

*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

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### INCARNATION AND PARADOX *(continued from page 93)*

could assert that God acts timelessly. But if that isn't verbal gymnastics comparable with round-squares, then verbal gymnastics do not exist.

I prefer to argue that a timeless God does not exist and, if he did, it wouldn't make any difference, because he couldn't do anything anyway. A timeless God is a static God. But the God of the Bible is the living God. He is the God who acts. Bowen works from the false assumption that "God as a perfect Being [is] without location in . . . time," and from this assumption a contradiction must arise when the temporality of Jesus is faced. His definition of perfection grows out of Greek thought, not Hebrew thought. There is not a single passage of scripture that suggests that God is timeless; rather, almost every assertion about God assumes his temporality. God is the one who loves, creates, judges, answers prayer and even repents. How does one love timelessly? It is impossible. And it's just as impossible to resolve the contradiction inherent in the contention that God is timeless but God in the flesh is temporal.

It is possible that someone could attack my position on the basis that I have denounced the use of paradox and mystery and yet in the process of making my argument I have employed these very concepts. I suppose that I could offer an extended defense of my practice and seek to free myself of an apparent inconsistency. But why bother? After all, it's a mystery. □

### Editorial: For Services Rendered

*Dean A. Thoroman*

### The Paid Professional Preacher

*Hoy Ledbetter*

### The Silent Christ

*Elton D. Higgs*

### Christians and the Consumer Ethic

*Tom Lane*

### Incarnation and Paradox

*Craig M. Watts*

### Suddenly Last Summer

*Don Haymes*

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## FROM THE EDITOR

### FOR SERVICES RENDERED

To pay or not to pay—a problem involving remuneration to ministers has been around a long time. Hoy Ledbetter explores the topic in this issue of *Integrity* and we anticipate his usual thorough research will produce an article worthy of serious consideration. However, neither he nor others on the editorial staff assume that this is all that needs to be said on the issue.

Thoughtful reflection leads to the conclusion that this is a many-faceted problem. The principle of fairly compensating for a job well done is usually not opposed, so difficulties arise for other reasons. Most fair-minded persons do not question the honesty of those who oppose paying ministers; they simply do not agree with their conclusions.

Is there something inherently wrong with a paid, professional ministry? What support, if any, may be found in scripture for the present practice of fully financing polished pulpитеers? If such support seems to be lacking, is the concept of a paid ministry necessarily evil?

Assume that the concept is not bad. The questions are still not all answered. For example, what duties may be properly assigned to "the minister"? Shall his efforts be primarily directed toward saints or sinners? Edification or evangelism?

There is also concern about what constitutes adequate compensation. What fringe benefits need to be included in the total wage package? In return, should ministers be expected to maintain regular working hours? How accountable should they be for their time?

At least one other matter should be examined. How much job security goes with a paid ministry? When extension of contract is under consideration, who is responsible for the final decision involving staying and paying? If constant moving is part of the ministry, what security can be built in for old age? Who ministers to the minister when his serving days are ended?

As usual, discussion is invited. *Integrity* neither espouses nor proposes an "official" position on this matter. Publication of responses remains an editorial option, but reader reaction is wanted and needed in order for this journalistic ministry to function properly.

—Dean A. Thoroman

## The Paid Professional Preacher

HOY LEDBETTER

Articles on the church's ministry recently published in *Integrity* and elsewhere have reactivated concern over the role of the paid professional preacher in that ministry. The legitimacy of his function has not only been vigorously debated within the restoration movement in which most of our readers have their roots, but it has also been questioned by some leading contemporary ecclesiologists. On the grounds of practical expediency and/or scriptural propriety it has been argued that the professional is more of a bane than a boon.

The preacher, at least as he is known in the church today, is hard to find in the New Testament (a fact that is betrayed by the variety of names by which he is called), but he should not for that reason alone be declared illegitimate. He is an invention of which necessity is the mother, for no matter how desirable "mutual ministry" may be as an ideal, modern churches which have depended upon it have almost invariably found it inadequate to meet their needs. Even if we concede that the failure of such experiments is a sign of culpable immaturity, the conclusion that the paid professional is at least an interim necessity is hard to escape.

That the church's ministry today is generally determined by pragmatic considerations which are usually not questioned should be clear to any thoughtful person, and that there are many departures from the Biblical norm should be equally clear. But what, exactly, is wrong, and what is right? Our answer to this question must begin with an examination of scriptural principles.

### BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

When Jesus sent his disciples out to preach, he admonished them, "Remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages; do not go from house to house" (Lk. 10:7). It is not necessary to discuss (as some have done) whether or not this preaching tour should be regarded as a missionary enterprise, for the principle which Jesus lays down is that the teacher deserves to be supported by those whom he teaches.

That this principle applies to the settled ministry (assuming that elders represent a settled ministry) is indicated by Paul's use of it in 1 Timothy 5:17-18: "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching; for the scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages.'" The word "wages" in

this passage is the key to understanding the meaning of "honor," a double portion of which is to be accorded to those who "labor in preaching and teaching." The context requires us to define "honor" as "honorarium" or, better, "compensation." The passage presents several exegetical challenges, but there can be no doubt that it authorizes compensation for hard-working preachers and teachers.

The relevance of this passage to the professional ministry is indicated by the fact that the work here envisaged has largely been assumed by the preaching minister today, since contemporary elders, more often than not, do not "labor in preaching and teaching." There is a strong possibility that our "preachers" would have been called "elders" in the early church, as they were in the early restoration movement, but unless one believes, as I do not, that a detailed pattern of ministry must be discovered in the New Testament and then be inflexibly bound upon the church today, the question of who did what in the early Christian communities is not decisive for determining ministerial functions today.

### RECIPROCAL SHARING

However, a more general reference to financial support of religious teachers is Galatians 6:6: "Let him who is taught in the word share all good things with him who teaches." It can hardly be doubted that to "share all good things" means that material support is to be given in exchange for spiritual instruction (cf. Rom. 15:27). At first glance this passage seems to enjoin one-on-one instruction, since the singular pronoun is used. Perhaps that would be the ideal situation, but Paul's obvious purpose is to impress on the individual recipient of instruction his responsibility in the matter, and of course does not rule out the practical approach of a group—or a whole church—pooling their resources to engage for themselves a teacher.

Paul follows this admonition with a warning that "whatever a man sows, that will he also reap," stressing thereby the seriousness with which we must subordinate our material blessings to our spiritual needs. One must choose "Spirit" over "flesh" and use his material wealth accordingly. And there is greater likelihood that one will do this in cooperation with other Christians than by himself. For this reason the paid teacher who serves a whole group may become a practical necessity.

There is no suggestion that this reciprocal arrangement should be of limited duration. As long as one needs spiritual instruction he is under apostolic injunction to pay his teacher. And since Galatians is one of the earliest books of the New Testament, this passage shows how early there developed within the church a class of teachers whose involvement in teaching was too extensive for them to maintain regular employment, and therefore they had to be compensated, if not in full, at least in part.

We might note in passing that the verb Paul used for teaching in Galatians 6:6 occurs also in Pseudo-Lucianus in reference to training an ass to do tricks—an instance not without relevance to the cynicism and even contempt which characterizes some contemporary teachers!

### A SMALL PRICE TO PAY

The Mosaic principle that the ox treading out the grain must not be muzzled is appealed to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 9, where he asks in verse 11, "If we have sown

spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits?" He also points out in his extended discussion that "the Lord commanded [an apparent reference to Luke 10:7, cited above] that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (v. 14). The fact that Paul waived his right for such support indicates that in some situations such concessions are expedient, but it is not a binding regulation for all succeeding teachers.

Paul's discussion in 1 Corinthians 9 further supports the general rule that compensation for Christian teachers came from *those whom they taught*. There is scriptural precedent, of course, for such teachers being supported by a third party (e.g., the Philippians' fellowship with Paul "to the account of expenditure and income," Phil. 4:15), but the principle remains that those who receive should pay, the rationale being that a teacher's keep is a small price to pay for the gospel.

### ABUSES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

That there were many abuses of the paid ministry in the New Testament is obvious. Jesus gave a hint of things to come when he spoke of the hireling shepherd (Jn. 10:12). Paul points out that there were many "peddlers of God's word" (2 Cor. 2:17). His original word (from *kapēlos*, retailer) basically refers to those who regard the word of God as merchandise by which they can make money, but it may also have an extended meaning of falsifying the word, after the pattern of a merchant who would adulterate wine with water in order to extend his profit. Early Christian literature also speaks of a wholesaler: the *christemporos* (Christ + *emporos*, wholesaler) mentioned in Didache 12:5 is "one who carries on a cheap trade in (the teachings of) Christ."

