

Integrity

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THREE PRAYERS AND A SONG

A few years ago the elders of my church were called to the home of a woman with a chronic illness who had been reading James 5 and wanted them to pray over her and anoint her with oil in the name of the Lord. When they arrived they found that she had also invited some Mormon elders. The woman restated her purpose, and one of our elders replied, "Of course, we will pray over you, but we don't have any oil"—and turning to the Mormons—"and I don't suppose you fellows have any either." But they did have some—which enabled them to promptly take charge of the situation.

Once, when a man came forward during the invitation, I sat down beside him and asked why he had come. He seemed surprised at my question, but replied, "I have sinned." I asked, "What have you done?" With some indignation he replied, "That's just between me and God!"

I remember a prolonged discussion in one church when a brother asked, "Do you believe that we can pray for rain and that it will rain where it wouldn't if we hadn't?" Some of the participants concluded with Mark Twain: "It is best to read the weather forecasts before we pray for rain."

The story is told of a man who one day got so excited in church that, right in the middle of the sermon, he shouted, "Praise the Lord!" Whereupon an usher quickly walked to his pew, leaned toward him, and whispered, "Shhh! You can't 'praise the Lord' in here."

These little stories have a point, but I am resisting the temptation to elaborate. What I would like for you to do is come back to them and make your own evaluation after reading the exposition of James 5:13-16 which follows. In this passage James deals with emotions which range from depression to elation. He focuses on weakness, both physical and moral, and prescribes the response, not only of the individual, but also of the fellowship of which he is a part. He portrays an atmosphere of trust and concern in which frail Christians can fully bare themselves without fear of being despised or laughed at or shunned.

James points the way to something that many people long for today but never seem to be able to attain. Yet we can have it, and we are meant to have it. We have only to recapture the spirit of our forefathers. There was a great power among them, although not all of them recognized it. (If they had, this

passage would not have been written.) Meditating on their mandate should discourage our sluggishness and stimulate us to restore the vitality of the early saints.

Suffering Hardship . . .

"Is any among you suffering? Let him pray."

Here "suffering" (which must be distinguished from the sickness of the next verse) means "to be smitten by a misfortune or evil" and refers to any kind of hardship¹ that causes depression, frustration, anger, or fear. The problem is not so much economic or physical as it is religious.² Many of us face difficulty with the motto "Why pray when you can worry?" and when we fail to work things out on our own, we become resentful, bitter, and accusatory. James suggests a more positive approach.

There is a widespread view today that tacitly rules out hardship for the Christian. While not actually denying that Christians may suffer, this view puts an inordinate stress on success in prayer (in the sense of getting what we ask for) which shoves chronic hardship so far into the background that it is virtually eliminated from the dynamic Christian life. Such shallow theology can be very hurtful to people who suffer, and we need to realize that men of God in the Bible were not always prosperous. They often lived austerely and died violently. For such noblemen as Elijah, Jeremiah and Paul life

was not a bed of roses. Many a righteous prayer has seemed to fall on deaf ears.

This is why perplexity and resentment may not be as reprehensible as we imagine. A case in point is Habakkuk who, although a prophet, was a great doubter. First he could not understand why God did not do something about the wrongs in the world. Then when God did act, Habakkuk could not appreciate his methods.

The prayer James enjoins is not so much for removing the distressful situation as it is *for wisdom* (such as that we are told to pray for in 1:6) to understand that God still acts in our lives when everything seems to be going against us.

As an illustration, our pastors have urged us to bring our tithes into the storehouse, promising that the windows of heaven would open and pour down for us an overflowing blessing. In faith we did what they said. But as far as we can determine, the windows of heaven have remained closed. In fact, our economic situation has grown worse, and we feel we *have* seen the righteous forsaken and his seed begging bread. Now how can we relate these observations to God's care for us? How do we keep from crying and complaining and struggling with our faith? It is here that we need the religious experience that James urges upon us through prayer.³

The very act of prayer can have a striking effect. Psalm 6 shows that a prayer which begins in a deep depression may end in a

1 The original word, *kakopatheō*, is used also of Paul's imprisonment (2 Tim. 2:9) and of the hardships Timothy must bear patiently as an evangelist (4:5); ". . . the word refers to calamity of every sort, and is not limited to the opposite of *euthumia*" (J.H. Ropes, *The Epistle of St. James*, 303).

