

# Integrity

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## Integrity

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One Man's Answer

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Alone

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# ONE MAN'S ANSWER

STAN PAREGIEN

On February 29, I received a letter from a young woman whose father was a missionary for the Churches of Christ and was also on the board of one of our Christian colleges. She and her husband are now among the growing number of voices who are asking, "Where shall we worship?"<sup>1</sup> After visiting several other churches, she commented, "Where can we settle? Back in the church of Christ, where they seem to stick closest to the scriptures in doctrine, and yet have so little faith and love and peace? Or in one of these others who, in our opinion, stray a little more from the scriptures doctrinally, and yet have so much more faith and love and peace, and give God the credit for answered prayers?"

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A graduate of David Lipscomb College, Mr. Paregien is the author of *The Day Jesus Died* (Firm Foundation, 1970) and editor of *Thoughts on Unity* (Mission Messenger, 1971). He may be addressed at Route 3, Stroud, Oklahoma 74079.

Since I was also wrestling with the same dilemma, I felt that I had to resolve the matter in my own life before answering her letter. After several weeks of intensive study, I informed her that my family and I had decided to regularly worship with a different segment of the Restoration Movement. Our decision was based upon the following convictions which are openly held only by a small minority of those in the Church of Christ:

1. We should regard as a brother every sincere, immersed believer in the Lord Jesus. I still recall the joy which I experienced several years ago when I finally saw that the family of God is larger than either the Church of Christ or the Restoration Movement. It was quite a revelation for one who had grown up in a climate of strict "undenominational" sectarianism. When I began preaching at the ripe old age of sixteen, my message was simple: "If we don't obey God in every detail, we will go to hell. The denominations are wrong in most everything, therefore . . ." Somehow I managed to overlook the fact that none of us is perfect and that God is probably more merciful than those preachers from whom I got my sermon outlines.

"Not the only Christians, but Christians only" was one of the slogans which the pioneer preachers used with great success. And I believe it should be revived as one of the fundamental principles of the continuing restoration. If a man has been immersed out of a sincere desire to please God, that is enough reason to accept him as my brother.<sup>2</sup>

2. We must allow each person to interpret the Scriptures for himself and to follow the dictates of his heart. The early Restoration leaders left no doubt as to their position on interpreting the Scriptures. Thomas

Campbell argued that "although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God."

Elias Smith argued that "in all essentials the Scriptures are plain to be understood; every Christian is free to examine the Scriptures for himself and to impartially judge of the sense and the meaning of the same; every Christian has a right to publish and vindicate what he believes is contained in the Scriptures, and to serve God according to his own conscience."

While we should always be happy to share our views with others, we cannot presume to make their decisions for them. It is the privilege and responsibility of each Christian to live as a free man in Christ (Gal. 5:1).

3. Nothing should be made a test of fellowship unless God has clearly made it a condition of salvation. All Christians are in the same brotherhood, because they are all children of the same Father. They are not members of the heavenly family because they are perfect or because they agree on all the "issues," but because they have all accepted Jesus as Lord.

Another powerful slogan which our 19th century preachers used was, "In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; in all things charity." The impact of this

1. See Judy Romero's article, "Where Shall We Worship?" *Integrity* (June, 1972), 8-9.

2. David Lipscomb wrote, "There are some in sectarian churches who will obey God and follow him in spite of the churches in which they find themselves. As examples, there are persons in the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches who are baptized to obey God rather than to please the sects. In this they rise above the sectarian spirit, despite the parties in which they find themselves (*Questions Answered*, p. 582).

3. Moses Lard, *Lard's Quarterly* (April, 1865).

thesis is mentioned by Moses Lard: "No position has been more distinctively enounced, or more firmly held among us than this: that matters of opinion shall never be made tests of fellowship."<sup>3</sup>

For example, notice the practice of one of the most respected scholars in the history of the Restoration Movement, J. W. McGarvey. His biographer, W. C. Morro, wrote in *Brother McGarvey* these words:

McGarvey never made silence of the organ a condition of his participation in any service. . . . McGarvey would speak or worship in any church or assembly where a musical instrument was used, but if conditions made it possible, he preferred the singing be without the instrument.

