

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

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Integrity

Editorials

Hoy Ledbetter

Mind Your Business

Dean A. Thoroman

A Problem of Identity

Craig M. Watts

On to Maturity

Frank D. Black

Legal Grace

F.L. Lemley

Eschatological Wonderings

Michael Hall

EDITORIALS

A SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT

In our next issue we intend to announce the appointment of a number of contributing editors, any one of whom is qualified for the highest editorial responsibility. Taken together, they embody a vast amount of talent, having produced countless articles (in both popular and scholarly journals, including some of the

most prestigious, and in leading newspapers) and not a few books. They are, as one would expect, very busy people, and therefore their cooperation with us may be regarded as reflecting a considerable devotion to our readers. Naturally we are expecting the coming year to be our best yet.

CONFESSIONS OF A DYING MAN

I'm not sure why, but Shakespeare's sonnet 12 has long been one of my favorites. I memorized it several years ago, and lately, at odd moments, I have found myself silently reciting some of the lines.

When I do count the clock that tells the time,
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;
When I behold the violet past prime,
And sable curls all silver'd o'er with white;
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
And summer's green, all girded up in sheaves,
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard;
Then of thy beauty do I question make,
That thou among the wastes of time must go,
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake
And die as fast as they see others grow;

And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make
defense

Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee
hence.

During the past year I examined a bit more carefully than before much of the great bard's evidence of time's advance. I sat for a moment and watched the hands on the clock move relentlessly on and pondered what that meant. I watched

the sun slowly sink and felt the oppression of the darkness when the sky lost its color. I mourned a little more than usual when our gorgeous flowers turned brown. I met several old friends, after a prolonged separation, and wondered how much older *I* looked to *them*. I stared at nude limbs silhouetted against a cold autumn sky and marvelled that summer had come and gone so fast. And I reluctantly admitted that the garden would yield no more.

The year began with a grim reminder. My wife's mother, who lived with us, died suddenly. The last of her parents. Another generation gone! During the summer I played softball. When someone rifled one to first, my reflexes were too slow, and my finger still hurts when I move it. We went to a restaurant, and in the dim light my wife had to read the menu for me. It often happens, they say, that people of my age experience a decline in visual acuity. So I have glasses, bifocals at that. A while back I resumed

my basketball career, but I waited too long. One jump for the ball and I was laid up with a sprained ankle. I still limp. I, too, beautiful or not, "among the wastes of time must go."

Now all of this tends to be depressing, and the question intrudes in my thoughts: what can be my defense against "Time's scythe"? Although I have four children, I find little comfort in Shakespeare's progeny. But fortunately I know that I belong to an eternal Father. He lives, and therefore I live. Note that I use the present tense, which will always be appropriate. Because I am his, all things, including life and death, the present and the future, are mine. Nothing will ever separate us.

Peter said that "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Although this passage provides us with a new perspective, since we are no more victims of time than our living Father, yet it does not discount the

importance of time. It must be redeemed as Paul says.

I find it interesting that Matthew's gospel ends with no mention of the ascension. Yet his closing words provide us with the very meaning of the ascension: "I am with you always, to the close of the age." Every time a baby is born I am reminded that I will not be here forever, but the Lord has left me here for a purpose, and he will always be with me in fulfilling it. "I am with you always." If that is so—and it is—then I must be about his business. And that is the only way I can appreciate that "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years." In other words, it is my defense against "Time's scythe."

The Christian combines patience with a keen sense of urgency. He salutes no man by the way when he is on his mission, yet he waits for the Lord. This is a great cure for depression.

ABOUT THOSE RECENT DELAYS

Since this journal is a cooperative enterprise which essentially involves you, our readers, we feel we should keep you posted on how things are going. During the past three months we have fallen behind in our mailing schedule. The October issue, for instance, was assembled well over a month before it was mailed. This delay caused several people to write to be sure that we had not dropped them or that we had not gone out of business. Unless God has changed his mind without our realizing it, we do not seem to be in any danger of going out of business, but whenever we are late in mailing, contributions from readers drop. At the present rate they are not nearly enough to keep us going, but we are confident that our many friends will rally to our support now as they have in the past.

