

INTEGRITY is published each month and seeks to encourage all believers in Christ to strive to be one, to be pure, and to be honest and sincere in word and in deed, among themselves and toward all men.

Integrity

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The Indwelling Spirit and Christian Decision-Making

Philip S. Roberson

this is how we can make sure that he dwells within us: we know it from the Spirit he has given us (1 Jn. 3:21-24).

I suspect, John Questor, that you sought a simple solution. It certainly would be comforting to be able to say, "Knowing God's will is easy! Just follow these five simple steps and you can be absolutely sure you are in accord with God. . . ." Our daily decisions, even the simple ones, could be made with the assurance that God's will is surely being done. Think how proud you would feel in doing exactly what God wants!

My contention is that the new covenant approach to knowing and doing the will of God is much less complicated than any legalistic approach. *Offer* your selves—your body, your mind, *everything*—to God in Christ. *Relinquish* your self-will.

Accept the active assistance of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Knowing and doing the will of God will then be as simple as knowing that, because of what Christ did, you have assurance of salvation in Christ. Your pride will be in Christ crucified and not in your own feeble efforts to please God (Rom. 3:27-29; 1 Cor. 1:30-31).

But when the kindness and generosity of our Savior dawned upon the world, then, not for any good deeds of our own, but because he was merciful, he saved us through the water of rebirth and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. For he sent down the Spirit upon us plentifully through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, justified by his grace, we might in hope become heirs to eternal life. These are words that you may trust (Tit. 3:4-8).

May God bless you richly with the presence of his Holy Spirit. □

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Interesting Information

We invite our readers to participate in an **informal seminar** to be conducted by **Scott and Diane Bartchy** March 25-26, the theme of which will be "Women, Men, and the Bible." There will be three sessions at the Troy Church of Christ, 800 Trombley, Troy, Michigan, as follows: Friday, March 25, 8 p.m.; and Saturday, March 26, 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. This study will be open *without charge* to anyone who wishes to attend. There will be short presentations followed by extended discussion. Scott is Professor of Biblical Hermeneutics at Emmanuel School of Religion and a distinguished New Testament scholar. Diane, who holds a master's degree in counseling, has done research in the area of changing perceptions of young people in male-female leadership. If you would like to have more information, you should call Dave Graf at 313/665-4326. Incidentally, the Troy church building is west of Rochester Road a few blocks north of I-75.

Our next issue will be a special on the very important subject of the decision-making process in the church and will include articles by **J. Harold Thomas** and **Joseph F. Jones**. You will not want to miss it!

We have recently received copies of two **new magazines** which may be of interest to you. *The Family* is published as a family educational service of The Institute of Family Strengths (Box 1205, Stillwater, OK 74074), a nonprofit corporation. You may receive a free copy by writing to the above address. *Gospel Teacher* (6121 Hudson, Orlando, FL 32808), co-edited by Bob West and Arnold O. Schnabel and published six times a year, features an unusual format and promises to be of interest to more than just Sunday School teachers. The subscription price is \$7. □

Caught in the Toils of Caesar's Law

NORMAN L. PARKS
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

"... that to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors, is sinful and tyrannical;

"that even forcing him to support this or that teacher of his own religious persuasion is depriving him... of liberty...."

"[Therefore] We the General Assembly of Virginia do enact that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever...."

—Thomas Jefferson, *A Bill of Rights Establishing Religious Freedom.*

The "middle ground" which appears to be the safe and sensible position to so many religionists is often a deceptive quagmire, as is the case with those who seek a balance between "letter" and "spirit." But by far the most popular appeal in religion is the belief that it is possible to serve both God and mammon.

When Church of Christ colleges made this happy discovery, they initiated unrestrained campaigns to indenture Caesar to God. While succeeding impressively by erecting dormitories, science buildings,

auditoriums, and libraries with public funds and by beefing up their enrollments and operating budgets through tuition conduits into governmental treasuries, at least five of them have been caught in the toils of Caesar's law.

This is only the beginning of their difficulties with the state. It is a mild beginning and the mailed fist of Caesar is still concealed in the soft glove of permissiveness. But there is an unfailing rule that governmental power must follow governmental money. It is utterly unrealistic to hope that the state will maintain a "hands off" policy in the affairs of such church colleges while they continue to engulf millions of taxpayers' funds.*

The marriage of church and state historically has always been bad, resulting in the corruption of both. Tax funding of church-related colleges is a form of this marriage. Clearly it is a violation of one of the most basic of human freedoms to compel taxpayers to support such institutions. If freedom of religion means any-

*Though one president has stated publicly that he will not accept any "interference" by the state in the internal affairs of his college, he has signed agreements for federal funds which bar discrimination on the grounds of sex. Abilene Christian ignored this commitment and continued its no-smoking rule against women students while permitting male students to smoke. When the government prepared to move against the university, its administrators suddenly announced that they had discovered a higher level of conduct for its students and henceforth no student would be permitted to smoke on campus. This is a portent of what will come later. At Lipscomb a young woman was barred from participating in the recent Founders Day oratorical contest, the explanation being that the contestants were normally preachers and the subjects religious, and the doctrine of the church prohibited a woman from addressing a mixed audience on a religious theme or occasion. Not a mere coincidence of the sudden adoption of this 1977 rule was the holding of the contest at the time of the annual lectureship, which dealt with the theme of the place of women in the church and featured the subject, "Are We Headed for Women Preachers and Women Elders?" The adoption of this rule was also testimony that pervasive sectarianism marks that campus, extending to extracurriculars and other aspects of college life.

