

INTEGRITY is published each month and seeks to encourage all believers in Christ to strive to be one, to be pure, and to be honest and sincere in word and in deed, among themselves and toward all men.

Integrity

8494 Bush Hill Court
Grand Blanc, Michigan 48439

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

Integrity

NOVEMBER 1975
Volume 7 / Number 6

■ Editor-in-Chief: HOY LEDBETTER
■ Editorial Board: DAVID F. GRAF
JOSEPH F. JONES
DEAN A. THOROMAN

■ SUBSCRIPTIONS: Names may be added to the mailing list by writing to the editor. There is no subscription charge (we depend on contributions from readers and God's grace). However, contributions are necessary for our survival. Since we are approved by IRS, they are deductible.

■ BACK ISSUES: Available back issues can be obtained by writing to Amos Ponder, 1269 Pickwick Place, Flint, MI 48507.

■ MANUSCRIPTS written exclusively for INTEGRITY are welcomed.

■ WARNING: Readers who fail to notify us of address changes (even slight ones) will be dropped from our mailing list.

November 1975

Integrity

My Shame and His Glory

Lillian Smith

When Right is Wrong

Hoy Ledbetter

Some Questions on the Lord's Supper

F.L. Lemley

On the Value of Being Wrong

Steven Spidell

Sometimes I Seesaw

Roger Montgomery

My Shame and His Glory

When the sacrifice was made
On Golgotha's mask of death
The earth did quake . . .
Righteous dead
Awoke and walked
To protest the denial
Of God's most Holy One.

When the Roman soldier's sword
Was thrust into an unresisting side
The cosmos itself roared back . . .
Sharp lightning
Rolled thunder's clouds
At man's blasphemy of holiness
And God incarnate in Christ hung
Lifted between earth and sky.

The angel host girded
Ready to come at His command
Surely must have fallen down
And wept bitter tears
As they heard the voice
Of eternal love
Say "Father forgive them . . ."

When those faithful fearless few
Lowered the lacerated lifeless body
Slowly . . . tenderly . . . into loving arms
Wiped the bloody spittled face
Then wended toward a borrowed tomb
The wind moaned in gasping gusts
Creation groaning in herself.

Then gently laid Him down
In that silent stony tomb
Unable to linger longer
To complete
Love's ministering rites
Pressed to haste by Jewish law
And waiting watching guards.

How final was
The rumbling rock
Which seemed unwilling
For such an ignominious end
To entomb its very Maker.
The heartbreak of His own
As they stumbled toward their homes
To face the crushing weight of grief
I know . . . Yes I know.

I am one of those forgiven ones
Whose sins He bore that day on Calvary
My shame and His glory . . .
And yet there is a joy
That over passes grief
A victory
At that rocky portaled tomb . . .
Victory that burst
The very vials of death
Then mounted the dais of God Himself.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

—LILLIAN SMITH

WHEN RIGHT IS WRONG

HOY LEDBETTER

A church, like any other psychological group, has two essential characteristics. First, it is composed of people who are so dependent on each other that the behavior of one member will influence the behavior of each of the others. Second, the members have a common set of beliefs, values, and norms by which their conduct is regulated. Since they became members by conversion—which implies that they accepted the common beliefs—we might suppose that ideological differences within a church would be a minor source of tension. However, this is not always the case. One reason is that the communication process is neither perfect nor exhaustive; the convert's understanding will not be identical to that of his teacher. Moreover, one person in the group may mature faster than another, and his advance in faith will lead him to an outlook that differs from the one who has grown at a slower rate or not at all. So uniformity of belief is difficult both to achieve and to maintain.

Some Steps Taken . . .

In order to assure that the members will have a common ideology, teachers (sometimes unconsciously, sometimes deliberately) tend to control input, so that the group will receive only a limited range

of information. The more limited the information, the less likely a divergence in belief. Since ideological uniformity is necessary if the group is to maintain its identity, it is not unnatural for members to regard their common beliefs as matters of life and death. When fear of loss of group identity arises, relentless expounding of the faith and/or suppression of dissent will occur.