Occasional delays will always be inevitable. If our equipment breaks down, or if one of our key people gets sick—and both have happened recently—we have to allow some mending time. But our worst delays have come from another direction. We have known for months that we would have to change over to our own addressing system, but our circulation department wanted to postpone it as long as possible because of the expense and work involved. But now we have borrowed the money and the conversion is almost complete. We hope mistakes will be minimal and that none will be lost in the shuffle.

If any of you have any questions or suggestions, why not give me a call at 313/694-3582? I rarely go to bed before midnight, so wait until after 11 p.m. for the cheaper rate. Thanks to all. —HGL

Mind Your Business

DEAN A. THOROMAN

If the attitudes and behavior of Christians cannot be distinguished from those of non-Christians there seems to be little reason to persuade anyone to become a disciple of Jesus. After all, why look for meaningful change where none seems possible? Conversely, how could most reasonable persons resist the powerful impact of lives dramatically changed because of personal commitment to the Master of the universe?

Since changes in attitude are most easily detected by observing changes in behavior, I maintain that Christianity is intended to be a way of living which can be tested by the actions of all who claim to be part of it. Such testing may be both internal and external. That is, I may know how Jesus affects my life by comparing outlook and behavior before and after I acknowledged his lordship. Those who know me may also make such comparisons and in so doing should be able to recognize that changes for the better have taken place. If such "testing" is not valid, how may anyone be certain that Christianity matters?

One important facet of our lives includes the way we take care of our business affairs. The aforementioned tests should be as applicable in this area of life as in any other. The remainder of this article is intended to provoke thinking on the issue of how Christians should function in the world of business. As usual, the editors of *Integrity* invite reaction to this and all other of its published material.

The Christian and Planning. Although anxiety about earthly matters should not characterize Christian thinking and behavior, we need to know that counting the cost and wisely using one's resources are not the same as being anxious. A minimum requirement for responsible money management must involve as much careful pre-planning as allowed by time, ability, and circumstance. Many financial difficulties would never occur if more thought were given to the concept of stewardship—a great biblical theme. Once we accept the truth that we really must give an accounting of the way we have used what is placed in our hands, we will act more responsibly and such action will include sincere attempts to avoid financial pitfalls by careful planning instead of careless spending.

Staying Within One's Means. Enticements surround most Americans. For most of us there are far more lures for our money than there is money to buy. However, Satan has an "answer" for those who are caught between more desire to get and less ability to pay. Instant and easy credit! Unfortunately, the small down payment and the low monthly payment usually are most attractive to those with small incomes and low bank balances. Temptation to spend is often greater than the ability or desire to resist.

What is needed? Apparently the days of E-Z credit, like the poor, will be with us always so the answer will have to be in the realm of God-control and self-control. For Christians this is consistent with the

expectation that disciples of Jesus will be temperate in all things.

There truly is no such thing as a "free lunch" and awareness of this truth will be accompanied by a realization that when we buy we must pay. Our ability to pay is determined by our current spendable income and all of this is said to emphasize that our desires to purchase must be curbed by our means to pay. Exceptions might come under the heading of "Emergency" but we cannot allow a few exceptions to become ruling forces in our lives.

Payment of Debts. Once a financial obligation has been legally assumed, no responsible person should be allowed to escape it. Certainly no Christian would even want to avoid a legal debt. Payment should be exactly as agreed as to the amount due and the date to be paid. Perhaps there is a need to emphasize "cost counting" more than "debt paying." Christians should ask the Lord's help in making sensible financial obligations. Does any believer doubt that divine guidance in such decisions would leave one without divine providence to pay for them?

When Financial Crises Hit. As soon as we become aware that we cannot meet a monetary obligation when it is due we must openly and directly talk to those to whom we are indebted to see if they can help us work through temporary setbacks. Most creditors are ready and willing to help honest persons fulfill honest obligations in honorable ways. If a creditor is unable or unwilling to adjust payments during special circumstances, professional counselors who have specialized in money management are available and should be used when other means fail.

Voluntary Pledges. Worthy causes are seemingly as numerous as identifiable human needs. Seldom does a week pass without at least one request for a mone-

tary gift to support an organization which has come into existence to alleviate the pain and suffering or the problems of individuals and groups. When a Christian decides which causes to support and the extent of such support it seems logical to assume that the intended receivers would be able to count on the *promise* of payment as "money in the bank" but such is not the case. I do not understand what goes on in the minds of those who make pledges which they never pay. It would be better for all parties concerned if fickle pledges were never made. Do you think consistency is required of Christians in terms of promises to pay and payment of promises? Perhaps more thought needs to be given prior to making a financial commitment to a worthy cause, but a great deal of thought also needs to be given to keeping the commitment once it is made.

