

INTEGRITY

INTEGRITY is published by a non-profit Michigan corporation. The editorial staff consists of Hoy Ledbetter, editor-in-chief, Frank Rester, and Dean Thoroman. Correspondence for the editor may be sent to 8494 Bush Hill Court, Grand Blanc, Michigan 48439.

At present all subscriptions are being paid for by contributions from our friends. Those who wish to receive INTEGRITY should send their names and addresses (be sure to include zip code) to the address below. It is not necessary to send a contribution, but those who wish to contribute are welcome to do so.

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

Volume 1 January, 1970 Number 8

INTEGRITY
P.O. Box 1205
Flint, Michigan 48501



Address Correction Requested

Integrity

January 1970

House Divided

THE WALLS COME TUMBLING DOWN

A House United

He who walks in integrity walks securely. Prov. 10:9.

FROM THE EDITOR

Dean A. Thoroman

One of the main goals of the originators of INTEGRITY was to deal with current problems in the Restoration Movement. At the present, we see no reason for departing from this goal. Thus, the special emphasis we are giving to "Fellowship" in this issue.

Justification for using as much space in one issue as we do in publishing Hoy Ledbetter's article is not difficult for those who are even slightly aware of strained relationships in the Christian brotherhood today. Do you know of a time when honest people have been more concerned about who really belongs in the fellowship of the saints? Have you ever known a period of greater distress over this matter in churches of Christ? Who is my brother in the Lord? On what basis is fellowship begun and sustained? How much doctrinal error may be tolerated without breaking the ties that bind? Hoy's article tries to answer some of these questions, and we print it for your serious consideration.

A bit of background may also be helpful. According to schedule, a well-planned forum was conducted in Hartford (near St. Louis) Dec. 29-30. Both Hoy and Frank Rester were invited to present views on Christian fellowship. The special article we are printing in this issue of INTEGRITY is one of these presentations. Perhaps a later issue will feature Frank's views on this vital topic.

We anticipate some disagreement with points made in this paper, and continue to welcome thought-provoking responses to any issues raised in INTEGRITY, with the hope that permission will be granted to publish noteworthy material. As is true with all enterprises similar to ours, the final decision as to appropriateness and use of articles submitted for publication rests with an editorial board.

Any undertaking as ambitious and as old as the Restoration Movement will attract people from many walks of life with personalities which have been influenced by widely varying circumstances. No one should be surprised that such variety leads to strongly opposing views. Further, we maintain that no one needs to be alarmed when differences are believed and expressed. Neither the holding nor the stating of an idea ought to cause even the least bit of difficulty if we assume others are as honest as we are.

When motives are questioned and suspicions are aroused, we find an ugly atmosphere prevailing. Fear and force all too often make an unwelcome appearance. Unholy battles are fought in spiritual civil wars - in the name of purity and loyalty - to determine which sect is going to gain

and/or retain control. Straw men and insignificant issues are brought forth to be beaten into oblivion by "champions" of various groups.

After the smoke has cleared and the noise of battle has ceased, spiritual iron curtains are erected to emphasize our enmity and to ensure that each party will stay on its own side of the fence. Long-standing ties of fellowship and respect are broken - in many instances to forever remain unended.

Under these circumstances, can we afford to neglect the important topic of "Fellowship"? May we urge the careful analysis of this theme. May we also strongly encourage every attempt to find a closer walk with our Creator and His creatures. Is it possible that a serious attempt to define and to discuss present causes of division might result in understanding which could lead to the truest form of unity and fellowship - spiritual communion based on loving trust - in spite of our differences? ¶¶¶

A LOOK AHEAD

The decade we have just entered very well may be one of the most exciting ones of our lives. It certainly promises to be one of change - rapid change. We predict that there will be much religious flux. There are numerous signs that churches and private colleges will have some trying times. There will be increased emphasis on personal religion, which will go a long way toward breaking down denominational walls. And, unless some dramatic changes take place, suspicion of - and separation from - the organized church will continue to grow. More people will feel a need to get out of the church building and into the marketplace.

