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Integrity

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

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THROUGH THE CLOUDS

Hoy Ledbetter

I am not a natural optimist. In fact, I can usually find some lead in clouds with silver linings. Looking at the current religious scene, I tend to identify with the man caught by scalp-hunting Indians: "Things look bad." But looks can deceive, and this may be the case now.

The future of the organized church looks bleak. Attendance is falling off; contributions are down in the face of inflation; church programs are being cut back; subscriptions of religious periodicals are suffering; religious schools are having trouble filling dormitories and classrooms erected in a period of optimism, and some seminaries are closing down; and religious publishers are holding back due to uncertainty in the market.

This is enough to give any ecclesiastical worrywart a full diet. Yet I am optimistic, for several reasons. For one thing, the current declension seems to be a reaction against certain aspects of religion, not against the Lord himself. If the church is under suspicion, it does not necessarily follow that its Head is distrusted. Declining interest in organized religion does not seem to be accompanied by proportional disinterest in personal religion. People are still seeking Jesus, but they often look for him outside the church. While we see some mistakes in this approach, we are not depressed or shocked by it. The church today is simply not meeting the needs of the people, at least in some cases.

Too many churches are too interested in maintaining denominational forms (which often become their chief concern) and are too brittle to bend to the needs of the people they seek to serve. This is not to say that the principles of the gospel need to be altered; they do not. But I am talking about forms, not principles.

As an illustration, imagine what would happen if we eliminated the invitation from our Sunday services. A vociferous howl would certainly go up, and some churches would undoubtedly split over it. Yet there is not one word in the Bible about this procedure. It is a modern invention of modern evangelists. It may have its usefulness, and it has its hindrances. Yet it becomes a real point of contention when someone suggests it may not be the best way to encourage people to acknowledge Christ or confess sins.

We should not be surprised that the colleges are in trouble. Some are so liberal that they simply do not provide enough spiritual food for people to live on. Others are so conservative that, although they talk about searching for truth, they actually suppress honest truth-seeking. Students soon come to see them as political institutions dedicated to the preservation of denominational ideas. Churches are often viewed in the same way.

On the other hand, it is encouraging that the Bible still sells well, and countless people are still going about their own private religious

exercises. Another plus factor - indicated by the mail we get - is that many people, who have been on the brink of deserting the church because they have been unable to find in it what they think a genuine Christian experience should be, have been encouraged by the voices of concern to stay with it.

And this is the solution. Let's not jump ship because of a few pinholes in the hull. Let's work to achieve real Christianity in the 20th century. If those who were never really converted decide to leave, it may be the metal will be purer with less dross. I do not mean to depreciate the value of any man - all are precious in the Lord's sight,

and they should be in ours - but the strength of the church has never been in its numbers or in its wealth, but in its dedication to the spiritual life. Let's make that our goal.

Finally, I am optimistic because I believe God is involved in what is happening. Granted that this may be a purely subjective feeling, I am still betting my life that our Father is working things out in his own way. I can see the sun ascending over the horizon, and I am thankful that he has let me live in this time. I will not be surprised if history records this generation as one that underwent a true spiritual revival. One is certainly needed. Let's work and pray for its realization. ¶¶¶

SCISSORS AND PASTE AND THE BIBLE STUDENT

Perry C. Cotham

The story is told of a man named Sam who had an obsession that he was dead. He went around his house and in public exclaiming to any willing listener, "I'm dead, I'm dead, I must be dead!" Sam's wife warned him that he was upsetting the children and pleaded with him to stop believing he was dead or else she would take action. Sam's only reply was, "I'm dead, I'm dead, I know I'm dead." After a few hectic weeks, Sam's wife convinced him he should see a doctor. The doctor tried to get Sam to change his insane belief, but in spite of the evidence Sam persisted by saying, "I know I'm dead." Finally, the doctor got Sam to agree with the statement "Dead men don't bleed," and

Sam was sent home to repeat that phrase instead of "I'm dead."

Months later Sam returned to the doctor for another session. "What have you got to say today, Sam?" the doctor asked hopefully. "Just one thing," Sam proudly said, "and that is that dead men don't bleed." "Great," said the doctor. "Now hold out your hand." As Sam held out his hand, the doctor plunged a long, sharp knife into it, and blood spurted from the hand and flowed freely to Sam's clothing and the floor. "Now what have you got to say about that?" asked the doctor. Sam paused and kept staring at his wounded hand in stunned disbelief and then exclaimed with surprise, "By George, Doctor, dead

men DO bleed!"

