

August 1971



PUBLISHED BY a non-profit Michigan corporation, 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.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Names may be added to the mailing list by writing to the editor. At present there is *no subscription charge* (we depend on contributions and God's grace). Contributions are deductible.

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Volume 3 AUGUST 1971 Number 3

INTEGRITY PUBLICATIONS, INC.
8494 Bush Hill Court
Grand Blanc, Michigan 48439

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Flint, Michigan 48501
Permit No. 239



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INTEGRITY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is no longer a novelty for churches to discover that some of their members have begun to speak in tongues and claim other gifts of the Holy Spirit. Most of us by now are well aware of the strain this can put on the congregation. Frustration among those whose religious heritage has not allowed for spiritual gifts beyond the New Testament period is common, and irreparable splintering of the fellowship is not unusual. If we are to avoid the pathetic separation of brethren, and if we are to keep moving toward a closer relationship with God, we must maintain our integrity in dealing with the Holy Spirit issue.

When pneumatics appear, even in the most understanding congregation, both sides tend to feel uncomfortable with each other. In the first place, it is psychologically desirable for one to have the approval of those he loves. Consequently a great deal of argument may be directed more toward vindicating ourselves than convincing others. In addition, those who feel that they have some good news to share will naturally want to evangelize. Yet the evangelist, no matter how careful he is, may find himself regarded as a troublemaker. Fear of this possibility will likely cause the brethren to separate into noncommunicative cliques.

It is always tragic and dangerous when people fail to discuss the important questions upon which they disagree. We all have much to learn from each other, and we should respect our responsibility both to *listen* and to *speak*. Every effort should be made to keep communicating. In this atmosphere of communication, not only must

we hold fast our own integrity, but we must also be slow to doubt the integrity of those who disagree with us. No doubt there are some dishonest individuals around, but they are few in comparison with those who are *sincerely* in disagreement with each other.

When Christians claim experiences which others regard as impossible, the doubter must either suspect the claimant's integrity or his interpretation of the experience. If the former is the true appraisal, it may be in order to expose his dishonesty; and since Jesus was stern with pretenders, a rather firm approach may be justified. But to declare another person dishonest is a grave undertaking. In most situations we have neither the information nor the judicial ability to go that far. G. Campbell Morgan aptly said, "The ultimate sin which any man commits against his brother is that of misinterpretation of his motive."

We must therefore fall back on the second possibility: that the person has only misinterpreted what happened. Even though—from that point of view—he is in error, we have no warrant to reject him because he lacks our ability to discriminate. Most of us would not have to look back very far to discover that we have changed our minds about some scriptures. Although one of these changes might not be very significant, an accumulation of them could make a world of difference. And until we have all knowledge—or have just stopped learning—we can expect to keep on changing our minds. In view of this, our "disfellowshipping" of pneumatics simply because they are pneumatics (or on some exaggerated charge of

factiousness) is wrong.

And just as we should not quickly doubt another's integrity, we should be sure that he has no reason to doubt our own. We should at the very least take a good look at the basis of our position. Are we really justified in interpreting the disputed scriptures as we do? Given the other man's situation, background and intellect, could we not possibly reach his conclusions? What we see as firmness of conviction may appear to someone else as the worst kind of arrogance. If he gets that impression, we need not waste our breath in further debate.

I would now like to propose some introspective challenges to both sides of the issue. First, those of us who are antipneumatics need to look at the impression we make upon the pneumatics. Is our spiritual life so dry that it *in itself* becomes an argument against our position? Do others see us as having been with Jesus? Do we really have anything to offer to those who are starving for a more intimate relationship with God? Let's take an honest look, no matter how much it hurts. Frankly I think we are far from unimpeachable in this respect.

We all need a firm doctrinal footing, and those without high regard for doctrine are out of step with the apostles. Precise scholarship is always important, but it is especially desirable in a religious element that is heavily rationalistic. Is our scholarship as exact as we think? We are sometimes guilty of wresting from a passage of scripture an interpretation which, although it fits in very well with our position, is hardly supported by any reputable scholar. An example is our application of "the perfect" in 1 Cor. 13:10 to the completed scriptures, a view that is rejected by practically all commentators. It could be that we need to spend less time in the forum and more in the study.