What should be the church's reaction to this decade of challenge? In coming issues INTEGRITY will attempt to deal with what we believe the church of the seventies should be. We are not at all pessimistic about the future of God's community, nor are we depressed by the challenges which confront us. We believe that there is much work to be done and that many of our approaches must be changed; but we also believe the "Good News" is the answer and that more and more people are looking for that answer.

It is especially important that we give sober thought to what Jesus intended for the church to be. INTEGRITY, therefore, proposes to devote considerable attention to its nature and mission. We are not iconoclasts, but we do believe that the raising of honest questions is the beginning of education. Questions, however, can be very troubling unless answers are provided. Our primary emphasis will be on the answers. The noble work of those who sought to restore New Testament Christianity is worth continuing, and it is the challenge of our decade. ¶¶¶

THE WALLS COME TUMBLING DOWN

Hoy Ledbetter

In Acts 15 we read that the apostle to the Gentiles made his way to Jerusalem from Antioch on one of the gravest missions of his life. The brotherhood to which he had given himself was facing its most serious threat. It had survived the onslaught of Jewish persecution, only to be sorely threatened with internal disintegration. The issue which threatened to rupture this great fraternity can be stated in general terms as legalism vs. liberty in Christ. Brethren from Judea had come to Antioch, teaching the converts there, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Paul and Barnabas had vigorously debated with them, and finally it was decided that they, along with certain others, should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. The outcome of this mission would be of tremendous importance to the fellowship of God's people everywhere.

The circumstances under which we meet here are not totally unlike those faced by Paul and his brethren centuries ago. The main difference is that, whereas they sought to prevent open division, our brotherhood is already sadly divided. Walls have been reared between us that for many decades have stubbornly resisted all our attempts to remove them. The noble efforts toward unity in the past have in many cases only intensified antagonism and reinforced party positions. Although the signs of the times are somewhat ambiguous, I rejoice in the belief that the chips on the stream indicate it is flowing in the direction of oneness - that the fragments of the restoration movement are closer to unity now than they have been for many years.

But that same old conflict between legalism and liberty in Christ confronts us today. It comes in a somewhat disguised form, but actually what we must decide for ourselves in this generation is substantially what Paul and the brethren in Antioch and Jerusalem had to decide when the church was a mere infant. My present concern, however, is not so much that we reach uniformity of opinion as it is that we react to each other in a scriptural manner when such uniformity eludes us.

THE JERUSALEM DEBATE

When Paul and Barnabas arrived at Jerusalem, "certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.'" This was the matter the apostles and elders came together to "look into."

Let's be sure we have the situation in sharp focus. Involved in this controversy were two different views of how one can be saved. Some Chris-

tians were attempting to bind the law of Moses, especially circumcision, on the Gentile converts. They thought that circumcision was just as much a condition of salvation as baptism. They firmly believed that the Gentiles could not be saved without it. Since they held this conviction, they tried to convince the Gentiles of this condition of salvation.

It should not be necessary to remind you that Paul's view of law and grace allowed no room for imposing upon the Gentiles any requirements of the law of Moses. He maintained that the Gentiles were free from law, and he steadfastly resisted all attempts to bind it upon them. So the conflict between these two elements in the church was very serious.

Our reconstruction of what happened at Jerusalem and Antioch will depend on how we harmonize the accounts in Acts 15 and Gal. 2. Since I believe the two chapters refer to the same incident, my discussion will presuppose this identity. Thus, when Paul arrived at Jerusalem, he went privately to the leading brethren and submitted to them the gospel which he had preached, and was continuing to preach, among the Gentiles. But an attempt was made to have Titus, who had come with them, to be circumcised. This attempt was not made by the brethren "of reputation," but rather by certain false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out their liberty in Christ, to bring them into bondage. Paul's resistance to this effort is indicated in Gal. 2:5: "But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you."

