

Integrity

Volume 5 SEPTEMBER 1973 Number 4

EDITORIAL STAFF:

Hoy Ledbetter, *Editor-in-Chief*
Frank Rester
Dean A. Thoroman

PUBLISHED BY a nonprofit Michigan corporation, INTEGRITY seeks to encourage all believers in Christ to strive to be one, to be pure, and to be honest and sincere in word and deed, among themselves and toward all men.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Names may be added to the mailing list by writing to the editor. At present there is *no subscription charge* (we depend on contributions and God's grace).

CONTRIBUTIONS from readers are necessary to our survival. Since we are approved by IRS, they are legitimate tax deductions.

ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS written exclusively for INTEGRITY are welcomed.

WARNING: *Readers who fail to notify us when they move will be dropped.*

Integrity

8494 Bush Hill Court
Grand Blanc, Michigan 48439

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED
RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Flint, Michigan 48501
Permit No. 239

September 1973



What Lack I Yet? Marcus Fair
A Letter to Marcus Joseph F. Jones
Let's Celebrate Harold Key
Church Music: Spiritual Power . . John Kernan
"Who Is This Man?" Terry Osmon
Ecumenical Conservatives Hoy Ledbetter

What Lack I Yet?

Groping in the darkness of soul of my own creation (possibly contributed to by hypocritical and indifferent church leaders and members; but note that I do not seek to justify myself by blaming them), seeking, searching for a vestige of something lost, something that I might not recognize even if I found it among the wastes, ashes, and skeletons of the dreams and visions I have entertained in intense spiritual moments but have witnessed the demise of through ill-fated collision with the attitudes of the modern Christian(?). I long and yearn for that peace of soul and meaning of life that has eluded my grasp during the last few years of my life.

Please note that I do not blame God. He is sufficient. He is enough! My fault surely lies within my own being. I am powerless to come to grips with the problem. Until I can, I am at a loss as to the solution to my dilemma. Is there rest for my searching soul? Is there basis for a meaningful life somewhere?

Do not conclude that I am just one of the young rebels. I am one of the over-the-hill generation. I am educated; some would even say I have had scholarly pursuits. I have preached for a number of years and still do. My sermons are basic and fundamental and scriptural. None could convict me of heresy . . . but what about heresy of the soul? What is this urge I feel, this envelopment of a sense of hypocrisy, even as I preach, visit, counsel, minister—all the things Christians do? What Lack I Yet?

To those who would quickly give answer, remember, I have already soul searched long and deep. Prayer? I have prayed long, fervently. Nothing!! Service to others? I have labored long and tirelessly. Still, Nothing!! Haunting!! The answer is not as easy as some are going to think. Unless you have tasted the bitters of empathetic agony; until you have agonized in my Gethsemane, hold your peace!!

As my faith wanes in my fellow man, the church—in essence, in human kind—what am I to do? Where to go? How to go? How shall I quench this raging fire within me before I am consumed? Is there a word from the Lord?

—MARCUS FAIR

A Letter to Marcus

JOSEPH F. JONES

Rochester, Michigan

Dear Marcus:

Your admonition to those who would give quick answers to your searching and penetrating quest for life brings an empathic response: for while some persons may find fulfillment in life with seemingly minimal effort, others of us have to agonize and experience our Gethsemanes. When first approached by the editor of *Integrity* to read your letter and reflect upon it with written response, I thought how wonderful it might be if we could have time in personal sharing. For while literary responses may be helpful and communicate something of insight and understanding, it seems that Jesus found personal, intimate communion with individuals more effective and rewarding. "What," I asked myself, "are the feelings and experiences beneath these symbols we call words? What is it that my friend, Marcus, is really saying that I must hear, and accept, and to which I must respond?" But not having such opportunity for this personal (face-to-face) sharing, we must do our best with words.

Search for Meaning . . .

The search for personal meaning is not confined to a few distraught or neurotic souls, as is so frequently assumed. Beneath the boisterous assertions of many church members (Christians?) can be heard the rattling of emptiness, the uncertainty of one

who dares not share with others his frightened and chaotic life. For if he has been a Christian all these many years, and a member of the true church with its ready answers and undeniable positions of truth, how can he yet be insecure, have unanswered questions, lack peace of mind, or be filled with "raging fire" within? Both in and out of the church individuals experience a sense of loneliness, cosmic alienation, lack of direction, and meaning, which Elton Trueblood so poignantly characterized in his book several years ago, *The Predicament of Modern Man* (1944). And so we keep within us those honest, agonizing feelings—questions, doubts, bafflements, angers, frustrations—which in the warm and accepting atmosphere of genuine fellowship could be intimately shared.

