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Dangers of Legalism
Telling It Like It Isn't
Church Renewal
A Fear of Fellowship
The Mind of Apollos
Indices to Volumes I and II

Dean Thoroman
Perry C. Cotham
David Elkins
Craig M. Watts
Chester S. Perhacs
Don Reece

DANGERS OF LEGALISM

DEAN THOROMAN

Legalism is defined as "strict, literal, or excessive conformity to the law or to a religious or moral code."¹ Those who so conform are properly called legalists and dangers resulting from their attitudes and behavior are the topic of this paper, with particular emphasis on implications for the church.

An important point should be made first: No criticism is intended or implied regarding sincere attempts to understand and to follow Biblical principles. In fact, readers of this article are strongly urged to study the scriptures with diligence while making honest efforts to translate their understanding into consistent action.

On the other hand, legalistic approaches to Christianity are held to be at fault and some of the ensuing dangers will hopefully be exposed by what is to follow. As usual, responses are invited—whether in agreement or not.

One of the dangers of legalism is the encouragement it gives to *mote picking and gnat straining*. Such activities were cited by Jesus as examples of ludicrous inconsistency. Imagine! Trying to remove a splinter from someone else's eye without even being aware of the telephone pole in one's own! Or, gagging on a gnat while consuming a camel! Yet, legalism is the fertile soil in which behavior like this germinates and flourishes.

Another danger of excessive conformity to a religious code comes from the feeling of *utter frustration and uncertainty* in never be-

ing able to fully satisfy the law's demands. One can never be sure he **knows, understands, or completely obeys** the legal code to which and by which he is bound. The law becomes an oppressive taskmaster with rigid requirements which can never be totally satisfied. Under these circumstances, some commit spiritual suicide, while others become fanatical worshippers of the law itself. Either of these choices is tragic, but evidence exists that many church members have gone or are going one way or the other. Backsliding and Bibliolatry are the symptomatic terms used to describe such consequences of unsatisfactory attempts to measure up to the mandates of religious legalism.

Judgmental attitudes abound in an atmosphere of literalism. There seems to be more than an accidental relationship between emphasizing strict adherence to code-keeping and self-righteous evaluation according to an individual's interpretation of that code. Another aspect of this attitude is finding fault in others so that the nit-picker always looks good by comparison. Motives are questioned and behavior is suspected, while mercy and compassion are apparently forgotten. Who is to blame when the target of such carping criticism finally decides to cast his lot in another direction?

Dogmatism is also likely to rear its stubborn head where strict obedience to spiritual law is emphasized. The more certain we really are of our position, the greater should

be our feeling of security. Usually, those who are confident about themselves have no compulsion to demand conformity from others. Unfortunately, the less secure we are about anything, the more we try to create the opposite impression. Thus, we make a lot of noise about our "certainties" and demand that everyone conform to our understanding of the "law." Backing down from a position is seen as a sure sign of weakness and differing views are considered dangerous. Why does anyone continue to subject himself to the dogmatist? Perhaps some are so weak and insecure about anything that they want to have their lives controlled by others who give the appearance of being strong and certain about everything. Whatever the reason, individual freedom is too often meekly surrendered and rigid group conformity is then equated with righteousness. Should anyone be surprised that an occasional uprising occurs when an individualist raises a few pertinent questions and refuses to give up his personal rights?

The "party line" becomes increasingly significant in a legalistic system. A jargon peculiar to the sect develops, so that members are identified as being "loyal" and "sound" by their skill in using the party language. Meaningless phrases are often memorized and repeated with little or no consideration as to their value or relevance. Interpretations of the Bible on most matters must be approved by "doctors of the law" if one is to be or become an authorized "defender of the faith." Is it not predictable that some would tire of this tyranny and would declare their independence, even at the risk of being marked as "trouble-makers"?

Protectionist policies evolve where excessive conformity is expected. The power structure moves quickly to keep "innocent"

ears from hearing "false teaching." "Liberal" preachers and others are lambasted and labeled. A form of ex-communication is instituted, as "unsound" teachers are quizzed and quarantined. Truth squads are formed to dissect whatever is written or spoken by messengers with a mission who have had the misfortune of being marked. Open discussion is no longer allowed on "controversial issues" and spiritual martial law is strictly enforced, though seldom legally declared. Unless one is willing to turn his mind and soul over to someone else, why should he allow a man or a small group of men to make him afraid by such power-play tactics? Dictators-come-lately need to face the truth about church government. **We are all brothers and sisters in the body of Christ and we are ruled exclusively by one Father.** The church has NO human hierarchy — such power structures being characteristic of human institutions. Perhaps we have need for more protection from "protectionists" than from any other group among us!

An inevitable outgrowth of legalism is *constant splintering into groups* which consider themselves more righteous than others because they think they are understanding and keeping the law more perfectly. The party spirit is nurtured in an environment which delights in demonstrating differences. Those who are taught in and caught up with such partisanship can easily develop a feeling of superiority and exclusiveness which others suspect may be self-deception and false evaluation. Parties are nearly always formed by legalists or as a result of pressure from them. When groups voluntarily break off from larger organizations due to more conservative doctrinal views, they feel completely justified in forming additional religious parties because they honestly believe they

¹ Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, G.C. Merriam Company, Publishers.

are following "God's will" better than those from whom they separate. Another action which code-keepers invariably take is that of expelling the "liberals" from their ranks—again in the name of "contending for the faith." Where does the responsibility lie for continued splintering of the church, with those who raise issues or with those who over-react to them?

Other aspects of this topic might be covered, such as the establishment of party publishing houses, the censoring of reading material, attempts to control the preparation (brainwashing?) of ministers, accumulation of assets, and economic sanctions. These would merely confirm what many already believe—excessive conformity to a religious

code harms both the conformist and those with whom he must live. He is harmed because his vision is so restricted that he cannot see how great God's grace really is. Those around him suffer because they must continuously overlook his arrogant attitude and try to tolerate his intolerance.

There is hope because many have forsaken the wide road crowded with literalists and have started to enjoy the search for the more difficult path of freedom. If you like the challenge of being free in Jesus, join this happy band today. Resolve to remove every man-made barrier in your newly chosen way. The joy of freedom will encourage you to let God's Spirit move freely in your life. So be it!