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thing, it means that every man's commitment must be free and voluntary. There is no difference in a tax levied to support the Church of Christ and a tax levied to support a Church of Christ college. Compulsory support of religion fired our Bicentennial ancestors to action to erect "a wall of separation between church and state." Our college executives are busy day and night destroying this noble wall, and, in riding roughshod over the people's religious rights, they are exposing the rights of their colleges to self-direction to the same consequences.

The long hand of governmental control will increasingly be felt as the decades roll on. The adjustments which these colleges will be required to make will shove them steadily down the road of secularization. This process is already far advanced in numerous Catholic and Protestant colleges. In Maryland in 1976 one such institution quietly severed all ties with its denomination in order to continue to receive state funds. In Tennessee one Methodist college was simply turned over to the state.

Of course, the forces of secularization are already operative on these church colleges apart from the pressures of Caesar. The remarkable about-face of our college executives toward being yoked with Caesar is a part of the total cultural transformation of the Church of Christ since World War II into a successful middle class society with middle class values and aspirations. Its less successful or more rigid or more pietistic members have been sloughed off both to the right and the left into sub-factions, leaving a dominant "mainline" church. It is not surprising that its colleges demand middle class campuses, with buildings, equipment, and salaries on the level with state institutions, not to mention bands, football teams, and other extras. The president of a Texas

state regional university four times larger than Abilene Christian University listed a football budget barely over half of the amount of ACU's. Some alumni and supporters of Pepperdine University express fear of an ever-increasing secularization of that institution. One saw social drinking among its faculty as evidence. The revelation that its chief executive drew an annual salary of \$54,000 plus residence and other extras, with part of the salary being awarded by deceptive means, furrowed not a few brows. A national weekly quoted its chancellor as repudiating in court the hell-fire fundamentalism of his church, and this was viewed by others as reflecting the secularization process.

The lobbying activities of these colleges in state legislatures match or surpass the tactics of the most effective special interests. Abilene Christian is given primary credit for persuading the Texas legislature to accept the principle that the state should make up the difference between the tuition charged in the church colleges and that charged in the state institutions. The result has been the "tuition equalization" program. In Tennessee Freed-Hardeman and David Lipscomb have helped finance one of the most massive lobbying drives ever seen in this state. Parents and students are recruited for this purpose. Their presidents are not only in close contact with their own legislative representatives, but they contact church members in the General Assembly and lobby personally on the Hill. Perhaps it is no accident that two Church of Christ legislators have been the spearheads of the drives in the two houses to funnel tax money to the church colleges.

It is significant to note that in lobbying for tax funds our college executives never refer to their institutions as church colleges, but always as "private" and "independent." In a way that can be only

The pursuit of mammon unquestionably leads these college executives to soft-pedal or even alter the basic propositions of their institutions.

misleading to legislators not familiar with the Church of Christ, they boldly assert that "our college is not church-owned." They have even carried this deception into court records, when the truth is that no American college is more closely tied to its religious constituency than is a Church of Christ college.

Oklahoma Christian College and Ohio Valley College were caught violating federal law by using for religious purposes buildings erected partly with federal money. Similar cavalier treatment of legal standards appears in the case of Freed-Hardeman and David Lipscomb with respect to lobbying activities. Both belong to the Tennessee Council of Private Colleges, a state-chartered corporation whose charter specifically prohibits the use of the bulk of its funds for lobbying activities. When the IRS audited the Council's funds, it found that almost all of its money was spent for lobbying activities and required a change in its classification for tax purposes. Both Church of Christ colleges are intimately involved in the Council's activities and pay assessments for its support. Since Lipscomb is the second largest college in the Council, it is the second largest contributor. A suit is generating against these colleges for this violation of charter law.

Both Freed-Hardeman and Lipscomb have been focal points of federal court suits which charge that the Tennessee tuition grant law by which they get tax money violates the First Amendment's prohibition of any law "affecting an establishment of religion." In addition, Freed-Hardeman is the defendant in another federal court, charged with receiving federal tax money in violation of our national constitution. A three-judge federal court found these two colleges to be sectarian institutions which the state could not support. The outlawed legisla-

tion was hastily replaced with a new law, but when it became evident that it, too, would also be found unconstitutional, it was repealed and a third piece of legislation enacted. And once more they are back in federal court.