When the suicide rates increase each year (especially among youth), alcoholism mounts as a national problem, drug addiction continues to be catastrophic in its scope, we cannot but ask if millions have your same agonizing unmet need to the age old problem of life's meaning. The psalmist verbalized his (and your) feelings and search when writing, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord" (Psalm 130). You graphically depict this search in vivid terms: "my dilemma," "darkness of soul," "vestige of something lost," and "wastes, ashes, and skeletons." Indeed, the dilemma is real for anyone who has not found the answer to life's existence, the why of being here, the

sense of purpose which make life worthwhile.

Search Can Be Thwarted . . .

Our quest for purpose and direction can be thwarted in many and various ways; and our responses to thwarted searching may themselves become roadblocks in our finding the way. Admittedly, hypocritical and indifferent church leaders and members may contribute to our frustrated search; but there will continue to be such individuals in our experiences. Amos was told to go back home, Jeremiah suffered rejection, Jesus was rejected and crucified, Paul faced religious opposition daily, as did Savonarola, Luther, Huss, and the host of those of whom the Hebrew writer speaks so reverently (Heb. 11:32-40). While not seeking to justify one's present spiritual void by blaming others, we may unconsciously harbor those demons of hurt pride, wounded ego, resentment, and anger toward those who have hurt us in life, and find our own quest for rich spiritual growth and meaning quite thwarted. The dynamics of such behavior even on the part of Christians is well known to any therapist who works with human behavior.

Human Inadequacy or Divine Power?

Your acknowledgment of spiritual impotence and sense of helplessness brings to mind the wrestling of the man of Tarsus. If ever one demonstrated the marks of a religious man, knowing religious rules and regulations, sharing the fortunes of being born into the right family, enjoying all the status and pride of acceptable religion, it was Saul of Tarsus; yet he knew an inner conflict and anguish of soul which made life intolerable. "Wretched man that I am; who shall

deliver me?" Saul knew the inadequacy of human striving as a basis for acceptance on the part of God, a source for peace of mind, or personal meaning in life.

Marcus, the religious heritage which I assume has been yours, and that of many in our brotherhood of churches, has done little until recent years to recognize the need for God's power, his empowering Spirit, and redemptive grace in the believer's life. The emphasis has been so intently on man's part, man's responsibility and doing to please God, that a theology of rules and regulations which have little power to control life has emerged, and become the diet for Christian feeding. The Apostle knew the emptiness of such an approach, and deeply resented it being foisted on the church in his day. (Read carefully Colossians 2:18-23.) Indeed, we are helpless or powerless "to come to grips with the problem" as long as we see the answer within either our own selves, or our un-Biblical system of works salvation.

In writing what was perhaps a circular letter to the churches of western Asia Minor (I refer to the Ephesian letter), the Apostle Paul prayed fervently that believers might know the strength or power which is available to us. Utilizing four distinct Greek words, this man of God implores that Christians might *know* (experience) what is "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead" (Eph. 1:19-20). In the same correspondence the Apostle offers a benediction which couches the assurance of Divine power to transform impotent and anemic lives into nothing less than brave and witnessing servants of the living God. "Now to him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power

that worketh in us . . ." (3:20). He could indeed do all things through (in) Christ who saved, sanctified, and empowered him (Phil. 4:13). (I have not attempted to discuss the question of how this power is appropriated to the believer's life; although the need for honest wrestling with the problem might well be the task for subsequent study and articles.)

Sermons:

"Basic, Fundamental, Scriptural . . ."

Marcus, since you claim to have preached for years sermons which were "basic, fundamental, and Scriptural," let me inquire of you—and all of us who dare to assume the ministry of proclaiming Christ—what was (is) the nature of these messages? What have we conceived to be basic, fundamental, Scriptural? The essence of the Good News is that God in Jesus Christ has come to sinful, failing man, with a message of forgiveness, peace, and power. The Good News assures us sinners that God not only absolutely forgives and justifies (declares not guilty), but that he accepts us as forgiven into his fellowship, the church, the fellowship of the saints into which we have been incorporated, with a new sense of belonging, sharing with all the other saints of God the creative working of redemptive love (Eph. 2:1-10).