Voice from the Past

"We are very tired of controversy, and still more of that unkind, uncourteous, and proscriptive spirit which appears to be the genius of every sectarian establishment. I would, indeed, very gladly bestow one hundred volumes of the warmest religious controversy as a reward to that gentleman who would teach me how to contend for the doctrine of Christ without offending any person in the world. Offences must come; yet I think it more than probable that we occasion many more than the Lord calls for; and that, of all our earthly sufferings, the smallest share is for the sake of righteousness. Let us, then, brethren of the Press, all try to improve a little in our next volumes. I am willing to try. Let us all contend for the doctrine of Christ in the spirit of Christ."

—Alexander Campbell, *Millennial Harbinger*, 1835.

TELLING IT LIKE IT ISN'T

PERRY C. COTHAM

A summons to more honesty and frankness would hardly seem necessary for our age. After all, this is a completely different age from the one our grandparents and even our parents knew. Note the explosion of four-letter words in all forms of mass media, especially in motion pictures; even John Wayne is less inhibited in verbal expression these days. Witness the frankness of sexual matters in popular magazines. And the explicit discussion to which housewives may choose to be exposed via afternoon television serials would have easily caused their grandmothers to blush. The plea of black youth to "tell it like it is" seems to have been adopted as a motto for communication by many people, young and old alike. But wait a minute! Before heaping laurels on this generation for integrity and openness, I propose that we look at an almost hidden but dangerous enemy of plain speech, the euphemism.

Probably as old as human language itself, the euphemism is the substitution of a more pleasant word or term for a blunt one—words dressed in sheep's clothing. We have often been warned of the easy tendency to dismiss another person or idea we do not like or fear by giving it some vague label which charges it with emotion and often paints it to be worse than it really is. Attaching the label of "communistic" to social or political action we despise or the label "liberal" to religious ideas that, for some reason or other, we prefer not to examine critically are examples of this. But we also

need to be warned of the opposite tendency omnipresent in human behavior—reducing the effect and impact of truth by discussing and thinking of people, ideas, and behavior in less than candid language.

Semanticists are agreed that the language we choose is a revelation of how we think and feel about personalities and ideas. In fact, increased knowledge of language choices will increase knowledge of society; in studying the ideas and attitudes of other societies and cultures, anthropologists have made brilliant use of linguistic insights. Further, and more important, the manner in which we choose to discuss and describe any given person, idea, or object substantially affects the way we think about it. Students of linguistics have had a long indoctrination in the concept that language is both a transparent glass through which we see the world and a tool by which we mold it. An individual's language will in great part determine his perception and his thinking and the methods he uses to arrive at conclusions.¹

It is because our language habits help shape our beliefs and attitudes that the use of euphemisms may be dangerous—it is a disguised and subliminal method of self-delusion. The sight of what is ugly, or unpleasant, or unpopular can be obscured in our minds by glossing it over with softer words or terms that skirt or understate the truth. Whenever a person is unwilling to come to grips with stern reality he need not categorically deny the truth; such a denial would place an onerous task on a basically rational man and a

less demanding adjustment is sought. Such a face-saving adjustment can be found in the euphemism—he needs merely to think and speak in images and languages with more pleasant connotation. But the result is that the affective connotations of a considerable number of words provide obstacles, sometimes serious obstacles, to proper mental attitudes and to effective communication.

EASY INDIFFERENCE

By his language habits a Christian can move deeper into insensitivity, indifference, and outright apathy to the needs of others. The term “senior citizen,” for example, may rob the elderly of much of the dignity of aging that belongs to them; in addition, the term may do little to enhance our sense of responsibility regarding their wants and needs. It is easier to be indifferent about our responsibilities to the poor and hungry when we can dismiss them from our minds as simply “underprivileged.” It is easier to forget about people trying to survive in disgracefully dilapidated apartment buildings when we describe their living conditions as “substandard housing” rather than slums. A 1965 Jules Feiffer cartoon tells the story of a derelict who is informed he is no longer “poor,” he is “needy,” then he is “deprived,” then “underprivileged,” later “disadvantaged,” and so forth. After much circumlocution, the man quipped, “I still don’t have a dime but I have a great vocabulary.”

MARTIAL RHETORIC

Much startling truth about modern warfare, the most tragic and most burdensome of social diseases, is concealed behind a large figleaf of euphemisms and jargon.² In fact, perhaps we should use the word “crusade”

instead of war since it has been applied by some important person to virtually every major conflict. Related to the conduct of modern warfare is such terminology as “selective service,” “task force,” “Operation something-or-other” (popular in World War II), “liberation,” “fraternization,” “brainwashing,” “police action,” “military advisers,” “sortie,” and “Defense Department” (formerly the “Department of War”), all of which are to some extent concocted for special connotation and worthy of rhetorical analysis.³

The rhetoric and propaganda that accompanied all modern wars is filled with examples of euphemistic language manufactured and manipulated to effect public support and the current “undeclared war” in Viet Nam continues to provide examples potent enough for purposes of illustration. We can become much more enraged when a plane is shot down over enemy territory if the aircraft is called a “reconnaissance plane” instead of a spy plane and, of course, a spy ship seems more offensive than an “intelligence ship.” The systematic destruction of crops and forests, depriving 600,000 people of their normal supplies of rice and other food, can be accepted as commonplace and all in the line of duty when called a “defoliation program.” Mass murder and destruction can be called “pacification” or “peace-keeping action” and “free-fire zones” refer innocently enough to mass expulsion of natives from their humble villages so an army can kill every living creature that remains without compunction. Invasion has become “incursion” and extensive bombing is “interdiction” or “air support.” Who is labeled the “aggressor” and who is labeled the “defender” may depend on which side you are on. What is glorified as a “commando raid” when executed by

the “good guys” becomes a vicious “sneak attack” or terrorism when committed by the enemy forces. An administration that rightly deplores violence on American campuses chooses to drop tons of bombs on North Viet Nam and neighboring Laos and Cambodia and call such action merely “protective reaction strikes.” Such rhetoric is not merely inflated—it is consciously manipulated.

Who can doubt that our attitudes and ideas about war—the current one or any other—are affected by the language we see and hear used to discuss it and the language we ourselves use in discussing and thinking of it? An uncritical acceptance of the connotation of many modern euphemisms can only enhance the remoteness of war from our everyday affairs and insulate the public conscience against the atrocious consequences of modern conflict.

