

INTEGRITY, a journal published by an independent nonprofit corporation, is intended to be a ministry of reconciliation which utilizes the varied talents of a large community of believers who seek accurately to reveal God to both the church and the world so that all may become one as He is one.

A Request of Our Readers:

Nearly 20 years ago *Integrity* magazine was born out of a need for a written open forum particularly for those of us who are a part of the Stone-Campbell heritage. Some have been able to use this magazine to study various angles on topics that might not be so freely discussed in their home congregation. Many people say they have been encouraged by the fellowship this magazine represents to them. *Integrity* has offered its readers the opportunity to learn from many authors of varying backgrounds and experiences.

Our request of you *Integrity* readers is simply this: we ask your guidance and participation in this writing ministry. Please suggest to us topics that you are interested in seeing discussed. Also, please tell us about those people you think have something important to say to other *Integrity* readers about these topics. We welcome your input!

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Facing Death

As you picked up this issue of *Integrity* and scanned the titles about death, what were your thoughts? Death is not an enjoyable topic, despite what we say about victory and the person who died being "better off." Death is repugnant to everything we know of life and the Life Giver. It always leaves a void for those of us who remain.

Our grandmother tells that when she was a young teen her father was diagnosed as having a cancerous tumor on the brain. Awhile before he died he was completely bedridden, unable to move or speak. Just moments before he died, as the gathered family around him watched, Great Grandpa opened his eyes wide and, looking beyond those in the room, delightedly grinned from ear to ear and raised his two arms out in the way you would greet and beckon a child toward you. It lasted only a moment then his spirit left his body. My grandma was left with the memory of her daddy making a happy transition from this life to the next.

Experiences such as this give us a sense of wonder and hope regarding life after death. Jesus, knowing our fearfulness and ignorance of death, spoke profoundly encouraging words regarding life now and later: "In this world you have tribulations; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." John 16:33b. "Let not your hearts be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." John 14:1-3.

Paul continued to explain this good news in I. Cor. 15:54-57:

"When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is thy victory? O Death, where is thy sting?"

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

With this evidence that Satan no longer has death in his grip to dangle before our eyes or to freeze our hearts with fear, why

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A Dialogue Between Thanatos and Zoë*

ELTON D. HIGGS

Dearborn, Michigan

(Two non-human figures meet on a road. One is dark and sinister, but with a certain disarming, seductive charm. He carries a pouch with a number of pockets inside it; the outside has a double insignia: on one side a grinning skull, and on the other a strongly fascinating but undefinable cloud. The second figure is somberly dressed, but his face has a calm optimism about it, even though it can be seen that he has been acquainted with suffering. He carries only a good-sized stone around his neck which has a cross engraved on it. The sinister figure speaks first.)

Thanatos: So there you are again! I suppose it's inevitable that we should travel the same roads, since we're peddlers of different ideas about the same event in the lives of humans. I must say, however, that your master puts you at a great disadvantage by giving you only one basic perspective on death to begin your arguments with—and an exceedingly gloomy one, at that. My master, I'm glad

*"Thanatos" and "Zoë" are Greek words for "death" and "life," respectively.

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then do some of us still wrestle with the fear and dread of dying? What will we be like when we are "changed"? If we grasp onto the victory over death that is ours in Jesus, how should we attend to each other's grieving when death does temporarily separate us?

The *Integrity* board members asked the authors in this issue to share their own wrestling with these questions and others. The

to say, furnishes me with a great variety of views, and they can be mixed to produce even more. In fact, I've got some to spare [*holds out his pouch*], and out of pity for you and the goodness of my heart I'd be glad to share them with you!

Zoë: Yes, I know you'd be very happy to put the seeds of deceit in my hands, just as you foist your lies on the poor humans who are vain enough or ignorant enough to listen to you. And it's true that your words are more palatable than mine at first. But what is sweet to the ear is often bitter to the soul, as all followers of your master find out, sooner or later. Better for people to know from the beginning where they stand so that they can use the little time they have to learn how to overcome death.

Thanatos: Now there's the center of your foolishness! My master's message to humans from the beginning has been that this thunder from the Omnipotent One about death being the penalty for "sin" is a phony weapon He uses to frighten people. After

resulting articles have made us cry and taught us peace. Our prayer is that this issue will help you, too, to be better equipped to face death more hopefully, more victoriously.

Bruce and Diane Kilmer
Co-Chairpersons
Editorial Board

all, my master asserted himself against the Tyrannous Father, and he still lives and thrives.

Zoë: “Thrives”—yes, I’m sad to say that he does, for the world is gripped by the sin for which he’s the model. But “lives”? That I cannot grant. He has separated himself from God, Who is the only source of life—indeed, the only source of being. It was your master who was first placed under the penalty (but not so much a penalty as an inevitable consequence) of what we’re calling death. He and all of his heavenly followers, are even now reserved—but only by the patience and forbearance of God—for the final execution of the sentence, which John, the servant of Jesus, saw in his vision as the “second death.”

Thanatos: And you accuse me of double-talk! First you rave about beings who are “dead” even though they’re obviously alive. Then you prattle about some sophistic distinction between a “penalty” and a consequence. And finally, since you can’t get past your own fallacies about death, you invent a “second death,” about which you can say whatever you want. My master has always known that this business about death is the Eternal Bully’s way of intimidating those He has created. That’s why he interfered when the Tyrant caged up a new set of His puppets in that everlastingly boring Garden. I’ll have to admit, however, that that affair was not as definite a show-down as my master had hoped. The Holy Intimidator was able to get the humans to feel guilty about what they had done, and that rather muddied the waters. If they had faced up to the Thundering Father, instead of running and hiding, they might have gotten free of all this fear of death that so often puts them under His influence.

Zoë: On the other hand, if His Eminence, the Great Liar, had not been so effective as apparently to deceive even himself, he would have returned to the Father long ago. The

fact that a drowning man firmly believes that he can live underwater does not alter the departure of life from his body a few moments later. With all your arguments, you can convince a man that death has no relevance to his relationship with God, but he will die, nevertheless, in both the primary, physical sense (which is mostly symbolic, either positively or negatively), and the secondary sense, which is the only sense in which you and your companions will ever experience it. You yourselves mistakenly think that since you are not subject to physical death, there is no death at all.