Titus 1:11 refers to certain deceivers, "especially the circumcision party," who were "teaching for base gain what they have no right to teach." A bishop is to be "no lover of money" (1 Tim. 3:3), and both deacons and elders are to be "not greedy for gain" (1 Tim. 3:8; Tit. 1:7). There may have been various reasons for these proscriptions, but perhaps they are best illuminated by Peter's charge that elders should serve "not for shameful gain but eagerly" (1 Pet. 5:2). Although Peter's requirement, by the mere fact that it is given, encourages rather than discourages compensation for teachers, a materialistic attitude is a detriment to any appointed servant of Christ, since it divides his loyalty and, even if he is impervious to the temptation to misappropriate funds, at least reduces his service to mere professionalism.

"Imagining that godliness is a means of gain," a notable characteristic of the deceiver, is wholly out of place in the visions of the true teacher. Still, the tradition of Balaam, "who loved gain from wrongdoing," appears to have been widespread in the early church. What was wrong with such hirelings was not that they received pay—all gain is not shameful—but that greed was the chief motive of their work, so much so that they would even adulterate the gospel in order to improve their financial status.

### POSTAPOSTOLIC LITERATURE

Although in reading the postapostolic literature we must be alert for deviations from the New Testament—since progress toward an authoritarian clergy began very early—we still should take a cautious look at one passage (from a document usually

dated somewhere between 80 and 120 and which therefore *may* antedate part of the New Testament) which deals with compensation for the settled ministry. Bearing in mind that it appears in a context which warns against those who "make traffic of Christ," note the following injunction regarding prophets and teachers in Didache 13:

But every true prophet who wishes to settle among you is worthy of his food. Likewise a true teacher is also himself worthy, like the workman, of his food. Therefore all the firstfruits of the produce of winepress and threshingfloor, of cattle and sheep, you shall give as firstfruits to the prophets; for they are your high priests. But if you do not have a prophet, give to the poor. If you make a batch of dough, give the firstfruits according to the commandment. Likewise when you open a jar of wine or oil, give the firstfruits to the prophets. Also take the firstfruits of your money and clothing and all your possessions, as it may seem best to you, and give according to the commandment.

Although this passage contains argumentation and an emphasis on the prophets not found in the canonical texts already cited, the differences are not significant. It is of particular interest to our discussion because of the great probability that the modern preacher's ancient counterpart is to be found in the prophet, not in the evangelist or even in the preacher of the New Testament.

At any rate, we find in the New Testament and other early Christian literature an argument for the paid ministry which seeks to counter an obvious reluctance to provide support and which at the same time warns against the abuses of professionalism. In our time, when the tradition of support is well entrenched, we must give our attention to abuses which threaten to rob the contemporary ministry of its right to exist. To some of these we now turn.

### HYPOCRISY

One of the most convincing arguments against the paid professional is that he tends to become, and is often regarded by the public as, a huckster—like the TV announcer who promotes a product because he is paid to do so and not because he believes every word of his pitch. Unless he can counteract this (usually tacit) charge of hypocrisy, his effectiveness will be reduced to the barest minimum. An additional problem is that the professional, knowing that paid witnesses have a credibility gap to overcome, and that the ministry has attracted its share of actual hypocrites, may become obsessed with authenticating himself. One effect of this obsession is heresy hunting, wherein the minister, perhaps unconsciously, is really more concerned with proving himself genuine than with proving others false. A better way of establishing one's believability is through loving and laborious service.

### CORRUPTION OF THE WORD

A related temptation the minister faces is that of corrupting the word. Because his livelihood depends upon acceptance by the congregation he serves, he is under constant pressure to avoid expressing convictions which would upset others. "I know this is true but the brethren are not ready for it yet" is a common rationale for prophetic silence. One of my most shocking discoveries came when I was asked by church leaders to preach something they knew I did not believe. Why a church would prefer a liar to a heretic is beyond me. A congregation is under no obligation to employ a preacher who does not fit in with its dogmatic goals, but it is under apostolic orders to see that

its spokesman is himself true. The best interests of the professionals and the churches alike will be served when integrity is moved to a higher place in the list of requirements for the preacher.

### MONOPOLIZATION

Inasmuch as there is a widespread tendency for them to do so, care should be taken that professionals do not monopolize the ministry. According to Ephesians 4:11-12, all ministers must regard themselves as pioneers under a mandate to equip *the saints* for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. It is usually the case that professionals so jealously guard their function in the congregation that *the saints* have little opportunity for ministry. Even if we grant (contrary to fact in many churches) that the preacher is better qualified than anyone else to address the assembly, that fact does not guarantee his exclusive right to do so. The variety of ministers who participated in the worship of such New Testament churches as Corinth and Antioch would have been impossible under the theory that only the best should speak. The preacher may better earn his keep by occasional silence than by monopolizing the pulpit.