4. The doctrine of congregational autonomy suggests that differences of opinion and practice are to be expected and tolerated on the congregational level, just as on the individual level. Few principles have been lauded so highly and violated so often as that of congregational autonomy. In theory, each of our congregations is free—within the boundary of God's Word—to carry on its work as the members think fitting. In practice, however, many congregations are intimidated by outsiders such as powerful preachers, editors, and college administrators.

The unity for which Jesus prayed does not depend upon absolute conformity. Paul and Barnabas had such differences that they felt justified in working separately (Acts 15). But they never renounced their state as *brethren*. Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone differed dramatically on the work of

the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians, but they worked together anyway.

5. We must admit that the issue of whether to use an instrument in worship has been distorted. For one thing, the problem is not as simple as preachers often portray it before their partisan audiences. There are persuasive arguments on both sides of this issue, most of which are conjured up through a laborious process of mental gymnastics. I cannot see how the good Lord could possibly make such a complicated study a "matter of faith." If it is really as important as some brethren assert, surely God would have stated his position a little more clearly.

However, since most of us are faced with this controversy, I want to share some conclusions which I have reached (each paragraph is lettered so as to make the prospective critic's job easier).

a. In the Old Testament the word *psallo* conveyed the meaning of "to play or pluck," probably upon a stringed musical instrument. By the time of the apostles, the meaning of *psallo* had shifted to denote "sing" (i.e., vocal music).

b. The first century church worshipped in song, without use of any musical instruments. But this fact is not conclusive evidence that it is against God's will to use the instrument.

c. The cultural context in the first century was a strong factor in their abstention from instrumental music. Although used in the Temple, it was not used in the Jewish synagogues. And it was the synagogue after which the Christian worship was patterned.

d. The point of such passages as Eph. 5:19, 1 Cor. 14:26, and Col. 3:16 is that we are to worship God *from the heart*. We are not to reduce our worship to either cold ritual or sensual entertainment. Singing without the spirit, whether accompanied

with an instrument or not, is unacceptable to God.

e. The purpose of singing, then, is to praise God and to teach one another. And the use of an instrument to accompany the singing does no violence to this basic principle, whether the context is that of the Old Testament period, the New Testament period, or the present day.

f. The pioneer Restoration preachers, like their Methodist counterparts (Adam Clarke, etc.), rejected the use of instrumental music in worship. Still cherishing the religious freedoms won by the Reformation in Europe, these independent-minded pioneers wanted nothing in their worship which might unnecessarily remind them of Romanism.

g. By the 1850's and 1860's, an increasingly industrialized and affluent American society opened the way for the use of organs in congregational worship. Dr. L.L. Pinkerton (a physician-turned-preacher) first introduced it into our congregations in 1859, at Midway, Kentucky. No doubt some Christians back then considered it a status symbol.

h. The outbreak of the Civil War in April, 1860 further strained "the tie that binds." Lack of communication and interaction between brethren in the North and those in the South increased feelings of suspicion and hostility.

i. Then in the 1880's, intensified controversy over the organ and lack of love for each other led to division. Walter Scott, Barton Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, John "Racoon" Smith, and others had a spiritual maturity which stressed their common faith and de-emphasized their personal opinions. Unfortunately, by the 1880's each of them was dead. And none of their successors seems to have possessed the attributes necessary for preventing the fragmentation of the Restoration Movement.

j. In 1906 this estrangement of our brethren was further solidified by the editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, David Lipscomb. He wrote to the United States Census Bureau in that year and requested a separate listing of the non-instrumental congregations under the title, "Churches of Christ." Previously the term "Christian Church" had been freely applied to our congregations. But no more.

k. Some instrumentalists today show little regard for the "weaker brother" concept Paul discusses in Romans 14. In his tract entitled, "What the Bible Teaches Concerning Instrumental Music in Worship," R.C. Bell acknowledges that his fellow instrumentalists "have, in a large measure, disregarded this appeal. Herein lies their sin—not in the use of the instrument—but in their callous disregard for the feeling of their weaker, misguided brethren."

l. A great many preachers who oppose the instrument get a lot of verbal mileage out of statements like this: "If they would just get rid of the instrument, we could have unity." This sword cuts both ways, however. For it is the same argument which one faction uses against women teachers, another against cooperative efforts such as the Herald of Truth, and another to oppose multiple cups. If those who use this argument are really serious, they had better get ready to be reduced to the lowest common denominator among us!

m. Since the New Testament makes no clear-cut, declarative statement regarding the use of the instrument, it is apparent that our opinions are based upon our subjective interpretations of non-New Testament evidence (i.e., secular history, church history, etc.).