Thanatos: Quite to the contrary: if the concept of death has any meaning, it’s limited to what you are referring to as the “first death,” the cessation of the physical body. Human beings—poor creatures!—are different from us eternal beings; for all I can tell, they seem to cease to exist when their physical lives are over. But to attribute this phenomenon to the result of some “sin” is a monstrous falsehood! My master and his servants have not figured out all the inscrutable ways of the Arbitrary Creator, but at least we refuse to be intimidated by the attempted extension of “death” into the realm of the metaphysical. Moreover, we hold out to humans a number of alternative views of this “death” by which they all end their days on earth; and all of these enable them to counteract death by either “living it up” (an admirable phrase which we find quite useful) or being philosophical and dignified. In a word, we find the most advantageous human attitudes toward death to be either ignoring it or absorbing it as part of some intellectual game in which it is romanticized or defied. The first attitude (reflected in the gleeful skull of my pouch) is signified by the words, “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” The second is embodied in such concepts and activities as humanistic existentialism and spiritualism (obscure comforts, like my cloud). In all of these approaches we advocate, there is a very satisfying emphasis on human beings finding

meaning within themselves—in their own natures and their own minds.

Zoë: You spoke a while ago of God having caged humans within a Garden; what you speak of now is imprisonment indeed: “within themselves.” You have caused them to cease asking the painful question, “Who shall deliver me from this body of death?” because until they at last actually face the door through which they pass into eternity, they either think that they have made their own accommodation with death, or they refuse to consider it seriously. The infinite variety of your distractions from the ultimate reality that would turn them in desperation toward God contrasts with the stark focus of the one point they must face squarely if they are to escape the “body of death” which they inhabit; and that is, “My inevitable demise from this earthly life is a reflection of something amiss within my soul.” That is the connection which the Devil and his angels have refused to accept since the time of their rebellion and have sought to obscure in the minds of humans. In the words of Scripture, this unaccepted and obscured concept is that “The wages of sin is death.”

Thanatos: The only way you’re going to get people’s attention with a point like that is to take the silly rock you’re wearing around your neck and throw it through somebody’s window.

Zoë: If that would gain me a hearing, I would gladly do so. But this “silly rock,” as you call it, symbolizes the very reason that people should listen to what God has to say through me; for although the facts about death are hard like the rock, the death of God’s Son on the cross established another kind of rock, which is a foundation for deliverance rather than a destroyer. “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” Those who accept the death of the Son as a substitute for their own death begin the process of being transformed

from the image of the first Adam into the image of the Second Adam. And because the Second Adam, Jesus, arose from the dead, those who are adopted by the Father as Jesus’ brothers and sisters are also assured of escaping death as a penalty; for although their physical bodies may molder in the grave, that is only a temporary state of affairs. But of course, this hope for resurrection is not merely a sentimentalized embodiment of the human longing for immortality, but a result of acknowledging that death is associated with guilt, and that only Jesus’ death can deliver us from that guilt.

Thanatos: Well, we keep coming back to the same thing, don’t we: that morbid, psychotic feeling of guilt. Death would carry no fear if the Great Steamroller weren’t so successful in getting people to think they’ve “sinned” against Him, and that they’re going to “die” for that “sin.” Still, it’s great fun to torment people who won’t go all the way with our line of thinking by making them feel guilty without seeing any way out of their situation. We hope they’ll see the light after a while and realize that the whole business of “sin” is irrelevant. If they don’t, they’re no good to us; they can commit suicide for all we care.

Zoë: At least we both agree as to where the focus of the matter is. If you are successful in making humans ignore the fact that death is not merely unfortunate, but evil, they will never see the threat it entails and will never seek deliverance from it (except to try to stay in their physical bodies as long as possible). On the other hand, those who understand that they must accept death as a part of God’s law and discipline can claim the sacrificial death of Christ as their own, and can experience death as an avenue to life, rather than as a literal “dead-end.”

Thanatos: You see who you can sell that bill of goods to; I think my line will move bet-

ter. People are going with what satisfies them right now, not with some deferred pay-off.

Zoë: I'm afraid you're right; I'm afraid you're tragically right.

Note: You may want to consult the following scriptures which are relevant to the discussion between

Thanatos and Zoe: Gen. 3; John 6:41-58; Rom. 5:12-8:25; I Cor. 15:12-58; I Pet. 2:4-8; II Pet. 2:4-10; Rev. 20:7-15.

Elton and his wife, Laquita, have served on the board for *Integrity* for many years and both have been contributing writers. They are professors at the University of Michigan in Dearborn and are looking forward to the coming year in England on sabbatical.

Grief — A Form of Love

RONALD DAVIS

Owosso, Michigan

Solomon writes that there is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance (Eccl. 3:4). Why do we try to avoid the very things that help us? Grief is essential in our lives—as essential as joy. If we but embrace it as it comes our way, face it head on, our understanding of life will deepen with a richness that reveals the joys of life to come.

Grief is an emotion of the spirit expressed through the body in tears. It is not depression or despair. It is an emotion designed to shield us temporarily from the void created by the loss we experience. Jesus, at the tomb of Lazarus in the company of Mary and Martha, was in great distress and sighed from the heart and wept. (John 11:33-38).

How do you deal with grief? How will you understand grief? Listen now to one man's story. Your approach to understanding grief and ultimate reconciliation with grief will certainly be different, but perhaps this man's account will strike a similar chord in your own experience and thereby we will see a common bond in humanity.

My father died last summer at age 70. During the four days prior to his death, I was able to spend many hours at his hospital bed in the company of my mother and my five brothers. The time spent quietly ministering to his bodi-

ly and spiritual needs was a profitable sowing in the seedbed of grief which would begin to blossom near the time of his death and continue for quite some time afterwards.