Underlying Problems. As in so many other areas of our lives, the way we handle financial affairs reveals much about ourselves. Whether the general picture is one of success or failure there are patterns of behavior which include fairly predictable monetary choices. We cannot expect the undisciplined person to exercise wisdom in spending dollars and cents when such wisdom does not characterize any other area of his life. This leads me to conclude that significant changes in one's business life may not be possible unless and until professional counseling is sought and absorbed along with deeper spiritual commitment.

Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow! Solemn recognition of the ultimate source of material and spiritual blessings should create within each of us a great desire to use what we have as wisely as we can. When we thank God for providing, we should earnestly ask for His guiding. He seeks no more than this from us and we should seek no less from Him.

A Problem of Identity

CRAIG M. WATTS

Flint, Michigan

The problem of identity is by no means a 20th century invention. Though it is as new as today, it is as old as mankind. Centuries ago the command "know thyself" was uttered, but it seems that few have been able to obey it. A more contemporary version is "be yourself." Sounds simple enough—just two words. But these two words open a Pandora's box in the realm of personality. How can I truly be myself or know myself? How do I distinguish who I am from who I am not?

Perhaps we should just be spontaneous. Perhaps we need to learn to be unpremeditated in our actions. Isn't that the way other animals live? They simply act what they are. No problem. But, of course, there is an obvious difference: while animals merely react instinctively to situations, we are doomed to reflect intelligently on life. I say *doomed* to reflect intelligently because that very characteristic complicates our search for identity. The only way to avoid reflection is to live mindlessly, habitually. Sadly, this is the method millions have chosen. But if we choose to live that way, are we truly being fully human? Are we not denying a basic aspect of the very identity we are searching for?

Maybe "be yourself" means that we are to accept our place as a piece of the machine—the universe. Perhaps we need

to submit to the grind of the universe and be nothing more than a tiny bolt in a monstrous mechanism. If that is true, then why does our personality scream out against the impersonality of it all? It appears that we are dislodged "bolts" if we are "bolts" at all. There is something about the world which makes many people feel like they just don't fit. We don't seem to be able to comprehend our nature in reference to something that apparently stands so opposed to us.

Some have claimed that man can find himself if he will "get into harmony with the world." Living "in agreement with nature" and finding a "oneness" with the universe is praised and depicted in glorious, idealistic terms. This idealism is empty. Anyone who has seen the destructive results of a flood or a tornado will know that such a harmony with nature is not the answer. Though many a mystic would hold this unity as the goal of life, it is more likely that man would lose his identity rather than realize it in such an endeavor.

Many have concluded that man must define himself, create himself, because there is no human identity or human nature that can be sought for and found. Though a number have chosen this road, it is neither the only, nor the best, approach. Perhaps those who have failed to determine their identity and nature have

failed simply because they are looking in the wrong direction.

Maybe the nature of man is not so evident and readily apparent because something has gone *wrong* with man. Generally people yearn for significant and solid values, but the impersonal world doesn't seem to yield up such things. Perhaps man is presently in an *abnormal* state. Perhaps man is simply alienated from himself and in some way needs to be restored in order to learn who he is.

The suggestion that something has gone wrong with man and that he is now in an abnormal state is affirmed in the Bible as being the basic problem of man. Man is held up as having immeasurable worth, being the only creature created "in the image of God." But man freely chose to reject his creator which resulted in the image of God within himself being defaced. Man still *feels* he is of great value and significance, but he no longer knows *why*. Man still senses his need for meaning and values, but he has lost contact with the Source. Man is separated, not only from God, but from himself as well.

The Answer to This Problem . . .

It is maintained in the Bible and by Christians that the image of God can be restored and that this can be done by virtue of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But a bridge must be provided between God's restoring act and man's apprehension of it. The laying of such a bridge through the proclamation of the word was considered by the early church to be its *very reason for existence*. This fact is confirmed by the frequent reminders in the New Testament that, no matter how strong the opposition, the early Christians "did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."