The pursuit of mammon unquestionably leads these college executives to soft-pedal or even alter the basic propositions of their institutions. Though all of them have long insisted that religion permeates all classes and all aspects of college life and that there is no such thing for the Christian as "secular" as opposed to "religious," their executives carefully evade the "permeation" doctrine when put to court test. Freed-Hardeman, for example, has carried a provision in its catalog drawing a distinction between its "secular" classes, tuition for which the state could presumably finance, and its Bible classes, tuition for which the state might not pay. In his deposition in federal court, its president was asked specifically if religion permeated all aspects of the college life and program.

Q. Well . . . you said the purpose of the school was to teach (all) courses in light of revealed truth of the Bible. . . . Is that substantially—? A. We offer a Liberal Arts program and Bible Department. Q. And your testimony is that there wouldn't be any difference in the Liberal Arts program than it would anywhere else, is that right? A. If you're saying that a Liberal Arts teacher has a Communist do the teaching or if you have an Atheist doing the teaching, the philosophy concept would be back of it [sic].

The reason for the side-stepping and lack of directness when the issue of permeation is raised lies in the fact that no court would hold financial support constitutional for a college which embraced the idea that, as Paul wrote, "religion is of use in all directions." When questioned specifically if the anatomy course at his college would be the same as that at the University of Tennessee, the president

It is this business which is going to get all of these colleges into trouble with the state in the future.

replied, "Well, the fact that our students are able to pass the Anatomy course and go ahead and enter medical school and be successful, I think there is the test." When pressed to answer if his anatomy teacher would likely teach that the "body is the temple of God," his answer again dissolved into vagueness.

The depositions of these two presidents make interesting studies in vagueness, defensiveness, evasion, fast footwork, and even inarticulateness. This is reflected in the answer of one president to a question on academic freedom. When asked if a teacher would be allowed "to set out for discussion the premise that the Genesis account is allegorical or an extended metaphor or symbolic," he replied, "There again it gets back to the basis of hiring the teacher. He knows when he is hired that these things are understood. This is a part of his understanding at the time of employment, and if he did otherwise, he would be violating his contract." If the court accepted the deposition of one Christian college president as factual, it would be left with the idea that attendance at church by his students was handled in the same way as it is at the University of Tennessee. Anyone who has ever attended a Church of Christ college knows better than that.

Fast footwork was displayed by both executives when asked to clarify what is meant by the popular expression "main-line Church of Christ." Both professed to be vaguely mystified by the term and were without the foggiest notion of its significance. This pose, of course, was to promote the illusion that there is only one institutional Church of Christ. This was to enable them to avoid having to explain to a skeptical court why a "premillennialist" or an "anti-institutionalist" would not be employed on the faculty, or why a teacher who attended Belmont

Church of Christ or welcomed "Charismatics" in his home would get the gate, tenure or no tenure. It is this business which is going to get all of these colleges into trouble with the state in the future.

The depositions have their hilarious side also. One president was being questioned by an attorney for the colleges, but the president apparently failed to understand the attorney's role and responded by ducking, rolling, and evading.

Defense Atty.: Are you familiar with the story of Ananias?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Wasn't he turned into stone because he refused to go along with the Communist plot?

Second Atty.: You're thinking about Lot. You're in the Old Testament, Henry.

Defense Atty.: I don't believe I am. Ananias was turned into stone, wasn't he, or struck dead?

Second Atty.: That is Lot's wife.

Defense Atty.: Lot's wife was turned into salt. I don't suppose that is relevant.

Plaintiff Atty.: But it is interesting.

Second Atty.: Let me, Henry, let me ask for a recess just a second.

Defense Atty.: Sure, sure.

Second Atty.: I think you should introduce yourself to your witness and tell him whose side you're on.

Defense Atty.: I thought he knew, but he doesn't always go along with me.

Second Atty.: He doesn't. He thinks you're trying to lay a trap for him.

Plaintiff Atty.: I don't mind it being in the record, Henry.

Defense Atty.: No, I was just—don't put this in. . . . Let's go home.

As one who with his wife and two children spent 46 years in Christian schools and colleges, I view the rejection of Christ's teaching with respect to Caesar and God with sadness. Christ made it very clear that taxes belong to Caesar; they are not to be siphoned off to promote any aspect of the Kingdom of God. And no matter what our present church culture holds, one cannot serve both mammon and God. □

The Scattered Sheep

W. CARL KETCHERSIDE

St. Louis, Missouri

A great many good brethren in our day are not only spiritually illiterate but are also uninformed as to the plea which gave us historical entry into the arena where sincere men were struggling for a solution to the perplexing problem of schism among those who professed faith in Jesus as Lord. I do not say this accusingly, but rather as explanatory of the position in which we find ourselves. We have painted ourselves into a corner by our attitude, and are spending our time talking to ourselves about other people instead of talking to other people about the glory of the Lord.