6. It is more important to have the right attitude in serving God than it is to be doctrinally perfect. To begin with, if we mean by "doctrine" the teachings of the

New Testament, how can anyone be absolutely correct? I don't know any person who has a perfect understanding or practice of all the Scriptures. Therefore, we had better make sure we're trying to obey God *because we love him*.

For example, let's suppose that a father asks his ten-year-old son to wash the car. Thirty minutes later the father finds that the son washed the car, but he let the soapy water dry and streak the car. Will he discipline his son for failing to do a perfect job? Maybe. But it all depends on the son's attitude. No father would punish a son who was cheerfully doing his best.

Well, with such convictions I found myself increasingly uncomfortable in the Church of Christ. The mountain-top experiences had been scarce during the last few years. Instead, in congregations where I visited or worked (from California to Kentucky) I found the same pattern of isolationism and legalism.

So, a few months ago I began worshipping with a congregation of the Christian Church (Independent). There I found what I am convinced is a sincere effort to worship and serve the Lord, both in spirit and in truth. Like the folks in the Church of Christ, they are not perfect. But they seem more willing to recognize that while they are Christians only, they are not the only Christians in town.

I feel that my new base of operations will provide a better climate for my own spiritual growth. I certainly have no less love for my brethren who label their congregations "Church of Christ." Nor do I wish to sever my relationship with them. I just want to freely circulate among all Christians, to participate in God's work whenever and wherever I can, regardless of the label on the church building. □

# THE FOUR-DIMENSIONAL WORD

JUDY ROMERO

*Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico*

*That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life* (1 John 1:1).

The mixture of the divine and human in Christ has always been a puzzle to men. In John's day they were saying Jesus had not really come in the flesh, but was only spirit. This form of Gnosticism separated the spirit from the body, and thus taught that spiritual piety and sensual lust in the same body were consistent. Today, men have slid down the opposite side of the mountain in saying Jesus was merely human. John's writings marvelously refute both extremes by showing the perfect unity of God and man in the person of Jesus. Our Lord was titled many things in the scriptures, but perhaps the most significant to us is "The Word."

In this day we call the Bible "God's Word," when we actually mean God's message. God's word to man is about Jesus, "The Word." The Spirit-inspired scriptures were meant to bring men to the knowledge of Jesus. What, then, is embodied in the title "The Word"?

*Logos* (word) means "expression of thought—not the mere name of an object" (W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). Some of Webster's definitions of *word* are: "a sound or combination of sounds (audible); a written or printed representation (visible); an expression or utterance." Jesus was the expression of God. Men cannot see God the Spirit, so God ex-

pressed himself in human form in order to give man an understanding of Himself.

In 1 John 1:1 John names four dimensions of Jesus the Word: (1) The *eternal* Word—"that which was from the beginning"; (2) the *audible* Word—"that which we have heard"; (3) the *visible* Word—"that which we have seen with our eyes—beheld"; (4) the *personal* Word—"that which) our hands handled." If we look at these in depth we see a portrait of Jesus as perfect God and perfect man.

## 1. JESUS, THE ETERNAL WORD

Jesus was the perfect expression of God the eternal, creator of all life. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn. 1:1). "That which was from the beginning . . . the Word of life" (1 Jn. 1:1).

When we speak words, we express ourselves to others (sometimes to our detriment!). Before we speak, that thought is still a part of us. Afterwards it has become separate from us, in the sense that others can see or hear it. The words can enter into another through his ears or eyes, but it is still our own expression of self. So Jesus the Word is separate and yet still part of the eternal God. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of *Christ, who is the image of God*, should not dawn upon them" (2 Cor. 4:4). As God is eternal, so is Jesus the Word. By his miraculous life and resurrection, he proved the eternal life of God was in him.

As God is life, so is Christ the embodiment and eternal expression of life. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and *the life*" (Jn. 14:6). "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (Jn. 10:10). "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (Jn. 1:4).

