

# Integrity

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In keeping with the connotation of its name, INTEGRITY seeks to encourage all believers in Christ to strive to be one, to be pure, and to be honest and sincere in word and deed, among themselves and toward all men.

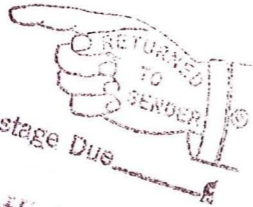
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**JANUARY 1971**



**Concerning Charismata  
Spirit and Intellect  
Poor Early Church!  
Obstacles to Our Greatest Aim  
Hope for the New Year - 1971**

**Hoy Ledbetter  
Pat Boone  
Bob Williams  
Judy Romero  
Don Reece**



*From the Editor*

## CONCERNING CHARISMATA

Recent lectureship programs and periodical reports reflect vigorous efforts to stop the rising tide of "Pentecostalism." This activity underscores the fact that more and more of the saints (including college graduates, successful businessmen, community leaders, preachers, and elders) are claiming bona fide charismata. To some concerned brethren, what to do with these so-called problem children of God is a very taxing question.

Generally the controversy focuses on the gift of tongues, and it would be well for us to remember that the case against having tongues today is not easily established. 1 Cor. 13 (a favorite text) will not bear the interpretation often given to it. "The perfect" in that chapter can only be applied to the completed Bible by exegetical hocus-pocus. If anything, the chapter supports, rather than opposes, the modern charismatic movement. Also the idea that gifts of the Spirit can only be conferred by the apostles stands on an extremely unstable foundation. Realizing this should encourage us to be more moderate.

Regarding tongues-speaking brethren, some can see only two alternatives: either the gifts they claim are exactly like those in the early church, or they are self-induced psychological

phenomena contrary to the Bible and therefore essentially devilish. But are there not other possibilities? Could not the Spirit give one a gift today which is not an exact replica of any of those in the early church - either at Jerusalem or Corinth? And is it not possible that even a primarily psychological experience could be induced by the Spirit, especially since the Bible speaks of "the spirit of your mind"?

But our most urgent question is not whether spiritual gifts are available today; more important is what our attitude will be toward those who believe they are available today. Even if we grant that our charismatic brethren are deceived, what then? If one misunderstands his experience and attributes to the Holy Spirit more power than He has actually exerted and therefore thanks God, does such a God-glorifying misunderstanding warrant his expulsion from the church?

I have been associating with some tongues-speaking brethren for several years now. The "big letdown" some of us feared has been a long time coming! As a result of their experiences - whatever they were - they are happier, more loving, and more generous. They are constantly praying and teaching others the gospel. They read the Bible like fanatics. They praise God wherever they go, even in places where some rationalists I know never mention his name. In view of this ("by their fruits ye shall know them"), I'm not about to judge them as either demented or devilish. I'm neither a psychologist nor a discernor of spirits. Besides, accusing the brethren is the devil's work, and frankly I do not like to be associated with him.

HOY LEDBETTER

## SPIRIT AND INTELLECT

*Pat Doone*

I have just been listening to a recorded version of the Book of Acts (which, incidentally, I believe should properly have been called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit"; it was God working through these men that made the Acts possible). In the 22nd chapter Paul makes his "defense." He relates how, as a devout Jew, he had persecuted Christians. He did this in all good conscience according to the knowledge that he had diligently sought. He tells the most preposterous story of how, while on his way to Damascus to persecute other Christians, he was struck down and blinded in the road, and heard the actual voice of Christ. Paul must have known that this story would sound incredible to the people he was talking to, and yet he trusted God because the story was true.

Recently I finished a book called A NEW SONG. In this book we simply do what Paul did in Acts 22. We tell what has happened in our lives, what we believe God has brought about, what we now believe after much diligent study of the Scripture, and some of the reasons why these things have happened. This book, we believe, is essential. There are so many misconceptions and wild rumors about what we are doing and not doing, about what has happened to us, and what we believe. We know

that people are judging us anyway, so we would prefer they judge us according to knowledge and to the facts of the matter, rather than by hearsay and rumor. We receive so many letters and phone calls from beloved brethren who are trying to "straighten us out." I cannot possibly keep up with all of the letters, or pursue all of the discussions individually. So it appears that this book must be one of the main answers to the dilemma.