2 Cf. Michaelis: "In 5:13, as shown by the antithetical parallel *euthumeō*, the *kakopatheō* suggests, not so much the distressing situation as such, but the spiritual burden which it brings with it, and which drives us to prayer. Hence the prayer is more for the giving of strength than the removal of the situation" (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, V, 937).

3 "Prayer may not remove the affliction but it most certainly can transform it" (R.V.G. Tasker, *The General Epistle of James*, 127).

renewed devotion. David's whole being was deeply troubled, and he was completely exhausted. He was worn out with grief; every night his bed was damp from crying, his pillow was soaked with tears, his eyes were so swollen from so much weeping that he could hardly see. In other words, he was on the verge of an emotional breakdown—all because of his enemies. But at the end of the prayer he is triumphant: "Go away, you evildoers! The Lord hears my weeping; he listens to my cries for help, and answers my prayers." Such progress from despair to triumph in prayer is not uncommon in the Psalms—which were written for our learning.

A similar turning point occurs in Psalm 73 (an immensely helpful one to me), in which the writer tells how he was almost thrown off track by the prosperity of the wicked. He observed that they do not suffer and have the troubles of other men; although they are full of wicked schemes, are proud, talk about oppressing others, speak evil of God, and give arrogant orders to men, they have plenty and are always getting more. Not only so, but everyone approves of them. So he wonders, "Is it for nothing, then, that I have kept myself pure, and my hands clean from sin? God, you have made me suffer all day long . . ."

Yet—and this always compounds the difficulty—he had to bear his frustration alone, for his sense of responsibility as a leader of God's people would not allow him to declare to his brethren such a potentially damaging revelation of doubt: "If I had said such things, I would have been untrue to your people."

In a better moment he could look back and say, "When my thoughts were bitter, and my feelings were hurt, I was stupid, and did not understand," but the necessary in-

sight did not come until he had an encounter with God. "So I tried hard to understand this, even though it was difficult, *until I went into your temple . . .*" He does not describe his experience in the temple—perhaps nothing extraordinary happened—but afterwards he could say, "God is my strength; he is all I ever want . . . how wonderful to be near God!" Is any one of you suffering hardship? Let him pray. "Yes," David would add, "and try going to church!"

The Emotional High . . .

"Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise."

There is more to the Christian life than bad experiences. At times everything goes so well for us that we just have to celebrate; and if the father's action in the well-known parable is a guideline, some emotions must be expressed in "music and dancing." The drinking party is a common resort for some celebrants, but the Christian's excitement finds a better vehicle. Paul says, in a fine play on words, "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart" (Eph. 5:18-19). In a parallel passage he told the Colossians to sing "with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Such thankfulness (literally *grace*) is our response to God's grace, and this is how we should view our prosperity. We receive grace and return glory.

I do not agree with Moffatt that "elsewhere in the N.T. the word to sing praise refers to public worship"; Eph. 5:19 does not necessarily require what we call public worship. But the music of our public worship does need to receive more attention, for it is ordinarily the only channel of emotional

expression for the whole body. One can choose his own means of praise at home, but when he goes to church he may be at the mercy of others who plan and conduct the program. This monopoly could be avoided by restoring the Corinthian procedure in which "each one has a hymn" (1 Cor. 14:26)—or at least allowing anyone who desires to do so to *lead* a hymn—but in some places that day may be a long time coming. In the meantime a heavy burden falls upon the congregational leaders.

Much congregational singing is uninspiring because it is uninspired. If the music is listlessly conducted, or if the words are not related to the emotions (and often they have little meaning for many of the worshippers), one who enters the meeting singing praise, because he is cheerful, may leave praying, because he has suffered hardship! On the other hand, one who comes depressed may catch the exhibited excitement of his fellow worshippers and go home cheerful. Precisely because we have so much to get worked up over,⁴ our music must comprise songs of praise which issue from cheerful hearts.

4 Barclay points out that "in the orthodox Jewish Synagogue, since the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, there has been no music, for, when they worship, they remember a tragedy; but in the Christian Church, from the beginning until now, there has been the music of songs of praise, for the Christian remembers an infinite love and enjoys a present glory" (*The Letters of James and Peter*, DSB, 152).

5 "Obviously these are office-bearers of the congregation (note the article) and not just charismatically endowed older men. Equally clearly they are regarded as endowed with the gift of efficacious prayer in virtue of their office" (Bornkamm, *TDNT*, VI, 664).