God spoke and there was life. Jesus is the Word of creation. "All things were made through him [the Word]; and without him was not anything made that has been made" (Jn. 1:3). God is life. He expressed divine life and it was Jesus. "And the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 Jn. 1:2).

Expression, as Webster tells us, is an "indication of feeling, spirit, character." Jesus is the utterance of God: the declaration, the assertion, the statement, the manifestation of God's self. He is the self-expression of God!

Man's desire to create is part of his imagehood from God. Creativity is self-expression, no less in God than in us. Any mode of creativity, whether music, art, or literature, is a method of self-expression in imitation of our Father. Man has the desire to create because he is created in the image of the creator. As man is God's expression of creation, Jesus is the expression of God-life in creation. This is why the man of unbelief cannot see God or have life, because he has rejected the personification of life in Jesus the Word. Jesus told the Jews in John 5:39: "Ye search the scriptures because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; *and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.*" These men were religious leaders, but they were lost to the truth when it opposed religious prejudice! The very scriptures we exalt bear wit-

ness of Christ, but they cannot give us life. Life is not found in dead words, but in the Living Word!

Jesus is the creator of new spiritual life in us. "Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth" (1 Pet. 1:23). "For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign *in life through the one, even Jesus Christ*" (Rom. 5:17).

Jesus is life expressed to man: eternally, audibly, visibly, and personally.

## 2. JESUS, THE AUDIBLE WORD

"Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me; for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye *cannot hear my word*. Ye are of your father the devil . . . when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father thereof. But *because I say the truth*, ye believe me not" (Jn. 8:42-45). "For the law was given through Moses; grace and *truth came through Jesus Christ*" (Jn. 1:17).

"Jesus saith unto them, I am the way, and *the truth*, and the life . . ." (Jn. 14:6). Jesus praying said, ". . . these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy made full in themselves. I have given them thy word . . . sanctify them in the truth; *thy word is truth*" (Jn. 17:13, 14, 17).

Jesus is the Word of Truth: a personification of God's voice speaking truth to man. He came to earth with a human voice and tongue, teaching God's truth. This is what John and the other apostles testified: that they heard with their own ears the teachings of Jesus, who was the incarnation—the

statement—of all truth. His life and his speech expressed nothing but truth. The Jews could hear his words, but not his word, which was truth. They had listened to the father of lies for so long that they couldn't recognize the truth of God in Christ's teachings. Their ears had been dulled by lies, and their minds blinded by their own falsehoods, until truth was meaningless to them. Pilate was of the same kind. He asked, "What is truth?" when the very embodiment of truth stood before him. But the apostles, with hearts and minds open, had heard and recognized the truth of Jesus, the Word of Truth. They were qualified witnesses.

"... Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow in his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Pet. 2:21-22). No mere man can express total truth, as did Jesus. As John said, "... it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth" (1 Jn. 5:7). Only the Spirit of God can produce truth. The witness of this perfect truth in Jesus' life and teachings assures us that Jesus was God and man... perfect God in a perfect man. The Word of Truth spoke the truth of God to man.

### 3. JESUS, THE VISIBLE WORD

"... God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn. 1:5). Jesus said, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness" (Jn. 12:46). "Seeing it is God that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

There is one thing absolutely essential to vision, and that is light. An object which has no innate light source must reflect light or it is invisible. The apostles not only saw the

living body of Jesus with their eyes, but they witnessed the spiritual light of God in his face and life. Jesus was the God-light which was reflected in the apostles and believers.

Jesus walked in light. He exposed the works of darkness and brought the light of hope to men's lives. "... the Christ must suffer and... he first by the resurrection of the dead should *proclaim light* both to the people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:23).

Light is not a luxury—it is a necessity to life. Without light plants and animals wither and die. Light was the very first act of God's creation (Gen. 1:3). When spiritual darkness descends on the world, men move in shadows and sorrow. They cry out for the light of God: "Oh send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me!" (Ps. 43:3). When God saw the spiritual darkness of man, he again said, "Let there be light," and there was Jesus! The visible Word John saw was the light of God shining in a dark world. "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God" (Jn. 3:19, 21).

The Word of light is more than life-giving, it is also a protection: "... let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the *armor of light*" (Rom. 13:12). When we put on Christ, his light shines out from us: "... for ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8).