I am deeply saddened to see that many of our brethren are so vehement on the subject of the Holy Spirit and personal experiences with God (through prayer, study, and services) that they are demanding that sides be drawn, people withdrawn from, ministers denounced, and earnest, believing Christians divided. And not because of unbelief, or adultery, or idolatry - but because some have sought closer communion with God and have experienced things, real or imagined, which have deepened their dedication and devotion to the risen Christ. Is the church supposed to be split over deeper spirituality? Or is not the moderate, thoughtful, searching, and sympathetic approach the better one?

I keep reading phrases, in letters from angered and frightened ministers, like "defense of the gospel" and



"the faith once delivered to the saints." What is the gospel? Is it not the "good news" that Christ is the risen, saving Son of God? Paul said he preached "Christ and him crucified" in simple terms. Isn't this the gospel, and the faith? Isn't it faith in these simple fundamentals, and obedience to Christ's simple commands, that saves a person? After that there are many areas where the most brilliant among us disagree - but who is to say that he can decide the final answers to these weighty questions, and that all who disagree with him are damned?

### *... confusing creed*

If the individual Christian is not to work these things out with his Bible and his God, if the majority opinion is to be the standard by which all individuals everywhere are to be judged faithful or unacceptable to God - then shouldn't we go ahead and write a creed, so that we can avoid the chaos and confusion that is inevitable when individuals are left to work out their own salvation? Wouldn't a fine, scholarly set of rules about what we all must agree to be preferable to the unwritten creed we seem to have now? See, this unwritten creed is such an insidious thing: it varies from place to place, from preacher to preacher, from Christian to Christian, yes, and even from scholar to scholar! You're never quite sure, when you're in different parts of the country, whether you're an "acceptable" Christian or not, according to this unwritten creed. Maybe at last we need a standard, so that the individual can be relieved of having to make decisions himself, so

that he can be sure he's acceptable to the Church, so that he knows the absolute and final limits to what he has a right to ask God for, and what God will and won't do for and through him.

Maybe the Catholics have been right all along - the Bible is a dangerous book for the layman! What chance does he have to understand it for himself anyway? And if he finds himself out of step with the accepted scholarship and majority view, regardless of his spirituality or experience with God himself, he is subject to excommunication - so he'd better leave the book to the scholars and clergy. After all, if he starts reading and studying that Bible for himself, and in prayer and fasting and commitment of his life to his God he finds himself doing his own thinking and having his own views and his own personal relationship in our Father, and if his views and relationship clash in any significant detail with preachers who've been teaching it differently for 30 or 40 years, he may find himself on the outside looking in! And who wants that? Better leave the imponderable Book alone, and let others do his thinking - and maybe his praying - for him.

### *... who can judge?*

It is a great fault for one to place absolute confidence in his mental capacity (great as it may be) to almost infallibly interpret the Scriptures, the mind of God, the working of his Spirit, and the inevitable consequences of others' actions and beliefs. This is such a heavy burden; only a very strong man could bear it.

But even a very strong and very wise man is pitiful and blind in his understanding of God and his ways. Even Solomon was just one blind man who had perceived his portion of the elephant.

I hope I'll always be aware of the need for more knowledge, more instruction, more chastising, more reproof and correction. If I ever reach the point where I "count myself to have attained," to be so expert that I can say with certainty which people are acceptable to God and which are not, and whether they have or have not experienced with God what they say they have, I fear that I will have set myself up for real conflict, and perhaps for more "reproof and instruction" from the Lord. And this I pray he'll do, if I need it.

We're all flops, on our own, aren't we? We admit our failure and inadequacy when we become Christians and throw ourselves on the mercy of God - which we should do daily, shouldn't we? Then how can one failure condemn or judge another?

One of the problems we are confronted with today is that we have completely tried to do away, consciously or unconsciously, with the supernatural in our relationship to God. We keep saying that God does answer prayer, but that he does it "through natural means." But what we're overlooking is the obvious choice that we must finally make - that prayer is either psychological or supernatural. If God does not suspend his natural law in order to answer our prayers, then we are in effect saying that prayer is wholly psychological, and self-contained.

The things that we pray for, if they do happen, would have happened anyway - so why pray? But if we do believe that God actually hears the prayer of a man, and steps in to answer that prayer, then we believe that he is suspending and cutting across what otherwise would have happened according to his natural law. At whatever point the hand of God actually changes things, he has moved in a supernatural way. He has suspended his own laws, including the scientific law of cause and effect.