As part of the grief process I kept a journal of everything my father uttered during his last 12 hours. Those "conversations" took the form of questions about what time it was, who was with him, prayer, and acknowledgment of those around him. At his death he submitted in peace to his creator. His sons in their own ways acknowledged this man as their father as they quietly wept in the presence of the peaceful body no longer racked by pain.

In the days that followed, the funeral and burial were important events that helped the family celebrate the gift of this man's life in which they all had shared. The eulogy, which was written and read by one of the brothers, was a focal point for all the bereaved. The fact that the eulogy was written down was important in that one could go back to the text over and over again and meditate on the multiple meanings of the thoughts expressed.

I quote the eulogy in its entirety to demonstrate the importance of writing down thoughts for the purpose of reflection. This pondering and repetition are important aspects of the grief process in the days following such a loss.

SHORTY

He was born with his mother's image stamped upon his physique. Fellow workers called him Shorty. His children called his father Big Daddy to set the generations apart. But a daughter-in-law named him **The Daddy** to set the record straight.

A man who was blessed with enormous talent and intellect was a giant on the mechanical scene. Ph.D.'s stand small in the shadow of his knowledge. Moonlighting was more an expression for his talent than a source of income. His life of inward struggle and conflict made life tough at times for him and those standing by. But in life as well as death his talents were his gifts of balm to all who loved him dearly.

The memories are the treasures not the conflicts and the pain. Counting them would fill pages in his book. From fixing cars to making kites, crossword puzzles to untying knots, piano tuning to you name it, his talent was spelled with a capital "T".

Those final days and hours are impressed upon our brains. We saw a man in control of pain. Only a giant could endure and soar above the death that called him home. Remember those days well and aspire to the greatness of the short man born tall.

His legacy is seen not only in himself but in his wife and sons as the scripture tells it best. "Sons are a gift from the Lord and children a reward from Him. Like arrows in the hand of a fighting man are the sons of a man's youth.

Happy is the man who has a quiver full of them; such men shall not be put to shame when they confront their enemies in the court (Psalm 127)."

So what means short and tall? The world will give untruth to confuse us all. If you tend to forget the meaning of these words, let your thoughts recall the man who was both short and tall.

In the days that followed, the eulogy along with the tears of grief helped to fill the void that was so strikingly present. Grief acted as a cushion for the heart that ached and suffered terrible loss.

Dreams are a part of grief, too. The Bible is full of examples of God's people being given insight through dreams. The following is a quote from a letter written by me to one of my brothers shortly after my father's death. It aptly expresses the meaning of Psalm 30:5b: "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning."

Dear Brother,

I had to write you about what happened to me last night after I got to bed. Try and understand the best you can.

I had just gone over in my head the events of the day, and as I turned on my right side I remembered telling a man who had interviewed me that morning that my dad had died and that's why they had been unable to reach me until now.

I said to myself the words **my dad** a couple of times, and reflected on the meaning of these two words and then said them in my mind again just to have the pleasure of saying them. At that moment I was aware by a vision, a mental image, or something that was real that Daddy was standing over me at my back. The Spirit of God (Jesus) was present with him. Daddy looked strong and broad-shouldered as he was in his youth, but, more importantly, I was vividly

aware and so was he that he was present as a father, a daddy, one who was experiencing fatherhood in fulfillment. He was able to express to me in a gesture and by his presence all those unexpressed emotions, words, and unfulfilled dreams of a real dad.

He bent over me and symbolically tucked me in, and his spirit ministered to mine not in the past memories of his fatherliness as imperfect as that was, but he ministered to me in his fulfilled and fully realized position as an earthly father who has now experienced the Heavenly Father.

The memory of this is obviously dear to me. I had not conjured it up in grief. It literally appeared before me.

I wanted you and the rest to know of this event and want to proclaim that we now have a daddy who is full and complete because of his union with God. And, that union lasts forever. At the same time, it is as if he were saying, "You can remember me as you knew me when I lived my time on earth, but I would like you to know me as the new person that I am. Let your memories of me be the present and future memories of a person who is experiencing fatherhood in a renewed and vigorous way. And remember that as Jesus is with me and you so I am also with you."

After this event I couldn't do anything but smile and quietly praise Jesus who was present for such a revelation of a dad who wants his family to see him in this new way. So I exhort all of us to view him and each other no longer in a human point of view with all of our faults and problems but as God sees us—whole, complete and new creations. . .

When you experience grief due to the loss of a loved one, remember to allow your grief

to be expressed. Express it in tears; write down your thoughts and have the courage to share these sentiments with those who will be receptive. Allow your grief to cushion those sorrowing aches. Be thankful for those frequent remembrances of your loved one. Think of that great celebration of remembrance as we partake of the Lord's Supper. "Do this in memory of me." We call Him into presence. Likewise, as we cherish the memory of a loved one, we share in that fellowship of believers who are in the bosom of Abraham and we realize that it is only our eyes that prohibit us from seeing the reality of God and His saints in heaven. Grief is indeed a form of love!

"But grief is a form of love—the longing for the dear face, the warm hand. It is the remembered reality of the beloved that calls it forth. For an instant she is there, and the void denied. It is not the grief, involving that momentary reality, that cuts one off from the beloved but the void that is loss. In the end one can no longer summon forth that reality, and then one's tears dry up. But while it lasts, it is a shield against the void; and by the time the grief wanes, the terrible emptiness of loss has given way to a new world that does not contain the shape of the beloved figure."

(from Sheldon Vanuken's *A Severe Mercy*)

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Congregational Grief

KENNETH D. CHAFFIN

Lafayette, Indiana

It happened on a Friday afternoon in mid-April. It was one of those first spring days you get in the North with balmy temperatures and brilliant sunshine. It made your heart skip a beat to know that such a day signaled the end of a long winter and the beginning of a warmer, more pleasant season. Everyone was outside. I had, myself, taken off for a quick round of golf, the first since the previous fall. We were all luxuriating in this wonderful weather.