6 "Since Jm. 5:16 is not referring to confession of sins before presbyters, but to mutual confession and intercession and the efficacy of the prayer of the righteous, 5:14 does not allow us to draw any conclusions as to the position of presbyters as confessors or their function as the leaders of the church's liturgy" (Bornkamm, 664). Bo Reicke overshoots the evidence when he says: "In order to terminate a sickness it was necessary to confess one's sins and to receive forgiveness for them, a procedure likewise prescribed here by James. More specifically the elders are instructed in vs. 15b to forgive on behalf of the Lord the sins of the sick who repent" (*The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 60).

7 "The epistles of the NT make it obvious how the bond of brotherly love is vital and strong in prayer. To crown the conquest of self Jesus even demands that we should pray for our enemies, and according to Lk. He sets an example on the cross. The Stoic prayer attains clarity concerning his own nature; nothing which comes from without can affect him. The mystic withdraws from all things; his soul experiences the delights of mystical vision. But when the Christian comes before God in prayer, he brings with him that which grieves him most, unjust suffering, and before the face of God it is transfigured into intercession for his persecutors" (Greeven, *TDNT*, II, 805).

In Case of Sickness . . .

"Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."

The elders are pastors of the local congregation⁵ who may bear more resemblance to the preaching ministers of today than to contemporary elders. They are accorded no particular distinction as hearers of confessions⁶ and have no special power to forgive sins, although they are men whose prayers, being "of faith," are effective. Although here the sick man is to take the initiative and "call for" the elders, the early church, and especially the ministry, exercised a constant vigilance over the sick. Sickness (which in this case may be a special form of "suffering hardship") was not merely an individual concern but one in which the whole community participated. This fact underscores the selfless devotion which enabled the early Christians to be so effective in prayer.⁷

One might argue that the elders could pray just as effectively at home as at the bedside of the sick. But prayer must not be isolated from fellowship. The person whose body is tortured with pain may find it difficult to communicate with God, and the prayers of godly men in his presence will aid him in maintaining communion. He will also derive much comfort and psychological benefit from the presence of spiritual petitioners.

Anointing with oil could reflect the use of a common household remedy,⁸ but since oil would hardly have therapeutic value for every kind of sickness (and James is laying down a general rule), other explanations should be examined. Since Mark 6:13 says that Jesus' disciples "cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them," some have connected James' instruction with exorcism.⁹ But his rule is also too general for this. Others trace the use of oil to the primitive belief that it was a kind of life elixir.¹⁰ But would James support such a view? Still others attribute to the oil a sacramental significance.¹¹ The weakness of this view lies in its lack of confirmation elsewhere in the Bible.

With the anointing with oil we may compare Jesus' use of saliva, which in ancient times was believed to have curative power. In healing the deaf man who had a speech impediment Jesus "put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue" (Mk. 7:33). The blind man at Bethsaida

was healed when Jesus "had spit on his eyes and laid his hands upon him" (8:23). In the case of the man born blind "he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay" (Jn. 9:6ff.). The laying on of hands was a frequent adjunct to healing (cf. Mk. 16:18: "they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover").

There was rich symbolism in these apertenances, although some of it may be lost on us. If healing could occur without them—and I believe it could—then their value lay in stimulating the faith of the person to be healed and in inspiring his cooperation in the healing process. For this reason I am inclined to view the anointing with oil as an aid to faith. James stresses that healing results from the prayer of faith, not the oil, but the oil might connote that God is present in all healing, even in medical therapy. Its application, along with laying on of hands and other forms of touching, would symbolize the cooperation of God and man in dealing with the patient's experience. Its usefulness in connection with our prayers today would be limited by the orientation of those involved.

If "in the name of the Lord" means "while calling on the name of the Lord" (A-G), we should understand that this is no mere formula. In Acts 19 the sons of Sceva undertook an exorcism with these words: "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." For them the formula not only

failed to work but had the opposite effect. The evil spirit said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, mastered all of them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. "In the name of the Lord" implies cooperation with and obedience to him.¹²

The sick man is "saved" when he is restored to health, when the Lord "raises him up" from the sick bed. He may receive an additional blessing of forgiveness, if he has committed sins. The archaic belief that all sickness is the result of sin does not enter the picture here. It cannot be doubted that sickness and death *may* result from sin (in 1 Cor. 11:30 the sin is failure to discern the body), but this is no universal law; and James' use of *and if he has committed sins* surely implies that the question is open. *If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.*

Confession of Sins . . .

"Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects."

The connecting link between this verse and the preceding one is prayer, not confession. Confession is introduced because it is a prerequisite to effective prayer, hence the "therefore." J.B. Mayor correctly paraphrases: "Since prayer has such power, pray for each other; and, that you may be able to do this better, confess your faults to each other." The present imperative *confess* indicates that it should be a continual practice.

