well-to-do can turn a legitimate concern with having enough themselves into a consuming insecurity and anger about not having as much as somebody else. The level of material possessions taken for

granted here as necessary to happiness is gratifyingly high. Contentment is a concept rarely talked about, and a state of mind understood by hardly any except those whose material holdings are much less noticeable than their character. (Indeed, I must admit that the advantages of "contentment" entirely escape me; it's so suppressive of self and so sickeningly submissive to the tyrannical Creator.) I try to make sure that people are not distracted by heavenly intimations that there is such a thing as sufficiency in this world's goods; any serious consideration of that dangerous doctrine would most surely tempt our clients to simplify their lives (and deny their competitive potential!) by focusing on the Enemy.

My political life is faring well. The fact that the moral standards of the citizenry are rather low, means that they are willing to tolerate shady and dishonest acts by their elected officials that would have meant impeachment or at least defeat in the next election twenty or thir-

Readers' Response

. . . I'm writing particularly about your article on "Women in God's Plan." Though I express disagreement with some of the things in this article, it does not mean that I do not appreciate or agree with some of the other things in the issue. . . It appears to me, from what I read in your magazine, *Restoration Review*, and other magazines published by non-instrumental people, that many have turned from the legalistic tendencies in their background to rather extreme positions in the opposite direction. By that, I mean some have adopted some pretty liberal views and even gone so far as to go into hierarchical denominational groups. . .

. . . I believe you have drawn unwarranted conclusions or applications from Gal. 3:28. I believe you have ignored the wording of I Corinthians 14:34-35 and I Tim. 2:11-15. In the former passage, you seem to overlook the phrase "as also saith the law (ASV)." In the

ty years ago. I've already found that a hint of future favors allows a councilman to run up a rather large bill at some establishments, and that even church members are willing to turn a blind eye to the ethical and moral implications of political actions that might bring advantages to "the Lord's Body." The church will not oppose a local lottery, for example, so long as it gets a piece of the action. I sometimes wonder how much hypocrisy I need to exercise as a politician, since many people seem to take it for granted that those in public office have to be a bit careless of conscience if they are going to get anything good done for their constituents. If that kind of "good" is what is in demand, no need to confuse the fools by tempting them to embrace "evil."

Corruptedly yours,

Ichabod

latter passage you seem to overlook the reasons Paul gives for what he said in verse 12. I do not see that you discuss verse 15 at all. It seems to me that you have made some decisions about the role of women in the church today and then set out to show that the scripture supports them.

I do not say these things in any vicious way; I just believe you are mistaken. I believe there are several other factors you fail to consider, having to do with why God created male and female, why he made us with different temperaments or emotional characteristics, physical characteristics, etc.

Perhaps I ought to explain that I have nothing against women or against their using all the abilities God gave them. . . My wife does not feel limited in what she is able to do for the Lord and I have never heard any of the other wives,

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