### AUTHORITARIANISM

It is also a legitimate matter of concern that professionals tend to usurp the decision-making rights of the congregation. The noxious weed of authoritarianism is being increasingly recognized and stamped out in the eldership, and it must not be allowed to further invade the preaching ministry. That preachers, by virtue of their special qualifications and pervasive involvement in the church programs, should be prominent in decision-making cannot be disputed, but great care should be taken that they do not become dictators.

### MERE PROFESSIONALISM

Finally, there is the problem of mere professionalism in the ministry. We need not doubt that the pulpit is used to fulfill the financial and/or neurotic needs of some preachers. Several years ago a friend urged me to become a missionary with the argument, "When you come back from a couple of years on the mission field, you will have more calls for meetings than you can fill!" When preachers work from such ignoble motives—when preaching is merely a means of gain, simply a good job at which one may earn from \$500 to \$700 a week, or when the pulpit is used to project a man into the center because he has a psychological need to be there—then an attitude prevails which is hardly conducive to taking up the cross of Christ. Although we must exercise great caution in dealing with other people's motives, we should nevertheless ask not only how well a preacher preaches, but *why*.

### CONCLUSION

Our critique of the ministry today should begin with the recognition that a restorationism which seeks to reproduce the exact forms employed by the early church is doomed to frustration and failure. The Bible leaves no doubt that certain tasks are to be performed, but by whom is often an open question, the ultimate answer to which must be left to the wisdom of the congregation concerned. This means that churches have a right to utilize whatever servants they think are necessary to carrying out their

mission as the body of Christ, and these may include a great variety of functions.

Such servants may arise from within the local church, or they may come from a pool of outside candidates. Once such servants are employed, the church is obligated to support them under the principle that the workman deserves his wages, yet this should be done with a sense of stewardship of God's gracious gifts. At the same time all the members are required to maintain their own ministry of building up the body—a responsibility they cannot properly delegate to another. Furthermore, as a ministry of saints they cannot allow another to dictate the terms of their faith or to assume any control over them.

The answer to the problems associated with the paid professionals lies not in radical excision, but in seeking ministers who follow the Biblical norm, which does not focus on a certain form or exclusive nomenclature, but on personal integrity and aptitude and fulfillment of the role of a servant (*the* word for minister in the New Testament). The paid professional should be prophetic, not conformist; eager, not avaricious; pioneering, not monopolistic; a *preaching* minister, not *the* minister; a hard worker, not a lazy opportunist; a servant of all and dictator to none; and a complement to, not the embodiment of, the church's ministry. His foremost concern should be the prosperity of the gospel, which will impel him, if necessary, to follow Paul's example and engage in a trade or take wages from other churches to avoid charging his hearers. The fact that there are many ministers today who meet these qualifications, and therefore sustain their right to be, should not be obscured by prevalent abuses. □

### THE SILENT CHRIST (Mark 15:1-5)

Why, Jesus, no reply?  
If ever defense was needed,  
It was then,  
When Pilate and the rabble  
Confronted you.  
You were not what you seemed—  
Beaten, friendless, bound—  
For you had trod the path of God,  
And angels awaited your call.  
These petty men had no idea  
Of the power they dared.  
And yet you said nothing.  
Yours was the last defense  
Against the folly of men:

The silence of Love.  
Oh, words may be prelude,  
And daily in the Temple  
They heard yours.  
But when Satan has triumphed,  
Blending the lies of men  
With our own despairing doubts  
To turn our virtue into pitch,  
The time of words is past,  
And we search the depths within  
To find a place beyond defense,  
Beyond our righteousness,  
Beyond integrity,  
To stand with the Silent Christ.

—Elton D. Higgs

## Christians and the Consumer Ethic

TOM LANE

Cincinnati, Ohio

Americans justly boast that ours is the most affluent society in the world. But our abundance has become more than a national blessing; it is considered the supreme way of life. A plush home and union-backed job, color TV, stereo and CB radio, and a gas-guzzling big car—still a status symbol despite the energy crisis—all are ingredients of this idealized life-style. Many people find it hard to visualize a less thing-oriented style of life. A few dream of the sense of freedom that less involvement with material things would bring, but even fewer seriously pursue that alternative.

One soft drink TV commercial pictures a man fleeing the routine of his office career to manage a country general store in a Western state. But he takes his old favorite soft drink with him. Similarly, a beer commercial features a park ranger explaining how he gave up a better-paying job in the city to do what he believes in. The beer company which this rugged individualist patronizes remarks that it, too, believes in its work. In a curious twist of psychology, the oft-dreamt but little realized alternative life-style is used to sell products that are typical of the materialist culture: cola and alcohol.