Confession and prayer are both mutual: "to (or for) one another."

James does not say where the sins are to be confessed—whether in church or in private meetings—and we must not dogmatize. But there is some venerable support for including church meetings, for *The Didache*, a very old noncanonical work which may have been written before some of the books of the New Testament, places confession of sins in the church meetings and as a prerequisite to eating the Lord's supper. "In church thou shalt confess thy transgressions, and shalt not betake thyself to prayer with an evil conscience" (4). "And on the Lord's own day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks, first confessing your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure" (14).

John R.W. Stott insists in *Confess Your Sins* that "sin must be confessed only to the person or persons who have been offended and from whom forgiveness is therefore desired. Confession is never to a third party, both because he has not been offended, and because he is not in a position to forgive sin" (p. 84). And he has reservations against any general public confession of sins. But if the purpose of confession is to obtain powerful prayers for spiritual healing, then why should sins not be confessed to brethren who have been only indirectly offended by them. If, for instance, I am covetous, I may need the help of people who have not been particularly harmed by that sin.

The psychological value of unburdening our souls may be seen in Psalm 32 (here the

⁸ Isaiah speaks of wounds not "softened with oil" (1:6), and the Good Samaritan applied oil and wine to the wounds of the robbers' victim (Lk. 10:34).

⁹ "The action is meant to be an exorcism aimed at healing" (Bornkamm, 664, n. 83).

¹⁰ Cf. Reicke, *op. cit.*, 59.

¹¹ "Anointing takes place in invocation of the name of God and is enclosed by prayer, which as the *euchē tēs pisteōs* brings healing and forgiveness. Here the oil has the character of the matter of a sacrament" (Schlier, *TDNT*, I, 231f.); cf. Moffatt: "Oil was a well-known remedy in the East, but this is a religious rite of unction, neither mere faith-healing nor purely medical therapeutic" (*The General Epistles*, 79).

¹² "It is in obedience to Jesus (*en tō onomati tou kuriou*) that the sick in the Church are healed by anointing with oil (Jm. 5:14f.), for Jesus has pledged His disciples to mutual assistance. Healing does not take place by pronouncing a set formula, but through the Lord in answer to the prayer which calls upon Him in faith" (Bietenhard, *TDNT*, V, 278).

writer speaks to God, but confession “to one another” will have similar happy results). “When I did not confess my sins”—then what? “I was worn out from crying all day long. Day and night you punished me, Lord; my strength was completely drained . . .” This evidently refers to psychosomatic distress ensuing from trying to stifle guilt by silence. Psychiatrists, no less than prophets, know that confession is good for the soul. Relief from his suffering did not come until he made a positive resolution: “I decided to confess them to you, and you forgave all my transgressions.” Only then did he feel peaceful and secure and could say to God: “You are my hiding place”—the *only* secure one.

There is a difference in confessing your specific *sins* and in saying that you have sinned (after all, who hasn’t?). A common practice today is for someone to go forward at the invitation and whisper to the preacher, who in turn says to the congregation, “Brother Jones has come forward, confessing that he has sinned, and wants our prayers. Let us pray.” While this procedure may have some value, it is not what James calls for, and it is probably not what Brother Jones needs. He needs to confess his *sins*, and the congregation needs to have details of his struggle in order to be effective in prayer for his spiritual healing.

Conclusion . . .

James ends his discussion with a reference to Elijah, “a man of like nature with ourselves” (the original means “of similar feelings, circumstances, experiences,” and is not an assertion of equality). Elijah was notably successful in prayer, but we have other in-

structive points of contact with him. When he once decided to give up, he prayed, “O Lord, take away my life; for I am no better than my fathers.” He couldn’t stand failure and was so frustrated he couldn’t see the good God was doing. God answered his prayer by providing him food and water.

Later on, at the mount of God, “the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.”

Sometimes, when in our depression we decide to resign from life, God just goes on doing what he has always done: providing us with the basic essentials, even when we, like Elijah, make no acknowledgment. Then, when he does answer us, he speaks in the still small voice. We prefer something spectacular, like wind or earthquake or fire, but he comes in a still small voice. Now the trouble with the still small voice is that it is so easy not to hear it. You really have to listen. And that is why some of us credit God with answering us, and others do not. It is all a matter of having keen ears.