But what would the leading brethren do? Would Peter, James and John go along with such efforts to impose circumcision on the Gentiles? Would they insist, either from conviction or expediency, that Titus be circumcised? It must have been an uneasy time.

The question was not settled without difficulty. Acts 15 states "there was much debate." No attempt was made to keep any brother from having his say. After this prolonged debate, Peter and James also spoke. Peter defended the Pauline position, declaring that both Jews and Gentiles were saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus. James also declared his conviction that they should not trouble those who were turning to God from among the Gentiles. And then, evidently out of deference to the Pharisaic party, he declared, "For Moses from ancient generations has . . . every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath." In other words, the Jewish regard for the law would not be affected by the decision being made. Then a letter was sent to the affected churches, in which, to put it simply, the apostles and brethren declared their position that the Gentiles were under no obligation to submit to the law of Moses.

What Paul sought, and what he received at Jerusalem, was the right hand of fellowship from the pillar apostles. And what we seek today is the

extension of that same right hand of fellowship to the various elements in our restoration movement, and, indeed, among all believers in Christ. But some of us cannot see how we can have fellowship with those who teach doctrines which we believe are false and which we think will eternally ruin those who accept them. In our view, if we extend the right hand of fellowship to those who teach things we do not believe, we are encouraging - and are in fact guilty of - perpetuating false doctrine. Acting upon this premise, we have gradually over the years tended to limit our fellowship to those with whom we are in doctrinal accord. As a result, since so much disagreement exists, our various communions have grown more and more restricted from the standpoint of doctrinal tolerance.

But must I limit my fellowship to those whose points of view agree with my own? And if I must not so limit my fellowship, just how far can I go with those who disagree with me?

Let's look again at the situation in the early church. It is apparent that the meeting at Jerusalem did not solve all the problems, that there continued to be a tendency toward two polarizations. The legalists not only disagreed sharply with Paul, but they tried to convince the brethren everywhere that he was absolutely wrong, and their presence is often implied in his epistles. They regarded Paul as a dangerous liberal whose teaching must be frustrated. And their attempts were not limited to Jerusalem, but they sought to follow Paul everywhere he went. Thus they constituted a kind of self-appointed truth squad bent on stamping out liberalism in the church. And they were not just a minor irritation; they were formidable opponents. That they had more than nominal influence is indicated by what happened when Paul went back to Antioch.

THE ANTIOCH EPILOGUE

I now turn to Gal. 2:11: "But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to the face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, 'If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?'"

The situation at Antioch was an advance upon the problem dealt with at Jerusalem. The Jerusalem decision had merely allowed the Jews and Gentiles to go their separate ways. The Jews would retain the option of continuing to keep the law of Moses, and the Gentiles would be free from

it. But another very practical question was left unanswered, which only came to the forefront at Antioch. What relationship should the Jews have with the Gentiles? Could a Jew eat with Gentiles who did not keep the law? Or, in other words, could there really be meaningful fellowship between the two without one side surrendering its position?

When Peter came to Antioch he found the Jewish brethren eating with the Gentiles, with no barriers to free and open communion. He at first saw nothing wrong with this practice, and so he too ate with the Gentiles. But that was before the delegation from James arrived. When these representatives of the circumcision party in the brotherhood came, Peter gradually (as the imperfect tenses indicate) withdrew and held himself aloof. What he did, in effect, was to say to the liberated Gentiles, "You may be saved without circumcision, but you cannot have my fellowship without it. If I am to continue to eat with you, you will have to keep the law. Otherwise, I will withdraw and hold myself aloof from you."

The tendency of Peter's action - and undoubtedly the deliberate intention of the circumcision party - was to "compel" the Gentiles to submit to the law. If they had fully accepted the conclusions of the Jerusalem conference, and if they were aware of the implications of this withdrawal from eating with the Gentiles, it follows that they did not wholly accept the idea that the Gentiles did not have to keep the law.

