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In Search of the New Left

DAVID ELKINS

It all began last year on the Fourth of July. I had just shot a pack of firecrackers and sat down at the backyard picnic table to eat watermelon. I took one bite and then broke the news. "I don't believe in God any more," I said to my brother who was spitting watermelon seeds at a furry caterpillar inching his way along the picnic bench.

"Shucks! You made me miss," he said, and squinted one eye to take aim again.

"Spoo." (We always called him that; his real name was Buckley.) "Spoo!" I spoke more loudly, "I said that I don't believe in God any more."

"So?" Spoo said, ambivalently dividing his attention between me and the retreating caterpillar.

"So?" I almost shouted. "Don't you understand what that means? It's the great turning point of my life, the unshackling of my spirit from the chains of medieval superstition, the freeing of my existence from the myths of ecclesiasticism, the opening of the gates to the garden of my pure humanity.

It's my personal 'Declaration of Independence' from the fictitious King George of the skies!"

I was surprised at my own eloquence. Spoo looked impressed, but the seriousness of the moment had obviously eluded him. He was stuffing his mouth for another raid on the caterpillar.

I leaned across the table. "Look, Spoo," I said. "This means I don't believe in church going, Bible reading, praying, or singing." I saw a flicker of interest. Spoo didn't care much for those things either. Redeeming the moment, I pressed on. "Spoo, this means I don't believe in baptism, the Lord's Supper, a cappella music or any of that religious bunk."

Now Spoo was all ears. Not believing in God could be tolerated, but losing faith in baptism, the Lord's Supper, and a cappella music? Well, Spoo had heard enough sermons to know that fooling around with those things was serious business. We stared at one another in silence. I was afraid I had given him too much at once. But Spoo had an honest heart. He thought deeply about it for a moment and then capitulated to Truth. "I don't believe in God any more either," he said. We grasped hands warmly, in a spirit of fellowship known only to true disbelievers.

That fall I went back to college and Spoo returned to his second attempt at the tenth grade. At college I enjoyed somewhat of a celebrity status. It was a small Christian school and there was a real superior feeling in being the only atheist on campus.

In February the annual Bible College Lectureship began. I hadn't planned to go but my roommate insisted. So to keep peace, I attended. The first speech was "Liberalism in the Church." The second one was "The Church Faces Modernism." I

could hardly believe my ears! The speakers were saying that the church was full of people like me. They said that even preachers, elders, and Bible professors had lost their faith. I attended the whole elating lectureship and every speaker confirmed the overwhelming abundance of liberals among us. According to the lecturers these modernists were infiltrating our pulpits, Christian colleges, publishing houses, and inner city missions. They were able to get in by hiding their true identity behind kindness and love until they worked themselves into an influential position. "Great strategy!" I thought to myself. A plan began to form in my mind. I could hardly wait to tell Spoo.

Finally spring exams were over and I headed home. As soon as the usual family laughing, crying, and hugging subsided, I took Spoo aside. "Listen, Spoo," I whispered. "Remember our pact—we're comrade atheists, right?" Spoo nodded. I continued, "Well, guess what! The whole darn church is full of people like us — preachers, elders, deacons, Bible professors, even Sunday School teachers. They've turned modernist and liberal and they're organized—organized to take over the whole cotton-pickin' brotherhood! And listen to this, Spoo. These guys are sharpies. In the past atheists have left the church, right? Well, not this new breed. They are faking it and staying in. They keep on spreading the Truth and then one of these days *Bingo!* the whole church is modernist!"

Then I told Spoo my plan: we would join the revolution and help infiltrate the churches in our area. Spoo seemed as excited as I. Being atheists was fun but conspiring to overthrow the religious establishment — Man, this was the Big Time!

The speakers at the Bible College Lectureship had said there was a conspiracy forming

in every city. So Spoo and I set about to find out what we could about the one in our area. I knew I would have to be cautious. Sunday morning after church I approached our preacher. "Brother Grodey," I began, "at the Bible College Lectureship all the speakers said the church is full of modernists and liberals."

Hurriedly Brother Grodey glanced in all directions, then quickly pulled me aside into his office. He shut the door and checked the windows. Only then did he speak. "Son," he whispered, "they're all over the place!" Before I could say anything, he continued. "I'm worried to death about our congregation. I've preached five months of sermons against liberalism and the elders have bought every member a copy of *Grinding the Ax*. Still, we're not sure. We've got a new fellow in the congregation — moved here from the West. He smiles all the time, visits the old folks, and has asked if he can have the teenagers to his house for a barbecue. So me and the elders are suspicious — that's the way they work, you know."

"Brother Grodey," I interrupted, "but surely there are no *preachers* around here who have gone modernist."