Moreover, although they devoted them-

selves to various other kinds of service, the ministry of the word always was given priority. "It is not right," said the apostles, "that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables." Again and again Paul reminded the readers of his epistles that God had called him *to proclaim his Son*. "Christ did not send me to baptize," he asserted, "but to preach the gospel." So strongly did he feel the urgency of this proclamation that he said, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" In our time, when the ministry of the word has lost its priority with many Christians, this emphasis needs to be recaptured.

Several years ago Bernard L. Manning described preaching as "a manifestation of the Incarnate Word, from the written Word, by the spoken word." This definition correctly includes three essential elements of evangelization. Its theme must be that of Paul among the Galatians, "before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified." The source of information must first of all be "the written Word." But "the spoken word"—the living testimony of living witnesses—also is a vital part. This is not to say that there must be a fixed method of preaching, but it does mean that living spokesmen are required today no less than in New Testament times.

If modern man is to reclaim his lost identity through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and if the church's primary reason for being is to proclaim that event in such a way that man may apprehend it, then we are failing both man and God when we keep silent. No function of the church must be allowed to supercede proclamation, and no undertaking should receive greater support from its members than those individuals and institutions which have devoted themselves to the ministry of the word. □

On to Maturity

FRANK D. BLACK

Indianapolis, Indiana

"There is a great deal that we should like to say about this high priesthood, but it is not easy to explain to you since you seem so slow to grasp spiritual truth. At a time when you should be teaching others, you need teachers yourselves to repeat to you the ABC of God's revelation to men. You have become people who need a milk diet and cannot face solid food! For anyone who continues to live on 'milk' is obviously immature—he simply has not grown up. 'Solid food' is only for the adult, that is, for the man who has developed by experience his power to discriminate what is good and what is bad for him.

"Let us leave behind the elementary teaching about Christ and go forward to adult understanding. Let us not lay over and over again the foundation truths—repentance from the deeds which led to death, believing in God, baptism and laying on of hands, belief in the life to come and the final judgment. No, if God allows, let us go on" (Heb. 5:11-6:3, J.B. Phillips).

Thus the writer of Hebrews chastizes the brethren for being slow and not growing in the faith. They had stagnated in their perpetual "milk drinking," and this appraisal makes it clear that in order to mature we must eat "meat," and the elemental teachings must not be continually rehashed. In view of this, why is it that in the Church of Christ we feel compelled to stick with the fundamental truths? By

putting the premium on the "laying over and over again the foundation truths" we have it entirely backward. This can be confirmed in the majority of churches by noting the percentage of sermons and classes that have to do with the faith itself, the need of salvation, avenues involved in attaining salvation, and so forth. Does 90% of the preaching and teaching need to continue to be directed to the needs of 10% of the audience?

Reasons for Emphasis . . .

I think the main reason for this emphasis is that we are paranoid. We are afraid we might miss one minute reaching someone who is a "babe" (this is the usual defense given), so we continue to speak on the fundamental truths. I think the answer to this is that the fundamentals need to be taught through personal work and not depend on the sermon.

On the other hand, if we feel compelled to preach and study that which we Christians should already know because our faith and knowledge are so weak we need a continual "shot in the arm," then the fault lies with us. This is our weakness, that we continue to drink "milk." Maybe we like basic gospel sermons because we don't want to be stimulated to think; we are comfortable hearing what we already know and agree with, so we can turn our minds off. Or we can pat ourselves on the back, thinking "we are

right." As we are fed this way all the time we don't have to worry about growing. Thus many are led to a contented position of self-satisfaction, while condemning all other groups. Is this right?

Perhaps the church, feeling as it does that it has all the right answers and is secure in them, is afraid to move on. Maybe we are afraid of what is out there. If so, we will remain "babes." But surely God doesn't want this of us.

I for one, being neither paranoid nor defensive, state that I'm ready to move on. It's not our "duty" to sit through lesson after lesson on the same subject. It is our duty to move beyond the fundamentals. We should want to be able to "discriminate what is good and what is bad." I like Phillips' rendering that some need "repetition of the ABC's." Make this analogous with your schooling. If you had stayed on the ABC's, you would never have learned to read. If you had never got away from addition, you would never have learned to work most problems. How would you like to sit through lecture after lecture on how to add? It would be pretty boring. I can see little difference in this and sitting through innumerable sermons on the necessity of baptism. These are boring too. Once you know it and believe it, what is to be gained? Is another sermon going to help you to believe more? You are ready to move on. If I had never got past the lectures on how to treat disease, I would never have become a practicing physician. Are we practicing Christians?