Another sad state of affairs that we have slipped into is trying to divorce emotion and human spirit from the worship and service of God. Since we are created in the likeness of God, and since God is Spirit and we are spirit, how can we possibly separate emotionalism and the movement of God's Spirit in the spirits of human beings from proper worship?

### *... bringing Him down*

The more we try to bind God by our intellects, confining the service of God to things we can understand and control, the more we reduce God to our level. Paul said (with his great intellect and with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) that "God's ways are past finding out! Who hath been counsellor to God?" Our problem is that in our earnestness we have studied the Scriptures, arrived at some majority views, and are now so sure that we are right in our understanding of the infinite Scriptures that we can bind others by our judgments. This is a dangerous state of affairs, especially when the very men who are doing this deny that they



have any right to inspiration of God, except through their own limited minds.

God moves according to his own laws and not our understanding of those laws! At least not necessarily our understanding. We'll never completely understand his ways! It's absurd to deduce from this that he will constantly change his laws, or contradict himself. He still adds "to the church such as should be saved," just like he did 2,000 years ago; but HE does it, and according to HIS knowledge and wisdom and plan. We can only form our opinions or judgment according to our finite knowledge and experience and study. And we must be humbly ready to face surprising developments where God and his Spirit are concerned.

### *... His surprises*

One should think of just a few of the surprises God hands us in the Bible:

There are a couple of non-Jews in the lineage of Christ - Rahab and Ruth!

His dealings with the lowly Samaritans.

His refusal to forbid those "not of us."

His occasional activities on the sabbath.

His promise to the thief on the cross.

His dealings with Saul of Tarsus and Cornelius and Philip and the eunuch and Peter on the rooftop and Herod who was "eaten of worms," and many other unpredictable, surprising things.

The fact that God in his sovereignty did these things does not mean that he is a God of chaos, does it? No, it only means that neither Paul, nor Peter, nor any of the apostles and disciples - even those who were the closest to the Lord, even while he walked the earth in the flesh, and even after they were filled with his Spirit - could predict or even always understand the ways of God and the movement of his Spirit.

In fact, as I think back, it seems to me that all through the Bible you can find evidence that whenever God's own people felt that they had him cataloged, explained, classified, and contained, he surprised them by doing things they thought he wouldn't or couldn't do! Why do we think that we are better equipped than Peter, or Paul, or even the clannish but devout Pharisees, to infallibly predict what God's Spirit will do? Boy, we think we're smart!

### *... like the wind*

It was Jesus himself who said that "everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3) is like the wind - and therefore unpredictable to others, in that no one knows or comprehends its origin or destination. I'm sure that we will allow God to move in whatever way he sees fit; but if we are led by the Lord, we may also do things in an unpredictable way; that is, unpredictable to us and by the standards we accept.

We've never professed that we know anybody who could "work miracles." We've said that we've seen incredible, miraculous things hap-

pen - sometimes in the ministry, or in answer to prayers, of devout men - but we know that only God can "work miracles." These surprising things have caused us to look again at these men and some of the things they teach. I've given up the idea that I have all knowledge and wisdom, and that I can safely assume to know who is pleasing to God and who isn't. I still go back to God's word, the source of Truth, the covenant, the final authority; but I go back to find "IF these things can be so" (not necessarily to prove that they can't), and that what I've always believed is unquestionably true.

### *... our limitations*

I've never indicated that God's Spirit, in his unpredictability, would fail to keep his promises - but that he simply could not be contained or predicted by our understanding of him. I don't care how much we may study, memorize, and know about God, Paul says, "His ways are past finding out! Who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11:33). Yes, I've discovered Jesus to be the same "forever"; but this doesn't mean that I can pretend to comprehend his might, his power, his specific plans, or predict how he may direct someone else. This doesn't mean that I think he saves one differently from another; it only means that he may lead one down a different path, or forgive a different sin in my brother's life than he has to forgive in mine. The decisions are his. I won't presume to make them for him. I pray he'll extend the same mercy to others that I know I must have if I'm to live through eternity with him.

Man's brain is a wonderful instrument. We are to use it to the best of our ability. God gave us his word, in its infinite depth and profundity, enough to ponder for eternity. But the GOSPEL - the "good news" - is simple enough for a low I.Q. grade school child to understand. It's Jesus, his lordship, our surrender and salvation. Any normal brain can understand that. But from there on it gets more complex, more personal, and subject to individual ability to understand. God knows that and can guide the willing spirit.