Brother Grodey glanced around the room and then smiled condescendingly at my naivete. "Son," he said, "the Westside Church just hired one. His name is Tom Kelsick and he's as liberal as J. Edgar Hoover!"

I was elated but, like a good intelligence spy, hid it well. Brother Grodey and I talked for another hour. By the time we finished I was convinced that I had found my first contact in the underground church. The Westside Church had always been a little different. Several of the members were college people — "eggheads" we called them. Now they had hired a modernist. It all fit—Westside had to be the center of the local

conspiracy and Tom Kelsick the new commander-in-chief!

That night Spoo and I attended the Westside services. At the door a man met us, saying he was one of the elders. I gave him a squeeze, winked, and said, "Don't worry, we're friends." He seemed a little shaken and hastily showed us to a seat.

"Must be new in the League," I whispered to Spoo. "Seems a little nervous."

Then the service began. Two songs, a prayer, another song. "This is smart," I told Spoo. "Ritualistic camouflage — so visitors won't know."

Then it was time for the sermon. Tom stood up. "Wow! A real outside agitator," I thought. "Called in to head up the whole city-wide infiltration." He preached beautifully. He talked about God, Christ, Calvary. love—he really made it sound sincere. Spoo got so involved in the sermon that tears began rolling down his cheeks. I had to give him an elbow in the ribs to bring him back to reality and remind him that it was all a farce — a smooth front for the revolution.

As soon as church was over I headed for the preacher. "Tom," I said in my best comrade-type voice, "that was a fine sermon. No one would ever know."

"Ever know what?" he smiled, feigning puzzlement.

I leaned near his ear. "It's okay, we're friends," I whispered.

Tom laughed nervously, which I thought strange for an experienced agitator. He should have been smoother.

"Listen, Tom," I continued. "My brother, Buckley, and I feel we have a lot in common with you and the Westside Church. We'd like to meet with you and the elders for a little talk. Maybe we can fit into your plans. We know a lot about the churches in

this area — could save you a lot of reconnaissance work, you know."

Tom faked bewilderment beautifully and then went off to round up the elders. We all met in the church office. All eyes seemed to be on me, so I began. "Look, fellows. A year ago Spoo, I mean Buckley, and I quit believing. We felt all alone until I went to the Bible College Lectureship this spring. There I learned about the revolution and about groups like Westside. Well, to get right to the point: Buckley and I would like to join up."

There was a full minute of dead silence. All eyes were still on me, as though they were expecting more. When I didn't say anything, the elders began slowly to look at one another. Finally, an older fellow, very soft-spoken, said, "Son, I'm afraid we don't know what you're talking about."

"Very good! Very good!" I laughed. "You guys are really great fakers. But you don't have to worry. I'm the real McCoy—a modernist, liberal, atheist. Check with the college professors. Ask Spoo here. What do I have to do to convince you? I know Westside is the local church of the conspiracy. I know Tom is a modernist. But your secrets are safe. I'm with you and I want to join up, right now, tonight."

Tom spoke next. "Friend," he said and then hesitated. "Friend, we honestly don't know what you're talking about. Westside is a church. We believe in God and Christ. Now I don't know where you got the idea that Westside is the front for some . . . some . . . what did you call it—'conspiracy'? Evidently someone has really misinformed you."

Tom suddenly brightened, as though he had just placed the last piece in a 500-piece jigsaw puzzle. "Oh, I think I see," he said, stroking his chin and smiling at the corners

of his mouth. "Brother Grodey has been talking to you, huh? Yes, Brother Grodey. I've talked with Brother Grodey on several occasions myself. Brother Grodey is a confused man. Like too many of our ministers, he's extremely suspicious and fearful. But regardless of what he told you, the Westside Church, these elders, and I — we're Christians, not conspirators."

By this time I was getting confused. I felt uncomfortable—kinda like the guy who has a loaded cigar blow up in his face. "You mean you fellows aren't modernists or liberals?" I said stupidly. "You're actually . . . really Christians? That sermon tonight, those services—it wasn't just a put-on?" Tom nodded. The elders smiled. The older one had tears in his eyes.

It was he who spoke. "Son, I've been an elder in this church for thirty-three years. My fellow pastors and I have tried to lead this group wisely. We have taught much about love, mercy, grace, and tolerance. Some have misunderstood us and we've been falsely accused on various occasions. Even though we do make mistakes, we are trying very sincerely to be followers of Jesus. If you're looking for a conspiracy, you'll have to go elsewhere. The only revolution at Westside is the one we're trying to bring about in the hearts of our people." The old man radiated a quiet dignity as he spoke. I felt small and foolish.