The moral of the anecdote is that some people, despite all the evidence in the world, will doggedly continue to believe exactly what they want to believe. Perceptual psychologists are now proving that this troublesome tendency to see or hear, or to believe only what we want to believe, is a characteristic that everyone has to some degree. This kind of behavior is called autistic thinking, and it is a kind of mental process in which truth is confused with desire.

Ultimately, Christians are guided by the Scriptures in matters of religious faith and practice. In attempting to convert others, we first ask them to "simply" forget their past beliefs and practices and to fully open their minds; when we fail to convert them, we walk away perplexed as to why all people cannot see the Bible alike. Unfortunately, however, many of us are addicted with the same problem we ask our religious friends to overcome - we approach the Bible with our own set of preconceived notions and assumptions, and we do not allow anyone else to fairly question these assumptions. We fail to see that much of our misunderstanding of the Bible is not over what the words literally say as much as over how these words are interpreted and applied.

The result of autistic thinking in studying the Bible is seen when some people make up their minds as to what certain passages mean before they give them fair study, and when someone disagrees with, or even questions, their interpretation, the labels "liberal" or "her-

etic" are conveniently used. Using this approach, one can believe virtually anything he desires and then go to the Bible and "prove" his point. For example, one brother I know believes it is always a sin for a woman to wear slacks, and his proof was found in Deut. 22:5. More tempting to most of us, however, is solving questions by first making up our minds as to the conclusion we want to reach and then going to the Bible in search of scriptures to support our view. In such important questions as the nature of Biblical inspiration, the basis for fellowship, the meaning of the word "kingdom," our relationship to the civil government, the Christian's social responsibility in this world, and the proper Christian attitude toward other races and toward members of other religious groups, we must study the Bible first and come to our conclusion last, and not vice versa. The same is true for questions of lesser import, such as the meaning of phrases like "breaking bread" or "baptism for the dead."

Now of course one cannot completely escape preconceived assumptions, and complete objectivity, if proven desirable, is humanly impossible. But the sad truth is that our assumptions are often shaped less by an honest, diligent study of the Bible and relevant materials than by our past experiences, our parents' beliefs, and our social and cultural milieu. For example, it would be interesting to know how much our attitude toward material possessions and carnal warfare, to name just two things, are shaped by the doctrine of

"Americanism." Perhaps it is time to ask if indeed many who wear the name of Christ are not in reality Americans who happen to be Christians instead of Christians who happen to be Americans.

In this connection, many preachers and teachers are guilty of using a "scissors and paste" approach to the Scriptures. It's almost as though in preparing their messages they wrote down on paper what they wanted to believe and then went to all parts of the Bible, cutting passages that at least in the remotest manner mentioned that topic, and pasted them to the outline. It does not matter if the words were not originally meant for us, or that they were quoted out of context, or even if the original meaning has been altered - as long as the verse touches in some way upon the topic the speaker is using, then it can be cited. There are a number of nice sermon outline books that are of inestimable value if one wants to do this kind of preaching or teaching, but, in a pinch, a concordance may be used for the same purpose.

Now we who sit in the pew can be blamed in part for encouraging our ministers to misuse the Bible this way. I well remember that as a student preacher at Lipscomb I liked to imitate "big name" preachers who could glibly quote seventy-five to a hundred scriptures per sermon. The congregations who heard these sermons in which I attempted to reach the hundred mark in scriptures quoted were apparently pleased. The more I could cite and quote, the more they were impressed; and today, sadly enough, many members still judge the qual-

ity of a sermon by how many single scriptures a minister can pack into a thirty minute message. But I'm convinced that such sermons are more a performance than a genuine and honest use of the Bible to deal with spiritual and human problems. Certainly our messages need the authority of a "Thus saith the Lord," but as listeners we need to be aware that only a few scriptures, properly and fairly interpreted and applied, can render a sermon more "Biblical" than the "scissors and paste" approach.

It is not the purpose of this comment to present basic principles of hermeneutics, but more scholarship and writing in this field is one of our biggest brotherhood needs today. The Bible student must ask what a certain passage meant to the audience to whom it was originally written, and then ask what it means when applied to the contemporary audience. In answering either question, he knows he has certain assumptions and preconceived notions, but he attempts to identify these and question them. His open-mindedness does not mean broad-mindedness or gullibility, nor does it mean making changes for the sake of change. It simply means that he is not so committed to previous assumptions that he cannot give every idea or interpretation that is new to him a fair trial in his own mind.