We need not question the sincerity of the circumcision party, but Peter's action was plain hypocrisy. His real convictions, like those of so many others who surrender to pressure, were belied by his hypocrisy. Paul says he stood condemned, condemned because he acted according to pressure and not according to conviction. The reason for his ugly behavior is clearly stated: he was afraid of the party of the circumcision. He was afraid of them because they were in a position to exert strong pressure. This fear caused him to be careless with the truth of the gospel. Paul's appraisal is given in verse 14: "I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel." (The original is literally "walking straightly," and the sentence may be rendered, "I saw that they were not progressing in the direction of the truth of the gospel.") The issue at stake was the truth of the gospel.

SUMMARY AND APPLICATION

Now this is the way things stood. The problem of fellowship was a recurrent one in the early church. On one end of the theological spectrum was the circumcision party, closely associated with James (just how closely is a matter of speculation). These were helped along on at least one occasion, and probably on others, by brethren like Peter, who allowed them to dictate their behavior, if not their convictions. On the other end are

Paul and those to whom we might refer as liberals, who held that salvation was not determined by law-keeping, either for Jews or Gentiles. And in between we may place those who allowed the Gentiles to remain free from the law, but could not conscientiously cease binding it upon themselves.

In view of this situation in the early church, we must ask ourselves two questions. First, did these early Christians maintain fellowship in spite of their basic differences? Second, how serious are our differences in comparison with those which they had to face?

My answer to the first of these is a resounding YES! They did maintain fellowship in spite of their differences. Once the questions raised at Antioch and Jerusalem were answered, the only ones who discouraged fellowship were implied extremists. When the pillar apostles extended to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that hand was never withdrawn. Although the basic issue was never settled to everyone's satisfaction, the division of thought never reached the point where one side regarded the other as having departed from the Lord.

How basic were their differences in comparison with our own? The answer to that is to some extent a question of judgment. But it is my judgment that we have never had a divisive issue in the history of the restoration movement as fundamental as that which those brethren faced, with the exception of the conflict over genuine liberalism. Our divisions have generally been over procedures, but they were arguing over conditions of salvation. We argue over approaches to worship and work, but they argued over approach to God. A group among us holding that baptism is not a condition of salvation would be a fitting analogy to the first century situation.

And let us keep in mind, too, the vigor with which they held their positions. Each side thought the other was absolutely wrong, and one side absolutely was. Furthermore, each side tried to convince the other of the error of his position. We today are no more convinced of, or determined to evangelize from, our viewpoints than they were.

My conclusion is: If those brethren could extend the right hand of fellowship to each other in spite of their differences, we should be able to make a similar extension today. We may not be sure of the outer limit of their tolerance, but we can say that they went so far as to remain in fellowship despite differences on what we would call today "the plan of salvation."

Now I want to discuss briefly a couple of the later controversies in the New Testament.

MYTHS IN THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

In the Pastorals a clear distinction is made between myths and truth. Paul warned Timothy that certain ones "will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths." Myths are antithetical to the truth of the gospel, and they are completely repudiated. Paul had previously left Timothy in Ephesus "in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering God's provision which is by faith." Evidently there was within the church a lively and general interest in a host of myths and genealogies. Paul warned that these do not further the divine work of salvation which is built upon faith, but rather lead to speculations. He continues: "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion." (1 Tim. 1:3-6.)

Timothy is further warned in 1 Tim. 4:7: "Have nothing to do with worldly fables (myths) fit only for old women." In the preceding verse these myths are contrasted with "the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine." Again, Tit. 1:14: "Not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth." Here also myths and truth are opposed, and the myths are further identified as "Jewish." Their danger lies in the fact that they turn one away from the truth.

Although we may never know the exact content of these myths, we can say in a general way that what was encountered was an early form of Gnosticism which had its beginning in Judaism. Whatever it was, this synthesis of Gnosticism and Judaism was dangerous for the Christians of that time. First, it distracted the minds of Christians from the simple faith of the gospel and led them into endless speculation which was devoid of spiritual profit, and which often led to quarrels. Second, there is also associated with them an element of human sensuality. A hint of this lies in the fact that they are called "worldly" (Greek *bebeloi*, which can include the concept of that which is unholy in a moral sense); but they are also the stock-in-trade of mercenary ministers who appealed to those who were bent on following their own desires.