The night was cool as Spoo and I walked home. "Gee," Spoo said into the silence. "Those guys were really nice. I didn't feel good around them. I mean, them knowing I was an atheist and all. It wasn't much fun being an atheist with them. I kind of felt like I was dumb — like it was smarter to believe. I mean, they were really nice guys — like real Christians, with love and all. Know what I mean?"

But I couldn't answer Spoo. My throat was getting tight and my eyes were blurring. I knew Spoo was staring at me. I turned my head, but it did no good; the tears began trickling down my face. Then I saw that Spoo was crying, too.

"Spoo," I finally managed, "we've been a couple of dummies."

"Yeah," he answered, wiping his tears with the back of his hand.

I put my hand on his shoulder. "Let's go home, brother," I said. "Let's go home."

And as we walked home, I knew the New Left, wherever it was, had just lost a couple of good men. ●

LOVE

*Love is
special
in my
life. Nature is
most astounding
and
curious to me.
I am caught
in the web
of Life
struggling to
find
Righteousness.
But my life
is full
of a special
uncomprehensible
Love
for one
The man
Jesus Christ.
—John Tomlinson.*

Who Is the HOLY SPIRIT?

Part One
THE TRINITY

JOHN McRAY

Z.T. Sweeney has written in his book *The Spirit and the Word*: "Christianity is differentiated from all the other religions by the fact that it offers its followers a spiritual dynamic in living up to its precepts. That dynamic is the Holy Spirit, that sets the Word of God on fire, warms the church from coldness to enthusiasm, and strengthens the Christian with a power not his own in the great battle between the flesh and the spirit."

EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

There have been questions about the relationship between the members of the godhead (Col. 2:9)—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—as long as Christianity has been in existence. Christianity was torn apart during the second through the fourth centuries over this question. In the second century Tertullian, a Christian in Rome, wrote an extensive treatise called *Against Praxeas* in which he discussed at length the subject of the trinity. The most extensive treatise in the first four hundred years of church history was written on the trinity in the early fifth century (about 400-416) by a great thinker in North Africa, Augustine. His work was entitled *De Trinitate* (On the Trinity).

Statements about the Holy Spirit seem to have come rather late in the development of the various creeds of Christendom. At first these confessions of faith contained state-

ments only about the nature of Jesus. They were written apparently to "weed out" people who came to be baptized but did not believe that Jesus Christ really came in the flesh or that there was but one God. They were called Gnostics and Docetists. But eventually, in the early third century and later, statements about the Holy Spirit began to appear in the creeds.

There has been no unanimity of belief on the subject since the second century. There has been no unanimity of opinion even among the leaders of the Restoration Movement in the Churches of Christ about this subject. Some of the leading writers and preachers among us believe the Father, Son and Spirit are essentially one. Others believe in a distinct "trinity." We have never in the Church of Christ made it a practice to withdraw fellowship with anyone over his opinion on this particular matter. It has been a matter so difficult in understanding that we have left it pretty much to the realm of theology and have gone on about our practical Christianity with what I am confident is an inadequate understanding on the part of all of us about this vitally important subject.

NEW TESTAMENT PROBLEMS

One of the problems lending to this difficulty is that some passages in the Bible seem to deny the trinity by implication. For example, in 2 Cor. 3:17 Paul said, discussing

Jesus, "The Lord is the Spirit." In Jn. 4:24 Jesus said, "God is Spirit," or "God is a Spirit." We cannot differentiate the two expressions in Greek. In the Old Testament God seems to be called at times the Spirit of God. What the Spirit of God is said to do seems to be that which Jehovah is doing.

JEWISH LITERATURE

In the *Apocrypha* — those books which were written during the inter-Testamental period (the 400 years between the close of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New) — there are some passages which make it very clear that the term Spirit is being used in a way other than as referring to one of the divine godhead. For example, in the book of *Susanna* (chapter 44) it is stated: "The Lord heard her cry [that is, the cry of Susanna who had been accused of adultery when she was not guilty]. And as she was being led away to be put to death, God aroused the *Holy Spirit* of a young lad named Daniel." This is the Greek translation by Theodotion. The older Greek translation, called the Septuagint, says that the Lord aroused the "*spirit of understanding*" in the young lad Daniel.