We are not fundamentally intellectual; we are first and foremost SPIRIT. The more we depend on our brains, the farther from God we may drift. But the more we let him feed and nourish our spirits, through his word and much prayer and devotion, the closer we may come to God, who is SPIRIT.

### *... a joyful new life*

You may not understand or agree with the source of our new-found devotion and love for Jesus, or sanction where it may be taking us - but it's there! We love God more passionately than ever in our lives. We serve him to the best of our ability; we sing his praises; we look for more opportunity; our hearts overflow with love for others; we've given up worrying much about material things.

We're living that new life! All things are become new! The fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance -



are flooding into our lives in new measure. We'll never have enough of these precious qualities, but God's Spirit has blessed us with more than we ever had before! Paul said, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God!" Satan can't give anybody the fruit of the Spirit; he sows hate and envy and jealousy and wrath and strife. Only God could have given us the love and joy we know today.

I know that some attribute a lot of our joy to some emotionalism. Well, praise God, I have become more emotional - I have something in my

life to be emotional about! We've all felt the emotion of those first century Christians radiating down through 2,000 years and wished that we could have shared in the excitement and joy that could see them through prison and scourging and finally into the arena with the lions, singing and praising God all the way. These things were possible only because they felt the presence of the living Spirit of God in their hearts and souls, not in their brains. They had not only believed, they had experienced his reality - though they couldn't always understand it. They didn't have to. He was leading.

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## POOR EARLY CHURCH!

*Bob Williams*

C-h-u-r-c-h. Six English letters. Yet how fortunate we are to have them! The early church was not so fortunate, since all they had was a word ekklesia, which could be used to describe anything from a Roman senate to a crap game. They didn't have Uncle Hiram to teach them that The Church meant The Called Out. Luke was so ignorant that he used

the term ekklesia to describe a riotous mob<sup>1</sup> and a duly constituted law court.<sup>2</sup> Whoever wrote Hebrews called the congregation of Israel an ekklesia,<sup>3</sup> an unfortunate mistake since that passage is a quotation of Psalm 21:23, and people in that dispensation under The Old Law could not possibly have been The Church.

How blessed we are to have the experience of the Middle Ages to teach us that The Church is an entity in its own right, apart from the people! Being New Testament Christians, we know that an institutional hierarchy is necessary to salvation. Otherwise who would exercise authority?<sup>4</sup>

Christians in Peter's day were so unlucky! Back when the Apostle was preaching, the Lord added people to The Church rather than the Church Secretary under the supervision of the Preacher under the supervision of the Elders.<sup>5</sup> Also, those poor people were apparently added to The Church because they were saved rather than being saved because they were a part of the herd in The Church.<sup>6</sup> They can be forgiven for this, since they did not have the Bible completed then and so were forced to depend on the Apostles.

On the same basis, the early Christians may also be forgiven for misunderstanding the nature of The New Testament Church. After all, since the New Testament had not yet been completed, they could rely only on the Holy Spirit, who must have been close to retirement age, if brethren today are correct.

Those poor benighted early Christians did not have the opportunity to attend Christian Colleges, since the schools at Antioch and Alexandria had not been founded then. Is it any wonder that in their ignorance they conceived of the church in terms of function instead of structure?<sup>7</sup> How could such people possibly make the correct inferences and know which examples Walter Scott would ap-

prove?<sup>8</sup> How could they possibly know that fellowship was legislated instead of some sort of socio-emotional koinonia?<sup>9</sup> We really should pity them!

Pity poor Paul! He did not even know that churches had to have elders to be churches, at least until his later trips, anyway.<sup>10</sup> Apparently he didn't even realize that all Churches of Christ had to be uniform<sup>11</sup> and just alike. Worst of all, he even called it by the wrong name frequently.<sup>12</sup>

Once again, Paul did not have the advantage of English in distinguishing between Deacons, Ministers and common servants. He had to call all of them by the same term: diakonos. He even called a woman that, which sure could have caused confusion!

We can be glad that we have our Bibles in English rather than Greek. Why Paul probably couldn't even have recognized The New Testament Church! At least now we can "call Bible things by Bible names."