This enforcement of group beliefs is also important to the individual, who, unless he is exceptionally sure of himself, will constantly seek to validate his own beliefs. When he is assaulted by doubt, his surest confirmation will come from the majority vote of his church. So he will try to guarantee that the majority vote will always be supportive; that is, he will strain every nerve to see that there is unanimity of belief within the group. He will vigorously press his opinions upon others, and he may attempt to expel the "heretics" who contradict them.

Since any recognized member's behavior will influence others, and since the life of the church depends on maintaining the common beliefs, what one person believes or does should be a matter of concern to all. For his sake as well as for that of the whole group they are obligated to take seriously any sign of his departure from Christian standards. But, on the other

A resolute determination to advance the faith must be accompanied by a truly Christian tolerance. This requires an understanding of what is really vital to our profession.

hand, if they carry this concern too far, they will involve the church in endless controversy over trifles. So a resolute determination to advance the faith must be accompanied by a truly Christian toler-

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND FOR DISCUSSION

Some valuable assistance in this matter is provided by Paul's discussion of the weak and strong believers in Romans 14. He begins with the admonition: "As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions." The opinions under consideration have to do with eating food ("one believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables," v. 2), observing days ("one man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike," v. 5), and drinking wine ("it is right not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother stumble," v. 21).

It is neither possible nor necessary for us to discover the exact situation faced by the Romans, but it is obvious that some could not rid themselves of ideological relics of the pre-Christian past. They were so over-scrupulous about eating meats that they ate only vegetables; they could not bring themselves to the liberated opinion that every day is alike in God's sight; and they could not drink wine without feeling it was contrary to God's will for them.

Paul's own view of such matters is stated in no uncertain terms: "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself" (v. 14).

ance. This balance requires that the members of the church have a solid understanding of what is really vital to their profession, or, to put it another way, of what is the true nature of the kingdom.

Hence, the weak man's convictions about eating and drinking were wrong. Nevertheless he was to be welcomed—accepted into the circle of fellowship without inner reservation—and that not just in order to convert him to the correct viewpoint. All debate is disallowed; there are to be no "disputes over opinions"; "you must accept him without attempting to settle doubtful points" (NEB).

An Unwarranted Distinction . . .

This order has never set too well with some brethren who love to debate and who feel that we all have to see everything alike. They feel that the very best they can do is to give those of contrary convictions a "reasonable time" to come to a correct (that is, their own) understanding, and they usually try to dodge Paul's ban on argument by making a distinction between "matters of faith" and "matters of opinion." Having assumed this freedom of movement, they can argue themselves hoarse over matters of faith while tolerating differences of opinion. But Paul knows no such distinctions.

A quick glance at verse 2 ("one believes he may eat anything") will show that Paul is concerned about eliminating debate on some matters of faith. And if

that verse leaves any doubt, verse 22 should remove it: "the *faith* that you have, keep between yourself and God." Faith here is precisely one's conviction about what he may or may not eat.

Independent Faith Demanded . . .

The weakness of faith considered in this discussion is scrupulousness over eating, drinking, and observing days, and it is not to be confused with a weakness in convictions about God. In this context the weak brother acknowledges the Lord no less than the strong. The strong brother who honors the Lord in eating and gives thanks for his meat is not a whit ahead of the weak brother who also honors the Lord and "says grace over his greens." One way of honoring the Lord should not be regarded as superior to another, or as evidencing a firmer basic conviction. It is not a question of faith, but rather of how faith is to be worked out in the individual situation.