This intellectual honesty is not the easy way out, and it is assumed at a great risk - the risk that he may have been wrong for many years, the risk that he may have taught others wrongly, and the risk of losing this intellectual honesty and principle if he does not make

the necessary sacrifices to adjust to new findings. The price of growing spiritually, whether in knowledge of faith or in practice, can be

both challenging and painful. But, then again, this quality of courage is what Christianity is all about.



UNPREDICTABLE!

Amos Ponder

Not long ago a fellow elder of a certain community of God's people told me that I had become very unpredictable. Such a statement can be highly disconcerting. Yet, after some reflection, I believe it is one of the greatest compliments one can receive. The statement was made because I had stated my true beliefs and was trying desperately to be honest with myself and others. I confess that being completely honest was new to me; and if I know anything about people, it would be new to most everyone. But why should such a one be thought unpredictable? This is not easy to answer, but I will attempt to shed some light on the problem.

One thing that all societies seem to have in common is insistence upon conformity. We are expected to dress alike, have similar hairdos, speak with the same accent, have the same moral standards and hundreds of other characteristics, some of which are very subtle. There have always been nonconformists, but they usually pay dearly. Historically, penalties for nonconformity have ranged from such extremes as the Salem witch hunts to milder forms of social outcasting.

We start teaching our children to conform very early, and I'm sure

that most of us can see more good than evil in conforming to a certain society. There certainly would be chaos without some standards to follow. But conformity can be carried to harmful extremes.

This conformity to society has been carried over into the community of the saints and is perverting Christ and his Body. This is easy to discern in the actions of the leaders toward a new member. A young man is converted, and immediately the leaders move in to guide him in the right direction. If his thinking does not conform, he is taken aside and told first that he is good deacon material; then reference is made to a mistake he has made on a certain point. The new convert, with his ego built up, strives thenceforth to conform to the views of the leaders and ceases to study and think for himself. After being in the church for a few years, he is able to parrot all the party lines. Then he is made a deacon. He has to be sure to back the elders in all their decisions, regardless of whether they are right or wrong. If he holds out, he will eventually be promoted to elder.

To further illustrate, an article - "The Doctrine of Christ" - in the May 26, 1964, issue of Firm Foun-

dation quotes from British theologian William Temple's Readings in St. John's Gospel:

For the church, commissioned to transmit to all generations the true doctrine which may elicit saving faith, heresy is more deadly than hypocrisy or even than conscious sin.

From this statement we gather that the author is equating heresy with doctrinal error - a popular but erroneous concept of the word, since a heretic in the Bible is one who will cause division, even though his view may be the correct one.

When is one in doctrinal error? The word doctrine comes from a Greek word which means that which is taught, or whatever the teacher teaches. If we do not understand all that he taught, we are in doctrinal error - a sin of ignorance. In the broad sense of the word, the doctrine of Christ is everything that he taught. Hypocrisy, from that viewpoint, is doctrinal error. If heresy is doctrinal error, why is it more deadly than hypocrisy? Christ was more severe with the hypocrite and the one with a poor attitude (conscious sin) than he was with mistaken worshippers, prostitutes, or publicans, many of whom were good people at heart but ignorantly in sin.

The view that heresy (doctrinal error) is more deadly than hypocrisy or conscious sin is common. But heresy could be a sin of ignorance; hence, it is more deadly to be sincerely mistaken than to intentionally sin, for hypocrisy and conscious sin are intentional!

What we are confronted with is an attempt to regard a few vital points as "doctrine," other matters

being viewed as of less importance or only opinion. Heresy is "more deadly" only to a denomination, because the denomination decides what is essential and loses its identity when these "essentials" are not maintained above all else.

In the denominational situation one must sacrifice honesty, integrity, and sincerity in order to preserve "doctrine." He must learn the position that the "brotherhood" holds on all the important subjects, keep all doubts and opposing views to himself, use the correct language, and avoid any discussion on differing views of "doctrine." In studying the Bible to learn the doctrines of the church, one unavoidably comes up with differing views on some subjects. To remain in good standing, he is forced to be dishonest. He sacrifices his integrity to keep from losing his place in the synagogue.