The course I was playing was on the campus of the major state university which dominates our community. The students were all basking in this glorious weather as well. From what you could see and hear, it sounded like the weekend had started early and that Purdue was one big party. Obviously, the student body was letting off steam after a dreary, cold winter. Because of that, darkness invaded the light of this beautiful day. On the eighteenth hole, one of the elders who lived nearby came over to give me the news that two of our members had been killed in an auto accident.

Putting the pieces together the next hour, as I raced home to shower, change and race out again to the family's home, I now knew that Brenda, a 36-year-old mother and her 15-year-old son, Sean, had been turning left into their subdivision on a two-lane road when another car traveling at 80 miles per hour (speed limit, 30 mph) had come up from behind and tried to pass Brenda's car on the left as she was making her left-hand turn. Her car was totally destroyed. Brenda was killed instantly. Sean never regained consciousness and died officially the next day. His organs now live in other people. The driver of the car and his two passengers were not injured. All of them were drunk. The driver's blood alcohol was .26 (the legal limit is .1, .3 can be lethal in some individuals).

By the time I arrived at the house, Brenda's

family was already there and her 12-year-old son, Shannon was in his room. It was left to me to tell the husband and father, Steve, as he returned from a business trip one hour later. The next few days were hectic. Included were pastoral care, trips to the hospital to see the fatally injured boy, decisions about organ donation, decisions about funerals, grief, despair, family comfort and healing, regular congregational assemblies where the most visible emotion was grief, and finally, a funeral.

On top of all this, the congregation had just recently been through one member's brain aneurysm (at age 50), a recurrence of colon cancer in another and three more deaths in the past few months that anyone would consider "untimely" or "tragic." Many were struggling. My counseling load increased. Theological questions concerning the sovereignty and goodness of God, while we still lived in an evil and tragic world, surfaced again and again in private conversations, in counseling and in Bible school classes. How do you cope? Is there anywhere to turn? Out of these experiences I began to work on the concept of grief at a group level, particularly a whole church.

How Do We Grieve as a Body?

What I found was that precious little has been written or discussed on this issue. Not much work has been done on the dynamics of grief affecting very many more people than the several different individuals of a given family. And even when those matters are spoken of, it is done in the context of individual grief. The larger group unit is usually only discussed as the needed support group in order to get individuals through the grief process. But after

all, is not (in systemic terms at least) the local church a single unit that can grieve as a whole? I believe that Biblical imagery such as the body metaphors of I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4, as well as Biblical admonitions to weep and mourn with those who are weeping and mourning would give credence to that idea as well. It seems that more attention to dealing with congregational grief might be needed.

Alan Harrington in his book, *The Immortalist* has observed that death is an unacceptable imposition upon the human race. The threat of death, he continues, is behind much of human irrationality and disturbed behavior. While others might want to use other vocabulary than the words "unacceptable" and "imposition," the concept remains true. Death is the one human experience that most everyone seeks to avoid and will do so at the risk of using every resource available. This is generally known as the "will to survive." Paul is even willing to call death an enemy in I Corinthians 15:26. Yet it is unavoidable. As we approach adulthood, all of us will experience the death of someone very close to us and will eventually have to face up to our own death. Churches, as a collection of people, are no different.

A local church may be in and out of the process of death several times a year (depending on its locale and the age of its members). In some sense, it is used to death. But, there can be those moments like the ones described at the beginning of this article, where death seems to have taken up residence in a local church. And

to be sure, we are not just discussing death as the final step in a long, healthy, fruitful life where a saint goes to his eternal reward, but rather that kind of death that bursts on the scene unexpected and unannounced; tragic death we sometimes call it. It is "untimely" or out of sequence. It "isn't supposed to happen," as one man put it to me at the funeral.

How can we help ourselves? How can we grieve (a needed, healthy emotion) and still be the people of God to the natural family who truly mourns its loss? The largest single practical thing we could do, after the fact, was to bring our grief as a church out openly — not to parade it, but to make it clear to everyone that we believed that such open grieving was necessary and helpful. The Sunday after the accident, open grief was everywhere. Not just a little weeping, but genuine sobbing was present through the entire assembly. We prayed in grief, we communed in grief, we sang in grief, we heard the word preached through grief. We did the same that Sunday night as well and on the following Tuesday morning when crowds overflowed our building for the funeral. And we went right on crying. We cried when we spoke or heard about death and resurrection, when we sang songs of heaven, when we prayed for the surviving father and son, when we prayed for the ill who we might yet lose, when we prayed for a forgiving spirit toward the young Purdue boy who had in a moment of reckless self-indulgence killed two people. We cried and cried and cried. It was good for us.

It took awhile for the numbing shock to wear off and then we started up again. Every bit of it was good for us. It was not morbid grief. It was just grief and the needed passages we had to make to get on with life as a local church. Even today, a year and a half after those events, we still have our moments of quiet mourning when something reminds us again of our loss as a congregation.

It gave us pause. It gave us opportunity to think and discuss with one another, as brothers and sisters in Christ, the nature of life and death and what life in Christ brings to bear on such topics. Because Brenda was a Sunday School teacher (she was teaching my five-year-old son at the time) we also had to deal with explaining death to young children. Again with openness and vulnerability, over several months time, we were able to use Sunday school classes and children's worship time to talk with our kids of life, death, God and Jesus. Speaking as one parent, I found this process to be among the hardest, but the most rewarding, which brings me to the second point of congregational grieving I would wish to make — the preventative process.

Preparatory Teaching

The Sunday before this tragic accident had been Easter Sunday. I had taken the opportunity to preach concerning resurrection, but unlike I had done in recent years. Generally, I had been using the resurrection texts to promote the idea of resurrection power in our Christian lives, that is to say, that we can be new creatures because Jesus in his resurrection showed the power of God over sin and the possibility for change was thus offered to us. This is a needed approach to the resurrection and was appropriate use of its theology for any Christian life. However, there is a certain sense in which I was preaching this way in reaction to many sermons I had heard growing up as a child, where resurrection theology was only used to promote the idea that Christians would one day be raised from their own physical deaths by God. Such theology seemed to be just a "pie-in-the-sky" kind of doctrine without much relevance to life in the present. While a balance

is always needed for both of these interpretations of resurrection theology, it seems to me that particularly among members of Churches of Christ who are interested in "this-worldly" aspects of the Christian religion, that we need to remember that the possibility of life beyond is all that keeps some people going. It is a delightful part of our doctrine that we need to continually keep before us. To know this is not all there is — that life on this planet is not the sum total of my existence — that I will live forever with a sovereign God — all of this is of greater strength to me than I can possibly ever realize.