Faith; therefore, is an individual matter, and it is not only one's *right* but his *obligation* to arrive at his own convictions and to act according to them. Paul asserts this unequivocally in verse 5: "Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind." The necessity of individual certainty must be recognized by all parties in the fellowship, but it is particularly the burden of the individual himself, since he (not they) is the subject of the original Greek imperative (an alternative translation brings this out: "Each one must arrive at his own firm conviction"). This is not to say that each one has a right to think as he pleases. On the contrary, he must give account to God for his thoughts as well as for his actions. But our Lord wants us to respond to him according to our true convictions. If we behave in such and such a way because of some human

influence, that is sinning, because then we have allowed another to exercise lordship over us. Therefore private judgment is not merely a right, it is a *demand* of God. Those who frustrate the attempts of others to meet this demand work against God; and yielding to pressure, however severe it may be, to abandon this responsibility brings one spiritual ruin.

Some things are true objectively. They include the fact that all food is clean, that all days are alike. One may eat anything, drink anything, and ignore all distinctions between days. But this objective truth is not necessarily recognized by everyone subjectively. The subjective takes precedence in such cases. As Paul says, "Nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for any one who thinks it unclean." What one believes about a matter is a binding reality for him, even though it may not be objectively true. That's a hard dose for some of us to swallow (as I am sure it was for some of the Romans), but Paul's antisectionarian medicine is clearly prescribed. "Each one must arrive at his own firm conviction."

Potential Faults . . .

The weak brother is subject to a fault against which Paul repeatedly warns him: *passing judgment* upon his brother. The warning is apropos, because he is not likely to see his disposition to criticize as a fault at all, but rather as an honorable expression of his sound convictions. If, having "arrived at his own firm conviction" that it is wrong to eat meat, drink wine, or to observe all days alike, he sees his brother violating this standard, he may feel it is his Christian duty to correct such waywardness. After all, how can one allow "sin" to persist in the church without speaking out against it? So care must be taken to avoid tyranny on the part of the

**To avoid any semblance of dictating matters
of faith, those who are liberated from scrupulosity are to
keep their faith between themselves and God.**

weak. Anders Nygren's warning should not be ignored: "Not infrequently it is the weak who is the real tyrant. In his judgment of others he finds a compensation for his own weakness."

Paul also warns of a corresponding fault to which the strong are prone: *despising* the weak. We might well remember another passage in which the same word despise is used—the one which tells us that Jesus addressed the parable of the Pharisee and publican "to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others" (Lk. 18:9). William Barclay claims that "of all attitudes toward our fellow man the most unchristian is contempt." Yet there is an inevitable tendency for the stronger to despise the weaker.

Potential Damage . . .

The strong Christian is called upon to make greater concessions because he has an advantage over the weak. Whereas the weak has only one viable choice, to abstain, the strong has two: he can either abstain or eat, and he can take either course without losing anything vital. If he does not abstain in certain circumstances, he may do irreparable harm to the weak. In Romans 14:13-21 Paul carefully analyzes this potential damage: he may "put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother"; he may "injure" (literally "grieve") a brother; he may "cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died"; he may cause "what is good to be spoken of as evil"; he may "destroy the work of God"; he may "make others fall

by what he eats"; and he may make his brother "stumble." These grave warnings leave no doubt that the weak may be led into sin by the inconsiderate behavior of the strong.

The process by which such damage may occur is indicated in verses 22-23. First of all an order is given to the strong: "The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God." "The faith that you have" is the faith that one may eat anything. This conviction is based on correct knowledge of the nature of true religion, but that fact does not require that it should be made the standard for the scrupulous, for they must arrive at their own firm convictions without outside pressure. Hence, to avoid any semblance of dictating matters of faith, those who are liberated from scrupulosity are to keep their faith between themselves and God. They are not to abandon their convictions, nor are they to dishonestly conceal them, but they are not to activate them in such a way that the weaker person is influenced to violate his convictions and so sin. Their situation is quite comfortable; they do not waver from what they consider to be right: "Happy is he who has no reason to judge [condemn] himself for what he approves." But they must not blissfully ignore the happiness of their more constricted brothers.