Recently a friend wrote to me: “I have located a job which is exactly what I have been praying most earnestly for, and which promises to challenge and fulfill me. It sure is funny, I spent all that time praying so hard for this job, and I didn’t even have to—I just applied for it and got it all by myself.” The prayer of a righteous man is very powerful when it goes to work. But some of us are not listening. □

Lord, Forgive Our Dullness of Mind

FRANK DALTON

Albuquerque, New Mexico

All around congregations seem to be bent on self-consumption as our traditions have crystallized to such a degree that we are like cheap plastic spoons. (They break instead of bend.) Where did we lose that dynamic of the first century church, or did it exist at all? Why do we, when faced with a real need, resort to committees and the professional ministers rather than applying the Balm with our own hands?

Each congregation lives in an environment and interacts with it to some extent. When the environment changes in a significant way, the fellowship usually goes through a process of adaptation which, allowing for time lag, corresponds in some way to the environmental change. If sufficient adaptation does not take place, strains will develop and the church will begin to move toward irrelevance, extinction, or even some form of abrupt, forced change. Some congregations adapt to changes more readily than others. The church in general, however, has found adaptation extremely difficult.

To say that the church has been insufficiently adaptive is not to suggest that it has been changeless. Many catch-up moves represent efforts to make it a more effective instrument of the Lord’s purposes. Such changes have usually been a reaction to external changes rather than some effort from within caused by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

If the church were dealing with a relatively stable and unchanging environment, an

insulated mode of operation might work fairly well, but if the environment is highly dynamic, as the world today is, insulation is likely to entail high costs. For one thing, it removes from brethren the natural, inspired determination to do what they can to relate the church to the world’s needs. Planning or initiative is usually futile, since any new ideas are greeted with profound skepticism if not outright rejection.

A church with sincere interest in the souls of men should be constantly searching and adapting to the now. Perhaps an example of this lack of adaptivity would make this discussion less esoteric. Faced with the realization that large numbers of people will not “darken the door” of an organized church, what have we done? Written them off, or adapted? Some brethren have begun having small group meetings in their homes to reconcile these individuals to the organized church, only to become discouraged themselves by the rejection of the establishment of such unorthodox methods outside the meeting place.

It may seem strange to speak of the church as insulated from its environment, since we (the church) all work in the world and contact millions of individuals daily, but the term is appropriate. If a scale could be developed showing the extent to which groups interact with their environments, the church would be found near the lower end of that scale. It is insulated in that its members have a high degree of interaction with

one another and a relatively low level of interaction with individuals outside the church. It is insulated in that it defines what is relevant to its mission in a parochial way. It is insulated in that it has developed ways of explaining away secular criticism and has learned to ignore or sidetrack most demands for change and relevance.

Much more could be said about why individuals act to shield against the environment of today. Disruptive adjustments cause uncertainty. Many have found their security in this world and not the eternal home of our Father. Isolation makes life easier. The world around us is going to become more

rather than less demanding with the passage of time. We are Christ's ambassadors to the world, and the isolation and inactivity that have been tolerated are too costly to be tolerated any longer. Nonadaptation, imagination not exercised, problems (or brothers) not understood, and opportunities overlooked may not be lightly regarded by our Lord who gave his life that we might be free. Free! Free! Free to share that love with the world of which we are a part. Praise his name!

Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves. □

The Legal Pattern

F.L. LEMLEY

Bonne Terre, Missouri

The great men who began the Restoration Movement in America were for the most part strict legalists and set the whole movement on a legal foundation. According to Joseph Belcastro, "Alexander Campbell was a strict legalist in the early days of his ministry. He wrote, 'For I was once so strict a Separatist that I would neither pray, nor sing praises with anyone who was not as perfect as I supposed myself.' This attitude did much to encourage strict legalism among his followers. He later changed from strict to moderate legalism. But many of his followers continued to express their strict legalism. They became such disturbers in the brotherhood that Barton W. Stone, Alexander Campbell, and John 'Racoon' Smith had to censure

them" (*The Relationship of Baptism to Church Membership*, p. 78).

These men of the early Restoration Movement thought that the New Testament contained the *perfect* pattern or blueprint for the church. Consequently some among the reformers, who were untaught and had little spiritual discernment, imagined they had to find a scriptural warrant or an authoritative example for each incidental and accidental of work and worship. The situation is no better today; in fact, after 150 years of refining such legalism, it has become a greater curse and a more dangerous defect than all the liberals and modernists (so-called) among us! Legalism is not only stifling, but it can be a source of heresy as it was with the Galatians.