In the Apocryphal book *Wisdom* (1:46) there is the statement: "Because wisdom will not enter a deceitful soul nor dwell in a body enslaved to sin. For a *holy spirit* of discipline will flee from guile and will rise and depart from foolish thoughts and will be ashamed at the approach of unrighteousness, for wisdom is a kindly spirit." Of course, wisdom in this book is personified in the same way that the "word" of God is personified in the New Testament in Jn. 1:14: "the word became flesh and dwelt among us." In the recently discovered Dead Sea Scrolls, which enlighten our understanding of Judaism in the first century when our

Saviour lived, there is this statement in the *Manual of Discipline* (3:7): "For it is through the *spirit of true counsel* concerning the ways of man that all his sins shall be expiated that he may contemplate the light of life. He shall be expiated that he may contemplate the light of life. He shall be cleansed from all his sins by the *holy spirit* uniting him to his truth, and his iniquity shall be expiated by the *spirit of uprightness and humility*." Also among the Dead Sea Scrolls, in the *Damascus Document* (7:3), it is stated, "And *no man* shall defile *his holy spirit* since God has set them apart." Here the spirit of man is called "his holy spirit"! Furthermore, there are some passages in the New Testament which seem to reflect this same first century Jewish understanding about the spirit. In Eph. 1:17, for example, Paul prays that, "God, the Father of Glory, may give unto you a spirit of *wisdom and revelation* in the knowledge of Him." Does this mean an *attitude* of wisdom and revelation? Does it mean a gift of revelation? Does it mean the Holy Spirit who is wisdom and revelation? We do not know for certain.

In Eph. 4:23 Paul speaks about "the spirit of your mind." He says that "you may be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man that after God has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth." Now what is "the spirit of your mind"? Is it the attitude of the mind? Is it the inner spirit of man which is eternal and immortal? Or is it the Spirit of God?

In Rom. 8:15 Paul speaks of the "spirit of bondage" — he speaks also of the "spirit of adoption," seemingly using this in a way other than of the Holy Spirit.

TRANSLATION PROBLEMS

Another problem and a very difficult one for those of us who attempt to translate the

Bible is how to translate the word *pneuma* in Greek and *ruach* in Hebrew. We do not always know whether to translate it "Spirit" or "wind." For example, in Gen. 1:2 the Bible says "the Spirit (wind) of God moved upon the face of the deep." In the footnote of our Bibles we will find one or the other. It will be translated "spirit of God" in the text and footnoted "wind" or vice versa. In Gen. 8:1 and Ex. 14:21, in almost identical language, the dry land appears when the *ruach* (wind) passes over it.

In Jn. 3:3-5, in the conversation which Jesus had with Nicodemus about the new birth, he said that "a man must be born of water and the spirit." Then he illustrated this spiritual birth by saying "the *wind* blows where it will — you hear the *sound* thereof but you do not know from whence it comes or whither it goes. So is everyone who is born of the spirit." Some might choose to translate it, however, "the *Spirit* breathes where it will — you hear the *voice* thereof, but you do not know from whence it comes or whither it goes. So is everyone who is born of the spirit."

I personally feel that the former translation is the right one. Jesus is illustrating the spirit by the wind and makes a pun on the word *pneuma*.

PROBLEMS OF DIFFERENTIATION

Another problem in understanding the Holy Spirit is that at times it is difficult to differentiate between "spirit of man" and "spirit of God" in the New Testament, as we have already remarked. For example, James says, "Do you think the Scriptures speak in vain? Does the spirit which he has made to dwell in us long unto envying" (Jas. 4:5)? There are several different ways of understanding this verse. It could mean: "Does the Spirit of God which God put within

man long to have him for God?" It could mean: "The holy spirit of man, which God made to dwell in him, longs unto envying, lusting after things which it should not." It could mean: "the spirit of man longing after the Spirit of God." Or it could possibly mean: "The Spirit of God which dwells in man—can it possibly long for and lust after things of this world?"

The problem here is that in ancient Greek writings there is no capital S and small s. There are no small letters at all in the earliest copies of the New Testament! We do not always know therefore when the "spirit of man" and "Spirit of God" is intended. It was not until about the fourth century A.D., about 300 years after the New Testament had been completely written, that men began to write in small letters too. The New Testament was written entirely in capital letters. We do not always know, therefore, when to capitalize and when not to capitalize.

Nor does it always help to have the article "the" with "spirit" — sometimes it can mean the spirit of man and sometimes it can mean the Spirit of God. Perhaps we need to be reminded occasionally of the truth expressed by Dr. Kuyper in his book *The Work of the Holy Spirit* that we need not know every distinction of the godhead in all particulars to be Christians.

AN IMPORTANT OBSERVATION

Whether the trinity exists in exactly the way we might conceive it (the word trinity is not a Biblical word) *is secondary to the fact that Christ obviously wanted us to think of it in this way!* I do not know if there is the kind of breakdown between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in a realm where Christ and God can both be called spirit, that I normally make in my own mind. But I also know that

I cannot conceive of it in any other way and God knew that would be the case. So he gave his revelation in these terms. He talked of his *Son*, although his Son is not reported anywhere in the Scriptures to have had a divine mother. Yet, you and I understand what is meant by the Father-Son relationship, before the incarnation.