Paul continues: "But he who has doubts is condemned, if he eats, because he does not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." The doubter is not condemned for his doubts, but for eating in doubt, that is, when he cannot do so without feeling he is vio-

lating the Lord's will for him. Such a person does not act from faith, but from some kind of pressure. He allows his good relationship with God to be thwarted by a less-than-divine rule of faith and practice. It is imperative that every Christian do what he does, whatever it is, because he believes that is what God wants of him. If he acts otherwise, to that extent he denies God's lordship over him and therefore sins, for "whatever does not proceed from faith is sin."

No Absolute Rule . . .

The strong cause the weak to sin *only* when they compel them through debate or other means of influence to act in such a way that they feel guilty about their behavior. This conclusion is supported by the original language in verse 21: "It is right not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother stumble." The infinitives "to eat meat" and "to drink wine" are aorists in Greek and imply that whenever an occasion of stumbling is likely to result from eating and drinking, the strong are to abstain *on that particular occasion*. This is not the same thing as perpetual abstinence. Paul nowhere requires that the strong abandon their convictions, that the scruples of the weak should become their standards. Nor does he ask the strong to refrain from acting according to their convictions in circumstances wherein the weak would not be under pressure to follow their liberated example and therefore sin.

The fact that the weak may not approve of what others do is no criterion. They are not endangered by what they disdain. As a matter of fact, the stronger their disapproval, the less likely they are to be damaged by liberated behavior. When Paul speaks of a brother being "grieved" (so KJV, literally rendering the

Greek) by another's eating, he does not mean that he is disappointed or irritated by it. The grief here is the grief of having sinned; hence the RSV correctly translates that he is "being injured."

It is no accident that this discussion occurs in an epistle which is a classic apology for salvation by God's electing grace, which man responds to by faith. This fundamental doctrine was being ignored by both the strong and the weak as they tended to elevate purely human practices to a predominant position in justification. A victory for either side, therefore, would have been a victory for legalism and a departure from the true basis of a right relationship with God. C.K. Barrett correctly argues "that both strong and weak are exposed to the same danger. The weak is exposed to the danger of externalizing God's righteousness, and supposing that his outward acts and abstentions *are* the righteousness of God, and that vegetarianism and the like constitute in themselves a sufficient standing for man before God. This is evidently false. But as soon as the strong despises the weak he falls into the same error, for he is treating his actions, or his 'faith' ('faith . . . to eat'!—v. 2), as a visible sign of superiority. For this reason, neither is in a position to condemn the other" (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 258).

The Cardinal Sin . . .

At bottom the danger to which the Romans were exposed was the cardinal sin of selfishness, which is the root of division. This is indicated in 15:1-3. The one who does not bear with the failings (literally weaknesses) of the weak pleases himself. His selfishness keeps him from pleasing his neighbor for his good, to edify him. The corrective is the example of the selfless Christ, "for Christ did not

**At bottom the danger to which the
Romans were exposed was the cardinal sin of selfishness,
which is the root of division.**

please himself." But the weak who eats when he does not act from faith, preferring to avoid the disdain of other Christians or the wearisomeness of having to live by his own scruples, is also selfish in that he has made his own convenience paramount to the will of God as he understands it. Both need to be reminded, as Paul reminds them, that the very reason Christ died and rose was that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

What Is Really Important . . .

This thought brings us to the reign of God, to which Paul directs attention in the very important statement of 14:17: "For the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." We cannot overemphasize the importance of this passage and its context, for, properly understood, it would not only eliminate the problems at Rome, but also many others in the modern church.

The kingdom of God is, of course, the reign of God—the situation wherein the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven. Food will not commend us to God; we are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. So Paul told the Corinthians (1 Cor. 8:8). But what does commend us to God is our having his very attitude toward others.

This verse (14:17) appears in a context which enforces the duties of Christians toward each other. It is preceded by the reminder that they are to "walk in love" (v. 15), and it is followed by an order to "pursue what makes for peace and for

mutual upbuilding" (v. 19). So in this context the terms righteousness, peace, and joy refer to duties which Christians have toward other Christians. Taken together they constitute an antidote to the poisonous selfishness which prevailed.