And those of us who are pneumatics need to weigh carefully the alternatives to our position. Since our experiences have necessarily involved a great deal of emotion, is there any basis for the charge that we just got carried away emotionally? Could another with the same environment and intellectual readiness have had the same experience, quite apart from direct inspiration of the Spirit? It would be a mistake to ignore the psychological possibilities. Can the experiences we claim in support of the availability of spiritual gifts only be interpreted on that basis? Are we so eager for spiritual assurance that we tend to magnify incidents?

Do we unnecessarily alienate our brethren by unconsciously or deliberately indicating that we feel they are religiously inferior? Nobody likes to be looked down on—especially when he is very sure he is right himself. This is the most frequent complaint I have heard against glossolalia.

Have we ignored doctrine in our quest for that deeper spiritual experience? And has our reaction against extreme emphasis on doctrinal correctness driven us to another extreme?

Finally, are we really inviting persecution, either because we subconsciously wish to be martyrs or because we do not have the patience to minister to our brethren and therefore want to be kicked out so we can be free of an unhappy entanglement?

These questions are not meant to imply that we necessarily are guilty of the faults they suggest. I am merely trying to get us to look at ourselves and at the way we appear to others. Pneumatics and antipneumatics can enjoy peaceful coexistence. The congregation to which I belong includes both. We know that such issues do not separate brethren when they are approached with Spirit-inspired love.

—HGL.

CHURCH-RELATED

SCHOOLS

—EXAMINED AND RE-EXAMINED

ALLEN HOLDEN, Jr.

In looking over the "Second Look" J.F. Dancer [April] takes at Elizabeth Mansur's article [February], I encountered an unusual phenomenon. Dancer's application of her objections to marriage at first seemed to be a leak-proof argument; but quite a while later I realized that he was trying the proverbial comparison between apples and oranges, comparing two things which are not in the same class, and hence he arrived at many unreliable conclusions.

There is a tremendous difference between a Christian marrying another Christian and a Christian attending an institution that is made up primarily of Christians. To do the first is not to lose any contact with the world—one still has associates both among the married and the unmarried, and can still exert a leavening influence. But to attend a church-related institution is to intentionally restrict one's sphere of contact to the members of that institution (practically speaking), and if these members are all (or most all) children of God, one has a phenomenon

comparable to putting all the street lights in one square block and expecting it to adequately light the whole metropolitan area. What Dancer didn't realize is that marriage does not affect one's realm of influence; to attend a school (especially a residential one) definitely does. Mansur's arguments stand: to segregate oneself in a church-related school not only limits non-Christian contacts, but it also puts the disciples still remaining in the public school at a disadvantage. In effect the army has a soldier A.W.O.L., and the morale may drop because he is no longer around to do his part to keep the spirits high. But if one marries a child of God, the army is still intact, still waging the battle, and finds itself in better condition because one of its members has found a good partner and helper.

Dancer didn't comment on the fact that schools are economically unwise, so Mansur's argument on this still stands.

Dancer's point concerning party strife is well taken: the strife is of human origin and not to be blamed on the school. But the fact remains that our philosophy of education dictates that we must attend a religious school that agrees with us in every detail, or else mainstream Churches of Christ would send students to colleges run by conservative Churches of Christ, Disciples, and various denominational institutions. We identify ourselves by our colleges as much as by periodicals or names, and it doesn't contribute in the least to unity. The schools may not be the cause of strife, but they are now at least catalysts.

Dancer's attempt to equate attendance at a secular (nonchurch-related) school with "bad company" and "sin" is unfortunate; while Paul wholeheartedly endorses fleeing from sin and not keeping bad company, he also makes a strong point of countering argu-

ments that Christians should seclude themselves from the world (1 Cor. 5:9ff), which is exactly the *effect* of Christians attending "Christian schools."

While I am no expert on the subject, it seems expedient to attempt to formulate the arguments *in favor* of church-related schools as I have heard them repeatedly from brotherhood spokesmen. A primary purpose is the important function of training preachers and Bible scholars, and researchers and professors in related fields. This appears to be a valid function, as one can learn under an individual who has studied the field well, and who is acquainted with the situation into which the new minister is to be thrust. But to insist that existing institutions (public, private, denominational) cannot serve this function is to limit truth to our group, and to restrict the transference of this truth to doctrinally sound persons only—a view of truth and learning inadequate for this age.