The first and foremost symptom of the sectarian spirit is an attitude of exclusivism. We build walls to protect our past discoveries and to keep others out, but we forget that it is those inside the walls who are in prison and not those outside. The factional spirit creates a party to defend some truth, or something that is equated as truth, and in its zeal for the position which gives it existence, it neglects to embrace a proper regard for all truth, or for truth as a universal principle. Every legalistic sect comes to think of itself as the one holy, apostolic and catholic church of God upon earth. It considers that it has discovered the key to understanding and all outside of its environs are heathens and publicans.

The fact is that, in our current state of affairs, no party, faction or sect has all of the saved in its corral, and therefore, no such clan or clique contains all of the saved upon earth. The called-out community is larger than any group regardless of the signboard behind which its adherents congregate, and the body of Christ is greater than any movement within it, or any movement in which we are. The

person without sectarian bias is the one who through love for all, regards as transparent the barriers men have erected contrary to the divine purpose and pleasure, and sees his brethren upon both sides of them.

I once regarded these walls as composing a "hall of mirrors" and whichever way we looked we saw only our own reflections. I can see through them now as clearly as if I were looking through a clean windowpane. The marvelous grace of God has melted the quicksilver of hostility and bigotry and made it possible for me, like Paul, to regard as brothers those who fracture and fragment themselves by claiming to be of Paul, Cephas, Apollos, or even of Christ as a partisan symbol.

The sheep of God are not yet a gathered flock. They are still scattered over the sectarian hills. We will not help them greatly by creating another sect into which to summon them, or by training and turning loose a couple of shepherd dogs to bark at their heels and herd them inside our enclosure, if they find within us a spirit of arrogance and self-righteousness which they must imitate to be branded as "loyal" in the annual roundup. The fact is that we have disillusioned a lot of those whom we roped in the past and they have jumped the fence and headed back for the woods.

One does not become a sheep because he comes to us but because he comes to Christ! He does not prove that he belongs to the Good Shepherd by hearing us but by hearing him! The fact is that any sheep who tried to listen to all of the "Church of Christ shepherds" in the average city would become so dizzy he would think "the Lord's church" is a merry-go-round or a baggage carousel. The cries of

“Lo here!” and “Lo there!” will have him running in a circle until he will become so dizzy he might turn out to be a goat and on the left side!

Every person on this rotating globe who sincerely believes with all of his heart that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God, and who has been immersed upon the basis of that faith, is God’s child and my brother. I love him, receive him, and welcome him, where he is and as he is, for that is the way God received me. I do not receive him *because* of where he is but because of whose he is. It is not a

question of what he is in, but of whom he is in, and who is in him.

If he is in Christ I am there with him. I believe there are Christians in the religious sects and parties which surround us. I am not in the fellowship with any sect, but I am in the fellowship with any child of God who is in them. Jesus did not die for sects but for persons. I detest sects and the spirit which created them, but I dearly love Christians and the Spirit who created them! And I shall try to love, not merely in word and in speech, but in deed and in truth! □

Orthodoxy, Rebaptism, and the Remission of Sins

JIM SIMS

Waco, Texas

Alexander Campbell was never more perceptive than when he jabbed at Bishop Purcell with this barb: “The gentleman has given you his definition of orthodoxy and heterodoxy; *my* definition is—the *strong* party is the *orthodox*, and the *weak* party is the *heterodox*.”¹

Campbell’s comment has its appropriate application to the “Rebaptism Controversy” in the Restoration Movement. During the time in which the Reformers, as they preferred to call themselves, were, for the most part, associated with Baptist churches, and even during the time they were being cast out of the Baptist churches, they did not think to raise the question, Should one who has been immersed according to the Baptist custom be reimmersed when he adopts the restoration plea? At that time it was quite orthodox to accept a Baptist as a brother.

Once the Reformers had been excommunicated from the Baptist churches and

had had time to lick their wounds, some of them began to gnash their teeth at those with whom they had once worshipped as brothers. Their reasoning process must have gone something like this: Brothers in Christ do not treat each other this way. I am fully confident of my own Christian character. Therefore, the whole fault must be with the Baptists.

The critical eye of some Reformers began now to penetrate even deeper into the Baptist religious experience. It now became clear to them that Baptists acted unkindly toward the Reformers for the simple reason that the Baptists weren’t really Christians in the first place. It now occurred to them that they should have withdrawn from the Baptists long before they had thrown them out. After all, the Baptists didn’t even baptize correctly. By this time it was orthodox to rebaptize a Baptist who adopted the restoration plea. It was hetero-

dox to speak of the Baptist as a brother.

Some of my good orthodox noninstrumental Church of Christ friends frequently throw their hands up in despair when they hear of some “liberal” Church of Christ committing the heresy of accepting a former Baptist into membership without rebaptizing him. The complaint is usually worded like this: How can he be a member when he hasn’t even been baptized “for the remission of sins”?

