

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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CONVERSATION OVERHEARD (continued from page 162)

a question of going along with the church. The elders were a distinct minority.”

“Maybe so, but they rule the church, and the church has to go along with them, even if they don’t agree with them.”

“Do you mean that just a few men in the congregation can determine what the whole church must believe and practice?”

“Oh, no, the Bible decides what is right to believe. The elders just interpret the Bible, and we have to obey them because they are right.”

“And what if they are wrong in their interpretation . . .”

“We must obey God rather than men.”

“. . . and who decides whether the interpretation is right or wrong?”

“Look, you’re trying to trap me. I

already said elders can’t be dictators. But they would really be dictators, and foolish too, if they didn’t consult with the other men, but the final decision is theirs, and they don’t have to have everybody agree. The church can’t be a democracy.”

“Then why do they have to consult the other *men*, as you say?”

“They have to get the support of the church so they won’t be dictators.”

“Are you saying, then, that they can prescribe expressly and with authority as long as they try to make people like it?”

“Now, look . . . Say, why don’t you guys join us for the Sunday smorgasbord at the Holiday Inn?”

“Sure. Good idea. I’ll check with the wife and be right back.” □

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CONVERSATION OVERHEARD

“. . . but what really bothers me is their contention that the elders don't have any authority.”

“Why does that bother you?”

“Well, elders are supposed to rule the church, and how can they rule without authority?”

“Maybe you misunderstand what the Bible means about elders ruling. But let me ask you, what do you think Peter meant when he said elders are not to lord it over the flock?”

“He didn't mean they don't have any authority. He meant that they can't be dictators. They can't dictate to the church . . .”

“O.K. That's good. But the problem is, we somehow always wind up defining an elder's rule in such a way that we give him a right to dictate to the church. If I remember correctly, the *American Heritage Dictionary* defines dictate as 'to prescribe expressly and with authority.' Are you saying that elders can't prescribe expressly and with authority?”

“Well . . . I would say elders can't lord it over the church like the kings of the Gentiles lord it over their subjects. That is, they can't use force like political rulers do.”

“But the elders do use force that way. You remember when Charlie and Bill were having those house meetings and the women were praying with the men? The elders told them they had to quit or be disfellowshipped. Wouldn't you call that force?”

“The difference is, Bill and Charlie could go to another church, and they did. Anyway, I think if people don't want to go along with the church, they should get out.”

“That's my point. The elders, just like political rulers, forced them to either line up or go into exile. They chose exile, but only because they were forced. They didn't want to leave. And most of the church, including one of the elders, didn't want them to leave. It wasn't

(concluded on back cover)

The Question of Evil

TOM LANE

Waynesville, Ohio

The existence of moral evil and pain, particularly the seemingly senseless suffering of innocents, is often advanced as argument against the reality of the loving type of God depicted in the Bible. The famed apologist, C.S. Lewis, recalled that before his conversion the question of pain loomed large in his mind as grounds for atheism (*The Problem of Pain*, p. 1). So it once appeared to this author that a world in which “the law of the jungle” is the rule of nature, in which strong creatures prey mercilessly on weaker ones, and in which random natural disasters cause pain to innocent children, could hardly be the handiwork of a benevolent God. Humorist George Carlin once argued that God is surely more humanly fallible than we think: “Look at everything God made,” he said, “—it dies.”

By the word “evil” let us understand any phenomenon which repudiates life and joy. Physical pain, mental anguish, acts and inward dispositions of selfishness and malevolence, and death, are all comprehended in this broad but serviceable definition. The problem is this: Evil exists. No doubt of it. Our experience proves it. The Bible admits it. But the Bible also affirms that there exists, alongside of evil, a God who, in contradistinction to evil, is good, and who also is omnipotent. How can evil, and a good and powerful God, coexist? If God is good, he must not be omnipotent, since he has failed to eradicate the evil which is opposite to his nature. Or else he is powerful enough to wipe out evil if he wanted to, but is not all-benevolent, since obviously he has not erased evil from his universe.

Can we account for this seemingly paradoxical coexistence of God and evil, and so accept the Bible's testimony that both God and evil exist here and now?