SEX MORALITY

Despite the American society’s unprecedented obsession with sex, and the accompanying candor in discussing matters related to sexuality, there are probably more euphemisms related to sex morality, at least from the Christian point of view, than to any other aspect of human relations.⁴ If one accepts the affective language of movies and television these days, no one is committing adultery any more—they are merely having affairs or “being intimate.” Such reassuring terms not only diminish the possibility that the adulterer will pay for a double life with guilt, subterfuge, and impaired self-respect, but add an air of adventure, spicy romance and even propriety. A popular expression in the field of sexual euphemism is “relating to each other as human beings,” wherein the real meaning is ob-

scured to the point that one is not even certain a sexual connotation is meant. A college co-ed may live more easily with her conscience if she thinks of herself as a “swinger” rather than a fornicator; after all, “making it” (or even cruder, “shacking up”) with a male friend is not nearly so bad as being promiscuous. And many young men think of their sexual conquests as “scoring,” conjuring up images of athletic prowess and technique. A man prefers to call the woman with whom he consorts as a “mistress” rather than a concubine; and the “mistress” refers to the man she favors who is not her husband as her “lover.” Both “mistress” and “lover” connote position, authority, and a certain respectability, while “adulterer” has such a nasty, guilty ring about it. Incidentally, mate-swappers also like to claim the term “swinging” for their extramarital activities.

Immodesty in dress can be passed off as “stylish.” The stripper has now become an “exotic dancer.” When nudity is involved the French expression *au naturel* may effect an image of daring sophistication; for the less sophisticated, “birthday suit” will suffice. When a voyeur buys a ticket to view a pornographic film, he can salve his conscience by calling the whole thing “adult entertainment”—in fact, he could even commend himself for his unselfish support of “freedom of artistic expression.” Various forms of pornography are often obscurely referred to as “blue” or “bawdy.” Jokes and stories that some find amusing as “risque” or “ribald” might be better classed as “off-color.” or more candidly, “obscene.” Lewd revelry can pass as “go-go dancing” and, in some states, enjoys the sanction of court decrees that such entertainment is an expression of freedom of speech.

If the translators of the Scriptures faith-

fully discharged their responsibilities, and for the most part I believe they have, the Bible is a book that calls a spade a spade. It makes no apology for using words like "whore" and "harlot" for the prostitute rather than such popular jargon as "wayward women," "courtesans," "ladies of the evening," "scarlet women," or "call girls." While some prefer "love child," the Bible uses the word "bastard." And no one who has ever studied his censuring of the self-righteous Pharisees could ever claim that Jesus was vague or equivocal in his use of language.⁵ More honesty and frankness in discussion of sex morality, both in private and public discussions, would go a long way toward improving our own morals and in imparting our true convictions and attitudes to those with whom we are associated.

SOFTENING SIN

And while we are on the subject, have you observed that very few people commit sins these days? Instead they stumble through "shortcomings," "misjudgment," or even better, "indiscretions" which are often viewed as symptoms of "glandular imbalance" or "improper societal influences."

The impact and guilt of almost any sin can be lightened by resorting to euphemistic muddling. Bribery and graft have been referred to as "payola." A known liar is more safely described as a person who is creating a "credibility gap." When a young person's behavior leads to personal dissipation, it is more politely referred to as "sowing wild oats" or "indulging in early excesses." Homosexuals are now commonly referred to as "gay" and rape may be called "seduction," "betrayal," or "foul play." A gossip is dismissed as a "big talker." Coveting can be passed off as "daydream-

ing" or something similar and lust can be dismissed as "fantasy."

WEAKENING STRONG DRINK

The state of drunkenness has been given to as much euphemizing as any other deplorable condition of individuals. This is because there are various degrees of "intoxication" or "inebriation" (two nice, sedate terms) and many drunks are reluctant to concede they have gone too far with the bottle. Further, it is a social *faux pas* to get drunk during a dignified "happy hour," so it is better to be "tipsy," "stoned," "loaded," "plastered," "soused," "primed," "a little high," and so on, undoubtedly *ad infinitum*; of course, one is just as drunk under one label as another.

DODGING DEATH

It is not surprising that our culture has concocted all kinds of euphemisms to describe death. No one relishes the thought of his death and of his body stinking, so the unpleasant reality is often clouded in a merciful manner. In view of the Biblical doctrine of the immortality of the soul, some of the circumlocutions are justified. The Biblical writers themselves employ such terms as "gave up the ghost," "slept with his fathers," "gathered unto his people," "to go hence and be no more." Most journalists hew to the facts and let emotions fall where they may by using "die" or "death" in their reporting; but the popular "passed away" is in harmony with Christian doctrine and Saint Paul referred to the dead as being asleep. The deplorable thing is that so much euphemizing about death is an effort to somehow dodge its reality. One still hears frequently in informal discussion such ex-

pressions as "the inevitable," "joining the great majority," "gone away," and "no longer with us." Cruder expressions include "gone west," "shoved off," and "cashed in his chips." (There was inadvertent humor in a time of sadness when a young foreigner attempted to properly announce the death of his friend's mother: "Beg to inform you, Sir, but the hand that rocked the cradle has just kicked the bucket!") Though man can walk on the surface of the moon, he cannot stop death—rather than employing language which diminishes its reality he should prepare for it.

ETHICAL SIGNIFICANCE

"Words and the meanings of words are not matters merely for the academic amusement of linguists and logisticians, or for the aesthetic delight of poets," notes Aldous Huxley; "they are matters of the profound-

est ethical significance to every human being."⁶ Such has been the underlying premise of this paper, though we have surveyed but one aspect of man's language habits—the proclivity for using euphemisms.

In sum, a Christian is called to be on guard. He must be aware that the manner in which he is discussing or hears discussed any given person or idea unconsciously molds his attitudes and convictions for good or ill. He will take care that his choice of words does not *unnecessarily* shock or offend and he is aware that one does not have to be vulgar or uncommonly blunt to tell it like it is. Obviously, evasion and soft-peddling is common and easy and complete integrity and openness is far from a popular course to follow—indeed, it often requires a large measure of courage. But it is most in the manner of the Master Teacher whose example we claim to follow.