In the midst of this materialistic society, the Christian is called to a different set of values. To be true to the Bible's view of material wealth and physical pleasures, the Christian must regard *things* as means to a greater good: the glory of God.

### The Consumer Ethic

Many Americans today live by what has been called the "consumer ethic." Fostered by commercial advertising, the constant portrayal of a materialistic "good life" in television programming, and the politicians' description of the good life as a material paradise as well as a society of order and equality, this "consumer ethic" consists in the following catalogue of goods and evils:

1. The bigger, the better. The bigger one's house, car, and overall stock of material goods, the higher one's quotient of happiness and well-being, and the higher one's social standing.
2. The newer, the better. Given two automobiles in equal working order, the latest model is to be preferred, unless, of course, the other car is a vintage edition. Given two plastic toy dolls, one with movable arms and legs and the second with a flexible waist in addition, the new "improved," "more lifelike" model is to be preferred, even though, by depriving the child of the imagination that must accompany a less lifelike version, the new one may actually give less joy in the long run.
3. To replace is better than to repair. "No deposit, no return" is good because it is more "convenient" than a recycleable item that does the same job. Why bother to re-

place the ink cartridge in your pen when you can throw the whole pen away and buy another nineteen-cent cheapie? Why wash a soiled dress when you can use a handy paper throwaway? Note how, even though faded and patched jeans are the teenage rage, the clothing industry has captured the money of teens who wish both the look of wealth and the "free and easy" look of their peers, by marketing prefaded and pre-patched *new* jeans.

### Christian Objections

This consumer ethic aims for the fastest possible flow of goods through peoples' lives. This is considered "good for the economy." While good for the economy, the consumer ethic is a bane to two vital elements of God's order. It is not good for man's natural environment, and it is not good for people.

The consumer ethic so prevalent in our life-style today is well named. It stresses man as "consumer" of goods and services. Business and industry endeavor to increase every citizen's appetite for things. Problem is, the supply of things to be consumed is not limitless. We are consuming ourselves out of house and home.

Planet earth is showing the strain. Natural resources are running out. Some scientists even agree that the documented worldwide changes in weather patterns in recent years are the result of the ravages of thermal and chemical pollution of the atmosphere, caused by industry and transportation.

The Bible portrays man not as consumer, but as steward of his planetary home, set here, in the words of Genesis, "to dress it and keep it." Man was meant to glorify God by cooperation with nature in conducting his material life. This purpose of man was not abrogated by the Fall. It could not have been. Sinless or fallen, man is inescapably an integral part of the created balances among animals, plants, water and minerals. If we refuse to be a *responsible* part, man's death as well as the death of the entire system is assured.

If man is to be a responsible steward of the earth, our consumption of its life-sustaining capacity must be rationed. We must conserve and recycle our resources. The most sensible attitude toward material things is that which prizes a reasonable standard of living (food, shelter and transportation, yes), but which eschews extravagance and waste.

Christians, especially, are bound to discard the consumer ethic for a sane outlook on material things. As Christians we are bound, not just by the logic that demands protection of natural resources as the price of survival, but also by the moral duty and loving desire to preserve the handiwork of our Father, the Creator. Also, Christians can see how the consumer ethic is damaging, not only to peoples' environment, but to people.

Materialism is an addiction that blinds its victims to spiritual values. Psychologists have identified an element in human make-up, dubbed the "acquisitive attitude." Bloated by the consumer philosophy, the desire for things and for the sensual pleasures which wealth affords becomes a passion pre-empting other drives. Many Christians know the tension of trying, oblivious of Jesus' warning, to serve both God and mammon. But try though one may to satisfy his desire for material pleasures, he never really can. All his possessions bring him only frustration, putting him on the treadmill

of forever wanting more. The mature Christian, by contrast, views material things and physical pleasures as part of the "good life," but a subordinate part.

The Christian, like anyone else, wants enough food to keep healthy, a dry and warm place to live, adequate clothing, and a sense of security that these necessities will be available in the future. The Christian, moreover, enjoys a gourmet dinner, a good movie, a day at the amusement park, and a trustworthy car, as much as the average person. In appreciatively enjoying such things, he actually glorifies the God who made man a material being and who gives material blessings to enhance our existence.