A second function which appears valid is to prepare the weak child of God to be able to face the cruel world, to so equip him that his life with Christ will not be marked by falling away. At first this sounds reasonable: the person not ready to face a secular school could be readied here. Unfortunately, such seclusion and protection is foreign to the New Testament. The apostles learned by following Jesus through the sinful world in which they lived and by doing what he did; Timothy learned by going along with an experienced missionary and seeing how he met the challenges posed him. In short, learning was on-the-job training, learning by doing. Monasticism was a post-New Testament idea, and it appears that ridding the church of this is a long and painful severance. The way that weak Christians are to grow is by being with other Christians, on the battle line, learning how to fight, getting strength

from their comrades—not in a cave poring over relevant documents and theoretical writings. Of course Christians need to meet regularly, admonish each other, and gain strength both from the Vine itself and the healthy branches as well.

A further purpose of Christian schools appears to be to seclude the young from evil influences, a theme often stressed in promotional appeals. This seems to betray an underlying fear that our students will not be able to cope with new freedoms, ideas, theories and opportunities; hence we need special teachers to properly present the material, high walls to keep the world out, and a strictly controlled indoctrination program to properly "educate" the occupants. Clearly this approach is lacking. As Perry Cotham puts it, "In the teaching program of a local congregation, or of any institution for that matter, we should not be concerned with making ideas safe for people, but with making people safe for ideas."¹ A proper preparation of young persons while at home and a commitment to the Master is the answer. To imply that young people are not ready to face the world when they leave for college is to admit that the parents' example and teaching, the teachers, the congregation and the other young people have failed miserably to challenge them to give their lives to the Lord.

"Contrary to all beliefs, it is not the theory of organic evolution or atheistic professors or sinning fellow-students that cause this 'loss of faith.' If a young person is shaken by these things and falls away because of them or any other challenges to his faith, it is obvious that his trust in God was faulty before he ever left home."² Having been through four years at Cornell, I cannot buy the baloney that some young person has "lost his faith." I would simply ask: "Have

you lost your faith? Or did you ever have it to begin with?"³ You can't lose something you never had to begin with, nor can you protect young people indefinitely. Often all the parent does is buy four years for his child, after which he still must face a hostile world, perhaps just as ill-prepared as when he entered the school. Proper preparation to meet the evil influences should be our goal, and the means should be by assisting the young person in having a personal encounter with the Savior and Lord of mankind, at which time he gives his life to Him.⁴

It is often argued that church-related schools give one Christian associates. To argue otherwise is folly, for all of the members of the church have been taken out of secular schools and put into Christian schools. It is hard to find Christian friends on the secular campus simply because they are all secluded in these special schools. If properly dispersed, there could be enough in every sizeable school in this country to launch an offensive similar in results to the Campus Crusade for Christ. Such is being done here and there with productive campus ministries, but it takes more than a literal handful to reach a large campus. I've felt occasional anger—and frequent pity—toward my brothers and sisters not here with us on the front lines. When we needed a division we got a small patrol instead. A core of converted Christians could turn campuses upside down like early Christians did the world—and would have the Christian companionship they so need.

Another offer the Christian college makes is that of teachers who are Christians. Using the same line of argument as for Christian associates, if Christian teachers weren't also hidden away teaching other Christians in Christian schools (much like our preaching

to ourselves in our sanctuaries we built for ourselves), they could be permeating the lump of dough of faculties of public and secular schools, and students at these schools would also have Christian teachers. But even more fundamental is the belief that truth needs to be specially processed before being served. I myself have enough confidence in truth to believe that it will withstand any encounter, and that it is still just as true whether presented by an atheist or by the apostle Paul himself.⁵ We don't need Christian teachers to teach us the truth, for we can obtain it from any source, and can continue to challenge it, knowing that if it is genuine it will stand up under these challenges.⁶

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) For reasons of economics, quality and sanity, Christian schools, if they must exist, should consolidate so as to create a *small number* of schools (ideally one), with the best of all faculties, a student body large enough to provide decreasing marginal cost of adding another student, fully utilized and financially sound buildings, and libraries of commendable size instead of the inadequate ones existing, all duplicating purchases.⁷

(2) If Christian schools must exist (for training or helping the weak as a last resort), let's not push them on high school students, using fear tactics ("You'll lose your faith if you go to a state school, just like John Doe here"), parental threats (so often commended in our publications), or incessant indoctrination during worship and Bible study and fellowship periods. If these schools are really independent from the churches, why allow them to rule our classes and get-togethers? Why allow them to advertise (free) their high school days and oth-

er activities in our bulletins and periodicals, or their forums and get-togethers and political sessions (citizenship forums)?