Some Results . . .

There are several results of this continuous feeding of "milk." Some, as I mentioned, become self-righteous and don't see their narrowness. Others become bored and vegetate and maybe don't

know why. But some know why: they get little, if any, intelligent religious stimulus from sermons or classes, so they must rely on themselves or perhaps a few friends. It isn't very complimentary of the church that this group must either tolerate the repetition of the ABC's and bite their tongues or go elsewhere for stimulus. Are they not being done a great disservice?

I think this "milk feeding" is driving away many intelligent "meat seekers" that are potential church leaders. Can we afford to lose them? These people tend to be open-minded, but please don't make the mistake of equating that with "liberal"—whatever the term means—or "unsound." If we lose them, we are left with perpetual "milk drinkers" who don't know what it is to move on. Can such ever qualify as good spiritual leaders?

There is a place for basic gospel sermons, and I know that church situations vary in their needs, but preachers and elders must not forget those in the audience who are thirsting for growth in all phases of their lives. We have plenty of Bible examples for sermons on current problems and Christian growth. More scripture deals with how to live than with salvation. Look at Paul's letters. More often than not he talked of people's problems while encouraging them as to how to live. These weren't the typical "gospel sermons."

The definition of teaching "meat" will vary, of course, from place to place, but we live in this world, so why not speak on the problems we face in trying to live here as Christians? We need more lessons that will help us where we spend most of our time—at home, at work, dealing with *people*. Why not speak on civic situations, politics, economics, and so forth, as they interweave with our trying to live as Christians?

But it must be apparent that we *want* to get away from the "milk feeding." So bring it up to your elders and preachers. Keep trying. We've been as we are so long it will take quite an effort to change. But I hope you agree that we must.

Some Suggestions . . .

Here are some ideas on the methods to achieve this (you may have better ones):

(1) The most obvious way is to have the eldership or minister direct the lessons toward Christian living. A short time at the conclusion of these lessons could emphasize salvation. Or there could be separate "basic gospel" sermons at selected times.

(2) There could be two separate lessons, one on Christian living and one a basic gospel sermon. The babes in faith, or "milk drinkers," would attend the latter. It would probably be easier to start

this division in the classes rather than for the sermon. This separation has obvious pitfalls, but the elders should be responsible for this differentiation. Certainly this basic concept is valid and could be rendered practical.

(3) Standards of growth could be established to help teach and lead people from immature to mature Christianity. Physical age doesn't enter into this distinction.

(4) Basic to the success of this division of lessons is overcoming the obsession that "everyone must attend every sermon." This is a fallacy. It's as simply stated as follows: "Meat eaters don't need milk." We must not feel paranoid about saying, "We know that, let's move on." Those who are mature in the faith should not be expected to attend the "basic gospel sermons" any more than they would be expected to go back to the first grade. □

Legal Grace

F. L. LEMLEY

Republic, Missouri

One of the greatest impediments to a life of real, uninhibited Christian joy is our subtle doctrine of "legal grace." By this expression we mean the teaching that requires either perfection in performance or a "passing grade" in law-keeping in order to enter the domain of God's grace. "Domain" is the word used in Galatians 5:4 (NEB) and simply means that realm or territory under the influence of God, in which God may extend grace to those

who have established a right relationship with him, *without regard to their achievement*. Any one who seeks to be justified by God on any law-system basis places himself outside this domain and severs the grace-faith relationship. This is sometimes called the "Galatian heresy." Due to our legalistic orientation it is very easy for us to fall into this error.

We have long practiced the idea that our repentance and baptism in becoming

a Christian applies to our past sins *only!* We have a so-called "second law of pardon" to deal with sins one commits after becoming a Christian. According to this "law" one must remember, confess, repent and pray for each individual sin, or else one unforgiven sin on our record in the judgment will condemn us to hell. Ask the ones indoctrinated in this "law" what they would do if they knew they had only five more minutes to live and you will likely get the answer, "I would pray to be sure all my sins were forgiven."

Sour Fruits of This Error . . .