Perhaps the preaching has been primarily intellectualized and verbalized, without being experienced. Outlines do not a message make! The man who would lead others to God must know God himself through an experience of self-surrender, genuine trust in Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord. It is difficult to stress the experiential nature of life in Christ when the emphasis has so long been on the rationality of conversion and the Christian life. James Stewart of Scotland

well wrote that Christianity is not first of all argumentation but affirmation, sharing and affirming what God has done in Jesus Christ.

You mention that no one could accuse you of "heresy," yet so honestly acknowledge a "heresy of the soul." Peer pressures are a well-known theme in the study of human growth and development. But not only in the rearing of children do we find this principle; it is obviously a vital part of our adult and professional behavior. We need and seek for the approval of others; and approval in our brotherhood has meant the holding of certain clearly defined and unquestioned interpretations, heralded with the correct terminology, and accompanied with appropriate disparagements for those who dare to differ. We have squelched honest searching in the church, labeled those who did question, and employed the various power methods available to quieten those who "don't love the truth." The need for autonomous, wholesomely self-assertive persons in the church, who love truth and people, is only now beginning to be recognized and welcomed. God hasten the day when men and women, youth and aged, can be encouraged to be themselves—persons of integrity in the church of God.

Source of Security . . .

It is vital that our security be rooted in adequate sources. There are few needs which drive men in their behavior like the need to find security. And in our search for meaning in life, assurance of forgiveness, and need for acceptance, we have turned to the wrong sources. When these sources then proved to be inadequate, we have lost faith in our fellow men, in the church, or in life itself—become confused, baffled, and skeptical.

Your pointed, agonizing questions turn us to the One Source for security. The disciples asked it long ago of Jesus in a dramatic moment in his life: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" You ask searchingly, "What am I to do? Where to go? . . . Is there a word from the Lord?" Indeed there is, as it comes from his Spirit through the Apostle Peter: "Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we have believed and know that Thou art the Holy One of God."

I know that God loves me, with all my limitations and failings. He has fully assured me of this in Jesus Christ. He has promised me that "eternal life" rests not upon perfect

answers to all human questions, but in knowing Him, and the Son whom he did send (Jn. 17:3). My security and peace rest in knowing that I am saved in Jesus Christ, and that I share an intimate personal relationship with him. Since he has accepted me, I can more readily accept others, even those who differ with me. I can love those who hurt me, because he loved me when I hurt him. Life becomes meaningful when I come to know him, witness for him to his marvelous works (1 Pet. 2:9-10), love others, and lead them to the love of God in Christ. Life's meaning? "To know God and enjoy him forever." □

Let's Celebrate

HAROLD KEY

St. Louis, Missouri

I have an idea that the most likely reaction to the above title is: "Let's celebrate what?" Well, just what, if anything, have you really celebrated lately? Within the last few weeks a Christian lady celebrated her 80th birthday, or rather, her daughters did. And a fine young couple celebrated their marriage to each other. And my sister's husband's parents celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. And there was the 4th of July with some people going on picnics and others shooting off fireworks, so you might call that a celebration.

But what is there that all of us can really celebrate? Easter? Christmas? Not everyone's conscience will allow him to single out

those days as high festivals, but at least those are suggestive of what we all have to celebrate: Christ!

It is in respect to *celebration* that Christians have something vastly different from that which is offered in any other religion or system of philosophy. This is the uniqueness of Christian worship: celebration! Those who view Christian worship as following a systematic formula ("pattern") miss the main point. In this light reconsider the contrast drawn by the Apostle Paul in these scriptures:

Now if the dispensation of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such splendor that the Israelites could not look at

Moses' face because of its brightness, fading as this was, why should not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendor? . . . For if what faded away came with splendor, what is permanent must have much more splendor. Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendor. . . . Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:7-8, 11-13, 17-18).

If Christian worship is not *celebration*, then it is highly questionable that it is actually Christian. Thus, the paradox of weekly "worship" which depresses and enervates (and repels) rather than elevates and empowers the spirit of the worshippers. Instead of struggling through worship as a heavy burden, there can and should be the sense of joy and delight.