(3) Neither should we imply that our best Christians in the brotherhood came from church-related schools, that our best professors now teach at them, that all faithful young people are attending them, and that they are the answers to all of the problems of our culture.⁸

(4) We should openly encourage young people to attend state and private schools, possibly in groups, with bringing Christ in their minds. Instead of implying that they will lose their faith and giving them up for lost, we need to openly take pride in their courage and dedication, and then follow through with all the assistance we can give them. If we live near colleges, we can take a personal interest in disciples attending these schools, inviting them into our homes and

helping them. In the interest of fairness, we should always present both sides—the reasons to go to a state school as well as the dangers inherent in such a decision.

(5) Since church-related schools are probably here to stay, we should try to improve them.⁹ Students should be encouraged to think carefully about what they are taught, and opposition and disagreement, even on doctrinal matters, should be encouraged in the spirit of a search for truth. Dissent should not be squelched, ignored or covered up, but should be seen as just what it is—the expression of disagreement with an idea, not committing some crime.¹⁰

There is a tremendous amount of good being done on secular campuses, for which we may give God the praise. May each student approach the question of his school choice with the openness and surrender of Isaiah: "Here am I, Lord; send me" (Is. 6:8).

1 Perry C. Cotham, "Freedom of Expression," *Mission*, 4 (1970/1971), 304.

2 Allen Holden, Jr., "The Christian Student's Perspective," *Mission*, 4 (1970/1971), 246.

3 "Two Old Bromides," *GO*, 3:6, p. 6; reprinted from *Campus Ambassador*.

4 Allen Holden, Jr., "The Personal Encounter With Christ," *Firm Foundation*, 88 (1971), 373.

5 John Milton said: "Let truth and falsehood grapple; whoever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?" Perry C. Cotham, *art. cit.*, p. 305.

6 "Can a man who never permits his faith to be challenged ever know if he has attained the truth?" *Ibid.*

7 Edward G. Holley, "Church Colleges and Public Support: Quo Vadis?" *Mission*, 3 (1969/1970), 118; see his footnotes especially.

8 "The Christian college provides answers for all five revolutions [crime, race, sex, population growth and knowledge expansion]." Don L. Hicks, "The Need for Christian Colleges," *Firm Foundation*, 88 (1971), 392.

9 Jennings Davis, Jr., Prentice A. Meador, Jr., Arthur Lee Smith, "Today's Student and Yesterday's College," *Mission*, 3 (1969/1970), 123f.

10 For instance: ". . . our Christian colleges have been largely unaffected by the dissent which has characterized many college campuses . . . The church has never flown its true colors more strikingly." Warren Best, "Mission Forum," *Mission*, 4 (1970/1971), 30. The implication is that dissent is inappropriate at a Christian college and inconsistent with Christian principles. See Jennings Davis, Jr., et. al., *art. cit.*, where they call for immediate restudy and modification of such "time-honored concepts" as: "dissent is basically unchristian and disrespectful and should not be expressed in mass . . ." (p. 124). Gary Freeman's approach to campus dissent is lighter, but equally apropos. Gary Freeman, "The Spirit of SCC," *Mission*, 4 (1970/1971), 26f.

EXPERIENCES WITH JESUS

JERRY OWEN

It may be that the Christian religion provides us with far richer experiences with Jesus than some of us have thought. Although none of us would think of Christianity as being without some kind of spiritual experience, we could be overlooking possibilities of broader experiences that we subconsciously yearn for. Let us examine some familiar songs and scriptures to see if they support such broader experiences, remembering as we do that although songs are not really proof they should reflect the sentiments of those who sing them.

One of our first encounters with Jesus is in baptism. This is beautifully illustrated by the lyric question: "Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?" Baptism in fact takes us to the very cross of Jesus—"Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death" (Rom. 6:3)—and then buries and raises us with him! At the same time, in another figure, we are clothed with Christ: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). "Washed in the blood of the Lamb"—*what an experience!*

In our new relationship with Jesus, we desire to know more about him, to stay close to him, to experience his nearness. Much of our singing reflects our regenerated emotions. "More about Jesus let me learn, more of his Holy Will discern. Spirit of God my teacher be, showing the things of Christ to me." "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." "He's the Lily of the val-

ley, in Him alone I see all I need to cleanse and make me fully whole." "He is of great compassion, and of wondrous love." "When we walk with the Lord in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds on our way! While we do his good will, he abides with us still." How we cherish our experiences with Jesus! (That is, if we sing sincerely.)