### 4. JESUS, THE PERSONAL WORD

John seems to have had a closer relationship with Jesus than the other disciples. In five places he is called "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He is shown at the table of the

last supper, "reclining in Jesus' bosom." He became known as the "apostle of love," for the great love he learned from his Lord. John knew Jesus by touch, as well as by sight and hearing. His was a relationship of love with God in the person of Jesus.

A God who can enter into the personal touch of love is this world's greatest need. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus" is not figurative. It indicates a union of our personality with that of Christ. He was the ultimate expression of God's basic nature—that "God is love." "Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him" (1 Jn. 4:9).

Jesus not only personifies the union of God and man in himself, but made possible that same union with us. We can say with Paul: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but *Christ liveth in me*; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the *Word of God abideth in you*, and ye have overcome the evil one" (1 Jn. 2:14).

When we put on the armor of God, as described in Eph. 6:13-17, we are literally taking upon ourselves the personality of Jesus the Word, the revelation of God: **Gird your loins with truth**—Jesus is the Word of Truth" (Jn. 14:6). **Breastplate of righteousness**—"For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness" (Rom. 10:3-4). **Helmet of salvation**—Jesus, as part of God, brought salvation: "And he (Jehovah) saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore *his own arm brought*

*salvation unto him*: and his righteousness, it upheld him" (Is. 59:16). Simeon, in viewing the baby Jesus: "Now lettest thou thy servant depart, Lord, according to thy word, in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (Lk. 2:29-30). **Gospel of peace**—"But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace" (Eph. 2:13-14). **Shield of faith**—"... looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). **Sword of the spirit, which is the word of God**—This sword can represent the power of the entire Godhead: the Spirit, Jesus the Word, and God the Father. Jesus is pictured in Revelation as having a sword coming out of his mouth, showing the power of his words. This power we use as he speaks through us.

The eternal God could have been satisfied to express his greatness to man audibly (as in the Old Testament), or visibly (as in visions), but he chose to reach out and actually touch man. He himself entered the fourth and ultimate dimension of love by entering our own persons with his being. All we have to do is reach out in acceptance of this divine touch. How can we resist such mind-bending love?

Let us praise his glorious name with Paul: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, *that ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God*" (Eph. 3:14-19). □

# COMMUNITY IS CRUCIAL

HOY LEDBETTER

I am writing this article under the reasonable assumption that you would like to see the world become one great brotherhood. I assume that you yearn for the elimination of war, that most painful symptom of social disease; that you are eager for amicable relationships between the races, and also between people who live next door to each other; that you would like to eliminate all forms of cheating and hostility. On the positive side, I believe you desire that people help each other when they are in trouble; that they encourage the timid, support the weak, show kindness to the lonely; that they learn to share what they have, and work to have something to share. I believe, in a word, that you are as eager as I am that we achieve community, in the full sense of that term.

In our day, community is not something that we can afford to dream about idly, nor is it merely an attractive choice among other viable concepts. It is not an option—it is a must, if we are to survive this generation's tendencies to self-destruction.

T.S. Eliot spoke for all sober people when he said in his "Choruses from 'The Rock'":

*What life have you if you have not life together?*

*There is no life that is not in community . . .*

"Community" is a word which is related by etymology to the words "common," "communion," and "communication." The Biblical term which conveys the ideas inher-

ent in these words is "fellowship." Fellowship is communion, and communion entails sharing or having things in common, and communication is an essential form of sharing (and in the obsolete sense it is sharing). People who share what they have, who give and receive from each other, who have things in common, form a community.

No matter how just our criticism of the hippie communes and other efforts at communal living by some of our young people, we should be thankful that those involved in them recognize the need for community. They are at least to this extent in line with Jesus. For we may say that the fundamental purpose that brought him into this world was to make it into a community.

Thank God, our young people today are incurably idealistic; but unfortunately our idealism is too often either misdirected or short-lived. That is, we either start from a base that is so insecure that failure is indicated from the beginning, or else our efforts toward reformation are so vigorously resisted that we fall back on the premise, "If you can't lick 'em, join 'em." But I fervently hope that our present generation will not give up so easily and adopt the cynicism which has gripped so many of their fore-runners.