But the Christian keeps his approach to material gratification balanced. He sacrifices waste and unnecessary opulence in order to contribute to the conservation of natural resources. He foregoes some luxuries in order to give gifts to the needy. He, like the sage of old, enjoys the physical things of life, not just for the inherent pleasure they present, but as tokens of God's love (Eccl. 2:24-26; 5:18-19). The Christian also knows that he must be ready to give up such things as God in his wisdom may ask. The Christian views his possessions as a means to the service of God, who alone is to be coveted and enjoyed in and of himself.

A large crowd gathered at the river to witness a baptismal service. As one candidate prepared to be baptized, he took out his wallet and laid it on a dry rock on the river bank. The old pioneer preacher stopped him: "Not so, my man; your wallet must be baptized with the rest of you." We may question the practicality of immersing the wallet, but the preacher's notion of stewardship was sound. The Christian subordinates all things, even his material means, to the service of the Savior.

### In Practical Terms

How can we put into practice this view of mammon as a subsidiary good? We should work to protect the natural environment. We can recycle our newspapers and glass bottles and aluminum cans, insulate our homes, and drive fuel-saving cars, taking care not to litter, and voting for legislation to protect the environment. We must be good stewards of our money and personal possessions, trying not to be beguiled by spurious advertising, giving "as the Lord hath prospered" to meet the needs of others, keeping our possessions in good repair, following the old maxim, "Waste not, want not." (Christian writers may compose their drafts on the backs of old rejection slips.)

Motivated by love, we should be open-minded toward brothers and sisters who choose alternative life-styles. Particularly among youth, communal living with a Christian flair, to pool living expenses and for mutual edification, is becoming popular. Other Christians are opting for missionary or social service instead of traditional better-paying jobs. Those who elect more traditional styles of living should encourage these experimenters. But those who choose a traditional pattern of life must not permit those whose lives involve less material involvement to sit in judgment, if both are truly seeking the Lord's way, whatever style of life or career is chosen.

For, every Christian's life follows what, compared to the materialist norm of our society, is an "alternative" life-style. The Christian enjoys his possessions as gifts from God, but is not unduly enslaved to them. He views them as a means to the glory of God. His heart is in heaven, for it is there that his treasure is—that treasure being the very God he loves. □

# Incarnation and Paradox

## or the use of a theological catchall

CRAIG M. WATTS

*Nashville, Tennessee*

One of the few things that I've learned so far in my few years of life is that in religious discussions it's not so important *what* we answer as it is *that* we answer. The fact that "we had an answer" to a charge or argument advanced against our position carries far more weight with most of us than the *content* of the answer. Knowing that we didn't have to stand in dumb silence in the face of those who sought to contradict our convictions offers more comfort than a thousand flawless syllogisms. Let's face it, generally people haven't been trained so as to be equipped to critically analyze the reasoning involved in most argumentation. The fact that most popular studies in apologetics are written as though David Hume and Immanuel Kant never existed is evidence enough that our "answers" all too often have more to do with our psychology than with real intellection.

But there are times—sad times—when the force of an argument directed against us temporarily takes our breath away. At times like these easy answers are hard to come by. Nevertheless, all is not lost! For just as our opponent thinks he is going to strangle us with our (supposed) self-contradiction, we have one infallible weapon at our disposal: *the paradox!* With the cry, "It's a mystery, a paradox!" the stranglehold gives way, and once again we can breathe the breath of life.

### An Illustration

In a recent issue of *Integrity* Bill Bowen offered a demonstration of the function of the paradox in Christian apologetics. While pondering his article "Round-Squares, Ideas and the Incarnation" (July, 1977), I couldn't help but recall the profound (or profane, depending on your perspective) words of Charles Hartshorne: "A theological paradox, it appears, is what a contradiction becomes when it is about God rather than something else, or indulged in by a theologian or a church rather than an unbeliever or a heretic" (*The Divine Relativity*, p. 1).

I certainly don't want to suggest that there is no place for mystery and paradox in the Christian faith. A God who is small enough for us to comprehend is certainly not a God who is big enough for us to take very seriously. But to appeal to paradox whenever we are faced with a logical dilemma is frankly a cop-out.

I emphatically agree with Bill Bowen's contention that the incarnation is not contradictory, but the full weight of my conviction does not rest on mystery alone. I think we need to re-examine that logical problem facing us in regard to the incarnation. Bowen succinctly stated the difficulty as follows: "Jesus was a man located in time and space, while God is neither in time nor space, and so to identify Jesus with God is

like identifying a circle with a square. And clearly it is a contradiction to speak of a 'round square.'"