On the first day of the week churches often sing, "'Tis set the feast divine—the bread the fruit of the vine—and saints commune before the shrine, in the supper of the Lord." Then someone reads from God's word: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament . . ." (Matt. 26:26-28). Communion with the Lord—*what an experience!*

Sometimes, however, as temptations and problems gather, we ask, "Does God offer more tangible experiences today to assure us he's really up there?" We have the Bible and prayer, but the early Christians had inspired apostles and prayer *plus* other gifts of the Spirit. Some of the songs we often sing—and love to sing—suggest that we either believe that some of those gifts are still available or that we inwardly *wish* they were. For example: "He speaks, and the sound of his voice is so sweet the birds hush their singing. And the melody that he gave to me, within my heart is ringing." "Perfect submission, perfect delight, visions of rapture now burst

on my sight."

A growing number of Christians have asked in complete faith (Lk. 11:13; Jas. 1:6; Jn. 15:7) and actually have had enriching experiences with Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit (the Comforter) to this world just like he promised (Jn. 14:16-18), and that promise is also *for you* (Acts 2:38-39; 5:32). As long as we do not trust in our experiences with Jesus (including the baptismal experience) as ends within themselves, they equip us for service in the more excellent way of love. Notice how this concept blends with the view that the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Cor. 12 are given to assist members of the body of Christ in gaining more love until *perfect* love is attained in the perfected body of Christ in heaven (1 Cor. 13:10-13). As we drink of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) and are filled with the Spirit like Stephen (Acts 6:5), God's love overflows from heart to heart. It's great to *experience* the love of God, so let us *praise God* (Acts 2:47) "because the love of God is shed

abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5).

Although he had this richness of experience, the apostle Paul *still* had his thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Likewise, we anxiously await heaven where tears are dried and burdens lifted. We reflect this yearning in our singing. "When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be." "There'll be no sad farewells, there'll be no tear dimmed eyes, where all is peace and joy and love, and the soul of man never dies." "I'll exchange my cross for a starry crown, where the gates swing outward never; at his feet I'll lay every burden down, and with Jesus reign forever." Truly a thrilling experience with Jesus awaits us!

It has been said that the Christian religion is essentially an experience with Jesus and that doctrine and theology serve to explain that experience. May God be with us all as we strive to submit our wills to his in this and all matters of life, death, judgment and the world to come.

PREACHERS QUITTING

—A STEP TOWARD RESTORATION

NUMA V. CROWDER

In reading the religious papers I detect a great concern about so many preachers leaving the ministry. Actually most of these are

not leaving the Lord's work as such, but are merely relinquishing their support for conscience sake. Rather than feeling concern, I look on this with great encouragement and as a long step toward restoration of New Testament Christianity.

First let me say that I believe it is scriptural for preachers to receive material support for their services; and if they are to be supported, they should be supported adequately. And there are circumstances where preachers should be supported.

The system is not wrong, but our practice of it in most cases is. It goes like this: A pul-

pit becomes vacant and several preachers apply and compete for the job. Each will preach a trial sermon and afterward get with the elders in a back room to haggle over such things as salary and fringe benefits. Or a well-known preacher becomes available, and several larger churches will compete for his services like a large corporation going after a top executive. And the methods used are not always of the highest order. It would be difficult to justify this practice with scripture. I can hardly conceive of Paul, Timothy, or Sylvanus going after jobs, or West Side Church of Christ in Corinth bidding for Paul's services in this fashion. But we know this is the way it is in most cases today.

The preacher is the congregation's conversation piece. There are always those who think he is overpaid, regardless. Some believe he doesn't work enough. Others don't like the way he dresses, his wife, the way his children behave or misbehave, etc. Then when some brave souls defend him, trouble begins. Inadvertently the preacher is the cause of more bickering and turmoil than any other member of the congregation. He could never be worth it. How could anyone be happy who is gossiped about as much as the preacher? Surely preachers are the most unhappy people in the world as a group. The pressures they are called upon to live with make life a nightmare for most.

Preachers keep men of the church from developing spiritually like they should in that they want to do all the preaching. Their egos are such that they honestly believe things would fall apart if they were gone for too long a time. The preacher who feels this way has entirely too high an opinion of himself. Because of our high educational level there are in most churches several men who can preach excellent sermons, or who can learn to do so when given a

chance. The man who makes his living in this dog-eat-dog business world of ours can relate to the church as a paid preacher never could. The people can identify with him. They say, "That fits me—I was there, too." People are getting disturbed about the professionalism that has become associated with preachers. This is especially so with the younger generation.