SOME INADEQUATE ANSWERS

Three solutions have traditionally been offered to explain this coexistence. None of these solutions fully solves the problem. The feeblest suggestion is that proposed by the four contestants of the patriarch Job. Pain is direct punishment for men's wickedness, they said. But were this true, we would expect to see suffering dealt out in proportion to wickedness. The worst sinners should see suffering the most. But this is not the case.

Though pretty holy as far as men go, Job suffered intensely. The psalmist Asaph, reflecting that sometimes crime does pay, admitted, “I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked” (Psalm 73). Seeing a man born blind, the disciples asked Jesus, “Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents” (Jn. 9:1-3). The disci-

ples thought that somehow this man could have been born suffering because of his own sins; a more mature theology recognizes that newly-born children have not the consciousness to commit sins. Nor can animals sin. But both babies and animals suffer from disease and injury.

This explanation for evil sees physical evil—pain and suffering and death—to be the consequence of moral evil—man’s disobedience of God. The suffering endured by those who cannot sin is left unexplained. Nor is the origin of moral evil explained.

A related approach suggests that the evil of suffering is corrective discipline against the evil of sin, that the existence of suffering and death throughout creation is meant to warn of the even worse ultimate consequence of sin: eternal death. Again, we cannot account for the sufferings of animals, who can learn no moral lessons from the existence of physical evil in their experience. And again, the origin of moral evil is not explained.

Another line of reasoning maintains that evil is a by-product of the possibility of good. God created the world, and everything that was in it was initially good. Among the good gifts granted the creature man was freedom of choice. Just as man could elect to do good, he could opt for moral evil. Man chose the way of sin, and continues to reap the consequences in the form of the temporal discipline of pain and death.

Even this explanation fails to explain why a just God should permit suffering by amoral animals. What tie have animals to man’s choice of evil over good, that they should share man’s discipline? The fundamentalist’s pat answer is that man is lord of all life forms on earth, and that lower creatures must thereby share his fate. Actually, Genesis 1 and 2 represent man as steward rather than lord of the earth. Our pollution of the natural environment and senseless hunting for sport show us to be poor stewards, but other creatures do not necessarily share our scourge of suffering because God cursed them in conjunction with our curse. Note that, when God “cursed the ground,” in Genesis 3:17-19, he was not pronouncing havoc upon the vegetation, but ordaining that vegetation should prove unresponsive to man’s toil. God cursed man through nature; he did not curse nature.

SIN AND SATAN None of these customary solutions solves the question of evil. Nor do the solutions lumped together explain the matter. But some elements of these proposed solutions will prove useful when applied to the Bible’s teachings about evil, and about how God is dealing with it.

The Bible teaches that God is the source of good things (Jas. 1:17). We cannot conceive of him creating a corrupt world. Creation, in fact, he pronounced “good.” Even man began his history morally and materially perfect.

The origin of sin, of moral evil, may, as one of the traditional solutions suggests, be attributed to the requisites of human freedom. In order that he might have more than a race of mere automatons incapable of willing love and affection, God created man with the prerogative to choose obedience or sin. Since Adam, who by his precedent introduced a tendency to sin into the mind set of humanity, men have characteristically chosen sin. Much of the pain and anguish experienced by humanity results from man’s moral depravity, out of which he deigns to treat his fellow creatures cruelly and selfishly

This does not account for the prevalence of physical evil, that is, pain and death, elsewhere throughout the realm of nature. But the principle that God desires willful obedience from his rational creatures, not the inevitable obedience of robots, helps explain how even the evil which plagues lower life forms got into God’s originally perfect creation.