1 See Benjamin L. Whorf, "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language," in *Language, Thought and Reality* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1956), pp. 134-59; and Archibald Hill, "What is Language?" in *Dimensions in Communication*, ed. James H. Campbell and Hal W. Hepler (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1965), pp. 156-57.

2 Anthony Lewis develops this idea in some detail in a column released by the *New York Times* Service, published in the *Nashville Tennessean* and other papers, January 5, 1971. Columnist Lewis cites a statement of Jean-Paul Satre to the effect that "evil is a product of man's ability to make abstract that which is concrete." Lewis adds, "The Vietnam War has shown us how profound an insight that is, and how terrifying in a technological age."

3 The renowned linguist Mario Pei examines the origin and use of some of these terms in "The Voice of Annihilation" in *Words in Sheep's Clothing* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1969), pp. 111-121.

4 Geoffrey Wagner in *On the Wisdom of Words* (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1968) gives the most extensive modern treatment of the use of euphemisms in sex discussions. In this connection, the twentieth century is not unique. In the nineteenth century, properly cultured people would avoid using words like "breast" and "limb." And the evolution to using the word "pregnant" has carried us through such euphemisms as "cancelled all her social engagements," "in an interesting condition," "in a delicate condition," "knitting little booties," "in a family way," and, finally, "expecting." Perhaps the best historical treatment of the use of euphemism in the American society is found in H.L. Mencken's classic, *The American Language* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1936), pp. 284-318.

5 See Matthew 23, for example.

6 Cited in Wagner, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

CHURCH RENEWAL

DAVID ELKINS

There is hardly a church leader anywhere who does not earnestly desire to see his congregation come alive. Yet the task of actually bringing about such revival is a perplexing one. Even though church renewal is a persistent theme of contemporary sermons, discussions and religious books, we must all sadly acknowledge that there are far more words being spoken about renewal than there are actual occurrences of it. In fact it is so unusual for a church to experience in-depth renewal that if it does happen, that church is talked about far and wide. Like the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31, a church genuinely in the process of renewal is a rare and beautiful gem. While there are many obstacles which contribute to the rarity of church renewal, I feel there is one basic obstacle which underlies and permeates all the others. This obstacle, simply stated, is the imprisonment of the Spirit.

I am convinced that only God's Spirit can give rebirth and transformation to either an individual or a church. Therefore, in order for renewal to become a reality, the Spirit of God must be free to motivate our hearts and touch our lives. Yet this is precisely the problem in most churches. We have stifled the creative working of the Spirit by our own inflexible theological understandings. We have restricted the Spirit's activities to the rigid confines of our own system of orthodoxy and dogmatics. Even though we sing "God Moves in a Mysterious Way"—we do not really believe it. We are so convinced of the immutability

of all our patterns, rules, and forms that we would almost excommunicate the Spirit if he went outside them to perform his wonders. We have captured God inside our human brain. We have made the Creator of the universe small, simple, and completely predictable. He is a puppet suspended by our theological strings and he only moves, acts, and works when we grant him ecclesiastical permission and pull the strings.

Not only have we fully explored, explained, and captured God's Spirit; but we have also set the boundaries for every child of God. We turn the New Covenant scriptures into a rule book by which we regiment the behavior of Christians into a predictable pattern. Jesus said that every one born of the Spirit is like the wind: you can't tell where it came from and you can't tell where it is going. But this kind of freedom and unpredictability is a threat to any institutional church. So when the Official Church comes up against such a free-as-the-wind Christian, it generally squelches, stomps, and stops him dead.

Even though we sing "Beyond the sacred page I seek thee, Lord"—woe unto the man who actually seeks God in such an intimate, personal way. And double woe to the man who comes back to the congregation reporting that he has actually found Him! People like this are a threat to the status quo and they shake the security of those who are institutionally-minded. If you don't believe it, look at all the furor surrounding Pat Boone's joyful testimony that he has found

God in a way he never believed possible. Instead of rejoicing with Pat in his newfound life with God, many are assailing his motives and assassinating his character. Pat can no longer be held within the confines of the traditional Church of Christ creed. There is no way to predict or control the man. He has found God "beyond the sacred page" and it's driving the rule-makers and creed-defenders up the walls! And this illustrates my whole point: we do not experience renewal in the church simply because we squelch every exciting thing that comes along. The Spirit moves in a man's life; he tries to tell us about it; and we nail his hide to the wall. A man tells us that he has had a genuine encounter with God and we accuse him of making "strange sounds" and we brand him a dangerous heretic! This is exactly the reason we do not experience church renewal—we kill the prophets and Spirit-filled men that God sends to us!

Paul Tournier in his book *The Adventure of Living* said this concerning the church:

Its leaders are always hoping for a renewal of fervor, but can only conceive of it as taking the direction in which the Church is already travelling. But when it comes, it usually takes the form of a new departure, and one which is at first disconcerting to them, because it runs counter to the view they have of the Church in the light of the past. They feel that the new movement of the Spirit is betraying and destroying more than it is preserving and accomplishing. And so the official Church always resists these far-reaching spiritual adventures and only afterwards perceives that it has been saved by those whom it has persecuted.¹

Some elders and ministers, who cry the loudest for church renewal, are scared to death when the real thing comes along. They are among the first to label it as "unsound" and denounce it as a Satanic digression. In this way perhaps thousands of potential spiritual revivals have been successfully squelched.

Too many church leaders want to have their cake and eat it, too. They want to sit securely on top of a status quo institution and at the same time experience the adventure of church renewal. But it generally does not happen that way. If church leaders really wish to see their congregations come alive they must do two things. First, they must realize that *only God's Spirit can bring about church renewal*. Second, they must realize that *the Spirit is not confined to working only within the perimeter of their own theological understanding*.

Therefore, instead of trying to control, manipulate, and predict the Spirit, they must submit themselves in humility to him. Whenever they see signs of tender new life, they must rush to its aid. No matter how warped, twisted, and immature it may be, they must not trample it, but nourish, encourage, and cultivate it. They must resist the temptation of using their authority to squelch life which is not an offspring of their own theological dogmas.

God's Spirit is moving in hundreds of churches right now, producing fragile new life in quiet and inconspicuous ways. Whether or not this new life will grow up into a mighty tree of renewal will be determined to a large degree by how the leaders of those churches treat that fragile new life.