The most tragic thing in the church is all this wasted talent. By nature people don't do much without necessity. Men won't do much for the Lord as long as they are paying a preacher to do it for them. But without a preacher there is necessity, and men will do the Lord's work, grow spiritually, and be happy doing it.

Financially the preacher is not a good investment. The average congregation's largest single expenditure is the building (for which there is not one word of scriptural authority), and the second largest is the preacher. With these two expenses the average congregation is nailed to the wall and can't do anything else. I know a congregation with an average contribution of just under \$600 per week, and they can barely meet these two expenses. This year they couldn't even finance a vacation Bible school, much less any outside mission work. Such a constant financial strain makes for irritability and short tempers. Another factor is the millions of dollars the church spends annually moving preachers.

It is a rare preacher who can prepare two good sermons a week. Most can preach one, but the other will be preached, not because the preacher has something to say, but because it is expected of him. The second one usually will be rather shallow, *under* the heads of most listeners. In our congregation, where we don't have a paid preacher, it has been said, "We have a variety of poor ser-

mons!" But this may be an improvement over poor sermons without the variety!

It is said that the proof of the cake is in the eating. The church here in Macomb [Illinois] is rather typical. Its membership is made up of the usual mixture of business and professional men, tradesmen, laborers, farmers, widows, housewives and students. About the only un-typical thing is we don't have a paid preacher. On January 1, 1971, there were 50 faithful members. To date this year there have been nine baptisms—one baptism for every five and one-half members. We fully support a family in Indonesia, send token support to four other places, and do more than average benevolent work. A strong local program of work is carried on,

especially on the campus of Western Illinois University. Six to seven men preach, and we have a surplus of teachers. When a person is baptized or moves in, we get him committed right off. We feel that a paid preacher would be a real hindrance. What we are doing others can do.

There seems to be a great concern about preachers leaving the ministry (meaning they start supporting themselves). I consider this to be the most important step in the restoration of New Testament Christianity we have witnessed in our day. If the world is ever evangelized, it will be by a church full of committed Christians, not by a paid ministry, and the first step toward a committed church is necessity.

How Sweet the Sound!

DON REECE

As a boy growing up in the mountains of western Virginia not the least of the blessings by which I was surrounded was that of a Christian grandmother. And not the least of the spiritual values which she early instilled into me was a love of "the old songs of Zion," one of which was the one beginning:

Amazing grace (how sweet the sound!)
That saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.

But although I can still hear her singing:

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed—

and although I often sang it with her (having learned all six stanzas by the time I was ten or twelve)—and hundreds of times in the years that followed—it was not until more recent years that I began to really understand it, or to have any real conception of the meaning of the grace of God.

Looking back on this early period of my life from the vantage point of a more mature

understanding, I believe that at least a part of my "hang-up" was due to the fact that I first became acquainted with Eph. 2:8-9 ("For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast") through the *Ashland Avenue Baptist*, a small religious publication which someone put into my hands shortly after I became a Christian. The editors and writers of this paper argued vigorously that there was a great and mighty gulf fixed between the "Bible doctrine" of "salvation by grace through faith" and the "Campbellite doctrine" of "salvation by water baptism"; that there were only three possible ways of salvation—by grace alone, by works alone, or by a combination of the two; that the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, in teaching that baptism was essential, were in reality trying to mix works and grace; and that such passages as Mk. 16:16, Acts 2:38, and 1 Pet. 3:21 should be taken in a figurative sense and interpreted in the light of such "clear passages" as Eph. 2:8-9. Sensing, as I did, that this position was untenable in the light of such "clear passages" as the ones which they said were figurative, and, at the same time, being too ill-versed theologically to answer these plausible sounding arguments or to harmonize the seeming contradiction, I reacted by becoming averse to the very idea of "salvation by grace through faith." I became subconsciously afraid of it—afraid to accept or to give any real emphasis at all to grace as a means of pardon lest the case for the essentiality of baptism (to which I was firmly committed) should be compromised or weakened. And it was not until I came to see that baptism, far from being in conflict with "salvation by grace through faith," is actually itself the means of grace—the God-

ordained method of taking unto ourselves the grace which is offered in Christ, the very point of rebirth and regeneration;¹ that it is, in the words of Alexander Campbell, the act in which we "receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit," and the very "gospel in water,"²—it was not until I came to understand this that I was able to consider objectively and sympathetically the Biblical doctrine of grace.