So, on the Sunday before the accident, I had talked of the blessing of heaven. I had discussed the use of symbols in the New Testament to describe it and how no one can be sure of what it will be like. But though we may not know the architecture or lifestyle of Zion, we do know its King and we realize that life eternal with him will give us joy unspeakable. I think it is vital as a preventative measure that we remind our people of heaven on a continuing basis. Tragedy in some way is going to befall most every life. If we have a hope we can turn to in the midst of the vicissitudes of life, we will be a long way down the road to dealing with such problems with solid spiritual and mental health. A key to congregational grief is the preventative preaching and teaching of heaven.

Hand in hand with such teaching should go other instruction about trusting God no matter what life brings. Such teaching is needed as another preventative measure. The hardest intellectual problem the Church has had to face is the problem of evil, sometimes referred to as the problem of suffering or the problem of pain (ala C.S. Lewis). It is the age-old question, Why do bad things happen to God's people? How can a loving God allow evil in the world? The time to study such matters, no matter how difficult or slippery they might be, is before a tragedy strikes. Indeed, a healthy discussion of the problem of evil should occupy a part of the church's educational curriculum on a regular basis. It has here at Elmwood, and I think it contributed to the spiritual and emotional survival of some of our people during that difficult spring. We need to grow and mature

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in Christ so that we can trust God as deeply as did Job, who, speaking of God, profoundly said "Though he slay me, yet I will trust him."

When such preventative notes are sounded and when grief can be openly expressed, I believe that a local congregation can move past the tragedy with deeper faith and greater commitment to its mission. A local church which has based its life as a congregation on the magnificent story of love as seen in Christ, will, in the face of tragedy and grief, be able, in the midst of its mourning, to sound a victorious theme and present a triumphant message. I read at the funeral a prayer from Randy Becton's book, *Coming To Grips With Life*. It is the right note on which to close this material for it acknowledges our grief, but we are redeemed by its victory theology.

Ministering To Our Leaders

GENE COWIE

Madison Heights, Michigan

We used to sing a song when I was a child: "Who takes care of the caretaker's children when the caretaker is busy taking care?" The song never answered the question; it just asked, and then implied that nobody does. As adults we may sometimes wonder, "who ministers to the strong ones—the leaders among us—in their times of need?" We rarely ask. I suspect that if we did, we would usually find that nobody does.

I believe that there are several reasons why we fail to meet such vital needs when they occur in our midst. The reasons appear logical, on the surface. But if we look beneath the surface at an occasion of great personal need, such as loss of a loved one, our surface impressions will give way to deeper observations, and we will find a real opportunity for service.

For example, when a congregational leader has lost a family member, how often have we

TRIUMPHANT

Father, when the humans
Have carried the body
To its earthen place,
Mourning has a grip on hearts
At that time
Help human grief to be transient
As one whispers to another,
But remember. . . He arose!"
The last word is
LIFE
Not death.
Praise your name!

Ken, Janie and their two children live in Lafayette, Indiana, where Ken ministers to the Elmwood Avenue Church of Christ.

made the surface observation, "He really handled it well." Or, "She was a real tower of strength the whole time." Or, "He was the one that the others were able to lean on." So we conclude, "They will be just fine." But this surface observation overlooks the obvious—leaders are people, too. It is appropriate to assume that they, too, have suffered loss and hurt; therefore, they, too, must suffer grief, and they need the support of those who love them and understand their need.

It is equally true, though not as obvious, that when a person seems to handle tragedy well, when they are a tower of strength to others, they may have a greater need for support than those whom they supported in time of crisis. For when their need for support and comfort was the greatest, they were totally occupied with being that tower of strength to others. Too often, they have denied themselves the opportunity to

grieve. Later, when the well-wishers have gone, and things are presumed to be back to normal, the suppressed feelings begin to surface, and they must begin to deal with grief. At this point, when their need for support is probably the greatest, all they usually receive are congratulations for having handled it so well!

Unmet Need

My wife lost both her parents within a span of less than three years. In both cases, death came suddenly, to two, fine, middle-aged adults who had much to look forward to in life. We were both less than thirty years old, and inexperienced in dealing with the death in the immediate family. She was the one who was the support for the others in her family on both occasions, the one who was too busy to deal with grief. Many years later, she and I came to realize the price she had paid for denying herself the opportunity to grieve. It did not occur to anyone, including ourselves, that she also needed some support. Thus her needs were never really met.

Twenty-seven years later, I lost both my parents, also within a span of less than three years. Their deaths were also sudden and shocking, despite their age and failing health. We were better equipped to cope with death this time, due in part to the wisdom and experience that comes with a generation of growth. It was due in greater part to the wisdom of our home congregation, the Troy Church of Christ, which had developed and taught a four-month, adult Bible study class on the subject of death and dying. (Yes, these are Biblical subjects and it is appropriate to occupy our Bible Study hour with them!) A substantial part of this class was devoted to the grief process—how to acknowledge and deal with it.

My father died in August 1982 at a retirement village some 270 miles from where I live. I was quickly caught up in a myriad of activities that seemed to be, and really were, so necessary. My parents had no church affiliation, and he had opted for immediate cremation without a traditional funeral service. The family did not want to bring in a clergyman, who would be little more than a professional

stranger, to conduct a memorial service. So my brother, my daughter and I planned and conducted it at the local community center. Then, and for the next several months, our minds were occupied with my mother. We had to assess her needs, and make some delicate and difficult decisions about relocating her so that she could have the care that she needed. Their house needed to be closed, furniture and furnishings liquidated, and we were deeply involved in the process. Superimposed on all of this were the dynamics of personal relationships, inevitable in every family, and too personal for discussion here.