It might seem to us, therefore, that if anything would cause the apostle to hold for a breach of fellowship over doctrinal matters, these myths would be sufficient ground for such a breach. It is striking, however, that nowhere in the Pastorals is Timothy told to withdraw fellowship (to use the modern term) from those who had taken up with these myths. To be sure, he is told that he himself should have nothing to do with the myths themselves; but there is no hint that those who hold the myths are to be excommunicated. Whatever may be said elsewhere in the New Testament of

doctrinal deviation as a ground of rejection from the fellowship, Paul did not enforce the idea of weeding out of the church those who held to false, mythical views. In fact, in view of our commonly-held position that doctrinal disagreement is cause for excommunication, his instructions to Timothy are surprisingly lenient. Listen to 2 Tim. 2:23-26: "But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels." Timothy must not become involved in these discussions; they are ignorant, foolish, and breed quarrels. "And the Lord's bondservant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition; if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."

If I have accurately read the signs of the times, this passage simply does not fit in with our modern formula for handling heretics. There is no suggestion in it that the opposition is to be "disfellowshipped." On the contrary, they are to be corrected with gentleness. It is true that they are wrong, they oppose the truth, they need to come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, and they stand in need of repentance. But it is Paul's feeling that perhaps "God will grant them repentance and the ability to come to their senses and escape the devil's snare." There are some matters that must be left to God. Is it not possible that our building of walls between brethren today over honest doctrinal differences is in fact a presumptuous usurpation of God's prerogative? If we do not have the power to call one into our fellowship, since that is God's work, do we not tread on holy ground when we dismiss one from our fellowship without God's express instruction to do so?

RESTRICTED FELLOWSHIP IN JOHN

John's writings contain some especially rich material. Not only does he give us some fine instruction about fellowship (or to use the Greek term, *koinonia*), but he also illustrates the outer limit of the Christian's toleration of false teaching. His statement in 2 John 10 is well known: "If any one comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him greeting; for the one who gives him greeting participates in his evil deeds." ("Participates" is the verb form of *koinonia* and means: "has fellowship" in his evil deeds.) John makes it clear that the teaching of Christ cannot be abandoned without a breach of fellowship.

But what is this teaching of Christ which one must bring in order to be received? Does this passage, after all, justify our traditional practice of refusing fellowship to those who disagree with our various interpretations of scripture? None of us would say that it means that every false position

taken by another makes it impossible for us to fellowship him, because we all have our lists of doctrinal deviations which we can tolerate. With all of us, it is not a question of whether we can fellowship someone who is wrong; but it is a question of which subject he can be wrong about and still be in our fellowship. And that is the rub! It is here that our thinking becomes fuzzy and is colored by our past experience and relationships.

John's passage must be interpreted in the light of its context. Look at verse 7: "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist." Thus John states that we cannot welcome, greet, or share with those who deny that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. The person who makes this denial has deprived Christianity of one of its fundamentals, and he must not be tolerated. With John there is a fundamental Christian confession which is necessary to the acceptance of a person into fellowship. One cannot be regarded as a believer without making this confession.

And with the confession is a concomitant standard of morality. This fact is indicated in the letters to Pergamum and Thyatira, which John recorded. The Thyatirans are chided as follows: "But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads my bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols." Those who held to the teaching of Balaam at Pergamum were likewise reprovved. Such teaching is identified with "the deep things of Satan" and cannot be tolerated.

Whenever in the New Testament we encounter a separation of professors of Christianity over doctrinal differences, one of two things may be said: either the doctrine involved amounts to a denial of the basic Christian confession, or it results in immoral behavior which promotes the work of Satan and nullifies the minimum Christian consecration.