When a man reaches this point, he is predictable. If asked a question on worship, the true church, the pattern, and others, he has a pat answer. His response in most any situation is predictable because he is a stereotype, a robot, or a Pharisee, with an outward conformity to ritual, but with no heart. He is an empty shell because he does not really believe in what he is doing. I speak from experience, but I think that I also speak for others who cannot speak for themselves.

What a shock it is to see what we are. We look into the mirror often, but do not see ourselves as we are, or we forget. We compare ourselves with ourselves and therefore are not wise (2 Cor. 10:12). When we see ourselves as we are and de-

sire to do the will of God, a great change takes place. We can be completely honest - without fear of what men shall do to us. We become very unpredictable in the eyes of the society. We no longer have the pat answer, but search for the truth and frankly talk about our views. Our response in worship to God may not be orthodox, but it is the real self with a true heart. We may no longer be concerned with petty things that only factious men regard highly, but we strive to please God, not men. There is

TROUBLE NOT ISRAEL

Ralph Sinclair

A denomination which holds to a concept of God-in-a-book is not likely to appreciate any prophets which arise within it. Somehow the story about one evicted prophet in the Church of Christ needs to be told. The name of the man and the community are not important to the lesson to be drawn from it. In fact, it is not a unique situation; the same thing has happened from Texas to Tennessee! Prophets have always reaped abuse, and this one has been no exception. He has reached a position of experience and maturity which the church so desperately needs to draw upon as a resource. Were he named, this article would embarrass him, because of his Christ-like humility. He will receive no honorary degrees from one of our colleges. There will be no notice in the brotherhood papers. The church will not mourn his pass-

closer unity among such people, although there may be less conformity. One should not be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2). Such people are so unpredictable that they could turn the world upside down.

We do not need to try to be different for the sake of being different, but we do need to conform to what Christ taught. If this causes my brethren to call me unpredictable, I wear the name gladly.

ing. Rather his testimonial will be from God. It will be born by devout children and grandchildren, and all whose lives he enriched.

Many who will feel his compassion and concern will not even be aware of this devout saint. His concern reaches even to another shore where he never stepped, where he was not known by name. Children in this distant land, like even my new daughter, received milk through cow programs made possible by his interests shared with others likeminded.

Here we see a man who is an elder and prophet in every Biblical sense. In his chosen career of medicine he helped in God's mending of the human body. In this he saw all work as sacred, even to manual labor performed on his farm. In recognition he received national offices and honors. Yet his own

church covets not his advice. Oh, how the church heaps honors upon its hireling priests and heaps abuse upon its prophets!

This kind and genial doctor, while pursuing medicine, did not neglect the Book held in honor by his people. He was a real student and an inspiring teacher. I never saw his equal during years of classes in a church college. As a fearless expositor of Holy Writ he had no peer. He was especially interested in and knowledgeable of the prophetic books, and yet did not neglect the others. In a long and successful career as teacher in church Bible classes he chose to remain open to the Spirit. He was ever mindful that new truth would spring from the Word. One amazing trait of his was that, no matter how many times he taught a book, he used newly prepared notes. For lesser teachers such carefully prepared and researched class notes would bear repeating with other groups. This was typical of his approach to any book in the Bible. His classes were always open and free, but without debate. He had the rare ability to always be forceful and positive in his convictions, but without being dogmatic.

Because of this approach his remarks were often misinterpreted and ignorantly, if not maliciously, spread. Because of his interest in prophecy, it was rumored that he was a "premillennialist." In our church this was a heresy so dark that it was always mentioned in hushed tones. The mere suspicion of it was enough to raise the ire of even distant congregations. It was an unjust label, which further underscores the fact that those it can-

not understand or accept the church labels and maligns.

His personal life was above reproach. He took Scripture seriously, so seriously in fact that he confessed his sins freely before his Bible classes. It was not a self-effacing act of mortification, but the mark of a true disciple. He sought no positions of notoriety. This was one reason he did not put into print the distillations of his hours of study and teaching. With notes like his, lesser teachers would have rushed into print. He wanted to be free to change his mind when led by the Spirit.

The questions he posed to his classes were not easily answered. The position one occupied was not important to him, but the direction one was facing was.

He saw his own children castigated for reasons similar to those given above. They marched to the beat of a different drum, and since he saw they were in the same procession, he learned from them.