When my mother died in July 1985, the circumstances were less demanding. She had also opted for immediate cremation, without a traditional funeral service, and there was no surviving spouse to require our attention. So we were under no pressure to pack up and make a hurried trip. Thus freed from time pressure, the family planned to conduct a memorial service the following month, allowing us time to arrange time off work and make plans to travel.

Facing the Need

At this point my wife suggested that, if the one who had been cast as the "strong one," the leader and elder, were willing to sit down and allow them, perhaps the Church would like to speak words of comfort and support to me. I agreed and the congregation, led by our minister Joseph Jones, planned and conducted a beautiful and appropriate memorial service. It lifted much of the burden of grief from my mother's death; it also reached back those three years, and spoke to some needs that had not been met when my father died. The Church family ministered a lot of healing that evening! Five weeks later, the family held the memorial service for my mother. My brother, my daughter and I again planned and conducted it. It was a real comfort and satisfaction for me to go into that memorial service with the support of my home congregation, who had first ministered to my needs and helped me to deal with my mother's death.

Less than a year later, when his mother

passed away, I had the opportunity to "do unto" Brother Jones as he had done for me. Although he had ministered to so many who had lost loved ones, it was his first occasion as an adult to experience the loss of a parent. It was a real privilege to plan and work with the congregation on that memorial service. His circumstances were different in some respects from mine, and I would not presume to say that I knew just how he felt. But I am sure that his feelings and his needs were similar to mine, for he had traveled some 600 miles to his mother's home, and borne much of the responsibility for planning and conducting her funeral.

Creating a Ministering Service

As we began to plan the memorial service, we felt a sense of inadequacy, and this is the second reason why we fail to minister to our leaders. Just what do you say to your elder, your pastor, the one to whom you have looked for support, in the time of his or her need? What can the students offer back to their teacher? We tend to feel so inadequate when we face the task of comforting the one who has taught us practically all that we know about comforting one another.

We need only to remember that our spiritual leaders are citizens of the Kingdom of God. It is therefore reasonable to assume that they have done for us, during our time of need, the very things that they would want us to do for them. Therefore, the best thing we can do is to give them back what they have given us. The Scriptures they shared with us, the songs they selected, the words of comfort they spoke, the thoughts they framed into prayers—these all contain the thoughts that they would want to hear in their time of need. Just give them back! There is no great need for originality. Of course, if you have some Scripture passage, some song, or some thought that speaks a special message to you, offer it—just as you would want it offered to you. Heart-felt sincerity may not be original, but it is refreshing and always appreciated.

What about a eulogy? That task always seems to be reserved for a person who has a special sense for what is appropriate, and has extensive knowledge of the deceased. Whom do you

call on when the best qualified person is the one you are trying to minister to? Those attributes are always nice, but never really necessary. I have delivered two eulogies without the benefit of either. Just go to the bereaved family member or members and ask them what they would like you to say. They are delighted to share their memories of their loved one, through you, with the friends who come to the memorial service.

The eulogy, though important, should comprise a relatively small part of the total memorial service. A much greater amount of time and effort should be spent in expressing appreciation for our leader and friend who has suffered loss. We have this service because we appreciate him or her. A number of people should be given the opportunity to make expressions of appreciation.

Remember that other family members are also hurting. When I lost my parents, I was very much aware of a wife who had lost two very dear in-laws, and a daughter who was deeply hurt by the loss of her grandparents. When you speak to the needs of one of your leaders, speak to the other family members, too. Let them know that you are concerned for them as you are for your esteemed leader.

But, you wonder, will our leaders be willing to sit down and allow us to minister to them? Will they admit that they need our help? I believe from my own experience, as one who has given and one who has received, that they will. But that is really not our worry. It is enough for us to care, be willing to reach out, and ask for the privilege of doing so.

To get started, set a date, and set it as early as possible. You may have a lot of phone calls to make in a short time; if so, get some help. Don't hesitate to set other things aside, and rearrange the calendar a bit if necessary. This type of ministry should have some priority. A congregational leader is probably widely acquainted, so invite some close friends from other congregations, neighbors, colleagues from work or professional organizations.

Consult with the one you are planning for. Don't hesitate to ask them whom they would like to have attend. Ask them for one or two of their loved one's favorite hymns so that you can sing them at the service. Ask them how to

handle delicate details that may be appropriate to the eulogy such as divorce, mental illness, or suicide within the family. And somewhere, near the close, give them the chance to make any personal response they may wish to make.

Personal tragedy is grievous, but is also affords unique opportunities to "bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ." Leaders are people, too. Let's be sure

to seize the opportunity to minister to them in their times of need as they have ministered to us.

With his Master's degree in engineering, Gene has worked as an educator and a businessman. He and his wife, Mary Alice, reside in Madison Heights. Gene has served as an elder to the Troy Church of Christ for more than 10 years. Their daughter, Diane, is a Wycliff translator in Central America.

The Idea of Death in Western Thought A Cultural Survey

GARY FIELDS MITCHELL

Rochester, Michigan

The story is told of a young man that came into a large inheritance, left his home town and returned after the passing of a few years. One day, while walking in town, he met an old friend. The friend had heard that the young man had lost all his inheritance. The two old friends struck up a conversation and in the course of their discussion, the friend asked the young man how he came to lose his fortune. The young man replied, "In two ways, first slowly and then suddenly."

Most of us identify with this "one, two" sequence in our lives. It seems that is the way many major events in our lives develop: slowly, then suddenly. There is no area where this "one, two" sequence appears in our lives with as much consistency as in the area of death.

Death. The death of a mother, father, grandparent, friend, son or daughter. Death, our own death. For some, it is anticipated with fear, with dread, and even a sense of horror. And still for others it will be anticipated and received with joy and peace. Some people hear the word death and know that for them it will mean relief, escape, "the way out." But no matter how death is anticipated, denial is always present.