But not every congregation is blessed with leaders who have unusual abilities to inspire all the members. So how can this celebration occur for them? The answer lies not in the genius of the worshippers but in the object of their worship: Jesus Christ. As he

said, he is the way, the truth and the life. Christian worship is the celebration of: (1) the reality that he did come to be our Savior; (2) that he did die that we might be free from the guilt of sin; (3) that God did raise him from the dead that we might be free from the power of sin; (4) that he lives today to intercede with God for us; and (5) that he is coming again to glorify us with the same glory that he has been glorified with.

So, *Christian* songs are to be songs of joy and assurance and hope as they focus on the mighty working of God in Christ Jesus. In the same way our prayers are to be expressions of praise and power. The Lord's Supper is to be not funereal but festive. Our offerings of money are to be given not with an appearance of dreary duty but reflective of the infinite inward and outward blessings which have come to us as sons and daughters of the living God. The word of God is to be a living and active message to us as the Holy Spirit lays it upon our heart. *Celebration!*

Were such to be the nature of our gatherings, we would have much less need to harangue the congregation about their duty to come together. It would be much more difficult to keep them away. As Christians, let's *celebrate!* □

Voice from the Past

"There are, indeed, some men who have a good delivery, but cannot compose anything to deliver. Now, if such men take what has been written with wisdom and eloquence by others, and commit it to memory, and deliver it to the people, they cannot be blamed, supposing them to do it without deception. . . . Nor are such men to be alarmed by the words of Jeremiah the prophet, through whom God denounces those who steal His words every one from his neighbor" (Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, IV.29).

Perhaps "deception" can be avoided by holding up two fingers (to simulate quotation marks) at the beginning and end of the discourse. These words are of no little comfort to those who give Chappell talks. However, Augustine might make a poor attorney.

Church Music: Spiritual Power

JOHN KERNAN

East London, C.P., South Africa

It's odd that the controversy over instrumental music still continues, and odder still that it has cropped up in South Africa, where it has been carried to the extremist extreme.

In South Africa, Africans traditionally sing without an instrument. You could visit all the congregations of the 2,000+ "Christian" sects and denominations in the country, and you would find few instruments. You'd probably find the Salvation Army with its usual band, and the Zionist churches pounding a drum to keep time to the singing. In the churches of Christ, you'd find one or two people performing the same function by slapping a Bible. (In South Africa, all congregations associated with the Restoration Movement use the name "church of Christ.") For the most part, the use of an instrument in the public assembly of the church is not a part of the African way of Christianity.

Yet, a few years ago, missionaries associated with the American non-instrumental churches began to agitate the music question, to disfellowship over the instrument and to cause splits in indigenous congregations. This, I submit, is the extremist extreme to which the anti-instrument argument can go—to transplant an American split to a foreign field by stirring up anti-instrument feeling among people who never use an instrument.

I don't know the reason for this anti-instrument agitation in South Africa. Perhaps it's wrong for local Christians to associ-

ate with missionaries supported by American congregations which do use the instrument. Or perhaps, when a Bible is being pounded in time with the singing, that Bible then becomes a "sinful innovation," to quote my old Harding professor James Bales as he quotes McGarvey (letter in *Integrity*, October, 1972).

While I don't know the motivation behind the local controversy, I do know all the sick old arguments used to support both the anti- and pro-instrument factions. I was immersed way back in 1933 in the Portland Avenue Church of Christ in Louisville, Ky., and later grew up at the feet of B.C. Goodpasture when he was minister of the Seminole Avenue church in Atlanta. I spent my first term as a missionary supported by the non-instrumental churches and since 1956 have been supported by the "conservative Christian" churches (many of whom now use the term "church of Christ" to distinguish themselves from the "Disciples of Christ"—how we "New Testament Christians" do love labels!). I've heard all the arguments from all the sides and still marvel that so many people can get so completely sidetracked on such a non-Biblical issue.

I say "non-Biblical" advisedly, because one cannot prove from the Bible either the use or non-use of an instrument in the public assembly of the church. Nor can we go back to the Old Testament to support an instrument in the public assembly today. While it may be true that the temple worship in-

cluded lyres, etc., the temple worship also included animal sacrifice. We can't validate one practice while we reject the other. And if we look forward to heaven to prove the instrument, as some people try to do, we must also advocate wearing white robes and crowns.

New Testament Passages . . .

So we must look at the authority which does control the church today; that is, the New Testament. And what do we find? Outside of the two or three passages in the gospels and Revelation, there are only eight passages that concern singing. What do these eight passages say about this subject?