There are many places in the New Testament where it is very clear that Christ wants us to conceive of what he came to do in these terms—trinitarian terms. In Matt. 28:18-20 Jesus said to "baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." In Jn. 14:16, the book in which we reach the "high-water mark" in the teaching of the New Testament about the Holy Spirit, there is this statement: "I will pray the *Father* and he will give you *another Advocate*, that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth." Notice the threefold aspect of that statement. "And *I* will pray the *Father* (there are two); he will give you *another Advocate* (there are three) — even the Spirit of Truth." Then in verse 26, "But the Advocate, even the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." Here we can see

clearly that Christ speaks of three personalities. We might also turn to 15:26: "When the Advocate is come whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he will bear witness of me." There are three. We might note also 16:13: "Howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come he shall guide you unto all the truth, for he shall not speak of himself, but what things soever he shall hear these shall he speak, and he shall declare to you the things that are to come."

In 2 Cor. 13:14 Paul closed this letter by saying, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen." Not only our Lord, but Paul spoke in terms of three personalities—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When he wrote to the Ephesians in 4:1-6 Paul said there is one God and Father of all; there is one Lord; there is one Spirit. He differentiated between the three.

Now I say again that whether this is the exact relationship sustained in heaven, it seems quite clear that Christ wanted us to conceive of it in this way. This revelation is not a means to an end; it is an end within itself. We cannot go beyond this differentiation which our Saviour made. ●

Say What You Mean

F. L. LEMLEY

Communication is extremely difficult under favorable circumstances, but given the handicap of ambiguity, it becomes almost an impossibility. If one should go to the extreme required to render his communication

incapable of misunderstanding or misconstruction, he would find it so cumbersome and redundant that it would have to be boring and repulsive. Our modern generation finds the English of the King James version

almost unintelligible. Language is undergoing constant change, and if we are wise, we will shift with the times and adjust, not our doctrine, but our ways of expressing our doctrine. Many times we would be much clearer if we would substitute the meaning of a word for the word itself in our efforts to communicate.

... avoiding ambiguity

The above observation is particularly applicable to the brotherhood use of the word "fellowship." The ambiguity with which we use the word obscures our communication on the subject. In English the word "fellowship" is used both as a noun and a verb, but in our uses we confuse the distinction. "Fellowship" as a noun means briefly, "brotherhood or a company of people with the same interests." It is comparable to the words "partnership," "comradeship," and "companionship." We would find it a bit awkward to say that Tom and Bill, in dissolving a partnership, quit "partnershiping"! Or if two people get a divorce, it is a bit amusing to express it as a "discompanionshiping." In speaking of church problems it is very common to hear one say that two brethren quit fellowshiping when in fact we mean that they quit "brotherhooding"; that is, each regards the other as out of the brotherhood (fellowship).

"Fellowship" as a verb means "to jointly participate" in some activity. This being the definition, it is axiomatic that when one ceases to participate he thereby ceases to fellowship (to jointly participate). For example, if one does not participate in a mission effort (like Herald of Truth), he has no fellowship (joint participation) with the fellowship (brotherhood) in this project. If one does not sing in the assembly, he simply does not fellowship (jointly participate in)

the song service with the fellowship (brotherhood). To withdraw fellowship frequently means no more than withdrawing our joint participation; but it can mean much more than that. It is a useless and absurd gesture to withdraw joint participation from someone who never jointly participates with us anyway. You may be sure that when the sincere but misinformed brethren withdrew fellowship from Pat Boone, they not only "disjointly participated" him, they "disbrotherhooded" him. Many withdrew who never had, and never would have, jointly participated with him in anything. The real meaning of all this is that when one becomes the object of such action, he is judged to be no longer an acceptable child of God and is to be regarded as a heathen and a publican (Matt. 18:17); that is, no more than a pagan.

only God can disinherit us . . .

Of course, this poses another problem: are we permitted to occupy God's judgment seat to legislate who shall or shall not be a child of God? Are we permitted to choose who shall be our brother and who shall not be? Do we control childhood, or is this God's department? Now let me say emphatically that the only fellowship we can withdraw is our own participation! We can neither extend nor withdraw brotherhood or childhood (fellowship). Whomsoever God receives as his child I must receive as my brother, and he remains my brother until God disinherits him. I have no more control over who is my spiritual brother than I do over who is my fleshly brother. We are brothers because of a common father, not because we are identical twins. So when we venture to withdraw brotherhood (fellowship), we had better be sure it is for an offense for which God disinherits.