When I was about eight or nine years old, I convinced my parents that I was mature and old enough to accompany them to the funeral home to visit the family of a dear old lady in our congregation who had died. My parents were reluctant, but took me along anyway.

This was the first time I had seen a dead person. I approached the casket. I was not sure what a dead person was supposed to look like, but one look and I knew for sure that this old lady surely looked better than I had ever seen her. As I stood there, looking at this dear old lady, something happened. It surprised and shocked me. I ran over and excitedly announced to my father (and to everyone else in the room) that I was sure that I saw the old lady's stomach move up and down, that she surely was alive and that a terrible mistake had been made. I thought this news would be received with great excitement. It was, but not the way I thought. My news caused great excitement, but also great embarrassment for my parents. I was quickly ushered out the door by my father and mother. Other than the death of one of my own grandparents, I did not accompany my parents to a funeral home until I was a teenager driv-

ing my own car. (My parents probably figured if I ever embarrassed them again, they could quickly leave and depart in their own car.)

Denial. Denial came to me as a boy eight or nine by imagining that I saw a dead person breathe. Death is crisis, and when crisis comes, denial rides on its back even if for only a short time.

How Attitudes Are Formed

Our attitudes about death have been formed and shaped by our early experiences, by friends, family and church. It is primarily through these channels that we have formulated our ideas about death. Yet all these channels have been influenced to some degree (be it greater or lesser) by the stream of Western thought. In light of the articles in his issue, it might be helpful to survey this "historical stream" of thought. I would caution the reader that this is a "capsulated overview" and it is hoped that it may serve as an impetus for further reading on the subject.

In primitive culture one finds many myths surrounding the subject of death. Denial is there just as it is in our present culture, but it is not just a denial of death's finality but also of its inevitability.¹ It has been suggested by Jacques Choron, in his *Death and Western Thought*, that the one thing that contributed to primitive man's total discovery of death was the concept of lineal time. Choron states the following;

"Not until lineal time replaced cyclic time did every event receive the character of uniqueness and of unrepeatability, and it is its combination with the already dawning individualization of the members of the primitive group that makes death appear as a real threat."²

Of course, another explanation might be Paul's words in Romans 1:19-20 "since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

Greek Philosophers

In the Greek colonies of Asia Minor around 600 B.C. philosophy was taking root. Ideas about death were weaving their threads into Pre-Socratic Philosophy. For these early Greeks, an awareness of the transitoriness of things produced a "fundamental pessimism" in their outlook. One finds their general view of death in the works of Homer.

"Speak not smoothly of death, I beseech you, O famous Odysseus, Better by far to remain on earth the thrall of another . . . rather than reign sole king in the realm of bodiless phantoms."³

The dead were thought to be "bodiless phantoms, "bloodless shadows" that lived and wandered in the underworld and were more frightening than anything known in this earthly existence.⁴

There also was what was known as Orphic brotherhoods. Pythagoras (572-497 B.C.) was one of the chief exponents of this view. This view of death involved purification in the wheel of births (the soul leaves the body at death and is purified and re-enters another body), transmigration of the soul and final reunion with the Divine.

With Anaximander (610-547 B.C.) and Heraclitus (533-475 B.C.) we find a concern with the "impermanence and transitoriness of things."⁵ (This concern with transitoriness can also be found in the writing of Euripides.)

In the death of Socrates we find the idea of a man as a finite and contingent being accepting his fate and putting forth the force of this character against death.⁶

In the writings of Plato we find arguments for the immortality of the soul. In his *Phaedo*, Plato states that death means the separation of the *psyche* (soul) from the *Soma* (body.) One finds in his arguments for immortality the idea of preexistence and postexistence; the soul being detached from the body at death, having its own existence.⁷

Plato's pupil Aristotle eventually rejected Plato's views of the "invisible" and turned to the natural order of things. He did not believe that the personality of man survived beyond death.

In the writings of Epicurus (341-270 B.C.) we find the argument that the soul dissolves after death.⁸ And in the philosophical system known as Stoicism (which arose about the same time) the fear of death was dealt with by attitudes of indifference and a benevolent kind of providence which for some was expressed in the doctrine of eternal recurrence. For the Stoic, philosophy dealt with the art of living the right way and viewing death as an art and not merely as a phenomenon.⁸

Renaissance Influence

Later, in the Renaissance period there was a preoccupation with the horror of death and the eternal punishments. It was pure fear and the way it was dealt with was simply to display it openly. Fear was not only focused on the horror of death but also on the deathbed itself. The deathbed was seen as the battleground with the devil for man's soul.

There developed a little later in this period an awareness of beauty and a keen interest in the world which led to an attitude that "death would wait."⁹

Later, near the end of this period, Pascal (1623-1662) stands alone with his reiteration of the Christian doctrine of death.

In the eighteenth century with Kant (1724-1804) and Fichte (1762-1814) one finds a preoccupation with what happens after death, but at the same time we find a denial of immortality.

In the early part of the nineteenth century the Romantic poet-philosophers focused on a new answer to the problem of death: the glorification of death. Death was not seen as "the reverse of life, but rather the completion of life."¹⁰

The People of God

In Genesis, in the Old Testament, we find that man ate of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 3) and thus came death — the Fall of Man. We read later of Abraham, Isaac, and David referred to in such terms as "living out the number of their days" or that they were old men "full of years." Death, is judgment but it also seems to carry the idea of

fulfillment.¹¹

In the book of Psalms, Sheol is mentioned. Sheol is a "nonland, a sphere that does not exist, and it is to this that the dead come." Helmut Thielicke, in his book *Living With Death*, states the following concerning the concept of Sheol and death:

"Here (in Sheol) the nonbeing of the dead is not just a substantial cessation of life — though that is naturally included — but it is the breaking off of the relationship to God. For this is what constituted the life of the living; it was a life in relation. This is why "in death there is no remembrance of thee; in sheol who can give thee praise?" (Ps. 6:5, cf. Isa. 28:18f.; Ps. 115-17, etc).