1. **Romans 15:9:** "And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy, as it is written, 'Therefore will I give praise unto thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name'" (ASV). This passage suggests that singing praises to God is a means of witnessing to the Gentiles, or, in our case, to non-Christians. The source of the quotation, Ps. 18:49, shows David in the midst of enemies and problems, but still so confident of God's help that he can praise God.

David and Paul both seem to indicate that this kind of praising is a personal matter rather than a congregational affair—when my heart is full of love for God and stricken with awe at his power, I automatically burst into praise. This spontaneous singing through sheer happiness in God is not an emphasis put forward by churches of Christ or Christian churches, yet we find it cropping up again and again in the Bible.

2. **Acts 16:25:** David singing in the midst of his enemies anticipates Paul and Silas. "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them." When the Christian is in a

tight spot, does he whimper and shiver and cower in a corner? He may, but he should not. Paul and Silas sang with gusto so that even the other prisoners heard them. In thus witnessing to the Gentiles, Paul practiced what he preached in Romans 15. For Paul and Silas, singing praises was a tremendous demonstration of their confidence in God. We may justly conclude that showing confidence in God under trying conditions is one of the chief reasons for singing hymns.

I witnessed the same kind of singing when I was shipwrecked in Alaska 25 years ago—a group of passengers gathered in a cabin and spent several hours singing hymns of praise and petition.

3. **Hebrews 2:11-12:** ". . . for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, 'I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church [congregation: RSV] will I sing praises unto them.'" Christ is quoted here, from Psalm 22:23. Thus Christ states that he will witness to his brethren by singing praises to God. The passage does not tell us how Christ sang. Did he show the exuberance of David by singing and dancing to the sound of a trumpet? Or did he use the more sedate synagogue chanting? We don't know. The passage is not concerned with the way Christ sang nor with the way we sing. It is concerned with the fact that Christ equates himself with believers as "his brethren" and that he is willing to join with them in praising God.

4. **James 5:13:** "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." What do Christians today sing when they are merry? They're more likely to sing the latest pop hit than a psalm. Yet if we "speak where the Bible speaks," we should show our joy and happiness by singing religious songs.

5. **Colossians 3:16**: “Let the word of Christ dwell with you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Because of the similarity of this passage to the granddaddy of all proof texts, Ephesians 5:19, we’ll take the two together, except for one comment. In terms of controversy over instrumental music, isn’t it ironic that verse 15 reads: “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts . . .”?

6. **Ephesians 5:19**: “Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God . . .”

It’s amazing that this passage got into the argument over music in the assembly of the saints. There’s a little exegetical rule that says that when you want the real meaning of a verse, you look at a number of other factors, including the verses immediately before and after the one you’re studying. It appears that few people, from McGarvey to Bales, have looked at the context of Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19.

Guidelines for Daily Living . . .

When we do look at the context, what do we find? That the passages aren’t talking about singing in a public meeting at all. They are talking about the individual Christian as he goes about his daily life. He is to walk in love, to not let vain words deceive him, to refrain from hobnobbing with evil, to walk circumspectly, to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to let the peace of God reign in his heart, and so on.

We “New Testament Christians” have really killed these verses, haven’t we? What a futile controversy over a point they don’t

even touch. What does Ephesians 5 really say? It says the same thing that Colossians 3 says, and that Acts 16 and Romans 15 and James 5 say: they all give a guideline for daily Christian living. When I visit a brother who is blue and discouraged, I can cheer him up by singing a psalm or a hymn. When I’m sitting on a crowded bus after a hard day’s work, how can I loosen my tensions? By making melody in my heart to God.

Does making melody in my heart exclude making melody on a musical instrument? Not in the experience of most of us. When we sang on the battered ship, there was no instrument, so our singing—our melody—was *a cappella*. But before the shipwreck, I lived in the barracks with a soldier who had a harmonica in his pocket all the time. When there was nothing special to do, or when we were sitting around engaged in the favorite pastime of griping about the army, this chap would whip out that harmonica and make melody. Sometimes the melody was hill-billy, sometimes it was jazz, more often than not it was a hymn. And the melody of the harmonica brought out melody in our hearts and the blues ran away.