When Jesus ascended back to heaven, he left behind him in Jerusalem a band of followers that numbered only 120. According to the usual estimates of the population of Palestine at that time, those first Christians

were outnumbered by over 30,000 to 1 in their own country. If we superimposed that proportion on my own community, there would be only one Christian in Grand Blanc. But those few people, empowered with the Christian dynamic, started something that no force has been able to stop in the hundreds of years since. Obviously our numerical strength is far greater than that of Jesus' early disciples. If we have the proper motivation—and adequate spiritual power—we too can turn the world upside down in a very few years. And this is by no means an impossible dream.

In Philippians 2:1-4 Paul tells us how to achieve community. Let us read if from J.B. Phillips' translation:

**Now if your experience of Christ's encouragement and love means anything to you, if you have known something of the fellowship of his Spirit, and all that it means in kindness and deep sympathy, do make my best hopes for you come true! Live together in harmony, live together in love, as though you had only one mind and one spirit between you. Never act from motives of rivalry or personal vanity, but in humility think more of one another than you do of yourselves. None of you should think only of his own affairs, but each should learn to see things from other people's point of view.**

## Some Barriers . . .

In this passage Paul not only gives the fundamental bases of community, but he also mentions some barriers which must be overcome before community can be achieved. The first of these barriers is *rivalry*—but we should not think of the healthy kind of rivalry characteristic of the athletic field or academic contests. Paul is talking about the selfish ambition of the man who

does whatever he does for his own private ends. This is the base motive which has split churches into warring sects, has produced all sorts of civil wars, and has put sovereign states bayonet to bayonet. It aptly describes the person who seeks public office, not for the good that he can do, but for what he can get out of it. This motive will indeed make leaders out of men, but such leaders do not seek to serve except as a means to their own private ends. Obviously the man who is bent on promoting himself will clash with every other man similarly inclined, and unending discord will be the result.

The second barrier to community which Paul mentions is *personal vanity*, an exceedingly common vice even in places where it should not exist at all. I have known church leaders who wanted to be credited in the pulpit or church bulletin with every good work they did. Of course, they wanted this to be very subtle—because even they knew such vanity is wrong—but if they did not get proper praise for their works, they let it be known in ways that were not always so subtle. But do not all of us, at least in our baser moments, crave to be praised, to be a little higher than someone else, to have others seek our advice and even our permission about matters? Don't we all like to be regarded as the final authority, and to have all eyes focused upon ourselves? But we must realize that personal vanity will destroy community. People who like to be looked up to do not like to look up. If someone seems to be getting above them, they will try to bring him down. And that will be the decisive blow to community—at least in most cases.

A third barrier to community is *selfishness*. Paul put it this way: "None of you should think only of his own affairs, but each should learn to see things from other

people's point of view." I am afraid Eliot was right in saying,

*And now you live dispersed on ribbon roads,*

*And no man knows or cares who is his neighbour*

*Unless his neighbour makes too much disturbance . . .*

Far too many of us are id kids whose behavior is dictated by the sensual passions of the moment. Like the baby who cries when he is hungry, no matter how tired or sick the mother may be, we demand immediate satisfaction of our desires, no matter what effect this may have on others, or even on ourselves in the future. This tendency is very obvious in our driving habits, our sexual behavior, and in our studies. If we begin to really care about our neighbor, we may have to alter our behavior to conform to his needs. We might even have to make some sacrifices, and sacrifice and selfishness cannot coexist. Consequently, the selfish man finds it more convenient to be indifferent and ignorant, and to think only about his own affairs.

But there is another side to this coin, and it ties in with Paul's injunction that "each should learn to see things from other people's point of view." There can be no community without *communication*. I said before that the words "community" and "communication" come from the same root. Although this fact is not important in itself, it does suggest the essential relationship between the two. Sometimes the need for sharing our minds and souls is much greater than that of sharing our goods. In two decades of marriage counseling, I have learned that there is one basic reason for marital discord. I have found no exception to this basic rule: when marriages fall apart, somebody's emotional needs have not been met.

And in my opinion the most common reason for this problem is failure to communicate.

This same failure underlies the so-called generation gap. If we would only "learn to see things from other people's point of view," as Paul said, we would find that we are not as far apart as we thought.