Instead of grappling with the problem, Bowen simply pulls out our theological catchall and disposes of the whole matter with the assurance that there is actually no contradiction at all; the incarnation is a mystery beyond human understanding. He argues that the incarnation is analogous to the formation of ideas through various electrical-chemical reactions which occur in the brain. That ideas arise from such reactions is unlikely, he argues, yet it happens. Also, as he points out, "Electrical-chemical reactions and brain waves are located in space; they may be spoken of as fast or slow-moving; none of which can be said of ideas . . ."

This is no place for an extended discussion of the mind-body problem, but it seems to me that this analogy simply doesn't stand. First, while I wouldn't dispute the necessity of the electrical-chemical processes in the brain for the formation of ideas within humans, I would be hesitant to claim that these processes are the cause (or at least the sole cause) of ideas. Second, to say, as Bowen does, that ideas cannot be spoken of as fast or slow moving, as electrical-chemical reactions and brain waves can be, suggests that he would identify the two. If that is the case, then perhaps ideas *should* be spoken of as being fast or slow moving. Of course to do so would be absurd, but the absurdity arises from the identification he infers. If the formation of human ideas requires something more than electrical-chemical reactions in the brain—something spiritual?—then there is no contradiction. The intended analogy is thus irrelevant.

In contrast, the problem of the incarnation which Bowen seeks to resolve does in fact contain a real logical contradiction. The primary difficulty does not reside in the fact that Jesus was spatially limited while God has no such limitation. No one claims that the Trinity became flesh. The Son alone was the subject of this aspect of the divine condescension. He emptied himself of his unlimitedness. Yet when Jesus prayed, there was still someone without limits to whom he could address himself. But speaking of mystery . . . the Trinity and the doctrine of the two natures of Christ provide more than enough of it to keep us all busy.

### Is God Timeless?

The most crucial logical problem revolves around temporality and timelessness. Clearly there can be no temporally located Jesus if he is the incarnation of a timeless God. We're not talking about mystery, paradox and limited human understanding at this point. We're talking about a logical contradiction.

For something (God included) to be timeless it must exist without duration. For that which is timeless there is no before and no after. Aquinas, Anselm, Boethius and all of the classical theologians would agree on this point. But if something is timeless, then it is incapable of acting or moving in any way, because the essence of movement is that something at one point in time is different from the way it was at a previous point in time. Activity thus entails temporality. To say that God is timeless is to say that he cannot act. Not only does the idea of a timeless God contradict the temporality of the incarnation, it contradicts the very idea that God could *act* to bring about the incarnation at all. Of course, if we want to follow Thomas Aquinas, I suppose we

*(continued on back cover)*

## LETTERS

Letters for publication should be addressed  
"To the Editor" and as concise as possible.

### Letter and Response

We appreciate your publication more than we can express. We were smeared and framed by an ungodly preacher who came in . . . to our new four-year-old congregation. My husband and I had dreamed of a congregation, and finally had put our hearts, our time, our lives, and our money into bringing it into reality.

As a result of secret meetings we weren't even aware of, and other devilish activities, we daily are aware of the lovely brick building we are familiar with every brick of—but we drive 50 miles from here to worship each Sunday morning, while our "brethren" here talk of "purifying" the church—by smearing, framing and forcing us to leave. Don't try to tell us the devil doesn't warp the minds of men—people we've known fifty years—when an ungodly preacher starts out to *control* a congregation.

We enjoy and appreciate the men and women who write for *Integrity*, especially Carl Ketcherside. You have made us aware of *much* in the Church of Christ we did not dream of. Perhaps had we known all this, we would have been more cautious and not quite so trusting of one and all.

NAME WITHHELD

**Editor's response:** When I read your letter, I was absorbed by the frustration it reveals and became grieved and angry. We are printing it (but withholding your name) because we want to make some comments which may be useful to others and because we want you to have the prayers of many readers who will be touched by your distress, some of whom have had experiences very similar to yours.

I must say that, if I had not had considerable experience to draw upon, I would have been inclined to suppose that you have some faults your letter does not confess, for one finds it hard to believe that one person can—or would wish to—so stir up a congregation that it could expel the very people who helped give it life. But yours is only the latest of numerous letters we have received—from people who have been driven out of buildings into which they poured thousands of dollars, who have been rejected by the very people they converted to Christ, and who suddenly found themselves shunned by friends whom they have known and worked with most of their lives. And over what? More often than not, over some minor point

of doctrine not even mentioned in the Bible.

