

INTEGRITY, a journal published by an independent nonprofit corporation, is intended to be a ministry of reconciliation which utilizes the varied talents of a large community of believers who seek accurately to reveal God to both the church and the world so that all may become one as He is one.

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*Integrity:*

I dearly love your magazine—I am especially happy to see your brethren open their minds. It has been a terrible hindrance to my Christian growth. I was raised in the Methodist Church and left it because there was little Bible teaching. When I first heard a gospel preacher I was greatly impressed—but later I was disappointed in the narrow minds of the membership as a whole. I obeyed the gospel many years ago and have stayed in spite of many temptations to look elsewhere for people who could and would allow room for learning. They have been hard to find. Consequently I do not attend Sunday School nor mid-week meetings because the doctrines weaken my faith. There's no room for learning anything new lest you become liberal. Thank you for the chance to know we do have open-minded people.

Sincerely yours,  
Illinois Reader

"I appreciate this fine publication and have profitted from reading it. Thanks."

Jerry E. Blair  
Memphis, Tennessee

Brethren in the Lord,

Years ago Bill Bauman gave me your address. I wrote you, have received your publication all these years, and praise God for the clear insights, courage and incisive teaching you print each month by His grace. May He continue to imbue you with power from on high, giving forth that which is needful for the body of Christ, to purpose us for what He has in store for us in the years to come, to the praise of His Glory.

Though having not see,  
I love you,  
John F. Bell  
Dallas, Texas

November/December 1986

# Integrity

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### God's Gift To Us

Each year, during December and January, much of this country, and even much of the world, celebrates Christmas and the new year. The constant battle waged by Satan is to distract us from keeping the Christ-event in history from being the central-event of our lives. Yearly, seasonally, weekly, daily, and moment-by-moment we are in need of the renewal of God's Spirit. We offer the articles in this issue of *Integrity* as Christmas gifts with the prayer that for all of us there will be something that will renew our faith and strength and remind us of who we are following and whose people we are.

These articles progressively present various aspects of Jesus and our relationship to Him. First, our sinful human condition is carefully examined by Ron Fisher. Then, God's response to our predicament — Jesus, His Son — is clearly presented by Joseph Jones, particularly focusing on Jesus being both fully God and fully man. Next, we asked Perry Cotham to reflect on what it was like for Jesus to live among us, and Perry's insights gently require us to redetermine what it means to be called a "Christian." Then, Walt Zorn begins a two part explanation of how Jesus actually saves us from our sin-condition. The impact of his teaching will be felt by many who have tried to "be good enough" through good works, even if those works were subtly disguised as faith.

We hope that, as you read these articles, you will be strengthened by any new spiritual insights. But, also, we hope that you will be renewed and refreshed by the reminder of facts long known: that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the world. Joy to the world, the Lord has come!

Bruce and Diane Kilmer, Chairpersons  
*Integrity* Editorial Board

## God and the Human Predicament

RONALD W. FISHER

Lansing, Michigan

Bad news/good news stories have become a basic part of this country's literary style by which to package and present humor for public consumption. We have all heard our share of them. They may be rooted in suspense, mystery, irony, surprise, or shock, but they have one element in common: each of them creates an increasing tension based upon opposites.

A science teacher was lecturing his high school students about the perils of the world's immediate future. "Class," he predicted, "anticipated developments on our globe pose many problems and challenges. There is bad news and good news." All eyes were riveted on him as he continued. "First, the bad news: by the year 2,000 all drinking water on earth will be contaminated." An especially curious pupil blurted out, "And what's the good news?" "The good news," concluded the instructor, "is that by the year 2,000 there won't be enough water to go around."

The cruel pathos in this prediction seems so incredible that our lips curl up in a slight smile. To others it may appear so harsh that they find no humor in it at all. People who live regularly with water pollution and/or water shortages would be moved to tears, not laughter.

Paul's epistle to the Christians in Rome about 57 A.D. is a classic study of a bad news/good news antithesis. He outlines, on the one hand, the somber reality of mankind's present predicament; and he traces, at the same time, God's flawless solution for reversing that plight. Tensions and stresses between these two polarities are discussed in the most dramatic contrasts imaginable in the first three chapters of Paul's treatise. This article will focus on those chapters found at Romans 1-3.