Righteousness reminds us that, among other things, the conscience of no one is to be defiled. It demands that we be just in our dealings with our brethren, doing always what is best for them, allowing them to exercise their rights as Christians just as we exercise ours. In the final analysis, it means putting others first and ourselves last.

Peace is the absence of squabbling, of "attempting to settle doubtful points"; but it is more than that. As in 1 Corinthians 7:15 the word "means far more than the opposite of strife in a reluctantly maintained marriage" (*TDNT*, II, 416), so here it enforces the positive promotion of right relationships. This means that individualism is out of the question. In verse 19 it is parallel with "mutual upbuilding." And in Paul's mind upbuilding, or edification, is never individualistic but corporate. It is the work of God (v. 20), in which there can be no thought of individual achievement and its results. The goal of our redemption—by which we become slaves of Christ—is obedience rather than autonomy, so we cannot make our separate peace with God. As we enjoy our liberation we must contribute to the spiritual furtherance of our brothers.

Joy glances back to the word "grieved" in verse 15. The Christian experiences joy when others have cause to rejoice. Paul refers to his sympathetic character in Ro-

mans 12:15: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." This is fellowship, freedom actualized. Christians are tied together emotionally; one cannot be happy when another is hurt.

In the Holy Spirit modifies all three. Joy is no profane mood, righteousness and peace are no purely human qualities. The age to which we belong controls every aspect of our lives.

APPLICATIONS TO THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Such questions as eating meat and observing days may seem pretty remote to us, so we need to make sure that the principles derived from this discussion have some modern applications. The observance of Sunday as the Lord's Day could come close to being a parallel to an ancient question, but since most of us observe Sunday anyway, it is not a very urgent issue. However, we might note in passing that our reason for what we do could reveal an unhealthy attitude. James Denney has truly said, "Nothing whatever in the Christian religion is legal or statutory, not even the religious observance of the first day of the week; that observance originated in faith, and it is not what it should be except as it is fully maintained in faith" (*The Expositor's Greek Testament*, II, 702).

The Use of Wine . . .

The Roman Christians who abstained from wine undoubtedly did not have the same reasons for doing so as their modern counterparts, but the issue is still alive. Take for example a certain church in which there are some people who believe it is wrong to take even a sip of wine. They prefer not to buy their groceries or drugs in stores where it is sold. In the same church are others who feel that drinking wine is not really sinful, but they cannot do it themselves without feeling guilty. Another group consists of people who not only think it is right, but are convinced that they must set a good (i.e.,

liberated) example for others. The abstainers think the drinkers are sinful, the drinkers think the abstainers are silly. They argue with each other, and—for reasons which I mentioned in the introduction—each side tries to convert the other. This gains nothing but an increase in tensions. What should they do?

If I understand Romans 14, Paul would say to the abstainer, "Let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who drinks; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? Each one must arrive at his own firm conviction. He who drinks drinks in honor of the Lord. I conclude this from the fact that his thanksgiving for his dinner includes the glass of wine. Since he is not living for himself, who are you to pass judgment on your brother? However, that does not mean that you should do what he does. Everything indeed is clean, but if you drink when you do not believe you should, it is wrong, because it is not an act of faith. It merely shows that you are more influenced by some man than by the Lord. Remember that whatever does not proceed from faith is sin."

And he would say to the drinker, "Let not him who drinks despise him who abstains; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to look down your nose at another man's servant? It is his duty to live by his own convictions. When he abstains, he abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God for his beverage. You believe it is right for you to drink wine. Happy is the man who has no reason to

**Paul was so completely emancipated
from spiritual bondage that he was not even in bondage
to his emancipation.**

condemn himself for what he approves. But the faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Quit arguing over another man's scruples, now and forevermore. I am not insisting that you give up your freedom and accept his standard, but when you hurt your brother, you are no longer walking in love. Not only so, but your 'freedom' is gaining a bad reputation. So be careful that when you drink your wine, you do so in a situation where your brother does not feel the slightest pressure to also drink and violate his conscience. You say it is your right to drink wine? Well, it is right not to drink wine or do anything that makes your brother stumble. We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves; let us please our neighbor for his good, to edify him. If you need a precedent for this, Christ did not please himself. So let not what you drink cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died."