¹ Paul Tournier, *The Adventure of Living* (Harper & Rowe, Publishers). Used by permission.

A FEAR OF FELLOWSHIP

CRAIG M. WATTS

There is a growing fear within the church, and it is destroying the joy that God promises. The fear is depriving us of the power we have as a collective body; it is hindering us from seeking help from each other, and it is stopping us from openly discussing the problems of the Christian pilgrimage. This fear is the cause of certain communication barriers, and it is forcing us Christians to isolate ourselves from one another more than we should. Engulfing many members of the church is the fear of fellowship.

Fellowship (*koinonia*) means sharing something in common with others or simply sharing ourselves. We need to be able to share our goals, plans, and prayers with each other without fear of being rejected. Too many people in the world are hiding their disappointments and failures behind a mask of success and satisfaction, when in all reality, they are depressed and lonely. We do not need to mimic the world's hypocrisy. As Christians we should be able to be open about our downfalls as well as about our joys.

God gave us his fellowship as a free gift (Eph. 2:8-9), but all too often we try to sell the fellowship we have to offer others. The Lord offers fellowship because of his mercy and generosity while many Christians offer fellowship with a price tag of conformity attached! God called us and gave us his hand in order that we might "be conformed to the image of his son" (Rom. 8:28-29). But certain men desire others to be conformed to the image of their inter-

pretation of scripture *before* they will extend fellowship!

It is sad when one Christian is afraid to get too close to another brother in Christ for fear that a word might spill from his lips that may cause him to be written up by someone. We cannot talk freely with one another lest something we say cause us to be branded as "unsound." Recently, after preaching the final lesson in a gospel meeting, the speaker confessed in private, "I've not been that nervous in a long time. There were at least seven preachers in the audience." Is this fellowship? Instead of receiving encouragement from the other ministers, he only had fear of them and the hypercritical responses they might throw at him. Is this fellowship or is this fear of true fellowship?

Not long ago I received a letter from a friend who is a minister in the south. The letter read as follows:

I am in a real bind here. Yesterday I attended (I had no idea that this would take place) a "heresy trial." I went to a "preachers' meeting" that was to end before noon but there was an afternoon session at which the fate of a preacher was to be determined. A delegation of ministers had been to see another preacher to see how he stood on certain matters and—well it is simply too disgusting to talk about. This puts me in a rather rough position. I was asked today to speak at a "holy week" meeting in the local Methodist church. Should I accept,

I will be burned at the stake a week later.¹

Because of the poor attitude of the other ministers in the area, this man hesitated accepting the invitation that the Methodist church extended. He was not worried that the Methodist people would stone him, but he was concerned that he would be "burned at the stake" by his own brethren! And for what cause? *Preaching the gospel at a Methodist church!* This incident is not alone. Others have been discouraged and threatened because of their desire to preach Christ wherever they will be heard.² This kind of action causes us to remember that two thousand years ago a man was looked down upon by his own brethren for committing such crimes as eating with sinners and helping people on a day of rest.

Another example of the fear of fellowship within the church can be seen at a recent Christian college lectureship. A preacher's workshop was held and the precautions involved in the "workshop" were shocking, considering that all present were supposed to be Christian.³ First, it was made clear that no one but preachers was to be there. Second, no tape recorders were allowed and those present were asked not to publish what was said there. One editor commented, "It says something about our internal affairs as a brotherhood that such precautions would be necessary, doesn't it?"⁴

Again I ask, is this fellowship? Must we hide behind locked doors and whisper to each other in order to share our thoughts, insights, and doubts? Must we limit our studies and teaching so that we will not keep on growing in the Lord for fear that we will be accused of not being "grounded in the faith" or of being "unsound" or "liberal"? If so, then the words of Alexander Campbell have again proved to be true: "In most instances the greatest error of which a brother can be guilty, is to study the Bible more than his companions or, at least, to surpass them in his knowledge of the mystery of Christ."⁵

In order to effectively work as a body we must rid ourselves of our fear to share. The price tag must be torn from fellowship that we might be free to love and help each other. There is so much we can learn from each other if only we can feel free to have a relationship like that expressed in the poem "Friendship."

Oh, the comfort—the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person,
Having neither to weigh thoughts, nor measure words—
But pouring them all right out—just as they are—chaff and grain together,
Certain that a faithful hand will take and sift them—
Keeping what is worth keeping—
And with a breath of kindness
Blow the rest away.⁶

1 A personal letter dated March 11, 1971.

2 Harold Key, "Why I'm Going," *Integrity*, 2/5 (October, 1970), pp. 78-79.

3 Leroy Garrett, "Unity Meeting at Abilene," *Restoration Review*, 13/1 (January, 1971), p. 9.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

5 Alexander Campbell, *Christianity Restored* (Rosemead: Old Paths Book Club, 1959), p. 127.

6 Unpublished poem by Dinah Murlock Craik.

THE MIND OF APOLLOS

CHESTER S. PERHACS

In the November 1970 issue of *Integrity*, Dean Thoroman had a fine article dealing with "Communication Barriers." I agree that unless these are removed, we are doomed to a life of endless strife and mental anguish. To hasten the elimination of this serious problem, I would like to turn the readers' attention to a Biblical example where this very problem was resolved very effectively.

If there is a person (outside the Lord Jesus) on whom we can focus to find the solution to this problem of communication, it would be Apollos of Alexandria. The incident involving this man and those connected with him, as recorded in Acts 18, spells out in bold relief our shortcomings in our dealings with each other and with those outside our fellowship. Let us take an indepth look at the incident involving this man and learn a lesson in the art of communication.

We are told that he was a Jew. This tells us that he was a God-seeking, God-conscious man, a man who *wanted* to please his creator. Added to this, he was an eloquent man, able to communicate in a vivid as well as forceful way—persuasive, as the incident in 1 Cor. 3 bears out. That he was "mighty in the scriptures" needs no amplification except to say that he was a Jew because his convictions left him no other choice.

Add to these the impressive commendation, "instructed in the way of the Lord," "fervent in the Spirit"; and he spoke and taught *diligently* the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And

this man was doing his thing where it was most difficult: in the synagogue, the center of learning. What a credential! Where can we find this rare breed today? While he spoke from a strict Jewish point of view, one would be inclined to believe that he would be a difficult man with whom to communicate. But the discerning reader will observe that Apollos had "advanced" from Moses to John the Baptist. This was a serious God-seeking man.