### FOOTNOTES

- 1 Acts 19:32; 19:41.
- 2 Acts 19:39.
- 3 Hebrews 2:12.
- 4 Matthew 20:24-28.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Acts 2:47.
- 7 Acts 2:42-47.
- 8 Acts 2:42, 46; cf. 20:7.
- 9 John 13:35.
- 10 Acts 14:23.
- 11 1 Corinthians 12:27-30.
- 12 1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; Galatians 1:13; 1 Timothy 3:5.



# OBSTACLES TO OUR GREATEST AIM

Judy Romero

We hear much these days about unity being our goal, and yet perhaps that unity will come automatically, almost as a side effect, when we strive for an even higher goal - love. 1 Cor. 14:1 says, "Let love be your greatest aim."\* On every hand we hear talk about loving our brothers, but how do we actually accomplish it? When we get down to the nitty-gritty of putting brotherly love into practice, there are some very real and difficult obstacles to face.

It's comparatively easy to love those who think like you do and who think you're great. So love only becomes a high ideal when it comes to the fellow who can't stand you or your ideas and lets the world (and particularly you) know it. It's the person who openly sneers at you, shreds your reputation in the church and around town, and refuses you even common courtesy whom you need to love. Impossible? Crazy? Crazy maybe, in the eyes of the world, but impossible - no. Nothing is impossible with Christ in us, and this is where it starts - within us.

Let's start first with the biggest problem - pride. Somehow, it seems to be downright agin' nature to be nice to someone who is hateful to us. This is Satan's lie, to make us think we're lowering ourselves to the other

person. Our natural inclination is to return punch for punch, literally, figuratively, or verbally. The truth is, man's spirit soars the highest when he truly loves another person, regardless of how that love is returned. Even the philosophers recognize this; witness, "To err is human, to forgive divine." As our Lord put it, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you... Love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High; for He is kind toward the unthankful and evil" (Lk. 6:27, 28, 35\*).

Here again Satan tries to pull the ripcord on our pride. How tempting it is to give our ego a little public boost by telling people, "Well, I love him, even if he doesn't love me." This stems from the same root of pride - a desire to make ourself look more holy and righteous than the other person. Love will never work that way.

Along with pride goes vengeance. God will avenge, we say, and that is true. But if we secretly are wishing vengeance upon our brother-enemy, then we don't truly love him. I know of a church that divided over a very

legitimate problem, but for months afterward members of each side would drive by the meeting-place and count the cars parked outside to see who had the best attendance. Each side was hoping the other would disintegrate. This is not love, for if we love someone we never will want to see him harmed or even embarrassed. "I'll just show him..." we say. Paul said, "Love vaunteth not itself..."

Another obstacle to love is suspicion. "I love him, but - I don't trust him." We claim this is only being wise, but is it? If we expect the worst from a person, we'll never be able to relax and love him. Being on guard builds a wall that will shut off love completely. In addition, suspicion will reflect suspicion back to you from the other person. Expect the worst, and the worst is what you'll get.

Why are we suspicious? Because that old ego is up front again. We're afraid the other person will take advantage of us in some way. But what is so important about that? Suppose you are taken advantage of - what does it hurt? No one was more stepped on, taken advantage of, reviled and wronged, than Jesus, and he always returned only love and good. He was kicked out of towns, homeless, tortured, and killed, yet his dying breath was one of love and forgiveness. Are we too good to have our egos trampled a little?

The glorious thing is, there's a purpose behind this seeming madness. Return evil for evil, pride for pride, and you'll only get more of the same back. Stick a verbal knife between the other guy's ribs, and he'll

only think up a sharper one for you. "A soft answer turneth away wrath," said the Psalmist, and don't say it doesn't work until you've tried it - at least 70 times 7 times! Sooner or later it will work, and I think sooner than you believe possible now!

Another great obstacle to love is our human desire to have our love returned. Many romances flicker and die because one person's love is not returned. Our spiritual love in Christ can transcend this obstacle. Many, many chapters and verses in the New Testament talk about love. But never does it premise this love on whether or not it is returned. So nothing depends on the other person. The solution is entirely in our own attitude, if Christ dwells within. Put yourself in the other man's place and look at his problems, heartaches, and fears through his eyes. Try to understand him. If you still can't, it doesn't matter - you can still let Christ love him through you. God's overflowing love is greater than we could ever imagine. Just open your heart and say, "Lord, love this person through me." Then prepare for a shock. For if you are sincere, God is going to answer that prayer!