But be it observed that the scriptural bases for God disinheriting a child are also offenses inimical to childhood. For example: if one denies the deity of Christ he cannot become a Christian at all; and if he falls into this belief after once embracing Christ, he is to be regarded as one not to be received or given any greeting (2 Jn. 7-11) lest we become partakers of his evil deeds. God disinherits such children—assuming that those in view were once legitimate children. Again: one can never become a Christian at all while continuing in the habitual practice of sin, for the gospel demands repentance. But if after becoming a child, he reverts to the love and habitual practice of sin, God will disinherit him (1 Cor 5:1-7). God's disinheriting means that we also disfellowship, but God is not bound by our decisions in the absence of his sanction. These people are no longer to be considered brethren because their defects are such that will prevent childhood. A heretic cannot become a Christian at all until he is cured of his perversion and wickedness. It is therefore a matter of simple deduction that if God receives a person as his child in spite of his error, he will not disinherit that person because of the same error, for such errors are not inimical to childhood. Neither are they legitimate reasons for disfellowshipping ("disbrotherhooding") if one espouses them after becoming a child. And God may not look kindly upon those who pass such judgments (even in ignorance), for this is presumption.

... suspicious behavior

Many are falsely accused of "fellowshipping" disbelievers or nonchildren in our brotherhood. It is common knowledge that churches of Christ are divided into over 20 factions, each of which believes it is the true

church and that all the others are in error and therefore disinherited children resting under the damnation of God! Therefore there is practically no fraternization between factions. When one does become brave enough to cross party lines, he becomes an object of suspicion, for this is a symptom of "unsoundness." For example: when a brother of the premillennial persuasion (or the instrumental music group, or the anti-what-you-may-call-it faction) visits another faction, if he should be asked to lead a dismissal prayer or lead a song, the one who asks him is immediately called to answer for "fellowshipping unbelievers," "fellowshipping error," or of "going liberal"! This is confusion, fuzzy thinking, and a contradiction of ambiguity. Let us define the problem in specific terms.

The problem is not one of childhood or brotherhood, for many of each faction confess that those of other factions obey the same gospel, accept the same Christ, and recognize the inspiration of the same scriptures. Those of each faction admit freely that God received the others in spite of their errors and have carefully avoided (except in extreme cases) making the bone of contention a condition of childhood. Furthermore, it is not a matter of fellowship (joint participation) in that of which one disapproves, for the fellowship is in song and prayer—on which the participants agree. So the question amounts to this: may one participate (have fellowship) in matters of agreement with those who may disagree on interpretation of the inspired word? In other words, are the issues over which we disagree matters for which God will disinherit a child? We are in a very awkward position to agree that such issues are not part of the plan of salvation on the one hand and then make them a cause for disinheriting on the other. We are

in a more awkward position still if we try to rationalize that those who have obeyed the gospel, placed their trust in Jesus Christ, and accepted the scriptures as God's inspired word are not children but unbelievers.

... fellowship is not endorsement

It is ridiculous to assume that if we recognize a person as a brother in Christ we have thereby endorsed all his shortcomings. Brother A calls on brother B to lead a prayer in the assembly. Brother C objects because B believes in the use of instrumental music in worship (or premillennialism, cups, classes, Herald of Truth, or what have you). C erroneously believes that to have fellowship in prayer and song is an endorsement of an error in which he has no participation. Of course, B may sit and jointly participate (have fellowship) to his heart's content so long as A does not call on him (that is, recognize him as a brother). So the question is not one of endorsement of error or of fellowship (joint participation) in worship, but one of childhood or brotherhood. Does being on the wrong side of our issues negate our childhood? If not—and by our own admissions they do not negate our childhood—then we ought to have fellowship (joint participation) with all the fellowship (brotherhood) in so far as we agree. If God does not disinherit his children for being mistaken on prophecy, the Holy Spirit, cooperation on a congregational level, means and methods, etc., then neither should we! These are not withdrawing offenses!

This introduces the subject of God's allowances for differing *faiths* (convictions). It seems we have never been able to agree on what is *faith* and what is *opinion*. The problem is that a man's convictions (opinions) are *faith* to him, while to others these convictions appear as opinions.

different convictions . . .

We must each answer to our own master (Rom. 14:4), and we each must be responsible for studying and applying the scriptures for ourselves. In so doing it is inevitable that we may develop different convictions. We ourselves must live by these convictions, for to us they become the *faith* by which we live. This has nothing to do with the *faith in Jesus Christ* that made us children, but with the faith that is developed through study and use of our common sense *after* we become children. God is tolerant in this area and allows us to have our own convictions (faith) so long as we do not bind them upon the brotherhood as conditions of childhood (Rom. 14:22-23). Such convictions are matters to be held between us and God alone, and while they may be conditions by which *we* are bound, we cannot bind others with them. To the person who is a vegetarian eating meat is a sin, but it is not a sin to those who do not have this conviction. God received both the meat eater and the vegetarian, and he is able to make both stand (Rom. 14:4). If abstaining from meats should have been a condition of childhood, then it would necessarily be a condition of disinheriting a child, and one could not be a child while eating meat. This error was not inimical to childhood, therefore could be tolerated in the brothers so long as neither became exclusive and passed judgment on his brother. This was the problem of Romans 14, and it is our problem of fellowship today. We are not content to allow the differences in convictions that God allows.

allowable differences . . .