This is precisely the sort of thing that provoked Campbell and others to begin the restoration movement, and we are compelled to fight it with equal vigor today. The preacher—let us give him the benefit of the doubt—is caught up in a sectarian system which has lost sight of the superlative value of people and which has ruled out a "love that will not let me go." The brethren, whom you have known fifty years and with whom you could worship in harmony until someone stirred them up, are to be pitied. Although they may, like Paul, kick against the goads, they are probably too ignorant of Christian teaching to recognize heresy when they see it and too unsure of themselves to resist subversive influences. They are in bondage to fear of disapproval by that nebulous "church" which the preacher represents to them.

You said, "Perhaps if we had known all this, we would have been more cautious and not quite so trusting of one and all." I hope not. One of the risks of fellowship is that people will not be able to take us like we are, but it is a risk that must be taken. When we must wear masks and cannot trust each other, there is no fellowship, and driving fifty miles to worship is a small price to pay for escaping such fakery.

Do not lose hope. Although there is no guarantee, God, who has done some marvelous works in our generation, may yet prevail upon those heretics who "purify" the church by tearing it apart. In the meantime, remember this: "The Lord knows those who are his."

### Could It Be . . . ?

I see that *Integrity* devoted 25% of the September issue to Allen Holden's pedantic, pedestrian and parochial review of Neil Diamond. Does this indicate a dearth of manuscripts, or a new trendiness by *Integrity*? Either way, I'd like to offer the following titles for your consideration (manuscripts available on request):

"Bette Midler and woman's role  
in the church"

"*I'm In You*": The theology of  
Peter Frampton"

"*Love Gun: Kiss*; and a new way of  
scattering seed"

And, hey, don't forget: Debby Boone made the Top Ten with "You Light Up My Life"!

ROGER MANNON  
Floyd, Virginia

*the signs of the times . . . don haymes*

### SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER

I was standing under a blazing July sun on the edge of a bean field in Delaware County, Ohio. My friend the anthropologist and pre-historian, Dr. Carl Phagan, was directing the excavation of a site where some "Early Woodland" people had made their home about 1,000 B.C. Carl and his students from Ohio Wesleyan University had been hired by the Environmental Protection Agency to survey the site and remove whatever artifacts might be uncovered, so that EPA and Delaware County could build a sewage-treatment plant using the little stream which flows nearby.

Carl and his youthful crew had turned up a number of remarkable finds, including evidence of a huge communal dwelling which Carl believes may be the largest of its kind—not located on a mound—in North America. There were several burials, one of which had yielded a large clay pot, intact. At some distance beyond the dwelling, away from the main part of the site, one of the crew had found a pit, about two feet in diameter by two feet deep, which contained iron-oxide powder apparently used to make ochre red pigment for "ceremonial" purposes. ("In pre-history," Carl says, "whenever we don't understand something we call it 'ceremonial.'").

The Delaware County Engineer, a harried young man sporting an incredible handlebar moustache and an air of put-upon impatience, had brought out a road grader to speed a process which, to him, was impeding progress. Carl put the grader to work in an area, between the dwelling and the uncovered burial sites, which had not yet shown any signs of previous human activity. The blade was taking about an inch of soil; its first pass yielded nothing. On its second sweep, I was walking beside it at an angle behind the blade, while Carl walked slightly ahead. Suddenly two parallel white streaks appeared in the scarred soil behind the blade. A pair of femurs—a burial!

For a few minutes, all other work ceased. Carl was on his hands and knees, rapidly but meticulously cutting away the soil of millennia from the best-preserved remains they had yet found. The students gathered around and watched in silence. The Delaware County Engineer raised his eyes to heaven in what was not an expression of gratitude. The grader operator, a burly fellow with one of the reddest necks I've ever seen, now had the rest of the afternoon off, but he stayed to watch as Carl assigned two members of his crew to the burial and began to stake out the rest of the area for a closer examination with trowels and pails. All of us, even—especially—Carl, were awed by the presence of a human being who had lived and breathed in this Ohio bean field 3,000 years ago, a contemporary of Samuel, Saul, and David.

The other burials at the site were "flexed," with knees drawn up to the chest; this body appeared to have been—unceremoniously?—dumped in a shallow grave, bent at the waist. Like the other mysteries of the site, this burial incited the imagination and answered with frustration. Late that night I recalled Professor Lynn White's remark about how our history is in bondage to scribblers; pre-history is, almost by definition, the period before men sought to explain or amplify themselves to their contemporaries and their posterity by writing. "That's what I like," Carl answered. "That fella we saw today, he doesn't tell you much, but he doesn't lie." □