The recent book VOICES OF CONCERN, which exposes some ills of the church of Christ, has been studiously avoided by church of Christ people. Only one orthodox reviewer has paid it the attention it deserves. In his serious review of the book, Dr. M. Norvel Young asks the question of his readers (and presumably the readers of VOICES), "Do we really look like this?" In answer to this poignant question: Yes, Dr. Young, unfortunately this is the way we look when we drive such people away from us as the noble doctor, his Spirit-filled children, and his spiritual children who are proud to call him father.

THE CHURCH AND THE URBAN CRISIS

Hubert G. Locke

For over one hundred years now our church has made the bold claim that it and it alone represents - in doctrine, worship, polity and structure - the church that was established in apostolic times, the Lord's Church, if you will, the true Church of Christ. We have not been troubled by the fact that other churches make the same claim, nor that every reformation movement for the past thousand years of Christian history has, in some way, laid claim to be about the same task of restoring the purity of the early church. In spite of the fact that we have not been alone in our pursuit, we have with great determination searched the Scriptures and then diligently tried to apply their precepts to our Christian community. And I am convinced that for the sum and substance of our 100 years of activity, we get an A for effort but an F - a failure, if you will - for accomplishment. And our failure lies in three areas; it is not a failure in what we HAVE restored or maintained or preserved in doctrine and worship, but instead a failure in what we have NOT restored in the quality of our life together in Christ and our genuine, Christian love for one another. That is our first and great failure.

The second failure stems from the first, and it lies in our arrogance for having convinced ourselves and in our attempts to convince others that we have indeed restored, in its FULLNESS AND COMPLETE-

NESS, New Testament Christianity. We have I fear made sound doctrine synonymous with correctness in worship; we have confused purity in polity with pureness of heart; we have assumed that because we call "Bible things by Bible names," we have completed the great task of the restoration of Christ's Church. Most of all, we have erred greatly in the belief that because "we have been silent where the Bible is silent," we have also been speaking where the Bible speaks - and that tragically is simply not true. In some instances we have spoken where the Bible speaks; in others, we have been silent where the Bible is silent, but in many crucial instances, we have been strangely and pathetically silent where the Bible speaks the loudest - and that is the second and great failure.

The third failure emerges from our neglect to extend the task of restoring the church far enough. Our restoration efforts have by and large been limited to right worship, proper baptism, correct government; but we have hardly moved at all in the vital, DOCTRINAL area of right attitudes, proper relationships, correct conduct toward one another. Our energies have been poured into bigger and better buildings, greater and more effective personal work campaigns, endless Gospel meetings, city wide crusades and extensive foreign missionary programs, but we remain a church whose colleges had to be

threatened by the federal government before we would admit our own black brethren as students, and we are still a brotherhood which tolerates scurrilous and scandalous, racist journals to be published and distributed by some of our brethren in the name of Christ and His Church; we are still in the year 1970 a fellowship of Christians who build buildings while the hungry in our cities go unfed, who hold meetings while the naked go unclothed, who spend time in our own fellowships and lectureships while those who are sick go unvisited and those in prison unattended. We stand, I fear, as a church which has washed the outside of the cup, which has whitewashed the walls of our splendid sepulchres, which has observed fastidiously all the tithe, mint and cummin of Biblical ritual, but we have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy and a faith in God that would impel us to battle against the great social evils that mar the lives of so many people in this world.

If these are our great failures - and I clearly and strongly believe that they are - then what are our challenges? Thus far I have shared with you my own thoughts and observations on where we have failed our Lord and why we have failed, and I label them as my own assessments with which you may choose to agree or disagree. But when it comes to what our Lord demands of us, there is no room for disagreement, nor any real or sincere question as to what we as Christians are called to do and to be; the only question is whether we will be obe-

dient to the Divine demands.

Let us, as we turn to the Scriptures, not rehearse and repeat those well-known verses which everyone knows but no one takes seriously. Those preachers among us who have been courageous enough to tackle the volatile issue of race have all repeated Paul's exhortation: "for there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free man, male or female, for ye are all one in Christ" and "for he has made of one blood all nations for to dwell together on the face of the earth." But the person in the pew has been, in effect, silently saying to himself: Paul said "Jew and Greek," not "black and white," and "maybe we all have to live on the same earth but not in the same neighborhood or worship in the same church." At least if we have not been saying this, we have certainly been believing it and practicing it, for just look around you and ask where are the churches in which black and white worship together? Count them in any city or any state, for that matter, and you will not use up the fingers on one hand. And where are the Christians who are the spokesmen in their communities for racial justice, for open housing, for integrated schools, for equality in employment? Where are the Christians who are at work in the slums or who are trying to break the racial hostilities of the suburbs? No, my friends, either we don't believe or we choose to ignore the Bible when it tells us that we are one in Christ. And so perhaps it is best if we try to find some other word of God that perhaps will speak to us more directly

and more meaningfully about racial separateness and our duties as Christians.