Man is not God’s only rational creature. Nor is man the only creature endowed with freewill. Angels, too, have the power to choose good or sin (Rev. 12:1-9). Behind the serpent in the Genesis 3 story we see the maneuvering of the original sinning angel, whose given name was Lucifer, the “Light Bearer,” but whose post-fall epithet is Satan, or “Adversary.” It is conceivable that this same Adversary who introduced temptation into human experience, as part of his own sinful personality possesses a destructive urge. He may not be Adversary to men only, but to all of God’s handiwork. The tooth-and-nail nature of nature, the tendency for all things to die, may be the result of Satan’s interference with creation. Just as man, because of his cruelty and selfishness, causes his fellow men and even plants and animals to know suffering and destruction, God permitting this as part of his grant of freewill to man, so Satan out of his malice may have corrupted nature, God allowing him to do this as part of his grant of freewill to the angels.

An exotic explanation this is, to be sure. But it is a reasonable extrapolation from the Bible’s picture of Satan as a destructive agent. This explanation for evil is not new in Christian thought. An early quasi-Christian sect, the Gnostics, conceived of a *demi-urge*, a creator of the planet earth subordinate to the ultimate creator God. This demi-urge, identified with Satan, became corrupt himself, and formed a world fitting his own character. While the Gnostics erred in visualizing a hierarchy of gods, their notion of the origin of evil is intriguing.

More recently, C.S. Lewis in his outer space trilogy (*Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*) fancifully hints that the Creator Christ left it to certain powerful angels to mold the natural order of particular planets. The angel assigned to be archon of earth became corrupt, and warped amoral material creation as well as the minds of the rational beings under his tutelage. In a more direct essay (*op. cit.*, pp. 122-124), Lewis suggests that by causing lower animals to prey upon one another, Satan may have introduced a sort of amoral evil into the originally all-herbivorous animal realm. It is going too far to ascribe moral awareness to animals. But still the thought that Satan may have intervened to bring evil upon lower life forms is provocative, and a good accounting for evil if we accept the premise that freewill is necessary to what God was after when he created even Lucifer: a sharing with his creatures of true love.

RESTORATION ASSURED That God thought the freewill of men and of angels of sufficient worth to have gambled on the advent of corruption into creation, we may find hard to sympathize at times. When personally confronted with disease, the death of a loved one, or the stress of everyday life, we may wonder if God is good after all. How can we cope with such situations?

The book of Job (which never exactly answers the philosophical questions about evil) teaches us about reacting to the fact of tribulation in our lives. The character Job

at first rationalized his trials: "The Lord giveth, the Lord hath taken away." Later Job fell into self-pity, then into bitterness against God, finally into despair. For this lack of confidence in him, God rebuked Job with a vision of his power in the tornado. Confronted with this awesome presence of God, Job acquiesced in confidence that God knew what he was up to.

Unlike Job, we should not despair when trials come upon us. Just as God never explained to Job why he was suffering (the reason being God's permission to Satan to test Job), instead of requiring Job simply to trust him, so we, puzzling at cosmic mysteries, must trust that God is good and that he works all things out for the best.

And that he will. Though for a time God tolerates sin and suffering and death in his originally, intentionally beneficent order of creation, there is superb testimony to his goodness and power in the certainty that this predicament, necessary now to establish men's and angels' freedom of choice, will not go on forever. The coexistence of God and evil is not what we would call a "peaceful coexistence." Christ came to undo the work of the Adversary (Heb. 2:14; 1 Jn. 3:8). Through faith in Christ, the sinner obtains forgiveness of his sins and promise of eternal life (Rom. 8:1, 18-23). At Christ's second coming all creation will be delivered from the evil of pain and death. We can put up with the seemingly senseless problems in our lives, and even learn the virtues of patience and faith from them, by keeping in mind the hope of Paul: "The sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed" (Rom. 8:18). We know that God is powerful and good because we have his promise of a new earth, restored to the perfection he meant it to have. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4). □

The Chief Blessing

W. CARL KETCHERSIDE

Saint Louis, Missouri

Recently I finished a biography of Samuel Johnson, written by John Wain. It embraces 385 pages. I had long had a desire to read about Johnson from the pen of someone other than James Boswell. I was intrigued by the life of a man who lived in England during our American Revolution, and who was a close friend of such contemporary notables as the statesman Edmund Burke, the actor David Garrick, the painter Sir Joshua Reynolds, and the author Oliver Goldsmith. Wain, who is Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and a successful writer, presented a fascinating story of a unique character.