### A Timely Example . . .

Communication eliminates another bane of community: *stereotyping*. Let me give you an illustration. We see a bearded, long-haired young man in tie-dyed jeans herding a Honda through the neighborhood, and we make a mental note to ourselves that those hippies are around, and we had better be sure to lock the garage door. But my experience has revealed that that so-called hippie may actually be a "Jesus freak" doing something that I have neglected to do—telling *my* neighbor the Good News. And my property may be safer around him than it would be around my next-door neighbors. But there has been no communication between us, and my stereotyping will probably assure that there never will be. So in my ignorance I will try to pardon what I should eagerly praise.

And while we are on the subject of the hippie look, let me say that, in a time when the whole world seems to be going to the devil, I refuse to become agitated over conserving cultural trivia. If our young men want to wear their hair down to their knees, and if they all want to dye it green (which was a local fad in a past generation), is that anything to start a war over? I am both pained and amused at current attempts in some of the religious periodicals to prove that Jesus did not have long hair. I am sure that such efforts reflect a certain amount of

prejudice. If people could be correctly judged by their dress, then we wouldn't have to worry about wolves in sheep's clothing. It seems to me that we have enough problems already, without inventing new ones.

But if we are to have community, we must all—young and old alike—try to see things from the other person's point of view.

### Implied Barriers . . .

There are two other barriers to community which Paul does not specifically mention in Philippians 2, but which are clearly implied. One is *pride* and the other is *hypocrisy*. These are especially dangerous sins because they can be—and are—often sanctified by a religious garb. It sometimes seems that they are found in church more than anywhere else.

Medieval theologians were correct in regarding pride as the worst of all the deadly sins, for the proud man will ultimately try to take over God's job. He will never be satisfied as long as anybody else is above him. To assure that he is number one, he may go to church more than anybody else. He may live an exceptionally clean life, holding to strict moral precepts and severely condemning those who lack his virtues and insights. Even his best friends—if such a man ever has any real friends—may not know of his corruptness. But when some situation or person challenges his preeminence, watch out! That is the end of community. Paul's antidote to such poison is this: "In humility think more of one another than you do of yourselves." That's a big order, but it is necessary to community.

Finally, there is hypocrisy. There was a time when being a hypocrite was a fine thing. It is easy to imagine a beaming Greek father proudly saying, "My boy is a hypo-

crite." Of course, back then the word meant an actor. And that was all right on the stage, but the church is no place for actors. When Jesus came, he found the Academy Award nominees in the church, occupying the highest seats. And that would not do. A religion of truth cannot be propagated by liars, and all hypocrites are liars. Jesus condemned them with unique harshness, but he wasn't very successful in getting rid of them. He finally had to bypass the organized church and start from scratch, so to speak. His original disciples were relatively free from such imposters, but they began to creep in, and today they are entrenched in the woodwork and hanging from the rafters. If someone wants to abandon the church today, he can always find enough to constitute a good case. But there is one thing we should remember. *Jesus isn't any happier with these hypocrites than we are.* He knows how dangerous they can be, how they can wreck community. Two people cannot be of one mind and one spirit as long as one of them is pretending to be something he isn't. If we are to have community, we must be perfectly open and honest with each other.

The early church had a practice which is almost unheard of today. They really confessed their sins to one another. But how long has it been since you have heard a man get up in church and confess his sins? Yet this practice is really valuable. Let me give you an illustration.

The church with which I work is small enough to provide some wonderful opportunities for honest sharing. Frequently on Sunday evenings we arrange chairs in circles to promote togetherness and encourage each person to speak his mind. The results are often immensely rewarding. In one recent meeting, a middle-aged man began to confess his sins. He was very specific. He con-

fessed pride and hypocrisy and selfishness—the sort of sins that are hardly ever confessed. He called people by name and told them how he had felt himself above them, and how he had pretended to be something he wasn't. He asked for their forgiveness and prayers then and there.

Now he didn't have to do that. Nobody had unmasked him, and whatever disguises he had worn had been successful. None of us realized he had such feelings. But he had decided the time had come for genuine honesty, and so he lowered the boom—on himself!

We might well imagine that such a confession would create a delicate situation. After all, when we make such intimate information community property, it may be used against us. And those who are the objects of such feelings may, instead of forgiving and forgetting, start nursing their wrath to keep it warm. But this didn't happen. Instead, the man immediately became more attractive to those to whom he had confessed bad feelings, and for the first time in their lives they began to have real fellowship. They, like so many others in our generation, were literally starved to see Nathan-

ael-like Israelites in whom there is no guile. If we can all learn to be that honest, we will go a long way toward achieving community.