In our zeal to "defend our position," let me venture a guess as to how this man would "be handled" in far too many instances today. Little or no consideration would be given to his superior caliber, ability, zeal, honesty, and—perhaps most of all—his consciousness of God as well as his awareness of his need of God's mercy and cleansing. This is made unmistakably clear for he was a Jew preaching that pardon was in the Baptism of John and not Moses. This leaves no room to doubt his honest search for God and pardon, because he had left the religion of Moses and had embraced the religion of John that promised cleansing—pardon—a Jew's "dream come true."

I am sure that there are many among us who would be quick to tell him just how "wrong" he was because he was preaching the "wrong baptism." Some might even ask Apollos what he was doing in the synagogue. But let us give our attention to weightier matters in this incident.

Enter two seasoned Christians, Aquila and Priscilla, former Jews displaced from

Rome who were paying a price for having left the Law of Moses and embracing the Law of Grace. Some might even be surprised that they were in the synagogue listening to this tremendous speaker and student of God's word. It is no secret why they were able to do this. They were mature, compassionate believers listening to an honest man. They had developed the art of communication to where it became a relatively easy matter to apply it to every situation.

It is obvious that they had learned to *see* as well as *hear* and to be able to correctly and profitably evaluate it all. They observed the superior qualities of Apollos, listened to his thought-out convictions. They were able to see what this man could do to and with people as he exercised his abilities. They also came to know his *weakness*—and it was not "that he was wrong." They did not become "unglued" when Apollos presented some "strange" doctrine.

These beautiful people took him aside—in private—and corrected his "error." They did nothing more than to tell Apollos that "He had come." You see, Apollos was preaching the "Baptism of John," a baptism that was effectual only if they who embraced it would "believe on Him who should come"; that is, Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah. The "sin" of Apollos was that *he had not been totally informed*, he had not learned that Jesus, the Christ, Messiah had come. Just why Apollos had not learned this fact is not revealed, but *it was not an isolated case* for

Paul found others in like state (Acts 19).

Note, please, the outcome of this display of mutual interest in a common God, coupled with a readiness to teach and to be taught. Apollos became a part of the full fellowship of Christ and, without loss or diminished zeal or ability, declared his newfound Savior to his countrymen. This is indeed a classic example of the art of communication between parties and a compliment to both.

There are many lessons to be gleaned from this account. One that must not pass unnoticed is that knowledge, regardless of the credentials or abilities with which it is coupled, is not always the final word. There is almost always "something" needful that we have not yet come upon that is the difference between "life and death." This "something" is more times than not found when one enters into meaningful conversation with "seasoned believers" of the caliber of Aquila and Priscilla, people who have added to their knowledge the coveted attribute of wisdom which is "found" only by time, trial, experience, and frequent conversation with God.

This is beautiful—in a house in Ephesus, Compassion had a meeting with Sincerity, an honest heart had a face to face conversation with Truth, the wise conversed with the knowledgeable, and a son was born into the family of God. Lord, give us the mind of Apollos and lead us to seasoned saints, that we may speak with each other, and find You!

CONCERNING BACK ISSUES

During the past few weeks we have had many requests for back issues containing articles on the Holy Spirit. Requests have been especially heavy for our review of Pat Boone's A NEW SONG, Pat's article "Spirit and Intellect," and the editor's "Concerning Charismata"—all in the December and January issues. Unfortunately, these two numbers are completely gone. If we decide to reprint them, we will notify you via INTEGRITY. We are very sorry so many have written in vain!

Letters

NOTE: We will henceforth publish letters as space allows and readers comment. Letters should be kept as brief as possible. Names will be withheld on request—but isn't it time for all of us to speak our minds regardless of the consequences?

The worst enemies . . .

Please express to Don Reece my whole hearted agreement with his "Too Risky" article. It has been my contention for a long time that such people as the one he referred to are the worst enemies the church has. They, being in positions of influence, can do the cause of Christ infinitely more harm than all the atheists, heretics, or Anti-Christians we might encounter.

ELTON ABERNATHY
Southwest Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas

Not dangerous unless . . .

Pneumatic brethren are like pneumatic tires. When Dunlop first created the latter there was a great cry that it would mean the death of the populace. Of course there have been a few casualties, but only when they exploded. I suspect that brethren will eventually get settled down and not fear the pneumatic brethren. Most of them will not explode.

W. CARL KETCHERSIDE
St. Louis, Missouri

Feeding the hungry . . .

I found 3 copies of INTEGRITY lying in the church office and was not able to put them down, they were so heart warming. My husband and I share so many of the views that were presented. We were converted in the Church of Christ (instrumental) and worshipped there several years. We now attend the non-instrumental church . . . and we feel both groups are our brothers and sisters in Christ. So many in the church hold such legalistic

and hard-nosed views, we have almost become frightened that we might be becoming too "liberal" when we long to hear sermons on the love that we are to have for the Lord and our fellow man and the fruits of the Spirit that are to be evident in our lives.

Alice M. Brown
Danville, Iowa

It has been some time since I have read a more spiritually-stimulating periodical. I find INTEGRITY's staff and contributors to be fine, Spirit-guided writers. The articles are well written and their content is inspiring. I praise God for your courage to speak out on issues confronting the Lord's kingdom! It is so refreshing to read articles presenting views differing with those usually presented by the "power structure" of the brotherhood.

ED BURNS
Christian Communications Mission, Inc.
Pueblo, Colorado

Praise the Lord! How long have you been publishing this INTEGRITY? However long it's been—it's too long and us not know about it! I'm just sick at perhaps all we've missed. My husband and I are "mainline" church of Christ. For several years we have been tearing our "spiritual hair," striving for freedom in Christ and working our way to heaven! We knew we were different and were "questioning" almost everything (heaven forbid!), but the main thing was the conflict in us and not hurt our loved ones and not be destructive to the church . . . and my husband is one of four elders.

LOIS BURKETT
Eugene, Oregon

Very long but very provocative . . .

"Beautiful but Unappreciated" [March, 1971] struck such a beautiful chord that I just could not resist responding. Ro. 6:14 is indeed a promise of tremendous import—its magnitude and beauty, I fear, are largely unappreciated by many (perhaps most) of our brethren.