Women in Worship . . .

The question of women participating in the services is one which more and more churches are going to have to answer for themselves. How does the Roman discussion help in this? First of all let us assume that neither side despises or passes judgment on the other, and that neither tries to influence the other to conform to its standard. Do I, then, as a "conservative," feel that my presence at a service implies my participation in everything that goes on? Do I feel that I have personally sinned in attending a meeting

wherein women participate, or am I merely annoyed at what they do?

Or if one actually feels that he does wrong by attending such a service—that his presence implies his endorsement—should I, as a "liberal," insist that women take part anyway? How do I reconcile what I feel is my duty with respect to the rights of women with the right of my brother not to have his conscience violated? Are the rights of women, as I understand them, in the same category as meats and days? Can I do justice to the rights of women by encouraging their involvement in meetings which the "conservatives" do not attend and thereby avoid hurting anyone?

Although Romans 14 was not intended to be a comprehensive essay on Christian ethics, I believe it provides an excellent backdrop against which these and other questions can be discussed.

F.F. Bruce has said of Paul, "So completely emancipated was he from spiritual bondage that he was not even in bondage to his emancipation." Not everyone I know is that way, for some of my brothers and sisters feel called upon to *brandish* their liberated life style even when they know others will be repelled by it. They use shocking language, simply, I suspect, because it is shocking. If they have been to a crude movie, they are sure to tell everyone about it. If they are around someone who is against smoking, they can't resist puffing in his presence. I realize that some have made too much of the Christian guarding his influence, but others, I suggest, have not made enough of it.

Thomas Campbell, our great spiritual forefather, proposed in his *Declaration and Address* that "inferences and deductions from Scripture premises . . . are not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so." He asserted further that no people "should be required to make a profession more extensive than their knowledge." In these statements he clearly reflects the attitude of Paul. Had he—and Paul—been listened to, his successors would not have divided over missionary societies and instrumental music in worship. Those who do not *perceive the connection* between these deductions and Scripture should not *be required to make a confession more extensive than their knowledge*. Still, today, one party is considered absurd and the other sinful. We need to restudy these questions—and many similar ones—in the light of Pauline principles, not in order "to settle doubtful points," but to learn how we can avoid despising and passing judgment on each other.

Criticism Criticized . . .

In his discussion Paul repeatedly uses the Greek verb (*krinein*, to judge) from which we get our word criticize. I think that implies something about criticism in general. There is too much of it today, too much negative evaluation. Criticism has its place, but if it becomes predominant, it only demoralizes and places those whom we wish to change on the defensive. Then not only is it bad policy, it is also untrue, for in most people there is more to praise than to pardon.

Closely related to criticism is the way in which we can demoralize those who would lead us in paths of devotion and mission by not supporting them. For in-

stance, if we use our money for selfish purposes when they know we could easily put it into good works, they are discouraged by our implied criticism of what they think is important. They believe they should do it, and would feel guilty if they did not, yet we influence them to refrain. Not only is it hard to do something when your brothers are against it, it is also difficult when they merely fail to support it. In every choice that we make we must think, not only of how it affects us, but also of how it affects others.

One question which is often asked is: "How do I know when what I do harms my brother? Must I always refrain from expressing my freedom in Christ for fear that some 'weak' Christian may be present and will be hurt?" In my judgment ignorance is an excuse in this respect. At Rome they knew, for they were debating, criticizing, and despising. What we know to do we should do, but to be too cautious would be as great a mistake as being too insensitive.

The Supreme Failure . . .