### The Big Answer . . .

So far we have talked about barriers to community. The question remains to be answered, How can we overcome these barriers and have real brotherhood? My answer may not please everyone, but it is the only one I can honestly give. *We can't.* The challenge is too big for us. We have to have help. We may know what to do, but the power to do it can come only from God. Eliot hinted at this when he said:

*There is no life that is not in community,  
And no community not lived in praise of  
God.*

And Paul makes it clear that we must experience Christ's encouragement and love, and know something of the fellowship of his Spirit, and all that it means in kindness and deep sympathy. Without this, we may make some stumbling steps in the right direction, but we will never arrive. In the words of the song, our only hope is to put our hands in the hand of the man from Galilee. □

alone

Tears fall down.  
I feel alone.  
My family far away.  
Close friends scattered.  
People here are busy,  
Keeping up with others,  
Engaged in family ties.  
But then I say, "Shame,

Others too are alone.  
Really alone! You—you  
Can talk to God."  
So chinning up,  
I begin anew  
The walk which  
Includes the Man of Galilee.  
—Beth Hug

## LETTERS

### Hamstringing Haymes

I have just finished reading . . . the June issue of your paper. I read with interest brother Haymes' article on "Simple Trusting Faith." On page 7, under subtitle "A Case in Point," brother Haymes states that if ACC follows Roy H. Lanier's advice, "the forces of ignorance and inquisition will run rampant." Brother Haymes considers those who disagree with him and Warren Lewis as *the forces of ignorance*. To reprove or rebuke his error is considered by him to be an "inquisition." Could it be that brother Haymes' article is an attempt at ignorance and inquisition *against* the truth?

Again, brother Haymes states that if ACC will not take Lanier's advice, but continues to hold to these professors that are liberal at ACC, they will lose support from "people who are, in any case, the natural enemies of learning." Certainly brother Haymes, in his own way, leads his inquisition against those who would stand for the truth. Not only are truth seekers and defenders called ignorant by him, but they are also labelled "natural enemies of learning." Now, he may feel that these labels will prejudice some folks toward his position. But, what are faithful Christians enemies of? All learning? Certainly not. Paul best explains what learning we are enemies of. "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." 2 Tim. 3:7.

Brother Haymes likens himself and others that stand with him as Lutherans and followers of Erasmus. He categorizes those who oppose him as "self-appointed axe-wielders, popes and grand inquisitors." Brother Haymes reminds me of our denominational friends. If he and his owned the church buildings, were the elders, deacons, and members who were in the majority, and we wanted to preach the truth, would he allow us the liberty

that he now expects? I doubt it. He would close his pulpit, bulletin, and buildings to us, just as we close ours to him. The only difference is, we preach the truth, and he preaches error!

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Concerning Don Haymes' article in the June issue, I have the following brief observations. *First*, faith apart from works is dead, so living faith implies activism but this does not mean that all activism is right. That we ought to be active in helping others does not mean that we agree with the means which some use.

*Second*, disfellowship, and the dismissal of teachers who are not in line with the fundamental principles of the school, are essential purges. I realize the term has a bad connotation in the minds of many—even though some of them would like to purge me—but the Bible shows its necessity. (Matt. 3:12; John 15:2; 1 Cor. 5:7; 2 Tim. 2:21; Heb. 9:14.) Purging can apply to what one is to do to himself, or what others have to do to someone else. Haymes mentioned Robert Meyers. He was purged because of his modernism. He himself told me he should have left a year earlier!

*Third*, if Warren Lewis' view of Scripture is right, we cannot depend on it. We could not say purging was right or wrong, or if right when it was right. Churches of Christ cannot be modernist and be scriptural. Therefore, modernists like Warren Lewis should either voluntarily separate themselves, or be disfellowshipped.

*Fourth*, Haymes is a purger. He differs from me on whom should be purged! As a purger he spoke of "the natural enemies of learning." He also said: "But it is time to bring to an end the tyranny of self-appointed axe-wielders who have terrorized free and open inquiry in the Churches of Christ in this generation" (p. 7). So he appointed himself to wield the axe on axe-wielders!! I am praying for him.

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