What they mean, of course, is that the preacher didn’t say that the baptism he was performing was “for the remission of sins.” In fact, he may have said that it was for something else altogether.

I have been told more than once that my thinking mechanism has a few circuits which fail to function according to the

**Baptism is a passive act.
It is something which someone
receives, not something he does.**

Manufacturer’s specifications. Nevertheless, I will dare to exhibit my reasoning process on this matter.

1. Conversion is primarily a matter of turning to Christ as the answer to the problem of sin. When the apostles preached, their emphasis was upon turning to Christ, not to baptism. They taught baptism, of course, but as the appropriate response of faith in Christ.

2. Virtually every person who is baptized today in a Baptist church is baptized simply because he desires to do the will of Christ. Very few people who are baptized have a settled “doctrine of baptism” in mind at the time. Usually they simply understand baptism as something that the church practices as an initiation rite because of the teaching and example of Jesus. Few give serious thought as to whether the cleansing they received was literal, figurative, spiritual only, or something else. They simply believe that what they are doing is the Lord’s will. By any reasonable standard, their baptism is an

act of faith and an expression of willing obedience.

3. The forgiveness of sins is God’s prerogative. It is not something which men can manipulate by formula. If remission of sins is granted to one who is baptized, it is because of what God does, not because of what the preacher does or says. Baptism is, in fact, a passive act. It is something which someone receives, not something he does. A human agent may administer the water, but anything of religious importance which is accomplished in the act is accomplished by God.

4. I have yet to meet the Baptist who has not believed, repented, confessed and been baptized. If he does not believe that his baptism was “for the remission of sins,” I reply that it was, whether he knew it or not! Though one may be able to fault his “doctrine of baptism,” I do not see how that could prevent God from honoring his willing obedience.

If one is to deny the validity of a baptism which was submitted to as an act of faith and an expression of obedience because of some misunderstanding which the person might have, then I am afraid that we need to start a campaign to rebaptize great numbers of people who were baptized “for the remission of sins” in Churches of Christ. Many of them have also been sold a faulty doctrine of baptism, and the nature of their theological error is, in my judgment, far more dangerous than that of the typical Baptist.

The Baptists, as we all know, preach a doctrine of salvation by “faith only.” By this they mean that nothing that one *does* can contribute to his salvation. We have typically responded by saying that men are not saved by “faith only,” but by faith plus baptism. While we have generally refused to see baptism as an act of merit, we have insisted that it is something other than faith and is essential to remission of sins.

So there we have the competing doctrines in their simplest forms. The Baptists say “faith only” and by that they

mean to exclude baptism as a part of the saving process. We say "faith plus baptism" and by that put baptism into some category other than faith. It is frequently misunderstood as a "faith-plus-one-work" formula. If one is an example of leaning too far backward, the other is an example of falling flat on the face.

It is my own conviction that we have both been wrong in emphasis, but that we may not be as far apart as we think. The biblical passage which would help both of us the most is Galatians 3:26f.: ". . . for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (RSV).

Paul argues that men are saved by a system of faith, in contrast to any system of law or merit. He also assumes that those who have been saved in this manner can be identified because they have put on Christ in baptism. What is noteworthy here is the manner in which Paul presents baptism as normative without excluding it from the category of faith. Baptism is not something other than faith; it is the appropriate expression of faith.

Campbell also aimed some of his satire

toward those who practiced rebaptism. He said, for example, "I know some will say that the candidates which they immersed a second time did not rightly understand baptism the first time. Well, I am persuaded they did not understand it the second time; and shall be baptized a third time."² With Campbell, I do not see the consistency in condemning others for the same type of mistakes that we so willingly tolerate among ourselves. I will conclude with the words of another great Reformer, David Lipscomb: "The only thing required in order to baptism is honest faith in the gospel, leading to a willingness to obey Christ in baptism. This willingness manifested is repentance. To stop and inquire if he believes in this, that, or the other result of baptism is to presumptuously add to the appointments or requirements of God."³ □

1. Alexander Campbell and John B. Purcell, *A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion* (Nashville: McQuiddy Printing Co., 1914), p. 82.

2. *Millennial Harbinger* II (1831), p. 483.

3. David Lipscomb and E.G. Sewell, *Questions Answered* (Nashville: McQuiddy Printing Co., 1952), p. 529.

The Lord's Church

F.L. LEMLEY

Bonne Terre, Missouri

More and more today we hear members of the church of Christ using the term, "The Lord's Church." This is perfectly legitimate and scriptural when referring to the *body of Christ*, but it is inappropriate when referring to a local congregation. *The* church of Christ implies exclusiveness and is offensive to others who consider themselves Christian. A church of Christ is more appropriate and acceptable. Substituting the term "The

Lord's Church" for "church of Christ" does not change our sectarian exclusiveness in attitude. Nothing is gained by substituting a euphemism, "*The* Lord's Church," in an attempt to hide our sectarian exclusiveness.