We do not deny that there is a pattern. Jesus is our example, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God. The Holy Scriptures do carry authority, and we cannot please God without obedience. But all this is not the point. We are denying that any brother or any number of brethren have a divine right to set up their explanations of scriptural truths as tests of Christian character and fellowship. There are positive and unmistakable doctrines in the book, but any inference, deduction, or explanation beyond the Word—right or wrong—can be no part of the divine pattern. **Where the word ends the pattern ends!** The pattern is not human but divine, and human inferences, deductions, explanations and/or combinations are no part of the divine pattern, but are human through and through. Humanly invented premises are no part of God's pattern!

The problems in our brotherhood derived from this legalistic pattern concept are legion. One thinks he must object to a kitchen in the building and labels those who allow such as liberals and modernists, fit only for the hottest part of hell. Another sees no pattern for orphan homes, congregational cooperation in certain areas, no pattern for cups, classes, baptistries and the like. I know one brother who once opposed business meetings on the same basis that we oppose instrumental music. It all seems a bit strange to see brethren laying down rules and regulations for the use of church-owned buildings and congregational treasuries when the scriptures are as silent on both of these as they are on instrumental music in worship. It would seem logical that these brethren should first produce a precept or example for church-owned property and congregational treasuries before laying down rules

and regulations for their use. But legalism does strange things to men!

Sincere Disagreement . . .

Sincere brethren cannot agree on what constitutes the pattern. This point will bear some thought. Is *every* scriptural, approved example binding? If not, why not? If some examples are binding and some are not, then how do we tell the difference? Which examples constitute a part of the divine pattern, and which do not?

Our legalism leads us to ridiculous extremes and ungodly schism. Some in the past have made such things as the chemical nature of the wine, the time of day for the communion, the posture of prayer, the type of tableware for communion, how to care for orphans and widows, how to spread the good news, and other expedients, tests of brotherhood. When is this ungodly foolishness going to end? It will end when we discover that there is a difference between the Word of God and our explanations of the Word. Inferences, deductions, explanations, combinations, and devised premises are not and cannot be part of the divine pattern, for they are all human! The pattern ends where the *Word ends!*

One last illustration: The pattern demands immersion for baptism. The place, the clothing, the time, whether it is done feet first, head first, or if one is lowered on a stretcher, are all no part of the pattern. The pattern *ends* with immersion. All human devices after that are no part of the pattern. Examples of baptisms in the Jordan, in the desert, or in a pool are not binding parts of the divine pattern for the simple reason that they are not objects of any direct command. No example is binding unless it is the object of a *direct command*. □

Viewpoint and Truth

MARCUS B. DALE

Little Rock, Arkansas

When one person tries to draw a map of the world on a flat surface, the result will look like a sliced up orange peel. Another person, attempting the same task, will come up with two circles. Both drawings, properly understood, will well represent our spherical earth, but the best understanding comes from examining a globe. This shows that men may have different ideas of a truth, yet each, from his own viewpoint, may be right.

The gospel, when transmitted to different people in different cultures, will give connotations that differ according to the background of those who hear. Because terms mean different things to different people, there is a language barrier. In some countries the term "son," when used in reference to Christ, gives bad connotations, so many missionaries bewail the fact that this word is used while others have dropped its use altogether. Is it not possible to express the truth about the nature and person of Christ without using this term? (After all, our pat confessional is based upon a verse which is not even in the text—Acts 8:37; we would do better to use Rom. 10:9 and 1 Jn. 4:15.)

Henry H. Mitchell, in a lecture entitled "The Black Tradition of Biblical Interpretation" (*Thesis Theological Cassettes*, IV, 10, Nov., 1973), shows how different Bible stories will affect blacks in America. His first illustration is David and Goliath. The emphasis of this story on American whites will likely be imperialistic: they will see the fact that David conquered the giant and became king over Israel as a result. The black emphasis will be that of a small shepherd boy who won though the odds were against him. This is the underdog emphasis. □

His second story is that of Moses telling Pharaoh to let his people go. The appeal to an oppressed and (in some areas and generations) an enslaved people should be obvious. The man who has been "on top" all of his life can never gain the same feeling because of a lack of empathy.

His third illustration is that of the resurrection. He notes that many black preachers say, "He got up." Rather than using the traditional term, they use one which again has the underdog idea. They say, "This is the underdog who was treated unjustly and was 'the victim of huge, powerful, insensitive government' got up and became the victor." A white man who has never been the underdog cannot grasp this fully. This does not mean that either the white or black man has an invalid interpretation of the stories. They just speak to different needs that each has. This is a mark of the all-sufficiency of the Biblical revelation.