This is what Paul is talking about—chasing away the blues by praising God. But if we want to “make melody in the heart” as excluding other types of melody, then we must also exclude singing, for singing is making melody with the lips. So this kind of literalistic reasoning just gets us into an untenable trap. It’s better to stick to the lesson the New Testament really teaches.

When my wife is sick and I’m washing the dishes, how can I get out of the doldrums? By singing a spiritual song. This is the lesson these passages really teach—that if we put more spiritual singing into our daily walk with God, that walk will go more smoothly.

7. **1 Corinthians 14:15**: “What is it, then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.” This verse is one of the two New Testament verses directly connected with singing in the assembly of believers. The other one is verse 26 of the same chapter.

This verse is concerned with “understanding” in contrast with “spirit.” There were some in the Corinthian church who prayed “with the spirit,” that is, “with an unknown tongue. In that case, the understanding is “unfruitful,” Paul says in verse 14. That is, there is no real value to that prayer. Singing is in the same category—some Corinthian Christians sang in an unknown tongue. They did not know what they were singing. Others sang in a known tongue—they sang with understanding. Singing with the understanding edifies others, which, as Paul says later, is the important aspect of singing, praying and preaching. Thus we come back to singing as a means of witnessing to the unbeliever. This kind of singing must be done in a language the unbeliever understands rather than in an unknown tongue.

8. **Verse 26**: “How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.” This verse puts singing on the same level as teaching, speaking in tongues, prophesying. We’ve thrown a couple of these things out of the church. Should we also throw out singing?

Look at the passage closely: “Every one of you [that is, each of you] hath a psalm . . .” This indicates that singing in the Corinthian church was done by one person at a time. Applying this rule to the church today, we would have to throw out choirs,

duets, and singing by the whole congregation. And if the restriction of verse 27 also applies to singing, then there could not be more than three solos at any gathering of the saints.

Let us give a word of warning to those in our midst who have tongues and prophecies in their church services today. If they justify tongues on the basis of 1 Corinthians 14, then they must be careful about the kind of music they have. Consistency is an absolute necessity in dealing with the Word of God.

Prototype Problems . . .

It’s obvious that most of us in the Restoration Movement don’t model our contemporary church services on Paul’s instructions to Corinth. Yet this is one of the very few chapters in the whole New Testament that give us any clue as to how the first century church conducted its meetings. It is the only one that deals with music in those meetings. If we’re unwilling to accept this chapter as a blueprint for the church today, then any scriptural argument for or against the instrument is *ultra vires*. If we do accept this chapter as a blueprint for the church today, then we must accept tongues, prophecies, interpretations, and not more than three solos in any one gathering. If we don’t accept it, then we have no scriptural basis for discussing music in the assembly of believers.

We use 1 Corinthians 16:2 as a scriptural base for the offering; we use Acts 20:7 as a scriptural base for the Lord’s supper. Most churches of Christ today do not use 1 Corinthians 14 as a scriptural base for an order of service. I’m not suggesting that we do use this chapter as authoritative for the church today. It deals with an exclusively Corinthian problem. By common consent and practice, most congregations in the United States

find a different type of program to be more effective. Congregations in South Africa are satisfied with a type of church service different from that in both the States and Corinth. On the basis of "Bible silence," "expediency," "necessary inference," and so forth, we've changed many aspects of the gathering of the saints. We've added many items that New Testament Christians of the first century didn't know anything about, including a Bible presented as one volume of 66 books.

I'm not suggesting that we use 1 Corinthians 14 as authority for church meetings today. I am suggesting that when we reject this chapter, we have no scriptural base for making decisions about church music. Thus the question of music in the assembly of the saints comes to being purely a matter of congregational opinion with no scriptural overtones at all. And with our vaunted congregational autonomy, we are left with the situation that each congregation can decide for itself as to whether it wants to worship with or without an instrument. It cannot plead scriptural authority for its decision, nor can it insist that any other congregation accept that decision. It cannot refuse to fellowship with congregations or individuals who hold a different opinion. Scripture does not come into the matter at all.

I am suggesting that the whole vicious argument has been based on the wrong premises, used the wrong passages and made the wrong emphases. When we put all the New Testament passages together, the overwhelming evidence is that singing is a matter of the individual response to God and may be used as a means of praising God publicly and privately; it may be used as a means of witnessing to the non-Christian and of confessing Christ to the believer; it may be used as a means of encouraging and strengthening a

"WHO IS THIS MAN?"