God allows us to differ in our convictions and still be brethren. Here are some differ-

ences God allowed. (1) The difference in attitude toward meats (Rom. 14). (2) Differences on the keeping of days (Rom. 14). (3) Differences in the Jewish and Gentile church (Acts 15; 21:17ff.). The Jewish church kept the law, observed circumcision, but these things were not bound upon Gentile churches. (4) The apostle Paul was a practicing Jew (Acts 24:17). The New English Bible makes this exceedingly clear! (5) Paul and Barnabas had a difference over taking Mark with them and had to separate, but neither lost his relationship with God. All this is to say that God does not demand uniform convictions on all points of scripture and application of scripture. We may differ and still be brethren and have fellowship with one another (jointly participate) in those things on which we agree. In spite of disagreements we can and must recognize one another as God's children and our brothers. It is a contradiction to try to recognize one another as brothers while we treat one another as pagans.

... not enemies but brothers

Anyone who can claim brotherhood with the Jerusalem congregation, pointing to them as the first congregation of churches of Christ, and who accepts the apostle Paul as an inspired Biblical writer, should have no trouble with any of the church issues of today. The only issues worthy of consideration are those that affect childhood, and there are very few of these. But what of 2 Thess. 3:6-18?

2 Thess. 3:6-18 is clearly not a case of "disbrothering" but a case of "disassociation" for the purpose of discipline. It is a case of refusing to allow a brother to eat of the common pantry without making some contribution. It is not a case of a brother

who was unfortunate in that he could not work or could not find work, but that of an able-bodied man who wouldn't work and tried to live off those who did. He was not to be treated as an enemy but admonished as a brother (v. 15). We of churches of Christ treat denominations as enemies to be converted, not as disciples to be further instructed! When one falls into what we call "denominational error," for all practical purposes he becomes our enemy and we treat him accordingly. 2 Thess. 3:6-18 does not deal with "unbrothering" but with "disassociation" to impress a point. It is most likely that the one in view here had some erroneous convictions about the second coming of Christ and had quit his job in order to be ready to meet Jesus. Erroneous convictions about the coming of Christ are not inimical to childhood. While God does not require perfection in knowledge as a condition of childhood, he does require one to purpose to obey. Those in view in 2 Thess. 3 are urged to work, and if they would not, they should not be allowed to eat. This may be regarded as a special case in a different category from that of 1 Cor. 5 and 2 John 7-11. It is also clear that it is not a case of a heretic as in Tit. 3:10. At any rate the person's defect in 2 Thess. 3 was not inimical to childhood, otherwise he could not still be counted as a brother.

The purpose of NT disciplinary action was to save the brother, to keep him in the fellowship. Something is wrong with actions that do not get the desired result. Withdrawing in the sense of "unbrothering" is for the protection of the church against incorrigibles who are outlaws in a spiritual sense. It is not for honest, sincere brethren who are surrendered to Christ, but who are mistaken on some text of scripture. God allows us to have differing convictions! ●

THE SEARCH FOR PRECISE TERMINOLOGY

In the August editorial I used the words *pneumatic* and *antipneumatic* several times in reference to those on both sides of the Holy Spirit issue. One brother has since commented that he did not realize what he was before reading that article. Another who was unfamiliar with the terms decided to look up pneumatic in the dictionary. He was not too pleased to discover, on his first look, that I had apparently said he was "full of air." But he looked again and decided that I had merely said he was "spiritual." (Pneumatic is from the Greek word *pneuma*, which can mean either wind or spirit.) This second look saved him the cost of a long distance telephone call to protest.

I am aware, of course, that there are some who think the first definition is very appropriate; but I hope I was not understood in that way.

I realized when I wrote that article there might be some confusion of terms. Since I am not a wordsmith, I just had to do the best I could under the circumstances. And pneumatic seemed to be the best word to describe those who believe they possess the spiritual gifts the early church had. I used the prefix *anti* in antipneumatic to denote merely *difference rather than antagonism*. It was used in reference to all those who do not claim to have spiritual gifts—not merely those who are diametrically opposed to the view that they are available today.