Johnson, who was the sage of London coffeehouses, in which he dispensed great draughts of wisdom, knew the depths of poverty and the cruel sting of repeated disap-

pointment. He suffered from terrifying diseases of the body, but he knew the source of inner strength. In his private journal for January 1772, he records his completion of the reading of the Bible, and adds, "I hope to read the whole Bible once a year as long as I live." This resolution is but one of many sentences I underlined with red ink as I went through the book.

As I turn back and read these again I find more of them dealing with hope than any other theme. "It is worth a thousand pounds a year to have the habit of looking on the bright side of things." "Hope is the chief blessing of man; and that hope only is rational of which we are sensible that it cannot deceive us." "Where there is no hope, there can be no endeavor." These gems of thought mean much to me because they reinforce my own philosophy of life.

I am constantly asked if I think the battle being waged for the unity of all believers in Christ will ever achieve its objective. Of course it will. Every blow struck against the towering mountain of bigotry, hostility, and sectarian indifference crumbles minute portions of its granite surface, but some day the cumulative force of all those blows will be felt and the quake will reduce the frowning parapet to rubble. We have need of

We are on the way out of a long night . . .

patience. God is not asleep. The Holy Spirit has not retired. The prayer of Jesus that all who believe in him may be one has not been lost amidst the din of conflict of twenty centuries.

In the movement of which we are heirs, there will be healing of rifts. Men cannot always exist on a diet of diatribe and despair. Partisan heroes will lose their glamor. Many are already doing so. Raucous voices of defenders of the status quo will die away. Brethren will become ashamed of their littleness. The restoration movement will come to know a reformation movement. The chill snow cover of exclusivism will melt away. The chains of sectarian enslavement will fall from the heart. The tributaries will flow toward a common channel. Showers of blessing will fall upon the parched desert and wilderness.

There will continue for a while the bitter attacks by puny defenders of the orthodoxy of opinion, but the cult of mediocrity will lose its power. No great goal has ever been reached without hardship. No great discovery has ever been made without the discoverer having been assaulted. One who is not willing to endure suffering must surrender any thought of sharing in glory. God's will must be done and it will be done. I intend to labor within that will and under its canopy until death stills my tongue and my pen drops from nerveless fingers. It was Bruce Barton who wrote, "Before you give up hope, turn back and read the attacks that were made upon Lincoln." To which I add that while you are doing so, turn back and read again those made upon Paul.

Despair envisions the moment, hope encompasses the future. Discouragement writhes within the enveloping strands, hope seeks for the knot which unravels the skein. We are on our way out of a long night of division and strife, much of it over trivia. The day is beginning to break and the shadows to flee away. The glacier of icy unconcern for God's children is beginning to melt. The rivulets of fellowship are beginning to gleam in the sunlight. As Martin Luther said, "Give men time!" □

Baptism and Legalism

F.L. LEMLEY

Bonne Terre, Missouri

Very early in the development of the apostasy, men began to attach some mystical qualities to baptism. Such error led to the false doctrine of baptismal regeneration and infant baptism. Today, while we profess not to believe in baptismal regeneration and do magnify the physical aspect of baptism, as I see it, to the neglect of the spiritual aspect. Preachers and teachers among us classify *all* as the children of the devil until they emerge from the watery grave of baptism to walk in newness of life.

This legalistic concept of the baptismal command, without grace, leads us to condemn to hell sincere, godly, committed and obedient souls who have not yet learned Dr. Thomas' doctrine that one *must* know at the time that his baptism is in order to the remission of sins or else it is not valid. Dr. Thomas was a contemporary of Campbell and had his wife rebaptized on the basis that baptism without specific knowledge of the reason (remission of sins) was invalid. Such a legalistic view, without grace, made immersion-with-the-full-knowledge-of-the-reason the validating factor of the whole Christian system. Thus baptism becomes the sine qua non of the Christian system, wholly and completely *outside* the domain of grace, so that the most righteous of saints cannot enjoy God's grace until they are bodily immersed. I believe that all of God's commands are within the domain of his grace. Briefly, this means that God will take into account extenuating circumstances.