That word, I believe, is given to us in Jesus' own words in John 13:34: "Little children," the Master said, "it is just a little while longer that I will be with you. You will seek me, but as I said to the Jews, where I am going you cannot come. So now I say to you that a new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another. As I have loved you, you also should love one another."

And then, as if to make absolutely certain that his disciples understood what he was saying, Jesus repeated: "By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

I do not know of any word of God that is clearer, more simply put, more direct, less capable of being misunderstood than this. It is, if you will, a clear command of Christ: we are not caught with the necessity of trying to derive necessary inferences, or looking for apostolic examples, although there are many of both. It is, if you will, a CONDITION of discipleship, and I wish to remind you that nowhere else in all the recorded sayings of Jesus are we given as clear and unequivocal command, in His own words, as we are in these words: that you love one another. All the other conditions of discipleship that we believe and teach as being basic and essential to Biblical Christianity: right baptism, right worship, right government, right name - all of

them hinge on this: our love for one another. And because we have before us at this point a concern for the issue of race, let us understand and confess before God and repent of our failure - our abysmal failure to listen to Christ, to follow His word, to be His disciples - at this very point at which he makes the most essential condition for discipleship.

Only if we are willing, I believe, to recognize and confess our failure to follow Christ - to put the matter bluntly - that we have not been Christ's disciples, not been Christians in this most Christian of concerns, are we ready and able to face the challenges of our age. And for those of us whose daily lives are lived in the cities of this nation, that challenge confronts the church as perhaps no other challenge does.

It is the city today where all the truths which Christ taught need so desperately to be heard and seen today. Heard AND seen, mind you, for the ears of city dwellers have grown deaf to the noise of competing and conflicting religious claims which come to them amidst the roar of the factories, the steady blare of rock 'n roll and the incessant hard sell of the advertisers. We would do well in the city not to fall into the trap of those who bombard daily the lives of city dwellers with yet another product. When we try to "sell" Christianity - no matter how modern our approach, no matter how sophisticated our methods - we simply become one of a thousand different products all convinced and trying to convince others of the

merits of their particular product or brand name. But what the world awaits is not people who will SELL, but Christians who will SHOW by the quality of their lives and their relationships with one another what the true and real meaning of the life in Christ is all about.

This is especially true when we confront the challenge of the church to the inner city. Here are the people who are the victims of every conceivable exploitation known to man - economic, social, educational, cultural - and religious. They are people who have been promised everything in the name of Christianity - from wealth to success to relief from backaches - and given nothing of substance by the church that makes them whole. They are people who are not the least bit interested in the peculiarities of our faith, who have no patience with our persistent attempts to differentiate ourselves from other religious faiths and practices, who are far more concerned with where the next meal will come from, and how the rent will be paid, and whether the job will hold out another month.

But they are people who will respond to the cup of cold water offered in Christ's name. They are people who want not to be fed from our poor baskets or clothed with our cast-offs but given the chance to earn their own bread, to buy for their children, to build a decent present and a hopeful future for themselves as you and I have done. And therefore they represent the great challenge to the church - not simply to save their souls but to

redeem their whole lives from the curse of poverty and loneliness and hopelessness and despair so that they can live in the marvelous light of Him who has called us out of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son.

The church which spends millions of dollars on overseas missions every year is neglecting the greatest mission field of all - the one that is right in our own front yards, the one in which we have been selling our buildings, pulling up our memberships and fleeing from because it is easier to serve God away from its problems and "with our own kind." I dare to say to you, with love and with candor, that I believe in the final day of the consummation of all things, when each of us shall stand before the great Judge of all creation to give an account of our stewardship - not what we believed or how we worshipped - but what we believed and what we did BECAUSE we believed - I am convinced that we will be judged, not by the buildings we erected or the campaigns we ran or the meetings we sponsored, but by the people we loved in Christ's name. Daniel Webster said it best:

If we work upon marble, it will perish; if on brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we work upon immortal minds, and imbue them with the just fear of God and love of our fellow men, we will engrave on those tablets something that will brighten to all eternity.