We have attempted to show that two men may *not* see an element of truth alike, *yet* both may be right. We have *not* asserted that two men may hold *contradictory* ideas and both be right. This would be illogical. It seems to me that much division within Christianity results, not from contradictory views, but from different groups emphasizing different elements of truth. One may emphasize the sovereignty of God, while another emphasizes the free will of man. Each doctrine can be carried to an extreme, so that they come into conflict, but this does not have to be the case. The same can be true concerning grace and works, and many other doctrines. It is a fact that all men cannot see the Bible alike. □

REVIEW

BY ALLEN HOLDEN, JR.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE CHILDREN AT SHILOH

The Gospel According to the Children at Shiloh is a compilation of the honest and, at times, blunt attempts by inner city children to communicate the Bible message in language relevant to their situation. There are plays, prayers, confessions of faith, autobiographical portions, questions and answers, and Bible stories retold in the language of the city. And, as if the stories weren't touching enough, they are illustrated by the drawings of the children, many of which really broke me up.

There are two sections in this 140-page paperback. The first deals with the Gospel story, including the birth of Jesus (in the garage of a hotel), his transformation (on top of a building), his triumphal entry into Jerusalem ("Jesus was in a Parade"), the last supper ("Jesus broke the cracker and poured the grapey juice and He said, 'This how I'll be.'"), his day in court, the crucifixion and the resurrection (Jesus is Alive!). My favorite is "Jesus and the Devil" (Mt. 4:1-11):

There was a man named Jesus, and a Godfather, the Devil. He told all the people that Jesus was liar. He wanted to make Jesus an offer he can't refuse.

And then Jesus started praying up in the mountains for 40 days and 40 nights. Then the Godfather came and said, "If you're so great, make this stone into bread and eat it up like a Nestles Crunch." Jesus said, "NO!"

Then the Godfather said, "If you're so great, why don't you jump off the Empire State Building?" Jesus said, "I don't want to take your orders. Don't tempt me you devil."

Then the Godfather said, "If you're so great, how come you don't take this mountain and put it on water?" Jesus said, "I don't want to obey your order—just my father's orders." The Godfather said, "You'll be sorry. You could have all this land." And Jesus said, "I will die for man, but not for you."

This section also includes "Jesus Taught his Gang to be Happy" (the Beatitudes) and the story of the woman caught in adultery ("Jesus Helped a Sexy

Woman"). The second section is The Children's Story, which includes self-portraits and the autobiographies of the children who have been blessed by this innovative inner city ministry. I like Derrick Falk's brutal honesty: "My name is Derrick. I a bad guy. I fight a lot. If you don't like it, I punch you in the face."

These stories are a result of Shiloh's daily Bible classes, and have their origin in attempts to answer such questions as, "How would this story have happened if it had happened on our block?" In addition to classes in the Bible, Shiloh's workers (young volunteer Christian ministers) are involved in tutoring the children, in sports events, field trips, art and drama, and are living testimonies to the power of the Holy Spirit in children of God. Reading *The Gospel According to the Children at Shiloh* gives one a better insight into what is being done to tell the story of the good news, as summarized by Hazel Williams: "Jesus is the Lord. Jesus is everybody. He stay with me. He help me. He have fun with me. He play with me. He go to school with me. He come home with me."

As I was reading, this book reminded me of previous efforts at letting children put the Word into their own situations and language, like *Children's Letters to God*, and Carl F. Burke's books (*God Is for Real, Man; Treat Me Cool, Lord*; etc.). I believe it is on a par with these, and goes one step farther, in that the children get to illustrate the book as well as write it. You can obtain a copy from Shiloh, P.O. Box 627, Mendham, New Jersey 07945. A copy will be sent free to all friends of Shiloh, although a contribution would be appreciated. A second copy can be obtained for \$2.00.

I will leave you with my favorite confession of faith in this book, which is by Annette Robinson: God can shake your world.

God can help put all the pieces together again.

Looking Backward

I would like to briefly respond to Ms. Romero's article on "Positive and Negative" (October, 1974). I can't disagree with her concerning her basic stance towards the negative. Over a year ago I offered some thoughts concerning the place of a critic (*Integrity*, June '73). If we were to do away with all negative preaching there would be no prophetic ministry. I also share her observation that it's rather ironic that a church that has been so negative in its own proclamation can dare fault others for being negative.