But while this enabled me to give grace its proper place in initial conversion, it did not immediately lead me away from an overall legalistic approach to salvation. For I had been so conditioned to think of being a Christian as a legal relationship that I had turned the New Testament into a new "law of Christ." And so for several years more I continued to struggle with the question of just how perfectly one must adhere to this in order to merit salvation.

But then as I grew older and saw more of life on the one hand, and as I began to comprehend the radical demands of this "law of Christ" on the other, I slowly but surely came to see the hopelessness of such an undertaking. I gradually came to realize what Paul was talking about when he said: "So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good . . . but I am carnal, sold under sin"; "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate"; "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it"; "For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members"; and "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"³

For a time I tried to solve the dilemma by arguing that the answer lay in constant

renewal by repentance, prayer, and confession. A critical "thinking through" of this position, however, soon made it obvious that it offered no real assurance unless one could be sure that he would be in a position to seek such renewal immediately preceding death. Like Paul, I was beginning to see that, any way you look at it, when salvation is placed on a legal basis, the very commandment which promises life eventually proves to be death.⁴

The first "light" came when I read the April, 1968 issue of *Mission*—which was devoted almost entirely to a study of salvation by grace. I read and re-read the following section from the article by J. Paul DuBois:

First, we discover that Paul's argument in the Roman letter was not merely an argument against the Law of Moses as a means of justification and that Christ did not come to abolish one law and usher in another. Rather, Paul's argument exposed the law principle as a basis of justification. Two facts make this clear: (1) The absence of the article "the" in the Greek in key passages in the Roman letter. "By works of law shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (3:20). "But now apart from law a righteousness of God hath been manifested" (3:21). "We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law" (3:28) . . . (2) The thrust of Paul's argument in Romans 3 and 4 would be invalidated if it opposed only the law of Moses and not the whole principle of legal justification. What was the weakness of the law as a means of justification? Precisely that no man could keep it perfectly, "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). If a man could have obeyed the law perfectly, there would have been no need for the atoning blood of Christ. "If righteousness comes by law, then Christ died for nothing"

(Galatians 2:21 NEB). The same thing is true if one reduces the teachings of the New Testament to a new law system . . . If keeping the commands of Christ is on par with grace in a man's justification (and this is not to be interpreted as disdain for his commands), how many must the Christian keep to assure a continuing relationship to God? What is a passing grade? Law and grace mutually exclude one another, for "if it is by grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace" (Romans 11:6).⁵

More insight came when I attended the Southeastern Campus Evangelism Seminar where three of the speakers touched briefly but clearly on the problem of law versus grace. And finally, when I read Richard Batey's commentary on Romans the "light" came in such a flood that at first it almost blinded me. Especially helpful were his comments on such passages as 3:22; 6:14; and 7:28:

The faith of the sinner makes him righteous in God's sight. Righteousness for the sinner is not virtue but trusting in the sovereign love of God.⁶

The dominion of sin has been destroyed, not because man has been made morally righteous and so fulfills the law but because God accepts continually the sinner who looks in faith for the fulfillment of life (cf. 1 Cor. 15:56-58).⁷

The apostle and those who follow in his understanding of God's grace continue to discover the solution to the human predicament in the cross as the disclosure of God as sovereign love. The need for God's unmerited favor and acceptance is never ended, as if the Christian could somehow arrive at a position in which he no longer needed to draw on God's grace. Rather the Christian's life is one in which the commitment to God's will is complete but perfect obedience is not pos-

sible. The solution is found only through faith in God who accepts the sinner.⁸

The key is found in the last two statements above—in the affirmations that “the Christian’s life is one in which the commitment to God’s will is complete but perfect obedience is not possible,” and that “the solution is found through faith in God who accepts the sinner.” Salvation, when viewed in this light, is seen to be not a matter of the perfect keeping of law (either that of Moses or any other), but rather a matter of remaining “in Christ,” of continuing to “walk in the light,” of being wholeheartedly committed to Christ and his way however much our performance may sometimes fall short.⁹ Paul himself puts it this way: “So then, I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”¹⁰ Brother Batey comments again:

Be what you are. God has made you free; live as free men—responsibly. God has accepted you as sons; therefore act like sons of God (cf. Gal. 4:1-7; 5:1,13-15). Paul’s dialectic may be expressed: “Believing that God has accepted you though sinful, out of gratitude attempt to be acceptable to him, even while knowing that you

can never achieve perfection but that God will continue to accept you even though you remain imperfect” (Rom. 7:15-25).¹¹

Thus the ethical and moral demands of Christianity become, not a means of meriting salvation, but the response of a grateful heart to God for the grace he has bestowed.