Scriptural baptism is not wholly physical. Man is a threefold being, composed of spirit, soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23). Scriptural baptism has to do with all three facets of man; therefore it is a triune baptism, yet one. There are physical aspects and there are psychological and/or spiritual aspects. Faith and repentance are as much *for* the remission of sins as immersion (Acts 3:19; 10:43). But faith and repentance have to do with the inner man while immersion has to do with the physical body. An immersion of the physical body that is not directly associated with faith and repentance is ineffectual so far as remission of sins is concerned. Faith and repentance are therefore integral components of baptism.

Immersion of the body in water is important because it is a command of Jesus Christ, and no obedient soul will knowingly and wilfully ignore any word of his Lord. Baptism is a symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:1-6). Baptism signifies that one is putting on Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). Baptism is a mark of identity whereby disciples identify with one another and with Jesus (Acts 19:1-7). Baptism is a declaration of sonship; as it was with Jesus, so it is with us (Jn. 1:32-33). By baptism our sonship is declared. Our baptism is an act of publicly declaring our acceptance of Jesus as Lord (Acts 2:41). In view of all these aspects, baptism is more than a physical dunking (1 Pet. 3:21). It has to do with the conscience and the inner man as well as the outer man.

But how is the soul of man related to the physical aspect? No man can baptize

another's soul, but God can! While it is the body that is immersed in water, the soul must be cleansed by the blood. We have sung the old song "Are You Washed in the Blood?" for years, yet none of us ever expected that the physical body would be washed and made white with literal blood. The soul is the seat of the intellect, the will and the emotions, and this is the part of man that is cleansed by the blood.

Not only does the blood cleanse our souls, but it keeps us clean (1 Jn. 1:7). This cleansing is an act of God, accomplished by his spirit. It corresponds to the circumcision of the heart not made with hands (Rom. 2:29; Col. 2:11). Hebrews 10:22 teaches us to draw near to God having our hearts sprinkled clean and our bodies washed with pure water—an allusion to the Old Testament cleansing rites. This cleansing is accomplished by God's spirit and initiates us into the one body (1 Cor. 12:13). We must have faith in the operation of God (Col. 2:12). The washing of regeneration (Tit. 3:5) is therefore more than an immersion of the body; it is a cleansing or a washing of the soul!

It therefore conveys an accurate idea to say that the soul is baptized in the blood, because in this operation of cleansing the soul is completely inundated in the blessings of the death of Jesus Christ. Man has to give his consent to this cleansing operation and does so in repentance, for repentance is a change of mind, a surrender to God, a willingness to obey. While it is the body that is immersed in water, the soul is washed, or immersed, in the blood.

Spirit to spirit . . .

But what happens to man's spirit in the process of being born again? The spirit is the seat of the intuition, the conscience and the source of true worship or communion with God (Jn. 4:24). The spirit and soul are very closely related and at times their functions seem to overlap. Both exercise control over one's body, and the body seems to be the instrument through which both soul and spirit find expression. It is the spirit that is born again (Jn. 3:6). It is the spirit that is begotten by the word or gospel (Jas. 1:18; 1 Cor. 4:15). The spirit is the dwelling place of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). We are the temple of God! God is the father of spirits (Heb. 12:9). The Holy Spirit within man's spirit gives him power (Acts 1:8). The spirit is the source of fruit (Gal. 5:22). The spirit is the part of man that takes on the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

A complete scriptural baptism therefore involves a begetting by God's spirit, a cleansing of one's soul by the blood of Christ, and an immersion of the body in water to symbolize the inner change and to declare to an unbelieving world that one is joining the ranks of Christian disciples. Baptism has to be both physical and psychological in order to find its proper place and meaning in the Christian system. Faith, repentance and baptism are all related to the forgiveness of sins, and all three constitute a triune, or three-part, baptism, yet one. We must baptize the whole man, spirit, soul and body.