THE BASIC CONFESSIOIN

But what is that basic Christian confession? A fundamental passage in answering that question is 1 Cor. 12:3: "No one speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus is accursed'; and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." According to this passage, the man who says, "Jesus is Lord," is doing so by the Holy Spirit. The Greek preposition (*en*, translated "by") can be taken in two ways. It can be used instrumentally, "under the influence of the Spirit, moved by the Spirit." This is the meaning conveyed by the standard translations and lexica. But it can also mean "in the realm of" the Spirit, in a spatial sense. This is the position taken by Oepke in Kittel's Theological Dictionary.

The meaning is not radically changed by the interpretation we accept. Regardless of whether it means "under the inspiration of the Spirit" or "in the realm produced by the Spirit," the fact is that one who makes the fundamental Christian confession that "Jesus is Lord" is on the Lord's side; he is a Christian. Of course, Paul does not mean that no one else can say the words - anybody can - but his point is that the one who recognizes the lordship of Jesus must do so by the Spirit. This is THE fundamental doctrine in the New Testament.

We may compare Rom. 10:9: "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved." Again the fundamental basis of salvation is one's acknowledgment of the lordship of Jesus. Churches of Christ today are not far from adopting this fundamental creed, since the only confession we require of converts is that they acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Son of God. However, we bind a great deal more upon people after they are converted.

Returning to John's writings, we read in 1 John 4:15: "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." We should note that in response to the Gnostic heresy John stresses the word Jesus. He said in 1 John 4:2-3, "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God." This simple basic confession was the watchword of early Christianity and the hallmark of apostolic preaching.

APPLICATION TO THE PROBLEMS

Now let's see how this Christian confession fits in with the doctrinal questions to which we have referred. In the conflicts over beliefs relative to the law of Moses and the circumcision of Gentile converts, there was no necessity of division. The essential lordship of Jesus was not denied by either side of the dispute. The Jews could continue to keep the law, as they in fact did, because there was no reason why the lordship of Jesus should be denied by their legalism. They were, of course, wrong; but this wrong was tolerable. The Gentile position could be accepted by the Jews because it did not deny the basic Christian confession, "Jesus is Lord." Although there was a dispute over what we might regard as "the plan of salvation," neither side denied the fundamental doctrine, and so they could be in fellowship.

In the Pastorals the myths could be tolerated as long as they did not distract from the basic Christian confession. Those who held them were wrong, but as long as the fundamentals were not denied, the worst harm that could come from them was quarreling and a wilderness of words. While these had their own dangers, they were not within themselves sufficient reason to expel anyone from the fellowship. Hymenaeus and Alex-

ander were a different matter, for they suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith and blasphemed, and blasphemy would certainly be the equivalent of repudiating the Christian confession. Hence, they were delivered over to Satan. (1 Tim. 1:19-20.) It is also said that Hymenaeus and Philetus held that the resurrection was past already, but the record does not indicate that Philetus was delivered over to Satan.

The Gnostics in John's time could not be tolerated because they denied Jesus had come in the flesh; hence, according to their position, there could be no incarnation or resurrection from the dead. They denied the basic Christian confession. Likewise, the immoral teaching of the Nicolaitans, Balaam and Jezebel in the Asian churches amounted to a denial of the lordship of Jesus, and they could not be tolerated.

I would be greatly surprised if there is anyone here who will not recognize the lordship of Jesus over him, with all that expression implies. Hence, I doubt that there is anyone here whom I would not regard as a brother in the Lord worthy of my fellowship. Some, of course, hold positions which I do not believe are correct ones. To the extent to which you disagree with any of my firm convictions, I regard you as in error. And from that point of view, I regard you all as in error, since it is unlikely that any of you would agree with me on every point. But if you are in God's fellowship, you are also in mine. And I do not believe that you have to know everything I know or believe everything I believe in order to be in his fellowship. And that is the position on fellowship which I urge upon you all.