LETTERS

NOTE: Some people say that cries for change come only from young people who do not know the past battles fought for Christ. The two letters which follow, from veteran saints with a combined experience of many decades, may cast some doubt on this assertion.

... And a Touch of Pride

My generation is rooted in the very beginning of Church of Christism. Physically I was born into it sixty-four years ago - the sort of birth that accounts for the greater portion of our membership. I followed the mob with all the enthusiasm generated by mobism. I rallied to its slogans: "we speak where the Bible speaks, and quiet as mice where it is quiet"; "we alone are responsible for restoring Christianity."

Being a nobody (just a member of the silent majority) and not in the struggle for pre-eminence, years before Ketcherside, Garrett, or Myers, I read the New Testament to find OUR image, not God's. I found it depicted, but not as I had hoped. I restrained my previous habit of scripture jumping, and my thoughts came to dwell on one scripture that flew up and hit me as a loose board does when stepped on its end, namely, "If you were blind, you would have no sin, but because you say you see your sin remaineth." This was really ME. My religion was vested in my claim to rightness, my pride in the fact that all others were blind.

A fallacy plainly antithetic to the religion Christ sought to restore was the mob spirit. In His wisdom He acted and spake with responsi-

bility for the individual, rather than moving in the spirit of the mob. Christ averted a disaster where the mob would have stoned a poor woman by calling for individual responsibility, or an examination of oneself.

Who would dare to claim individually what the Church of Christ claims as a group? Would any go about shouting, "I have found it. I have it. I do everything according to instructions?"

However much we're inclined to confess we're wrong in some areas, we still cling to our pride and arrogance groupwise.

Our slogans and cliches are not masterminded by Christ. Jesus referred to himself as "the son of man," never went about shouting, "I am the Christ." He preached the kingdom of heaven, went about doing good, and was unique among men for his deep sympathy and great love for all men. "Who do men say I, the son of man, am?" was not asked of idle curiosity. The thoughtful thought He was connected with God, not because of His claims, but like Nicodemus, knew by His works and speech that God was with Him.

There are many people who know Christ, but will ask of "the church," "But who are you?" Aside from our attacks on others, our sermons and publications are as though they

came from a special breed - to and about restorationists.

Christ alone can rightfully be called a restorationist. He came to restore the soul, the spirit, the very heart of God to men. When we store this, God-seekers will come from the east and the west to sit with us in his kingdom. We need not strive, nor cry out in the street, nor bruise a broken reed; nor need we cast stones at other members of the human race. But to confess that we would see Jesus alone would be good for our souls and the souls of all men.

I can no longer thrill to topics from restorationists' views. What has been restored? What would be lost of brotherhood, kindness, sympathy for those who have been robbed of human dignity, concern for the suffering and all the things revealed by Christ as the soul and spirit of the kingdom? I dare say that should we as a group be suddenly annihilated from the earth, our absence would cause no grief; and if men were compelled to choose one group for annihilation, it would be us, for all others have missions of mercy extending round the world while we are too encumbered with many things to choose the good part. Like the priest and Levite, we must hurry to worship and recitation of our CORRECT views concerning the five-item-system and instrumental music.

How many wounded (on the way, as we pass on our way to correct worship) are of no consequence to us? It was different with Jesus. His precious time was devoted to the LIFE of the WAY, the rock foundation, LOVE.

Oh, Lord, forgive our foolish ways,

Restore our rightful minds.
In purer lives thy service find,
In deeper reverence praise.

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Mission Impossible?

I have been a Christian 30 years, have traveled in seven different countries, and I must say that the present purpose of INTEGRITY is very badly needed. All Christians free of churchanity should support this paper to the fullest extent. People in every nation are basically the same; the organized groups of Christians separating themselves from other organized groups are no different in us than in the denominations around us. They are hopelessly divided, and we have followed them.

Yet perhaps our cause of division may not be in a hopeless state. But only Christians free of this sin are able to think and reason, because they do not have the shackles of the group over them. Their education is not in a group security; their thinking is not curtailed by group authority; their lives are not dominated by church dictation. They can freely live as they believe without fear of being discriminated against by the authority of the church. They are the CALLED OUT whom the Truth has made free of the massive confusion of divided groups. I make a plea to all free Christians: support this paper!

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