This erroneous concept insures that we live our lives burdened with guilt and apprehension, not knowing if we are saved or lost. This also enables preachers who are skilled in creating neurotic guilt to send in glowing reports to the papers: "I held a meeting out in Podunk in which we had 113 responses, two of them baptisms." This erroneous doctrine, coupled with the mistaken idea that *every* mistake of every sort is a sin, makes for ulcers and helps fill our psychiatric wards. Legal grace is the equivalent of NO grace at all, for if God extends grace ONLY to those who keep the law perfectly, then he extends to no one! Grace modifies law.

We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand (Rom. 5:1-2). It is significant that Paul did not say, "We have access into this grace by *achievement*." We are saved and justified before God by "faith-obedience" and not by faith *plus* a passing grade in obedience or achievement. By this we mean that a saving faith and obedience (achievement) are inseparably joined together, so that there is no faith apart from obedience and no obedience apart from faith. Obedience is faith in action! But the performance does not have to be perfect, nor does the achieve-

ment or action have to be completed before one can experience God's grace. All of God's commands are within the domain of his grace and are not conditions of entrance therein. Abraham is our example of this, as we will demonstrate.

Just as Abraham's faith was reckoned or credited to him as righteousness, so is ours (Rom. 4:23). Abraham acquired a *right standing* or a *right relationship* with God because of his faith, not because of his completed obedience. This right relationship was enjoyed by Abraham in Genesis 15:6, before the command to circumcise was given and before the command to offer Isaac was given. This relationship was a *gift* to Abraham from God because of, or on the basis of, Abraham's faith—a faith that caused Abraham to *begin* his life of obedience.

This life of obedience was begun *before* Genesis 15, for at this point Abraham had already begun to move with God! When faith *begins to move a man* in obedience, his faith becomes what we call a "vital faith," or a saving faith. So at the point of Abraham beginning to move, he entered the domain of grace and God credited to his account a "right standing" or a "right relationship" which he maintained by continuing to walk by faith. He enjoyed God's grace from the *beginning* of his obedience and did not have to wait until he accumulated enough points of achievement to make a "passing grade." From a legal point of view, Abraham did not complete his obedience in offering Isaac, for the instruction was to offer him as a burnt sacrifice. Abraham never got the fire lit, but as far as God was concerned, Isaac was a burnt offering. This is a clear-cut case of God accepting the intent of a submissive heart in lieu of perfect performance. This principle is for us today (Rom. 4:23).

Now repentance requires that we ac-

quire a penitent heart, one that is surrendered, one that is submissive and obedient. One does not acquire a penitent heart today and then tomorrow discard it for a rebellious heart of stone! One must maintain this attitude of heart so long as he lives. Consequently when one repents of sin, he repents of *all sin*, past, present, and future! This should not sound strange to our ears, for when Jesus died for sin, he died for *all sin*, past, present, and future. He atoned for my sins and yours before we ever committed them. So in repentance and in acquiring a penitent heart, one repents of all sin, even of those he has not committed as yet. This penitent heart assures that one will never rebelliously and willfully disobey God. To lose this penitent heart not only affects the validity of one's faith, but will jeopardize his salvation. If one loses either his penitent heart or his faith, he has lost the very basis of his salvation and his right standing before God. Such a one cannot continue to remain within the domain of God's grace.

Baptism Is for All Sins . . .

Further, when one is baptized for the remission of sins, he is baptized for the remission of *all his sins*, past, present, and future! His baptism is the step of faith that places one in a right standing with God, places one within the domain of grace, and brings one under the protection of the blood. Once one is under the blood, the blood continually cleanses (or keeps one clean) from every sin (1 Jn. 1:7). The sins of one in this relationship with God are not imputed to him, for they have been forgiven (past tense), and have been covered (another past tense—and even before they were committed), and he is blessed, for the Lord does not count his sins against him (Rom. 4:6-8).

So all this being true, the person who is in a right relationship with God and is maintaining this relationship *never has any unforgiven sins!* Praise the Lord! This is truly grace and renders salvation truly a gift from God (Rom. 6:23). There is now *no* condemnation to such a one who is in Christ Jesus, for he has been freed from the vicious cycle of sin and death (see Rom. 8:1-2, Phillips). One who puts his trust in God has hold of eternal life and does not come up for judgment, for he has passed (again past tense) from death to life (see Jn. 5:24, NEB).