The Lord's *body*, being composed of every child of God on the face of the earth, cannot possibly be denominational or sectarian. Such is impossible, for the Lord's *body* includes the sectarian chil-

dren of God. Individuals and congregations may become sectarian, but the *body* never. Local congregations may become sectarian to the point they form a federation and create a denomination, but the *body* would still include God's children within the denomination. The sectarian members of the church in Corinth were rebuked for being of Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ, but they were still members of the *body* in spite of their sectarian attitude. It should be noted that those who were "of Christ" were just as sectarian as the rest. Paul was truly nonsectarian in recognizing all of them as saints in spite of their defect.

The Restoration Movement had its beginning in an effort to unite the Christians

Individuals and congregations may become sectarian, but the body never.

in all denominations. The leaders of this movement recognized that there were children of God in the Lutheran, Baptist, Presbyterian and other denominations who ought not be divided by denominational lines, but united in Christ. This is not saying that all members of these denominations are children of God, for we cannot with any certainty say that all members of the noninstrumental, conservative, "mainline" churches of Christ in Nashville are truly children of God. Nevertheless such doubtful members are all included within the membership of the congregations.

The concept of our Restoration forefathers has long since been replaced with the concept that there are *no* children of God in any denomination except in "*The* Lord's Church," which, of course, in our minds, is not a denomination even when we emphasize the word "*The*." Every knowledgeable person who knows us interprets this affirmation of purity to mean, "All of God's children in this area are in the congregation meeting at First

and Main known as the church of Christ with a little 'c,' or euphemistically as "*The*' Lord's Church with emphasis on "*The*.'" Whom do we think we are kidding? Our own sectarian concepts are showing through, even when we use this euphemism!

To be truly nonsectarian requires that we ignore sectarian and denominational lines and titles and recognize all of God's children as brothers, wherever they are and in whatever sectarian entanglement they are found, without regard to human barriers and human alienations. To recognize means we not only acknowledge them, but use them, call on them for participation with us without distinction, as the apostle Paul did at Corinth with those who were erecting fences that separated those of Paul from those of Christ.

Of course, objections will be raised to this approach, one of which will likely be, "But we do not know who is truly a child and who is not in these denominational fellowships." This is true, but neither can we tell who is who within our own fellowship; only God knows. If we must err, it is better to err on the side of tolerance than on intolerance. But the doubt remains that in so recognizing brethren we will endorse error or even endorse denominationalism. Nonsense! Paul addressed the Corinthians as saints and recognized all as brethren and did not endorse any of their defects by such recognition. It is strange indeed to see that those so overscrupulous on innocuous doctrinal differences never give a thought to meeting with, worshipping with, and being led by some of their own congregations who are morally defective.

It is true that the Lord has a church which is his *body*, and only God keeps the books. Only God knows who are his own and we as human mortals have no business sitting in the judgment seat putting some on the right hand and others on the left. We can well afford to be quite tolerant in our ignorance, lest by our exclusiveness we exclude ourselves. □

The Indwelling Spirit and Christian Decision-Making

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I am very much perplexed by any approach to Christian living which leaves out the pervasive influence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Knowing God's will, doing God's will, and daily decision making can all be best understood in the context of the Spirit-filled Christian life. That the Spirit of Christ dwells in the child of God is such a sound and substantially supported Christian doctrine that it will not be discussed at length herein. Unfortunately, this doctrine is widely ignored and almost universally misunderstood. Because of this, the application of the doctrine herein will be somewhat detailed. Knowing and doing the will of God daily depends both upon an understanding of and an undoubting acceptance of the personal guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit. This treatise will deal at length with questions raised by "John Questor" regarding Romans 12:2 and briefly with the responses of Jim Reynolds and J. Harold Thomas (*Integrity*, December, 1976). My contention is that the twentieth century Christian can and must know and do the will of God on a day by day basis. This is possible only by the active assistance of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Our approach to knowing and doing the will of God is all too often like that of the rich young man who approached Jesus asking, "Master, what good must I do to gain eternal life?" (Mt. 19:16-22, NEB). This young man really thought he "had it all together!" He was a good Jew. He had kept the law from his youth. Still, how-

ever, he was uncertain both about the present and the future. "Where do I still fall short?" he asked. The answer given him by Jesus is very much in accord with the exhortation of Paul to the Romans (in 12:1-2). Jesus said,

If you wish to go the whole way, go, sell your possessions, and give to the poor, and then you will have riches in heaven; and come, follow me.

Paul exhorted the Roman Christians in these words:

Therefore, my brothers, I implore you by God's mercy to offer your very selves to him: a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for his acceptance, the worship offered in mind and heart. Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world, but let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed. Then you will be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is good, acceptable and perfect.