ADDENDUM

The question of whom I will fellowship must always eventually become a matter of subjective judgment. Even when the only condition is one's acknowledgement of the lordship of Jesus, each must decide for himself whether that acknowledgement has been made. No matter where we draw the line, there will always be cases where fallible human judgment must be exercised. It would be very easy for us to make the acceptance of our opinions a criterion for judging another's recognition of Jesus' lordship. Hence, we need to be aware of our own imperfection. When David said, "Let me fall into the hand of the Lord...but let me not fall into the hand of man," he was speaking for a race conscious of the limitations of its own judgments.

Since our possibility of error is so great, let us render our judgment with the utmost charity toward all as well as with malice toward none. If we make a mistake, let it be on the side of charity. We should extend to others the same trust and fairness we expect to receive. If we will do so, the walls will surely come tumbling down. ¶¶¶

letters

PRAISE

"I have heard much good and some bad about INTEGRITY. 'But these are the necessary risks of the game and will be gladly taken by the man who believes that to draw closer to the truth is more important than to be untouched by error.' (Gerald Kennedy.) I am glad that there are some people within the brotherhood that do not oppose individuals for seeking the truth just because the search has brought about a different conclusion."

GOOD ADVICE

"Thank you for sending your provocative little journal. The spirit which animates it seems sincere. We need provocation, but not rancor. Love and good works is the desired end of exhortation. This, it seems to me, cannot be reached by poking at each other with sarcastic jibes in brotherhood journals. INTEGRITY by its very name should be free from those elements which dis-integrate the church. So far, you wear the name well."

GOODBYE

"Please remove my name from your mailing list. We have no desire to any longer receive any of your material until you are back in fellowship with the church."

EDITOR'S COMMENT

The three letters which appear on this page are representative of much of the mail we receive. Most people

who bother to write are in accord with our policies, if not our views. They are grateful that we are standing for "liberty in Christ" (that expression is often used), and they wish to encourage us not to allow pressures from any source to deter us.

Some readers fear that we will become vituperative. They cite other journals of questionable taste, and urge us not to become like them. We don't intend to. We hope to be honest without being onerous; to relieve burdens rather than adding them. We request your prayers in our behalf.

INTEGRITY did not begin for the purpose of carrying on a local fight. Our readers include residents of about two-thirds of the states and several foreign countries. The issues they are interested in are not local; they are universal.

We are aware that some churches refuse to "fellowship" us (the leaders of one have so notified us). We are too tolerant of our "erring brethren" to suit their taste. We are not surprised by this; in fact, we expected it. There was a time when we might have taken the same approach. Although we believe the ideas and methods of these brethren are not supported by the Bible, we are determined to love them and defend their right to speak and act according to their convictions.

We have made a practice of withholding names from the letters we print. This is because of our deference to the fears of some who write. Such fears seem to justify the existence of INTEGRITY. Some persecuted (this is the correct word) saints evidently have a real need for psychological ventilation, and we do not wish to discourage them from writing. The vast majority of correspondents, however, indicate no reluctance to being identified.

VOICE FROM THE PAST

Amongst Christians there is now, as there was at the beginning, a very great diversity in the knowledge of the Christian institution. There are babes, children, young men, and fathers in Christ now, as well as in the days of the Apostle John. This, from the natural gifts of God, from the diversities of age, education, and circumstances, is unavoidable. And would it not be just as rational and as scriptural to excommunicate one another because our knowledge is less or greater than any fixed measure, as for differences of opinion on matters of speculation?

Indeed, in most cases where proscription and exclusions now occur in this country, the excluded are the most intelligent members of the society; and although no community will accuse a man because he knows more of his Bible than his brethren, and on this account exclude him from their communion; yet this, it is manifest, rather than heresy (of which, however, for consistency's sake, he must be accused), is, in truth, the real cause of separation.

If God has bestowed better gifts or better opportunities on one man than another, by which he has attained more knowledge, instead of thanking God for his kindness to the community, they beg God to take him away; and if he will not be so unkind, they will at length put him from them under the charge of heresy. In most instances the greatest error of which a brother can be guilty is to study his Bible more than his companions - or at least, to surpass them in his knowledge of the mystery of Christ.

- Alexander Campbell.