But at the same time we must see that negative preaching is never an end in itself. One is negative for the sake of the positive. One tears down in order to build up.

It seems obvious that Ms. Romero fails to understand what many people mean when they speak of restoring the church. She attempts to criticize this view by claiming that to restore the first century church we must restore first century problems. No one would desire such a thing, of course. Anyone who contends for restoration is interested in restoring the New Testament *ideal*. Now the problem really begins when we attempt to define just what the ideal consists of. I feel certain our sister is reacting to the extreme legalistic blueprint approach. *Perhaps* I would share her rejection of that. Nevertheless I do not believe we must discard

the whole idea of restoration simply because of what some extremists have done.

Ms. Romero's rejection of looking backwards to the first century has the seeds of destruction in it. Christianity is a *historical religion*. It is this fact that sets it apart from so many other world religions. In the Christian system we have no reason to look ahead (hope) unless we first look back (historical resurrection). I believe that Christ is ever present today and we must cling to that fact or we will die spiritually. But on the other hand, I believe it is meaningless to speak of presence of Christ today apart from the resurrection of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago. In other words, there is no Christian faith apart from the backward look into history since the historical resurrection is the central fact of our faith.

Ms. Romero sees the problem in the Church of Christ very clearly: "We laid our emphasis on doctrine instead of the good news of Jesus." I really believe she is missing the real problem here. Doctrine is not the problem. If we take doctrine away we are left with empty words. Jesus would have no content without "doctrine." I do believe that minor, petty, unimportant points have been blown up and emphasized in Churches of Christ. But this is not doctrine. It is nothing more than sectarian pickiness. We need doctrine. We need the doctrine of the resurrection, justification, atonement. We need a good doctrine of man, of hope and of faith. Without doctrine we have no meat spiritually. What we really need to learn is to emphasize where the Bible emphasizes. If we did that we would go a long way, solving a lot of problems.

Flint, Michigan

CRAIG WATTS

ANNOUNCEMENT

We are happy to announce the addition of two very capable men—David F. Graf and Joseph F. Jones—to our editorial board. Both have considerable experience as preaching ministers (a work in which they are still engaged), and both have done graduate work in Christian colleges (Dave at Harding, Joe at Pepperdine).

Dave, who lives in Ann Arbor, earned his B.D. at McCormick and is now completing work on a Ph.D. (in ancient Greek history) at the University of Michigan, where he is also a teaching fellow.

Joe, who lives in Rochester, is a certified marriage counselor and has held administrative and teaching positions at various colleges. In addition to two master's degrees (theology, history) he obtained his Ed.D. (in the history and philosophy of higher education) at Oklahoma State and, more recently, a Master's in Marriage Counseling (a two-year program) at the University of Detroit.

Of Suffering Love

Most likely there is no greater stumbling block to one who would believe in the God of the Bible than the problem of pain. It is at the point of pain that doubt and difficulty find the most evident entrance. To be honest, the universal experience of pain does not seem consistent with our image of a loving God.

C.S. Lewis stated the dilemma in a simple form in his book *The Problem of Pain*: "If God were good, he would wish to make his creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty he would be able to do what he wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore God lacks either goodness, or power, or both."

Of course, dozens of easy answers to this problem are periodically offered. But too often those with the most answers are the ones who have the least experience with the problem. For thousands of years the greatest minds have struggled for an answer, but still there is not a final, undisputed solution.

There are certain cases of human suffering that can be brushed aside with relative ease. It might be claimed that often suffering is the just reward for one who has chosen to reject the ways of God, and that it is the natural consequence of foolish acts. To a large degree these contentions are true, but they are by no means sufficient. Much more remains to be explained.

What justification can be found for the suffering of the tiny, starving children in Asia, Africa and elsewhere? What strong reasons can be offered to those innocent individuals who were burned and scarred by the bomb that hit Hiroshima over twenty years ago? Where is the answer? What is the reason?

Though we don't have a full solution, there is an answer. The answer is the cross. In the cross of Christ God did what is seemingly impossible and contradictory: he wed suffering to love. In the cross we find suffering without guilt and love without measure. It was the innocent who suffered, yet in that act of suffering the greatest love in the universe was displayed: it was and is suffering love. God has not ignored the problem we have. The cross was an appeal to trust God in spite of our lack of understanding concerning the problem of pain. In the cross he has proved that in Christ the most irreconcilable oppositions can begin to make sense.

—CRAIG WATTS