We may now note that faith is related to one's spirit, repentance is related to one's soul, and immersion is related to one's body. But all the changes wrought need not be either instantaneous or simultaneous with one's emerging from the water of baptism. A child is not born the instant it is conceived! There may be a considerable time lapse between a conception and a bringing forth or birth. We use the word "birth" in two

different senses. The context will determine if we mean the whole process of regeneration or just the act of bringing a child forth. A child born (brought forth) allows for a fuller enjoyment of life and also introduces the child into the world. The birth (bringing forth) does not produce the life. If the child is not living before it is born, the birth will not give it life.

We are alive to God and dead to sin at one and the same time (Rom. 6:11). One does not go into the water a child of the devil and come out a child of God, as some have supposed. It is the begetting and not the bringing forth that determines fatherhood. It was therefore quite natural for John to declare, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God . . ." (1 Jn. 5:1), and for Paul to say, ". . . if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved . . ." (Rom. 10:9). If they had been of our school of legalists, they would not have made such open-end statements without first including repentance and baptism in the statements. Many other open-end statements are in the book which we cannot receive at face value while holding our legalistic concept of water baptism *without grace*.

Inward and Outward . . .

Campbell observed (Lunenburg Letters) that there was an outward and inward circumcision, and on the same basis there could also be an outward and inward baptism. Many receive the outward who do not receive the inward, and the converse is also true: one may receive the inward without the outward in the sense Jesus had in mind. This being true, one who has a faith in Christ that would lead him to a martyr's cross, who has repented of sin and surrendered his heart to God, willing to obey, cannot be correctly classified as wholly unbaptized just because for some extenuating circumstance he has not been impressed with the full import of water baptism. As Campbell observed, an angel might mistake the meaning of an ordinance, yet obey it to the extent of his knowledge, in the sense he understands it. Such obedient hearts, dead to sin and partakers of the circumcision not made with hands, are in the process of obeying the Lord and therefore are subjects of God's grace.

We enter the domain of grace at the point of vital faith, at the beginning of our obedience, not after we have successfully and perfectly completed our obedience. Romans 5:1-2 teaches us that we have access to grace through faith. It is significant that Paul did not say we have access to grace through *perfect obedience*. Our obedience must always be a matter of degree, for no one can claim perfection in either understanding or performance. Paul said, "If righteousness comes through law [perfect performance in keeping law], then Christ died in vain" (Gal. 2:21). If grace is to be extended only to those who keep the law perfectly, then there is no need for grace at all.

Faith is the validating factor in our relationship with God, not perfect performance. Through faith God grants to us a "right standing" with himself, just as he did to Abraham. Abraham's faith was imputed to him for righteousness, and the same applies to us (Rom. 4:23). In view of all this, the pious unimmersed who have obedient hearts, who have received the circumcision of heart not made with hands, who are producing the fruit of the spirit, should not be counted as children of the devil in need of total conversion, but should be considered disciples in need of further instruction. After all,

all of us are disciples in need of further instruction and but for God's grace would have no hope.

So preach the word so as to baptize the whole man, body, soul and spirit. Extend to others at least the degree of grace we must have for ourselves in order to be saved, and stay out of God's judgment seat. An obedient heart that is trying but is honestly mistaken is not to be equated with a stubborn, rebellious outlaw whose heart is perverted. Just because one does not understand baptism as we do does not make him a disobedient rebel, a child of the devil to be destroyed. □

The Times of the Gentiles Fulfilled?

DON FINTO

Nashville, Tennessee

I find that I am becoming more and more a literalist in reading and interpreting the word of God. I decided several years ago that I needed to re-read the prophets with the possibility in mind that there are still things to be fulfilled. I had always read believing I was just reading history or confirmations of the first coming of Christ. I still have no dogmatic position on what must transpire when the Christ returns, but would like to share one of the first things that opened my mind to a different conclusion.

I was teaching a college class in Luke. We arrived at Luke 21. I did not look forward to teaching that particular chapter because Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 were very confusing for me. But as I began to read, some pieces seemed to fall into place clearly. And the wonderful thing is that even if you do not concur we can fellowship in Christ Jesus.

"Jerusalem will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all nations." Luke 21:24.