The most dreadful thing here is not that the dead cease to remember Yahweh, but the very opposite, namely, that God does not remember them when they are thrust into this nonland: "like those whom thou dost remember no more" (Ps. 88:5). Since life in the OT is life for, with and under God, since it is life in relation, the nothingness of death means a total loss of relation. It is exclusion from the service of God and the history in which God bears witness to himself by his guidance. Those who overlook this total end and trust that things will go on forever are fools in their security. Hence the psalmist prays: "teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom" (Ps. 90:12; cf. Ps. 39:4-6).

Life in the Old Testament meant relationship, and death, a loss of relationship. (Before the birth of Christ the Pharisees did hold a belief in the resurrection of the dead.) Relationship. The Old Testament Jewish awareness of "relationship to Yahweh" was a concept that I think we do not fully grasp. Against this relationship there was a unique faith; a faith that accepted God's will and totally trusted in His rule.

The New Testament proclaims that through Christ we have victory over death.

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the

dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." II Cor. 15:51-53.

Take the time in the next few days to read I Cor. 15, let the glory and wonder of this proclamation seep into your spirit. (As I get older I find myself lingering at cemeteries imagining what that wonderful scene will be like.)

Accepting Christ as our Saviour and Lord does mean that we have victory over death, but it does not mean that we escape our humanness. In the face of death there will still be denial, fear, and grief. C.S. Lewis in the opening words of his book *A Grief Observed* says; "No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear." No, the pain is there, but so is Christ and His Spirit. The wonderful thing is that Christ's victory over death is a victory that we can claim as we go through the fear, denial and grief.

1. Jacques Choron, *Death and Western Thought* (Macmillan Company, New York, New York, 1963), p. 13.
2. Ibid., p. 25
3. Ibid., p. 32
4. Ibid., p. 32
5. Ibid., p. 35
6. Ibid., p. 43
7. Helmut Thielicke, *Living With Death* (William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1983) p. 64
8. Choron, Ibid., p. 66
9. Ibid., pages 92-93
10. Thielicke, Ibid., p. 112
11. C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (Bantam Books, New York, 1961) p. 1

Bible passages quoted from the N.I.V.

Gary is a graduate of Michigan Christian College and Abilene Christian University. He is an industrial salesman and lives in Rochester, Michigan with his wife Annette and their two children.

Readers' Response

Brothers and Sisters,

Thank you especially for your series on suffering and death. God sent it to me at just the right time. Through it I was better able to minister to some very dear people. . . I would appreciate some study on "the essentials" of the faith, dealing with the "seven ones" of Ephesians 4; especially something that will be sensitive and helpful to some of our more legalistic brothers and sisters in the Body. I pray with Jesus "that we all might be one that the world might believe." I do appreciate much of what I read in *Integrity*. . . Find enclosed check to help in cost of subscription.

In His care,
Don McPherson
Neenah, WI

Dear Brothers,

I have greatly enjoyed several of your recent issues, but the best one to me was the July-August (1985) issue starting on the subject of suffering. May the others be as good!

May the Lord guide and keep you in all His ways.

In His love,
Ernest Lyon
Louisville, Kentucky

Thanks for *Integrity*! I am enclosing a donation in appreciation of your writings.

R. Leon Gibson
Santa Ana, California

Dear Brother Jones,

The May/June issue of *Integrity* reached us yesterday. Thank you and the other writers for a very timely and helpful issue!!

Alcoholism is rapidly rising in Japan. Drunkenness among Japanese men has been taken as a matter of course for generations. "Release from pressure" and all of the usual excuses. I do not remember hearing the term "alcoholism" during earlier stays in Japan. But now there are AA meetings all over Japan and the problem is being talked about more openly. The present crisis in Japanese drinking patterns, however, concerns the unbelievable rise in alcoholism among Japanese women. This is especially true among housewives whose children are grown and among young housewives in their twenties. "Kitchen drinkers" is the term used here. Because of these challenges in Japanese society the May/June issue is very useful to me.

Beyond the issue of alcoholism I appreciated the call for the church to be the healing organism that the Lord intended. The Japanese congregation where we work is a very fine, devoted church. Its weak spot is the same as that of many middle-class USA churches: the hesitation (or, perhaps, even dislike/distaste) to get involved with the actual personal problems of people. As the articles point out, that kind of contact with folks where they are hurting is costly. I plan to share the suggestions for 'people helping' with the church here.

One more thing — I was pleased beyond words to glance at the back cover of the issue before opening it and find Harry Emerson Fosdick's song! I grew up on his radio preaching. Found a copy of Fosdick's biography on a Tokyo book store shelf the other day — wasn't able to buy it that day and hope it will be there next trip.

May the Lord bless and strengthen you in your important efforts in the healing of people.

Sincerely in Christ,
Elmer Prout
Japan

Dear *Integrity* Board,

I have so enjoyed reading the *Integrity* here at my daughter's home. What a joy to be lifted by these great truths "praise the Lord."

Sincerely,
Mrs. C. W. Collier
Clifton, Texas

Glad you are still "in business"! Especially appreciated the marriage-divorce series (have out first son getting married this spring!) and the Holy Spirit. . . I still "quench" Him too much! Thanks again for your work, In Him II. Thess. 2:16 and 17!

Jerry and Linda Kelley
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Thank you for *Integrity*!

Beulah Ashburn
Garden City, Kansas

Keep up the good work!

M. Wood
Trent, Texas

Workers for *Integrity*:

"I've enjoyed and benefited several ways from your publication and enclose (check) for your continued efforts in producing *Integrity*. As a suggestion, you might consider having some of your very able and eloquent writer/contributors do articles on "Fundamentalism" and its role/effects in the church of Christ. I'm a long-time and active member of the church of Christ, but only recently became aware of its fundamentalist stance, and how that certain fundamentalist characteristics are rarely mentioned or discussed in our classes/sermons. . . Thanks for your continued good work in illuminating His word in our time.

K. R. Cornelius
Birmingham, AL