Now the obvious question will be, "If this be true, why are we taught to confess our sins, as 1 John 1:9 and James 5:14-16 teach?" John was writing in a context of the rising Gnostic heresy which denied the fact of sin. He was not giving a law for remitting the sins of faithful Christians and was not saying that one must remember, confess, repent, and pray for forgiveness of each individual infraction. Rather he was teaching that we must acknowledge the fact of sin in order to be forgiven. One who does not acknowledge the fact that he is a sinner need expect nothing of God, for he is out of step with truth. James teaches us to confess our sins to one another and pray one for another. What else could a penitent heart do? While God may not have taken our sin into account, our brothers do, and confessing is a cleansing catharsis for our conscience. Besides it helps us to maintain this penitent attitude of heart.

May God deliver us from this doctrine of "legal grace" which forever keeps us in doubt of our salvation, not knowing if we are saved or lost until the judgment. Let's quit frustrating the grace of God (Gal. 2:21) and see the glory of salvation to the uttermost. God has declared us "*Not guilty!*" (Rom. 8:33). □

Eschatological Wonderings

MICHAEL HALL

Niles, Michigan

The Corinthian believers not only had internal spiritual problems concerning partyism and fusses, but they also had some serious difficulty over the *didachē*. Apparently when they wrote that lost letter to Paul, they inquired about some eschatological doubts and speculations concerning their resurrection from the grave (1 Cor. 7:1; 15:12). We don't have their original question or have a full grasp of the error, but we do have Paul's wonderfully delightful resurrection chapter—1 Corinthians 15!

How can a body eaten by a fish, burnt in a fire and scattered through the world have an actual physical resurrection? Furthermore, what kind of a body would it be, seeing that some of its physical composition is now become part of sea creatures, animals, and even plants? Such must have been their thoughts and questions. Paul rehearsed this dilemma in verse 35: "But some will say, *How* are the dead raised up? And with *what body* do they come?" Such questions might have even come up in their Sunday morning Bible classes.

What Was Harmful . . .

What was harmful to their life in the Spirit, however, was not their questioning, searching, learning, or even their doubts. What threatened them was *the way* in which they handled their doubts. Instead of bringing their doubts to Jesus, honestly confronting them and trusting God that the answer was with him, they apparently decided to "chunk" the whole

resurrection thing and disregard it as foolishness and impossible.

"How say some among you," Paul inquired in verse 12, "that there is no resurrection of the dead?" Their problem was not with the glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus; it wasn't that they disbelieved that. His resurrection wasn't even on their minds (which was part of their problem). But they had come to a theological roadblock. There was no apparent answer or easy solution to their question. What did they do? They threw the whole thing out the window! "There must be no resurrection for any who die" was their grand conclusion. "If there is to be a 'resurrection,' it certainly can't be physical, for we can't figure how that could be; therefore it isn't."

Paul's answer is kind and masterful. Twentieth century preachers would do well to learn his approach. First he asks them to be *logical* about their conclusions. If there is indeed no bodily resurrection, then, Paul warns, there are some detrimental and serious consequences which you will have to handle. First, the good news is undermined, for we "so preach and you so believe" that Jesus arose from the dead, and that's part of our *euangelion* (vs. 1-11)! Paul is calling their attention to the fact that at least one person—whom we all love, adore, and praise—has actually arisen from the dead! Further, if dead people can't experience a real resurrection, then the *kerugma* (proclamation of good news) is vain, trusting in Jesus is empty and meaningless, and the apostles

are all liars (vs. 14-15). Are you ready for those logical consequences?

Unsound Deductions . . .

Of course, the Corinthians weren't being logical about their eschatological and theological convictions. But then most errors among Christian people over the *didachē* are errors which aren't logically sound in the first place. And they are errors all of the *logical* consequences of which are not considered, let alone believed. Paul tries to make them see how unsound their deductions have been. If there's no resurrection, then forgiveness of sins is a farce and the sleeping ones are "perished" (15:17-18). He points out the miserableness of Christianity if they're actually without hope for a hereafter (v. 19), and the stupidity of suffering if this is "all there is" (vs. 29-34).

After exposing such a dismal dilemma of hopelessness which the consequences of their thinking demanded, Paul pulls the shade up and lets the light of the glorious Good News shine in. Here is the Good News: "but now IS Christ risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (v. 20).