This is the faith through which we are saved by grace—the faith that so completely comes to dominate one’s life that everything else becomes secondary to his basic commitment to God; and which, at the same time, realizing that such commitment can never be perfectly fulfilled, continuously and unceasingly looks to the cross as the ultimate ground of salvation. It is the faith which enables the Christian to sing with confidence and assurance:

Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come;
‘Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.

COMMENTS FROM READERS

CALIFORNIA: Please know that my copies will be loaned out many times. Our congregation desperately needs to stop wallowing in our own self-righteousness and examine our attitudes.

Praise God for the awakening his Spirit is bestowing today.

ALABAMA: A few months ago I began receiving your publication. I really looked forward to getting it. I read cover to cover, then passed it on. I never knew how I was added to the mailing list, but thank God I was. The paper suddenly stopped, and I had lost track of all my copies, so I didn’t have the slightest notion who or where to write. Another friend started getting it a couple of weeks ago, so now I know who to write. Please add me to your list again. I wish I could send a check at this writing, but that will have to wait till my next time. Thanks so much for *Integrity*. It’s truly a breath of fresh air here in Alabama.

EDITOR’S NOTE: We are sorry this reader was dropped. However, unless we drop those who fail to notify us when they move, we will have a very cumbersome list of uninterested readers. And our budget just won’t allow that.

TEXAS: I must let you know that I very much appreciate and am grateful to God for *Integrity*! Its spirit and content has been a wonderful strength to me and I praise God for the godly way everything is approached. I am convinced that

God has and is working through you to speak to me in some of my confusion. Thank you again, and I pray His richest for you!

TEXAS: It is with delight that we read *Integrity* each month!

A couple of years ago my wife and I began to search. Paul could have been speaking to us rather than Timothy when he said “. . . they will keep the outward forms of religion but deny its real power.” There simply had to be more to Christianity than we were experiencing in our local congregation of the Church of Christ.

The Lord IS faithful. We sought and we have found (and are finding). God truly is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. His power is as available today every bit as much as nearly 2000 years ago.

The Lord has begun using us in the church in this area. (When things happen that only He could bring to pass, we can only stand in awe and wonder!) Your publication is the best that we have seen in telling the wonderful news that God indeed IS with us. The enclosed contribution is in faith that you will continue to tell this Good News.

WEST VIRGINIA: We have read [a copy of *Integrity*] and are impressed that it explores the very ideas we have been asking ourselves. Keep up the good work!

DIVINE PROOF

Oh, all my brothers in the churches of the land,
Will you now refuse to heed the world’s hungry demand?
You claim you’re Christ’s creation to meet the awesome needs.
Then why do you neglect the world as it constantly pleads?
You have a sign of hope that you should always radiate.
Have you traded in your message for the world’s pitiful hate?
The world screams, “Hypocrites, liars, you have nothing that is true!”
And our words won’t prove them wrong, only the things that we do.

—Craig M. Watts.

1 Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5,18; Gal. 3:26-27; Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; John 3:5; Tit. 3:5.

2 Alexander Campbell, “Ancient Gospel.—No. II. Immersion,” *Christian Baptist*, V/7 (February 5, 1828), p. 168. His complete statement is as follows: *The first three thousand persons that were immersed after the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven were immersed FOR THE REMISSION OF THEIR SINS AND FOR THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.* I am bold, therefore, to affirm that every one of them, who in the belief of what the Apostle spoke, were immersed, did, in the very instant in which he was put under the water, receive the forgiveness of his sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. If so, then, who will not concur with me in saying that *Christian immersion is the gospel in water?*

3 Rom. 7:12, 14, 15, 22-24.

4 Rom. 7:10.

5 J. Paul DuBois, “By Grace Through Faith,” *Mission*, I/10 (April, 1968), pp. 313, 314.

6 Richard A. Batey, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans, The Living Word Commentary*, Vol. 7 (Austin: R.B. Sweet Co., 1969), p. 50.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 84.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 104.

9 Rom. 8:1; 1 John 1:7; Rom. 7:25.

10 Rom. 7:25.

11 Batey, *op. cit.*, p. 82.