Since Christ was speaking in the early part of the fourth decade following the Lord's birth, he was obviously foretelling the destruction which would come through the Romans in 70 A.D. That Israel has been led "captive" into all the nations, yet kept her national identity so that she could again become a nation is one of the marvels of the centuries, further testimony of the accuracy of the Lord's predictions.

"Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

Jerusalem was trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the year 1967. In that year she came again under the rule of Israel as a nation. Even from the time she became a nation in 1948 until 1967, Jerusalem was still ruled by Gentiles.

Now without considering any of the next few verses and their particulars, notice verse 29, "When these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

As far as I can determine, these things have "begun to take place" so that the Lord's words to me are, "your redemption is near."

"But no man knows the day nor the hour," you say. And you are right. Not the day nor the hour, yet Jesus seems to indicate that his disciples will know the "times." Did he not say it would be like it was in the day of Noah, when people were eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage (Matt. 24:37-38)? Who was surprised in Noah's day? Noah? No. He may not have known the day nor the hour, but he was expectant and ready. He knew the time was soon.

Paul, too, says that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, yet he makes a distinction on how a believer and an unbeliever will be thinking. "While they [unbelievers] are saying 'Peace and safety' then destruction will come upon them [unbelievers] suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child, and they [unbelievers] shall not escape. But you [believers] brothers, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief, for you are all sons of light and sons of day" (1 Thess. 5:1-6).

Do you wonder why it is even important to pursue such thoughts, when men in so many generations have been wrong about such things? I believe it helps us keep priority in our lives. Perhaps the Lord gave the prophecies in such a way that every generation might have such indication that theirs could be the closing one. It helps us to look forward with anticipation. □

A Reluctance for New Wine

The rhetoric of threadbare hope
Stretches toward year's end.
Pieces of frayed ambition extend
To cover the old wineskins
That many disclaim
But few set aside.
Like children clutching tattered dolls,
We hug in vain security
The rags of the past,
Because in some degree
They are accommodated to our wills.

The outworn selves we cling to
Can be our own
The more as time goes by:
We patch and mend
In order to possess.

The new
Stirs something deep within,
But I would not willingly admit it.

—Elton D. Higgs

REVIEW

CHRISTIANS AND POLITICS

Politics, Americanism, and Christianity by
Perry C. Cotham. Grand Rapids: Baker
Book House, 1976. 335 pages, \$7.95.

The Restoration Movement has produced its own flood of literature, but few serious writers from that heritage have ventured into the sphere of public life and policy. Perry C. Cotham, formerly assistant professor of political science at David Lipscomb College, has given us a stimulating and enlightening evaluation of American life in *Politics, Americanism, and Christianity*.

When one considers the heritage from which Cotham writes, his book could be seen as unique if only because it, firstly, is addressed to the Christian community at large and not only to "our people," and, secondly, because it is not simply a biblical commentary. But Cotham's work is not only unique, it is a well-written discussion of a worthy subject.

The book is divided into four sections. The first examines biblical foundations for a Christian analysis of political life. From the Old Testament, Cotham sees importance in the covenant and in the corporate life of the nation of Israel. In the New Testament, he sees a variety of viewpoints, but does not see real contradictions in political ethics. For example, he argues that the interpretation of the state in John's Revelation does not contradict Paul in Romans 13. Jesus is understood as a "social conformist" rather than as a first-century Che Guevara. Cotham sees early Christian activism as limited to the Christian community itself

and not extended to the political and social institutions of the day.

In his second section, however, Cotham argues the case for modern Christian involvement in the American political scene. In doing so, he parts from the noninvolvement position of David Lipscomb. He sees noninvolvement as inadequate because

Christians who attempt not to participate in political processes are making two statements: first, that Christianity is irrelevant to social problems except to the extent they can be solved through individual regeneration; and second, that the status quo on any given issue in which they choose not to involve themselves should prevail.

Cotham suggests that the New Testament teachings on political noninvolvement were culturally conditioned and do not set a pattern for the modern Christian. He suggests that Paul would have instructed Christians living in authoritarian Rome somewhat differently than he would Christians living under laws that they have had a hand in writing through democratic processes.