(On "self-sacrifice" see also Rom. 6:12-14 and Lk. 14:25-33.) When we view the New Testament scriptures as a legal code—an ever-present handbook of religious "do's and do not's"—we will necessarily develop a doubting, pessimistic, insecure attitude much like that of the rich young Jew of Jesus' day. "Where do I still fall short?" "What yet is lacking in my life?" "How do I know what the will of God is for me?"

It is only through self-sacrifice that a proper relationship with God can be attained and maintained. Offering our bodies as living sacrifices means, among other things, relinquishing our self-will. When we try to do the will of God with-

When we try to do the will of God without first relinquishing our self-will, our Christianity becomes self-centered, self-supporting, and legalistic.

out first relinquishing our self-will, our Christianity becomes self-centered, self-supporting, and legalistic. Our actions are inconsistent and our lives inadequate. We are at once self-sufficient and grossly insufficient! A close analysis of Paul's exhortation reveals the difference between self-will and self-sacrifice. Adaption or conformity to our worldly environment is a self-willed process. We are still personally in control. Transformation (new creation) is a metamorphosis caused and controlled by an external force. We cannot transform ourselves into acceptable beings. Righteousness is not a result of our own efforts or desires. Righteousness is bestowed by God upon the Christian because of his faith in Christ. We are made righteous by what *Christ* did (Rom. 5:18-19; 10:3; Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:8-9). *He* is our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30-31). New creation is a righteous condition bestowed upon those who accept Jesus as Christ. The transformation is initiated by God and maintained by the indwelling Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:11).

His purpose in dying was that men, while still in life, should cease to live for themselves, and should live for him who for their sake died and was raised to life. With us therefore worldly standards have ceased to count in our estimate of any man; even if once they counted in our understanding of Christ, they do so now no longer. When anyone is united with Christ, there is a new world; the old order is gone, and a new order has already begun. From first to last this has been the work of God (2 Cor. 5:15-17).

Doing the will of God is not at all a matter of reading, learning, and perfectly discerning a compilation of commandments and then consciously striving daily to live by them. Neither is the scheme of redemption a series of steps to be followed nor a list of commands to be perfectly obeyed before a believer is admitted to the fold. Nor is acceptable Christian worship simply a series of public acts commanded each week in a specific

sequence or format. The Christians in Galatia were fortunate: long before their Christianity became a cold, legalistic ritual Paul penned a sharp criticism of those "who had stolen in to spy upon" their Christian liberty seeking to bring them again under the bondage of law (Gal. 2:4).

You stupid Galatians! You must have been bewitched—you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly displayed upon the cross! Answer me one question: did you receive the Spirit by keeping the law or by believing the gospel message? Can it be that you are so stupid? You started with the spiritual; do you now look to the material to make you perfect? Have all your great experiences been in vain—if vain indeed they should be? I ask then: when God gives you the Spirit and works miracles among you, why is this? (Gal. 3:1-5).

As if these piercing questions would not be sufficient to bring the Galatians to their senses regarding their imperiled Christian liberty, Paul added this:

When you seek to be justified by way of law, your relation with Christ is completely severed: you have fallen out of the domain of God's grace. For to us, our hope of attaining that righteousness which we eagerly await is the work of the Spirit through faith (Gal. 5:4-5).

My prayer is that some living writer will soon present the scriptural case against legalism in such a way that many living Christians will realize how perverted their contrived concept of Christianity has become. New creation means a new way of serving God—a way apart from a restrictive legal code!

But now, having died to that which held us bound, we are discharged from the law, to serve God in a new way, the way of the Spirit, in contrast to the old way, the way of a written code (Rom. 7:6).

God revealed through his prophet Jeremiah that a new covenant relationship one day would replace the written covenant with the children of Israel. This new covenant would not be in writing like the one given by God to Moses. Rather, it would be a spiritual bond (Jer. 31:31-34).

Human logic tells us that nothing combats an evil desire in us like a good strict law against it.

The apostle Paul gave a further explanation of the nature of the new covenant. The entire third chapter of 2 Corinthians is devoted to a comparison of the two covenants. Therein Paul states that God "has qualified us to dispense his new covenant—a covenant expressed not in a written document but in a spiritual bond" (see also Heb. 8:7-10).

The children of Israel insisted upon being ruled by a king so that they could be like their heathen neighbors (1 Sam. 8:5-9). Today, many of God's children insist upon a written code so that they can be like the Jews and other religious people they associate with. The kings of Israel were not God-willed; neither is a brand of Christianity willed by God if it is based upon a written legal code. No, John Questor, Christians do not learn God's will by reading the Bible. No, J. Harold Thomas, we do not need "faith in the Bible" as a resource "for finding the will of God." Rather, our faith must be in a risen Savior (Gal. 2:15-16; 3:22). If the "present working relationship with God" Jim Reynolds wrote about is a consequence of the operation of the indwelling Holy Spirit in his life then "a detailed biblical study of God's will" would not be necessary. Please do not misunderstand! I am not suggesting that we discard the New Testament scriptures. We should study them intensely every day. If one thing is missing among my brethren today it is genuine study and analysis of the inspired Word of God. In them is revealed the gospel of salvation in Christ. In them is revealed as well a remarkable history of first century Christians in a serious struggle against the evil one. Let us, however, keep the New Testament scriptures in proper perspective: they must not be used by men with good but misguided intentions to contrive a system of legal bondage like that from which Jesus died to set us free.

The fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control—are produced in the life of the Spirit-filled child of God *not* by conscious perseverance in keeping a legal code, but *by the activity of the indwelling Holy Spirit*.

There is no law dealing with such things as these. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the lower nature with its passions and desires. If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course (Gal. 5:23-25).

Legal dictates make lots of sense. Human logic tells us that nothing combats an evil desire in us like a good strict law against it. Paul tells us, on the contrary, that law actually *creates* in us the *desire* to do wrong (Rom. 7:7-25). To the Colossians he wrote:

Why let people dictate to you: 'Do not handle this, do not taste that, do not touch the other'—all of them things that must perish as soon as they are used? That is to follow merely human injunctions and teaching. True, it has an air of wisdom, with its forced piety, its self-mortification, and its severity to the body; but it is of no use at all in combating sensuality (Col. 2:20-23).

Jesus was incarnated to fulfill (complete) the law and the prophets (Mt. 5:17-20). In his death upon the cross he set aside (annulled) the law (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:13-14). In no case are we told that Jesus set aside the old law only to establish in its place a new law—a new covenant, certainly, but not a new law. The very *principle* of law was set aside by the crucifixion of Christ. Again and again (in his letters to the Galatians and Romans especially) Paul contrasts law and grace—not an old law and a new law (Rom. 3:20-28; 7:6; Gal. 2:15-21; 3:13-14, 21-22). The "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2) is not at all a set of legal principles akin to the law of Moses. The law of Christ is rather a universal principle—love (Jn. 13:34; Gal. 5:13-18).

Our deliverance from the burden of legalism (and the burden of sin!) is the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The law principle was a temporary measure—a school master or tutor—designed to bring God's children into a mature state in which faith would be the ground of justification. When Christ came, that level of maturity had been reached and the school master's charge (purpose) was ended (Gal. 3:23-25). God's children do not now (in Christ) *need* either a school master or a legal system. Our guiding principle is faith. Our deliverance from the burden of legalism (and the burden of sin!) is the indwelling Holy Spirit.

I mean this: if you are guided by the Holy Spirit you will not fulfill the desires of your lower nature. That nature sets its desires against the Spirit, while the Spirit fights against it. They are in conflict with one another so that what you will to do you cannot do. *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law* (Gal. 5:16-18, emphasis supplied).

The Spirit-filled, Spirit-directed child of God does not *need* law. Just think how ridiculous it is to need a command to love God and your fellow man! And who in Christ needs a command to assemble with his brothers and sisters? Do you act in obedience to a command when you sing, or pray, or help someone in need? Do you need a command to be made mindful of what Christ has done for you on Calvary? Commandments are foreign to the new covenant relationship. And they are a burden to those who try to live by them! Christ promised us his commandments would *not* be burdensome (1 Jn. 5:3). How is it that living the Christian life is not a burden? The law of Christ is not burdensome because it is not a legal code. We are able to bear the burdens because we have supernatural strength within us—the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:26)!

Let you think that we have strayed far from the intent of this treatise—to answer John Questor's questions about

knowing God's will—let me now apply what has been said to the subject of knowledge of the will of God. The New Testament scriptures are not a legal handbook. Christians are guided by the indwelling Holy Spirit and not by a bunch of written commands derived from the New Testament scriptures. Knowing the will of God depends on the guidance of the Spirit of Christ. A lack of understanding of these very basic concepts puts one in a position of seeking justification in Christ by achieving an impossible level of self-righteousness. Paul told the Galatians that had the law been sufficient there would have been no need for Christ. To seek legal justification is to deny Christ (Gal. 3:21-23; 5:4-6). It is not enough that the indwelling Spirit helps us to know the will of God. The Spirit also empowers us to live in accordance with God's will.

In the same way the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness. We do not even know how we ought to pray, but through our inarticulate groans the Spirit himself is pleading for us, and God who searches our inmost being knows what the Spirit means, because he pleads for God's people in God's own way; and in everything, as we know, he co-operates for good with those who love God and are called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:26-28).

Further, and in a practical sense, the children of God have their conscience as a guide to the will of God. If in our daily lives we can operate within the confines of our conscience, then we can be assured of following the will of God. With the help of the indwelling Spirit of Christ this can certainly be done.

Dear friends, if our conscience does not condemn us, then we can approach God with confidence, and obtain from him whatever we ask, because we are keeping his commands and doing what he approves. This is his command: to give our allegiance to his Son Jesus Christ and love one another as he commanded. When we keep his commands we dwell in him and he dwells in us. And