I want to cite a couple of verses that have produced many happy hours of meditation and comfort for me, and are supporting verses to the one used in the article: Ro. 4:15-16, [here quoted in part from] the Weymouth translation: "For the effect of the Law is wrath; but where no Law ex-

ists, there can be no transgression. All depends on faith for this reason—that righteousness may be by grace, so that the promise should be made *sure* to all his posterity: not merely to those who rely on the Law, but also to those who rely on a faith like Abraham's."

Unless I am perverting the scriptures, the following conclusions should be deduced from this reading:

1. The promise could never be made sure through law (and was never intended to be).

2. Thus, to preclude transgressions in this age, God deliberately refrained from laying down laws for justification (so that justification could be made *sure*).

3. The statement that "Where no law exists, there can be no transgression," implies that the opposite must follow, i.e., that we can cause transgressions if we lay down laws for ourselves as a means of justification. I believe 1 Cor. 15:56 points at this when it says, "Law is the stronghold of sin."

How indescribably beautiful is the passage that was used (Ro. 6:14), for it tells me that I have been freed from sin NOT by any of my good deeds, not by anything I have done or will do; but because of something that God has done—He has taken me out from under law!

Then what about all the do's and don't's in the N.T.? Aren't these laws that will condemn us in the last day if we fail to keep them? The answer is no. The man who has fallen in love with Jesus thirsts for enlightenment as to how he can please the object of that love. The N.T. is the reservoir from whence we attempt to quench that unquenchable thirst. If we can agree that the thirst is and should be an unquenchable one, we should then also see that it is *not* the quenching of the thirst that makes one righteous, but rather the thirst itself. And if this be true, then one's righteousness is not a measure of how well he has satisfied his thirst, but rather a measure of the intensity of that thirst. To put the consequence of this reasoning bluntly: if a man is unrighteous because of something that he is doing, or failing to do, and the only change that he makes is to do or refrain from doing—then that man is unrighteous still. In other words, if the outer works are not always preceded by a change in the "inner works," they lose the catalyst that makes them count as righteousness. The ultimate consequence of this is far-reaching; for this means that the worth of an act is never

found in its performance, but rather in its motivation. To illustrate, would one attribute righteousness to the man who does the following things?

1. Abstains from stealing only because there is a law that would punish such acts.

2. Refrains from adultery only because of the fear of being found out.

3. Is baptized only to please his mother.

4. Refrains from discriminating against the black man only because of the law and its consequence.

These are trite illustrations, I realize, but we should be able to see the ultimate conclusion to which we are forced. If man's motivation does not rise above the level of law (civil, social, or whatever) there can be no righteousness connected with the deed. The deed finds its righteousness only in the loving faith that produces it. Thus, in our age, law (not in the legal sense) serves to educate and satisfy a loving faith, but sustains NO direct relationship to righteousness. Its relationship is to loving faith. Thus, the deeds that I do, if they sustain no relationship to loving faith, are in no sense a mark of justification or righteousness. No matter how noble, good, or beneficial the deed, it cannot speak of these things unless it has first been spoken to, by loving faith. This should humble us all, for what claim of achievement can a man possibly make when all he has to offer is faith! Since faith is a product of the inner man, we are even stripped of (or should be) the inclination to take credit for the mental process that leads to it since this process is really that of getting ourselves out of the way and letting faith shine through and take over our lives.

This concept makes faith an innate characteristic of all mankind that is but awaiting the opportunity to shine through. Ours is the task of letting it! I view faith as like unto a brightly shining light bulb that has been painted black (that is what sin has done to all mankind). Man's part is simply to remove as much of the black as he possibly can—a process of the intellectual mind. In so doing, he lets faith shine through. I realize that this concept of faith may sound heretical, but it is the concept that best lets me fully comprehend and appreciate how utterly dependent I am upon God. Thanks be to Jesus Christ who is the ultimate agent for helping remove the blackness that hides the brightness of the light that burns within every man.

JAMES LEDBETTER
Huntsville, Alabama

INDEX TO VOLUME ONE (1969-1970)

Compiled by Don Reece

ARTICLES:

- ANDERSON, ROGER
The Good News, 20-22.
Restoration Unity, 67-70.
- BASSETT, GARY
A Thoughtful Comment,
87-89.
- COCKRILL, JAMES
The Communion of Love,
105-106.
- COTHAM, PERRY C.
Scissors and Paste and the
Bible Student, 163-166.
- ELKINS, DAVID
Masks People Wear, 37-39.
Of Wine and Wineskins, 8-
12.
Reflection, 195.
Religion and Relevancy,
152-155.
Sectarianism - Corinthian
and Contemporary, 52-
54.
Such a Time as This, 24-
25.
- HYDE, DAVID
Patching the Hole, 89-91.
- LEDBETTER, HOY
A Clouded Issue, 98-100.
A Sense of History, 178.
Comment, 149.
Disgraceful Graffiti, 146-
148.
From the Editor, 130.
Handling the Problem, 35-
37.
Honesty and Truth, 84-85.
Integrity, 2-4.
In This Issue, 34.
Muted Ministers, 193-195.
Patron Saints, 134-136.
Sowers of Discord, 18-19.
Speaking Out, 66.
The Cool Fool, 57-59.
The Handmaiden of the
Church, 82.
The Walls Come Tumbling
Down, 116-125.
Those Contemporary Cor-
inthians! 50.
Through the Clouds, 162-
163.
- LEMON, NOEL E.
Integrity in Church Disci-
pline, 71-73.
- LESLIE, ARTHUR, Jr.
We, the Colorless, 108-109.
- LOCKE, HUBERT G.
The Church and the Urban
Crisis, 170-173.
- MARSH, DOUGLAS
The Christian and His
Body, 59-61.
- PACE, MARTEL
A Reply to the Editorial
by Hoy Ledbetter in In-
tegrity, June 1969, 28-
29.
- PEREGRINE, PETER
Camelite Flops, 92-93.
Under Penalty of Perjury,
107-108.
- PONDER, AMOS
The Nature of Opposition,
137-139.
The "Worship Service," 74-
76.
Unpredictable, 166-168.
- REECE, DON
A Very Short Comment,
148-149.
The Right of Free Inquiry,
179-190.
- RESTER, FRANK
An Observation, 17.
Is There a Lawyer in the
House? 150-152.
Organized Religion as I See
It, 41-43.
The Corinthian Communi-
on, 55-56.
The Philosophies of the Ins
and Outs, Ups and
Downs, Populars and
Unpopulars, 12-14.
- SINCLAIR, RALPH
Trouble Not Israel, 168-
169.
- SMITH, JOHN
"Does It Mean Nothing to
You, All You Who Pass
By?" 140-141.
God Has Spoken, 44-45.
Let Me Sow Faith, 25-27.
Lord, Make Me an Instru-
- ment of Thy Peace, 8-
10.
Regeneration or Rebirth,
104-105.
To Understand, 86-87.
- STARK, HOWARD
An Elder's Offering, 83.
- THOROMAN, DEAN A.
Congregational Independ-
ence, 5-8.
Elders Worth Double Wa-
ges, 191-192.
Expel the Evildoer! 51-52.
From the Editor, 114-115.
Intellectual Honesty, 40.
Leadership - The Need,
156-157.
One Response to "A
Thoughtful Comment,"
101-103.
Squelching or Developing,
22-24.
The Church I'd Like to
See, 130-133.
- WELKER, JAMES
Solving the Problem, 76-
77.