*Black, massive clouds
Crowded my mind—
Winds blowing bleak
Through the desolate
Wasteland
In my chest.
Rain in torrents
From my eyes—
Thunder pounding
From clenched fists.
Until He spoke:
"Peace.
Be still."
Even the winds
And the sea
Obey Him.
Jesus.
Lord.*

—TERRY OSMON

brother; it may be used as a means of uplifting the singer. The New Testament message is not how the singing is done, nor even how good it is, but the fact that it is done.

The New Testament isn't concerned with whether we sing without an instrument or whether we pound on a piano or a drum or a Bible. The New Testament is concerned with singing as a spiritual force. When we drop the futile, divisive controversy and start emphasizing the spiritual value of singing, the church will discover an undreamed of power of spiritual growth. □

From the Editor

Ecumenical Conservatives

The Religion Editor of *The New York Times*, impressed with the way Missouri Synod Lutherans and Catholics have joined hands in Key '73, claims that "Jacob Preus and John Cardinal Carberry are the most important ecumenical leaders of our day." Very interesting. Preus, already well known for his attacks upon liberalism at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, recently spearheaded a victorious conservative drive in New Orleans. Obviously one who calls him a liberal must be very far to the right. Thus a fatal blow has been struck at the myth that the ecumenical spirit must be tied to theological liberalism. This myth has been encouraged by the fact that the theological relativity of the liberals has enabled them to be in the forefront of ecumenical efforts in recent years. Although those who minimize doctrine thereby overcome a major deterrent to cooperation, it does not follow that liberalism is the only alternative to division. As a matter of fact, many of the liberals themselves (no doubt challenged by Dean Kelley's *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*) seem to have awakened to the fact that no unity is possible which overlooks a doctrinal foundation.

One might reasonably expect that the more conservative a person is, the more he

will have a passion for unity. The Bible so strongly asserts the oneness of the body that those who take it seriously must be bothered by our historic sectarianism. And the conviction that the Holy Spirit is alive and active today makes one alert to the possibility that He is moving in the current religious situation to bring together believers in Christ. There is nothing liberal about such an outlook. Moreover, since the Scriptures provide us with numerous indications of tolerance among the early saints, one's tolerance may actually increase as he grows in understanding of and respect for the sacred writings.

Many of us have been disturbed by the possibility that recent religious developments, although widely praised, may lack a vital doctrinal foundation. I hesitate to use a term which may be misunderstood, but it is possible for us to be carried away with a "Jesus myth." Little is gained if we merely trade one myth for another. But, on the other hand, it is absurd for us to regard peripheral party peculiarities as vital doctrine which must be agreed upon as a prerequisite to unity. I say absurd because such thinking is neither practical nor scriptural.

The church *does not have, never has had, and never will have* uniformity of belief. We must face this fact. To say that "we can

learn what the Bible teaches on truly crucial matters” may be true, but what are the truly crucial matters? Once we have determined that doctrine is vital, we must decide what is vital doctrine. It is in this respect, I believe, that we have paid too little attention to the Bible.

Paul said, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” This statement is the antidote both to doctrinal indifference and to sectarian exclusivism. To hold that it implies a significant basis of belief is not narrowmindedness.

And to declare that it does not require conformity to denominational peculiarities is not theological relativity.

Paul further says, “No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.” Again he gives the fundamental confession to be made. On this we can agree. But the more we add to it, the more we are unlikely to see in our time the unity which prevailed in the first century. Those who have undermined the foundation have really done no more damage to unity than those who have encumbered the superstructure with non-vital beliefs. Our brethren who have the ecumenical spirit have not departed from the Bible. On the contrary, they have gone back to it. —HGL

Letters to the Editor

On Women and Prayer

It has never been a habit of mine to respond to critics of anything I or others have written, but I feel it necessary to correct a statement made by Brother Cecil May in the May issue (“Women and Prayer”) in which he denied that Ephesians 5:21 means what it says: “subjecting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ.” He states that the context is of wives being in subjection to their husbands. I’m sure he is not trying to put down women. However, in our enthusiasm to support an idea we must be careful not to unwittingly wrest the scriptures by blowing up one verse and calling it context. It seems to me that the context (that which precedes and/or follows and is directly connected with) is an over-all exhortation to be imitators of God, walking in love (vv. 1-2), and contrasting light and darkness (vv. 3-14). Verses 15-21 are a sort of encapsulation of this contrast: “not as unwise—not foolish, but understand—not drunken