One thing more. Our natural tendency is to avoid the company of those who don't love us. But you'll never be able to love them if you are never around them. God's love can never reach them through you if you don't rub elbows with them. It's easier to run from the problem. However, the great blessing and thrill you experience when you see people responding to God's love in you is worth every ounce of courage you need to do it. One wise man said:



He drew a circle that shut me out;  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But love and I had the wit to win;  
We drew a circle and took him in.

If you think you already have  
enough love, I challenge you to meas-  
ure yourself against the ideal of love  
in 1 Cor. 13. Just fill in the blanks  
with your own name:

"\_\_\_\_\_ is very patient and kind,  
never jealous or envious, never  
boastful nor proud, never haughty nor  
selfish nor rude. \_\_\_\_\_ does not de-  
mand (his/her) own way. \_\_\_\_\_ is  
not irritable or touchy. \_\_\_\_\_ does

not hold grudges and will hardly even  
notice when others do (him/her)  
wrong. \_\_\_\_\_ is never glad about in-  
justice, but rejoices when truth wins  
out.

"\_\_\_\_\_ is loyal to (his/her enemy)  
no matter what the cost. \_\_\_\_\_ al-  
ways believes in him, always expects  
the best of him, and always stands  
(his/her) ground in defending him."\*

If you honestly come out of that  
feeling more than two inches tall,  
you're way ahead of the rest of us.  
Let love be our greatest aim! ☸

\*Living Letters.

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## HOPE FOR THE NEW YEAR - 1971

*Don Reece*

At the stroke of midnight, Decem-  
ber 31, each of us received from God  
a most precious gift -

one year,  
twelve months,  
365 days,  
8,760 hours,  
525,600 minutes,  
31,536,000 seconds -

a definite, specific section of Time  
carved out of Eternity. We did not  
make or create it; we did nothing to  
merit or deserve it. But it is now  
ours, given to us by God to do with  
as we see fit.

The very name which we apply to  
this God-given gift - the name New  
Year - is suggestive of that which it  
envisions; for that which is new al-  
ways carries with it a new hope and  
new promise. Those who first came  
to America came because they be-  
lieved that here in the New World  
there was hope for a new life of free-  
dom. And those who went West did  
so because they believed that on the  
new frontiers there was promise of a  
better future. And so it is with us at  
the beginning of 1971. Whatever the  
failures and disappointments of 1970,

we now stand on the threshold of a  
New Year - a year which by its very  
newness gives promise of something  
better. It is to this that Tennyson  
points in his poem "Ring Out, Wild  
Bells":

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,  
The fleeting cloud, the frosty light;  
The year is dying in the night;  
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
Ring, happy bells, across the snow;  
The year is going, let him go;  
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,  
For those that here we see no more;  
Ring out the feud of rich and poor;  
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,  
And ancient forms of party strife;  
Ring in the nobler modes of life,  
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
The civil slander and the spite;  
Ring in the love of truth and right,  
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;  
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold,  
Ring out the thousand wars of old,  
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,  
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;  
Ring out the darkness of the land,  
Ring in the Christ that is to be.<sup>1</sup>

But not only does that which is  
new carry with it new hope and prom-  
ise; it also carries with it new op-  
portunity. Like the little boy who

came to his teacher with a tear-  
stained face and blotted lesson, so we  
come to our Heavenly Father with the  
old year stained and marred. And  
like the teacher who dried his tears,  
and gave him a new leaf, saying: "Do  
better now, my child," so our Heav-  
enly Father forgives us our sins, and,  
in the New Year, gives us a new page  
from his Book of Time. And because  
he knows that it, too, will soon be  
blotted by our inevitable sins and  
failures, he also gives us with it his  
continuing grace and love. This truth  
is beautifully pointed up by Dr. John  
J. Moment in his poem "Opportunity  
For Another Start."

How burns the stars, unchanging in  
the midnight skies;  
As on the earth the old year dies!  
Like leaves before the storm, so  
haste our lives away.  
Eternal God, to thee we pray.

For all thy mercies past we lift our  
hearts in praise,  
Thy care that crowned our fleeting  
days.  
Our follies and our sins, O Lord, re-  
member not  
Lost hours when we thy love forgot.