LETTERS:

- 30, 46, 62, 78, 93-94, 110,
126, 158-159, 174-175.

POETRY:

- DENISON, BETTY
Happiness Is, 143.
- MUNROE, LYNN III
Miles Apart, 155.
- TUCKER, JOHN
And God Smiled, 142-143.

Voice from the Past:

- Beecher, Henry Ward, 15.
Brewer, G.C., 31.
Campbell, Alexander, 79,
127.
Campbell, Thomas, 47.
Dods, Marcus, 63.
MacLaren, Alexander, 95.
Plummer, Alfred, 111.
Let James Speak, 80.
Let Socrates Speak, 48.
Let Spurgeon Speak, 64.

INDEX TO VOLUME TWO (1970-1971)

Compiled by Don Reece

ARTICLES:

- BACUS, FRANCES
The Story of a Lost Soul,
30.
- BALES, JAMES D.
Short Comment, 154.
- BOONE, PAT
Spirit and Intellect, 115-
120.
- COTHAM, PERRY C.
Telling It Like It Isn't,
185-189.
- DANCER, J.F., Jr.
"The Case Against Church-
related Schools" -
Second Look, 175-176.
- ELKINS, DAVID
Church Renewal, 190-191.
Depth Relationships, 69-
70.
Simony - Then and Now,
99-100.
- HACKETT, B.N.
Communion and Fellow-
ship, 27.
- HODSON, RICHARD
Stages of Love, 136-137.
- KETCHERSIDE, CARL
The End of War, 36-37.
- KEY, HAROLD
Why I'm Going, 78-79.
- LEDBETTER, HOY
Annuity Coeptis, 2.
Comment, 154.
Concerning Charismata,
154.
Greet and Regret, 98-99.
God Bless You All, 111.
"I of Myself," 89-93.
It's Beyond Me, 34-35.
Precious Guarantee, 55-57.
Review of Integrity Poli-
cies, 162.
Spiritual Restoration, 22-
24.
"Tell It Like It Is," 18.
"The Perfect" in 1 Cor. 13,
131-135.
Viewing the Remains, 9-
11.
Women and Slaves, 50-52.
- LEMLEY, F.L.
Heresy Hunters, 150-152.
On Withdrawing Fellow-
ship, 171-174.
- MANSUR, A.V.
Beautiful but Unappreci-
ated, 146-147.
- MANSUR, ELIZABETH
The Case Against Church-
related Schools, 138-
139.
- McRAY, JOHN
Neither Jew, Catholic, nor
Liberal, 140-141.
Tradition in the Church,
163-167.
- PERHACS, CHESTER S.
The Mind of Apollos, 194-
195
- PONDER, AMOS
Who Am I? 85-88.
- REECE, DON
Grounds for Breaking
Christian Fellowship,
71-77.
Hope for the New Year-
1971, 124-127.
Star of the East, 101-108.
The Drawing Power of the
Cross, 167-170.
The Humpty Dumpty Syn-
drome, 43-47.
The Need for Integrity in
the Use of Terminolo-
gy, 19-21.
Throwing Cold Water on
the Fire of Christ -
The Campus Evangel-
ism Story, 3-9.
"Too Risky to Get In-
volved?" 155-159.
- RESTER, FRANK
Elders and Office, 53-54.
- ROMERO, JUDY
Church-Made Hippies, 57-
59.
Obstacles to our Greatest
Aim, 122-124.
- SMITH, JOHN
A Solution, 40-41.
Will the Christian System
Work? 147-149.
- THOROMAN, DEAN A.
An Open Letter to Several
Christian Friends, 63.
Communication Barriers,
82-83.
Preacher's Musical (Non-In-
strumental) Chairs, 28-
29.
Removing Unwanted Eld-
ers, 66-68.
The Eldership: A Study in
Authoritarianism, 38-
39.
The King's Highway, 25-
26.
Ways to Remove Un-
wanted Elders, 12-14.
Write to Dissent, 130.
- WATTS, CRAIG M.
A Fear of Fellowship, 192-
193.
Confrontation or Polariza-
tion, 84-85.
Of Doubts and Doubters,
152-153.
Proclaiming the Negative
Gospel, 142-143.
- WHITE, BOB
More Than Worthy, 42-43.
- WILLIAMS, BOB
Poor Early Church, 120-
121.

LETTERS:

- 14-15, 60-62, 196-197.

NEWS:

- Ketcherside in Flint, 68.
The Hartford Forum, 111.

POETRY:

- HACKETT, B.N.
If I Were An Elder, 68.
Sell Bonds, 54-55.
- REECE, DON
On a Friend's Arguments
for Heathen Damna-
tion, 95.
The Perpetual Resurrec-
tion, 31.
Troubled Waters, 60.
Victory, 179.
- THOROMAN, T.D.
Star of Wonder, Star of
Light! 110.

REVIEWS, BOOK:

- LEDBETTER, HOY
Pat Boone's "New Song,"
109.
- REECE, DON
Facing the Revolutions,
93-95.