Realizing how sensitive the Holy Spirit issue is, I have sought terminology which

does not involve prejudicial connotations. I do not like the word "Pentecostal," for instance, because, in addition to being inexact, it conveys derogatory implications to some of our readers. "Glossolalists" would be too narrow since the issue is much broader than tongues speaking. "Holy Spirit brethren" is too vague. "Spirit-led brethren" and "spiritual" would hardly be surrendered by either side to the other. "Charismatic" is a good term, but it is widely used in a way that is not related to the Holy Spirit.

Then there is the problem of finding an exact opposite to any of the terms above. When we are dealing with controversy we must describe one side as precisely as the other.

Some readers will probably think all this is too much quibbling about words; and they may be right. Nevertheless I think our use of words is serious business. I do not doubt that we sometimes use prejudicial terms in place of rational argument. "Holy Roller" is a good example. Since this is a derogatory expression, the person who uses it obviously intends for us to place its referent in a bad category. Although such emotional persuasion may be effective with many people, in my opinion it is basically dishonest.

We must be careful that we do not employ a kind of mental reservation wherein we use a term capable of more than one meaning without being too grieved if the listener takes it in the worst way possible, knowing that we can say, if we are called in question, that we did not mean it that way, or that he just misunderstood us, or that he takes us too seriously since we were only joking. We might well recall Prov. 26:18-19: "Like a man who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, 'I am only joking!'"

Words obviously do not always have the same meaning for everyone who uses them. If we really want to be honest, we will not only say what *we mean*, we will also say what the *other person means*. —HGL.

Letters

REACTIONS TO AUGUST EDITORIAL

I am taking this opportunity to express my thanks for your well-written, thoughtful, and sensible editorial on pneumatics in the August issue. I wish a copy of it could be put in the hands of every church member.

The opposite approach came to my attention only last week. A young man and his wife, desirous of making a full commitment to the Good News while they were young and unencumbered with heavy family responsibilities, gave up a joint income of \$19,000 a year to accept work with a ghetto program in New York at a subsistence wage of \$3,600 for the two, provided they could raise their own support. A local church where they had been members was asked to contribute. Instigated by their hard-nosed preacher, the elders advised the young man that not only would they not support him, they would do all in their power to keep others from contributing to his support because Pat Boone had been a leading contributor and supporter of this particular program! It mattered not that this ghetto program was not involved with the pneumatics problem, it was enough that they had not "disfellowshipped" Boone.

I thank God for the "young princes" (as *Restoration Review* calls them) of the new generation who are daring to think and write in terms of love, integrity, and unity and who see the absurdity of the legalisms and so-called scriptural barriers which the older generation has erected to fracture the body of Christ.

If there comes a time you need additional support for your publication, I stand ready to help.

NORMAN L. PARKS
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

The lead editorial "Integrity and the Holy Spirit" by Hoy Ledbetter was very perceptive and irenic in content. Thank you for the deep efforts you are making on behalf of peace . . .

Please allow me to state an opinion concerning this editorial, because I feel that you overlooked a very vital point. You will have to come to grips

with the fact that the mainline Church of Christ not only claims to be "christians only," but also to be "the only christians." Most pneumatics, as you call the Spirit-led brethren, visit and worship with Pentecostals, Full Gospel Business Men's breakfast and dinner meetings, and other denominations. In other words, these people accept others as christians that the antipneumatics cannot so accept. And this is the chief point of difference, which your editorial somehow overlooks. We are just as willing to go out to hear the Reverend Dennis Bennett as we are to go out to hear Brother Batsell Barrett Baxter. An increasing number of mainline churchofchristers are breaking out of their isolationist shells and discovering that God is dealing with other religious communions and other believers.

Since the Church of Christ regards all others as false prophets and false teachers it obviously is not going to accept those of us that regard the Bennetts, the Bredesens, the Boones, and others as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Perhaps you will favor us with another article which will point up these differences. I am personally pleased that you can worship where these differences are overlooked in a spirit of love.

In conclusion let us look at how a great christian leader saw these problems.

"So long as any man, woman, or child declares his confidence in Jesus of Nazareth as God's own Son, that he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification; or in other words, that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of men; and so long as he exhibits a willingness to obey him in all things according to his knowledge, so long will I receive him as a christian brother and treat him as such."

—Alexander Campbell, *Christian Baptist*, Vol. 3, p. 183 (1826).

I dare say that Bishop Campbell would not be accepted in many pulpits today for having stated so forcibly what the New Testament scriptures seem to be saying about fellowship.

RALPH M. SINCLAIR
Cincinnati, Ohio

. . . I have read the editorial by "H.G.L." captioned "Integrity and the Holy Spirit." If this is characteristic of your publication, you will have me as a contributor.

VIRGIL W. THOMPSON
Mt. Dora, Florida