with wine, but filled with the Spirit,” ending with the general instructions, “giving thanks for all things” and “subjecting yourselves one to another.” The last sentence begins in verse 18, and I find no period until after verse 21, which, as I understand English, hooks all those verses together, unless the King James and American Standard translators did a bad job of translation. The rest of the chapter, vv. 22-33, speaking of the marriage relationship as a picture of Christ and the church relationship, must be considered either a new subject or a sub-heading under the previous verses. It seems most reasonable to me to consider it a sub-heading under the general principle of “subjecting yourselves one to another.”

If the last part of this sentence applies only to wives and husbands, then certainly the rest of the sentence does too; therefore “speaking one to another in psalms and hymns” must also apply only to wives and husbands. If “speaking one to another in psalms and hymns” is a commandment to

all Christians, then “subjecting yourselves one to another,” using the same set of words in the same sentence, must also apply to all Christians.

“Subjecting yourselves one to another” is not an isolated statement, but is only one of many verses in the New Testament setting forth this principle for the body of Christ. Please consider the following references:

Gal. 5:13: “For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but *through love be servants one to another.*”

Phil. 2:1-8: “If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind *each counting other better than himself*; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea the death of the cross.”

1 Pet. 3:8: “Finally, *be ye all* likeminded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tenderhearted, humbleminded—”

1 Pet. 5:5: “Likewise, ye younger, be subject unto the elder. Yea, *all of you* gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another; for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.”

If we all could put into practice just this one New Testament principle, it would heal the great majority of our husband-wife, parent-child, brother-sister, man-woman, inter-racial, inter-church, and inter-denominational relationships!

Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico JUDY ROMERO

Prayer and Sinners

I appreciated the close reading Brother Rick Deighton gave to my article, “Right on, Lord!” (February, 1973), and the meditation he shared in a letter to the editor. However, he seems to me to have missed both some of the points I was making, and those Malcom Boyd was putting forth in his prayers. Rick objects to Malcom’s statement to God, “I’m a captive to my own will and don’t give an honest damn about you or your will,”

saying, “We don’t need to stoop to frivolously using ‘damn’ to punctuate our prayers in order to be honest with God.” Not knowing Malcom personally, I cannot say whether he was being frivolous in his usage of “damn” (and any other expletives he has used), but I *can* speak for myself, and I can assure you that there are many times when that is *exactly* how I have felt. I often *think* with a vocabulary that includes “damn” and other such words, much to my shame, and my point was that total honesty dictates—yea, demands—that my prayers reflect what is in my mind and heart, not what ought to be there.

Rick next misunderstood Malcom Boyd’s prayer in a gay bar, in which Malcom asked God to be with these men in this bar, even if they couldn’t or wouldn’t ask God themselves for this favor. Bro. Deighton’s response was, “This certainly doesn’t sound like God’s Word . . .” He understood the prayer to be asking God to be with these men *during their homosexual acts*, thus implying that God should condone it. As one who drove a taxi for almost a year, I can assure you that much of the attraction of a gay bar (or any bar, for that matter) is rooted in man’s alienation from his fellow man, and his intense need for human interaction, understanding and attention. No, Rick, we shouldn’t pray that God will excuse sin or ignore it, but then, I don’t pray for sin, I pray for *people*, and *all* people are sinners, and all people *need* my prayers, just as I depend on the prayers of other people. This is firmly rooted in Biblical theology and in the example of Jesus, who was so often seen with the publicans, whores and sinners that he earned the reputation of being a drunkard and a glutton. I can pray for people without approving of their conduct, just as I *deplore* many of the things that I do, but I haven’t stopped praying for myself, and I intend to keep up that practice no matter *how* gross I may act.

Finally, I see no conflict between Fred Blakely’s comments that God is a “transcendent One, ‘glorious in holiness’ and ‘fearful,’ or awful, ‘in praises,’ who is ‘high, august, and consuming,’” and what I said about the closeness and informality which we should enjoy with God. Altering Fred’s statement slightly, I would assert that “the God of the contemporary church” can be our “pal, with whom a free-and-easy relationship . . . is sustained.” “What a *friend* we have in Jesus.” That, my brothers, is *good* news.

San Diego, California

ALLEN HOLDEN, Jr.