Finally, Paul gets around to answering their questions: "How are the dead raised and with *what body* do they come?" (v. 35). The body form of the resurrection is to be "a body as it pleases Him (God)" (vs. 26-38). It will be glorious, powerful, spiritual, and alive (vs. 43-45). But we still don't know what we shall be like, only that we'll be like the Lord Jesus who will fashion our bodies like unto his glorious body (1 Jn. 3:1-3; Phil. 3:20-21).

And the HOW? That isn't really answered in the chapter, except that he points out that *God created it in the first place*, and *he* can raise it again! The question of power is no problem with Him. That's insignificant and beside the point

when we think of *who* will do the raising. The time is somewhat important: it will be at the Revisit of Jesus to Planet Earth (vs. 51-57).

The chapter teaches more than it explicitly states. It instructs us to keep trusting the Father, even when the answers to some of our theological doubts are not crystal clear. It calls upon us to look at the consequences and logical implications of our convictions. When logic reveals the absurdity of our convictions, those convictions need to be re-examined. The chapter ends with a very pragmatic suggestion. It's as if Paul was trying to say that we need to let the Good News of Christ's victory and return so thrill our spiritual lives that no eschatological problem would ever stop us from aggressively ministering in Jesus! "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (v. 58). □

PLEASE NOTE THAT . . .

Because several obstacles have caused us to fall behind in our mailing schedule, and because we would like to take a Christmas vacation, we have decided to combine the January and February issues into one, mailing it the last week of January. Since December is going out about two weeks late, this added delay does not seem unreasonable.

We regret the anxiety our erratic mailing schedule has caused some who have written to express their concern. We have no intention of going out of business and are looking forward to 1976 as our best year yet. Our thanks to all who have helped us in so many ways.

LETTERS

In Gratitude

Many thanks for a journal that continues to be practical, attractive and brief. Its articles are thought-provoking and encourage freedom. Continue to bless us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Toronto, Ontario

AUDREY WRIGHT

On Pride in Womanhood

The heading "Voices of Frustration" for two letters in *Integrity* (September, 1975) is fitting in that both letters express the inward self-pity and unhappiness of two women. Apparently neither one has had contact with congregations where men and women, complements of each other, unite in recognizing Christ as Head and the people of the congregation as members of His body with differing functions. (1 Corinthians 12) There are many women proud of their womanhood and "who care" who see challenging opportunities to serve their Lord in the visible "Church of Christ." They do not feel themselves "treated as inferiors in the church."

Apparently Jean Overton prefers to cling to her father's name. Is she willing for her husband to consider letting other women use his name?

(Isaiah 4:1) Bobbie Sherwood does not seem to recognize the possibility that physically she is a female body and must use it to show the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22ff.) Her concept of the role of a Christian woman is so very narrow. May I commend the reading of "God's Woman in 1975" by Helen M. Young (*20th Century Christian*, July, 1975) to all who love and desire to serve our Lord?

Columbus, Ohio

EDITH HUEY

The Devil's Advocate

Regarding the editor's discussion of *Abba* in the October issue: this word is simple (we can say it backwards as well as forwards) and innocent (if indeed it is used only by the obedient) enough to merit inclusion in our devotional jargon, but it is not without suspicious associations, since it is the etymological sire of the word *abbot* (the principle of a monastery).

As for Moule's discussion of the language of worship, we need a moulage (no apology for the pun; your journal could use a little humor) of his footsteps to see where they are leading us, for we have to be very careful about allowing those old words (like *Maranatha*, *Hallelujah*, *Hosanna*, etc.) to creep into our worship services lest we speak the language of Ashdod and visitors think us a church of ababblers (again no apology; same reason). If we admit *Abba*, can *Benedictus* be far behind? Then we will have passed Jerusalem and landed in Rome.

The old paths are good when we can understand the markers, but the learned Ecumenicus Smith has said, "Restorationism must be selective," and I say "Amen!" Shalom.

DRYDAL PARCHFELD

WOMAN'S PLACE IN CHURCH ACTIVITY

We have just published a 36-page paperback with the above title by Norman L. Parks. It is not a reprint of the author's previously published material, but is a completely new treatment of the subject, written in Dr. Parks' characteristic vivid style. His discussion is one that must be taken into account by every serious student of the question. We will send a copy to anyone who sends us \$1. For prompt service write to: Amos Ponder, 1269 Pickwick Place, Flint, Michigan 48507.