In all debates between Christians there lurks in the wings, ready to intrude at the first opportunity, one sin which is greater than any we debate. Its danger to us makes the usual issues shrink in significance like a peanut in a boxcar. That sin is failing to praise God. If we in any way—whether through contempt, criticism, argument, pressure, or indifference—discourage our brother from praising God, we inflict upon him the ultimate harm. Therefore I conclude, as Paul concluded, with this prayer: "May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with each other, in accord with Jesus Christ, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." □

SOME QUESTIONS ON THE LORD'S SUPPER

F.L. LEMLEY

Bonne Terre, Missouri

From time to time we are exposed to reasoning on the day of the week for observing the Lord's supper that ends with the conclusion that we must not observe it on any other day but the first. We have kept the first day so long that evidently some with a legalistic bent have concluded it is law. Some take the command from Matthew 26 and the example from Acts 20 and conclude, "Sunday *only*, and on no other day!"

We do not argue with the command of Jesus, nor do we have any argument against our practice of first day observance, but to make laws where God made none cannot be taken lightly. According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Jesus said, "... as often as you eat this bread ... etc." "As often as" does not mean "Sunday *only*!" To keep the supper in remembrance of Jesus is a plain command, but to add, "on the first day of the week only, and on no other day," is an addition manufactured by man. This is like saying, "He that believeth and is baptized, in the Jordan River *only* and in no other place, shall be saved."

There are some weaknesses in our reasoning which we should clarify. For example, by what process of reasoning do we conclude that the day of the week is

bound by virtue of one example, but the time of day verified by two examples is loosed? The supper was first given in the evening because it was in connection with the Passover which was observed in the evening by mandate (Ex. 12:6). The example of Acts 20:7 was an evening observance. If we reason that there must have been a command binding the first day observance, why not also reason that there must have been a command binding the time of day, since we have two examples of such? Both are part of the same observance, and one assumption is just as reasonable as the other. In fact, a very strong case can be made from inference for evening observance only, because it is all connected with the Passover and Christ is our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7). He was sacrificed at about the same time the Passover lamb was being killed; that is, both died about the same time of day.

Other Questions . . .

To raise other questions, by what reasoning do we conclude that unleavened bread is a *must* because that was the only kind allowed at the Passover, but just any old wine, including Welch's doctored up grape juice, will do? Why not at least be

consistent in our requirements? If one ingredient of the Passover meal was bound, why not the other?

By what reasoning do we ignore the Jewish method of determining time in favor of the Roman method? By doing such, some overscrupulous brethren make it a sin to observe the supper from Saturday sundown to midnight Sunday morning. Then again, such brethren ignore the Jewish method to observe the supper after sundown Sundays. According to Jewish time anything after sundown Sunday is the Jewish Monday. And all our examples were based on Jewish time reckoning. By what rule of thumb do we distinguish what are incidentals and what

are essentials in these examples? Do we not take a lot of liberty to sustain the way we have always done it?

All such problems as we have mentioned arise from our legalism. The church of Christ in the 20th century is set on a legal foundation, and it is our legalistic approach to scripture that has resulted in numerous sects and parties among us. The church of Christ is in more danger from legalism than from so-called liberalism. Brethren steeped in legalism think their every inference and deduction must be bound as the law of God, and they make no distinction between the Word and their inferences and deductions from the Word. □

ON THE VALUE OF BEING WRONG

STEVEN SPIDELL

Austin, Texas

This may seem to you a strange idea to be considered by a people who strive with diligence to be right on all matters of faith and practice. After all, what value could error have in the light of God's revelation of himself and his directions to the church concerning the kind of people they should be, both in thought and in deed?

Still, I hope that you will indulge me a moment of reverie, for I am one who

knows more about being wrong than being right—or so my friends tell me. But hold, if you will, your condemnation. For as luck would have it, I may have stumbled on to something which might speak to others who have had that same apparently unhappy fate.

Now, to be sure, no one likes to be wrong. And that for a very simple reason: being wrong makes a person look dumb. And no one likes that. To be

right all of the time is the only honorable path to living. So we will do everything we can to be right—even when we are wrong. Just think about all of the times we have slipped into error and then have cast about trying to find someone else to blame for giving us wrong information or misleading interpretations.

Rewards and Reprisals . . .