How burn the stars unchanging in the  
midnight skies;  
From age to age thy love endures.  
Thou art our God!  
Send now thy flaming truth abroad,  
that with the New Year's dawning  
Right may conquer wrong.  
Grief yield to joy and tears to song.<sup>2</sup>

And what should be our response  
to this unfailing grace and love? What  
shall we do with this section of Time  
called 1971? For Time, unlike other



gifts which we sometimes consider too precious to use, cannot be kept. It must be used - but how?

Just here someone is apt to suggest that perhaps we should budget our time; that is, that we should set aside so much time for work, so much for play, so much for sleep, so much for Sunday School and Church, so much for prayer and Bible study, and so much for personal work. This idea is defective on two counts: not only is it well-nigh impossible, but it also obscures the Biblical teaching that all time is holy and should be used as unto the Lord (Col. 3:17).

The real criterion as laid down in the Scriptures is not a rigid, legalistic effort to use so much time for this, and so much for that, but rather it is love - love for God, and love for our fellowmen (Mt. 22:37-39; Mk. 12:30-34; Lk. 10:27, 28; 1 Jn. 4:21; 3:23; 4:7; 3:11; 2 Jn. 5, 6). And when we take this attitude toward our profession as Christians, the following are some of the things we will want to do in 1971.

In reference to our relationship with God we will want to improve our record. If there is sin in our lives of a more serious nature than is normal for all of us, the New Year would be a good time to take it to God in prayer and repentance and make it right. It would also be a good time to resolve to live closer to God - to make a studied effort to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). It would be a good time to seek to let our worship become more meaningful - a privilege rather than a duty, and something to refresh our souls

instead of something to be endured (Jn. 4:24; Rom. 12:1; Phil. 3:3). And it would be a good time to let our personal behavior become more gracious and God-like - to seek to be changed more and more "into his likeness from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:6).

In regard to our relationship with others there are also some things we should do - some things which all of us know, but which all of us tend to forget. We should resolve to be a little more understanding, to try to see the other person's point of view - to put ourselves in his place and to ask, "How would I react?" - to remember that all have different emotions, urges, tastes, and desires, to be a little more sympathetic. We should resolve to be a little kinder to those with whom we have to do, to be like the queen who poured her tea into her saucer (when such was considered very ill manners) in order to save her guest from embarrassment, to remember and follow the injunction of Paul in his letter to the church at Ephesus (Eph. 4:32). We should also resolve to be a little more helpful to those who need our help, remembering that whatever we do to one of his little ones we do it unto him (Mt. 10:42). And finally we should resolve to love our fellowmen a little more, even the sinning and unlovely, remembering that even "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

The love of God, and the love of man! Let this be our one transcending goal in 1971! And in doing this we shall fulfill that Scripture which our Lord said is greatest of all - the twofold commandment on which

"hangs all the law and the prophets" (Mt. 22:38-40).

The New Year is, by virtue of its being new, uncharted and unknown. On this point one writer has said:

There is no magic crystal that can show

This New Year to me, there is none can say

Which way the variant winds of life will blow,

Boding me ill, or whisking clouds away - 3

This does not mean, however, that we cannot and should not face it with hope and courage. This truth is vividly pointed up by the poetess, Louise Haskins, in words once quoted by the King of England in a New Year's address to his subjects:

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:  
"Give me light, that I may safely tread into the unknown!"

And he replied:  
"Go out into the darkness and put

your hand into the Hand of God,  
That shall be to you better than a light and safer than a known way."

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.  
And he led me toward the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.<sup>4</sup>

These words are as relevant and true today as they were in 1939. Whatever of good or of ill the future may hold, it is God who holds the future - and he "is the same yesterday and today and for ever," and "his steadfast love endures... to all generations" (Heb. 13:8; Ps. 100:5). In this we may place our trust and on it we set our hope.

And now to my fellow readers of INTEGRITY I say in the words of the poetess:

"Go with your hand in the Hand of God,"

and

**Happy New Year!**

#### FOOTNOTES

1 Alfred, Lord Tennyson, from "In Memoriam,"

2 John J. Moment, "Opportunity For Another Start," THE ROANOKE WORLD NEWS, January 2, 1967.

3 By Elaine V. Emans from the poem "This New Year," THE CHURCH SCHOOL January 1951, copyright 1950 by Pierce and Smith. Used by permission.

4 Louise Haskins, from "The Gate of the Year," MASTERPIECES OF RELIGIOUS VERSE, (ed.) James Dalton Morrison (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 92.