Cotham urges activism or involvement in politics, but he is cautious when it comes to civil disobedience. "The responsibility to obey the law is greater in a democracy than in an authoritarian or totalitarian state," he reasons, and adds, "In a democracy one does not have even a moral right to break the law until all channels for protest and reform have failed."

In the remaining portions of the book Cotham deals with issues such as civil religion, political morality, and the nature of true patriotism. He asks significant questions, such as, "Is America really a Christian nation?" and "What does the enigma of Watergate tell us about ourselves?"

Cotham does not ride a bandwagon for a political party. His views are not obviously either "liberal" or "conservative." Rather than dogmatizing, he provides a sounding board to assist others in formulating their own views.

The book has a few faults which do

not seriously detract from the author's main purpose or argument. Cotham states from the beginning that he assumes biblical doctrines and narratives as normative for Christians today. The result is sometimes a careless proof-texting where perhaps no text was needed in the first place. (Does moralizing over the rise and fall of Solomon really help us to understand Dick Nixon and Watergate?) In one place he assumes the Pauline authorship of Hebrews, a view far removed from the mainstream (or the backstream, for that matter) of critical biblical scholarship. From passing remarks made in the book, this reviewer concluded that Cotham sees coed dorms as evidence of deplorable moral laxity, and he seems to see Watergate as the ultimate disproof of contextual ethics. Some case studies have indicated that coed dorms can sometimes be an effective deterrent to casual sexual involvements. (One does think twice before he seduces a girl he must pass in the hallway every day.) And the situation ethicists themselves preferred to see Watergate as the ultimate misapplication and abuse of contextualism.

All things considered, *Politics, Americanism, and Christianity* is well worth the reading, but we hope to see it soon in an inexpensive paperback edition.

—Jim Sims

LETTERS

One More Time

Please ask Norman Parks to investigate—if he has not already done so—NOW, and other groups pushing the adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Most of the objections to ERA, that I have heard, could not be attributed to anyone's "hysterical imagination," but were based upon quotations from representatives of NOW.

As I see ERA, Section 1 is innocuous to the point of uselessness under the existing circum-

stances. Section 2 involves hidden dangers. Some promoters of the amendment—not all—plan to put pressures on Congress, HEW, and other powers that be, to pass legislation and/or to issue bureaucratic edicts which will favor homosexuality, abortion, etc.

Brother Parks says: "If the ERA was ratified, abortion and homosexuality could still be made crimes without violating the Constitution." But considering the trend of the times—toward the legitimizing of various forms of immorality—isn't it more probable that they *would not*?

Personally, I would rather see specific Amendments, directed at correcting the inequities, such as those he lists as existing under Tennessee state law. I believe Section 2 of ERA is too vague and indefinite for safety.

Section 3 would seem to make it imperative that Congress act with inadvisable haste in passing proposed legislation.

CHESTER A. WILLIAMSON
Joplin, Missouri

Norman Parks' recent article on the proposed Equal Rights Amendment has much to commend it. There is, however, a real problem with the enforcement of *any* proposed amendment to the Constitution after adoption—and for that matter with enforcement of the Constitution itself. That problem centers around the fact that the United States Supreme Court does not content itself with interpreting the law but by its rulings establishes new law. Herein lies the biggest dilemma of all—not that either the Constitution or the ERA is inherently defective but that the intent of both is open to serious potential injury by an "imperial judiciary."

R.N. LENHAM
Towson, Maryland

A Vital Role

Thanks to an unknown benefactor who was concerned about my soul, I have been receiving *Integrity* for several years. I began to read it during a period of time that I had allowed personal problems and doubts to cause me to totally remove myself from Christ and His body. *Integrity* was my only link to matters spiritual.

Having begun to remove some of the barriers . . . I am trying very hard to rededicate my life and to claim God's offer of my redemption through Christ. I now appreciate more fully the vital role that *Integrity* played in keeping a crack in the door that in my bitterness and resentment I was so foolishly trying to close forever.

Today I praise God for the editors and writers of *Integrity*.

NAME WITHHELD

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Compiled by Don Reece

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