The shame and embarrassment we feel at being wrong leads us into all sorts of dodges and manipulations in order to escape being caught up short. Isn't this the way we teach our children? To be right about the answer to five plus two or about making an appropriate behavioral decision brings praise and reward. But to be wrong brings derision from classmates and reprisals by parents. To be wrong is a terribly expensive and painful business.

But, you see, we have already uncovered, backwards to be sure, the value of being wrong. No one is as humble as the one caught with his hand in the cookie jar half an hour before dinner. Our pride, in that moment, is swallowed up in our guilt. If, somehow, we can prevent our pride from reasserting itself, by making excuses or blaming someone else, we have discovered, by accident, a theological truth of the first order. Namely, that we all, everyone of us, is without excuse before God, defenseless. We have no argument, no escape from the judgment that is due from disobeying God's will and failing to love him and one another. We stand condemned, by right, before God, and nothing can change that verdict. We are guilty.

I think religious people make their biggest mistake when they figure that they stop being guilty before God when they think they live a righteous, moral life, or adhere closely to correct doctrine.

Then we think that we have made ourselves right before God; we aren't wrong any more, so God won't condemn us. So our pride returns and we are in worse shape than when we knew we were wrong.

What the church needs today are people who know that they are wrong. And who can admit it. What the church needs today are people who know that rightness is bestowed on us because of Jesus Christ alone, as a free, undeserved gift, quite apart from any merit on our part. What the church needs today are men and women who know that they are sinners who have been saved by grace. What the church needs today are humble persons of a contrite heart and a meek spirit, who glory alone in God's love.

What a Fellowship . . .

Just think what the quality of our life together could be when no one thought too much of himself, so as to be right all of the time, but counted others as better than himself, looking out for the welfare of others. We would have a fellowship of servants, of selfless Christians who knew only the mind of Christ, that one who emptied himself and became as one of us.

There is a value to being wrong which the self-righteous and pompous will never know: the salvation of God. For as long as our own rightness counts more than God's grace, we will never feel the gentle touch of his forgiveness nor the warmth of his fellowship. Much like the Pharisees of old, those whose pride and glory is in their rightness might as well feel good now, for their self-made righteousness is all they will ever know. But for the publicans and sinners, for those who, like children, for all their best intentions, can't quite ever seem to be perfect, and must rely on God's mercy and love, know that God's Kingdom was made for them.

Sometimes I Seesaw

Sometimes we walk forward
But that's not the way we go;
Sometimes we have to learn a lot
To find out how little we really know.

Sometimes we talk a whole lot
And say very little still;
Sometimes we have to climb a mountain
To find out it was just a hill.

Sometimes we win a game
Though outscored on the field;
Sometimes the people are the loudest
Who never had to yell.

Sometimes the most important things
Are the smallest we've ever done;
Sometimes the happiest memories
Are the ones we've yet to learn.

Sometimes the hardest things we do
Are the easiest of them all;
Sometimes our biggest moments
Are remembering our biggest fall.

Sometimes the very worst in us
Only leads to our very best;
Sometimes our hardest struggle
Is learning how to rest.

Sometimes our most important words
Are the ones we've never said;
Sometimes the most important Book
Is the one we've never read.

Sometimes we feel the worst
When we should feel our best;
Sometimes we feel the tireddest
When we've had the longest rest.

Sometimes we see the furthest in the
darkest night;
Sometimes we tell the truth but it's still
not right;
Sometimes the poorest people are the
ones with too much time;
Sometimes the richest people are the ones
without a dime.

Sometimes we see the farthest
When we don't look at all;
Sometimes we're the deafest
When we've heard the loudest Call.

Sometimes we give up the most enjoyment
To gain the least fun;
Sometimes we've never seen the Father
Because we've never seen the Son.

Sometimes we go the fastest
When we're not going anywhere;
Sometimes we end up the latest
When we've got the most time to spare.

Sometimes the Most we understand
Is what others never understand at all;
Sometimes the only thing we can do
Is trying to see as others saw.

—ROGER MONTGOMERY