### Paul's Analysis

The opposites in Paul's human/divine equation are set forth in bold relief by two key passages. At one parameter we note: "What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin" — (Romans 3:9, 10).\* At the other parameter we observe: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'BUT THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH'" — (Romans 1:16, 17). God's righteousness and man's sin—it is impossible to find another contrast so stark as this.

A number of years ago I was enrolled in a graduate level New Testament exegesis course. Our professor was commenting upon a passage of Scripture that probed the depths of mankind's sin. He remarked how the Word of God is so candid about the crisis of human iniquity. Then, in a moment of reflection, he recalled several of the neoorthodox theologians under whom he had studied in two New England seminaries. "These men," he acknowledged, "were masters at diagnosing the desperate condition of the wayward human race." "But," he added, "they were amateurs at prescribing remedies for its wretched condition."

One need not classify Paul with these neoorthodox theologians. He is without peer in assessing mankind's self-willed stampede toward moral degradation and oblivion. Yet he does not join the hand-wringing, floor pacing sentimentalists who lament the outcome of the whole human enterprise. He repeats the solu-

tion which the Lord Jesus Christ entrusted to him in the gospel. He matches item to item the dreadful need of mankind with the delightful resource of God's grace. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the issue.

Men have "suppressed the truth in unrighteousness" — (1:18b); God has revealed His righteousness in the gospel (1:16, 17). Against evident knowledge, the human race has refused to honor or thank God as God (1:21a); God has manifested His eternal power and deific nature in His decisive statements through the elements of creation (1:20a). Humanity has discarded recognition of God's glorious person, so as to embrace corruptible natures of man, birds, beasts, and crawling creatures (1:23); God has manifested wrathful displeasure against such deviant behavior and has mingled it with kind forbearance, wooing mankind back through repentance (1:18; 2:4). Human beings have rejected God's rightful claim to worship from them and have transferred it to mere creatures (1:25); God has gone on record that He will vindicate Himself by condemning the unrighteous and commending the faithful in His great day of accounting (2:5-10).

Given a listing as convincing as this, the earnest reader is moved to ask, "You mean mankind can act as willfully and shamelessly as described here despite possessing such irrefutable evidence?" Paul's answer speaks unmistakably: "Not only can it act thus, but it has acted thus time and time again." He has brought us down to the bedrock of inflexible truth—the bad news is inherently bad, and the good news is inherently good. The two entities are worlds

apart. If we cannot distinguish the intrinsic differences between good and bad, we can never come to perceive life's reality with accuracy. As a matter of fact, if we do not comprehend how bad the bad news is, we can never appreciate how good the good news is.

## The World's Delusion

Failure to discern both factors of this spiritual equation readily explains why the world without Christ sees no need to embrace the gospel message with obedience. It minimizes the seriousness of the bad news by denying its existence through rationalization or redefinition. Mankind is perpetually reluctant to admit liability of guilt because it maintains the delusion that it has sufficient good intentions and adequate worthy actions to merit its own good standing before God, providing there is one. Paul's assessment of the human predicament underscores what a drastic decline from Bible truth there is in such thinking; for in the face of accountability, mankind occupies a much higher station of awareness than it lets on. It is without excuse (1:20) since evidence of God exist all around it (1:19, 20).

A kind of dementia has settled into mankind's thinking since it did not respond to God in ways that were morally right. It consigned itself to futile speculation and foolish deceit (1:21b, 22). It abandoned itself to a condition where God could fittingly give it over to perverse sexual passions and a reprobate mind (1:24-28). It then sold itself out to being filled with all sorts of horrid, vile sins (1:29-31). Yet it knew all the while that such conduct deserved God's death

sentence (1:32a); nevertheless, it willfully persisted in said conduct and gloated in the acts of those who joined them (1:32b). Fear of God has disappeared from their hearts (3:18). These spiritual portraits furnish no cause for rejoicing at the well-being and vitality of the human race. There is nothing to celebrate.

## The Christian's Myopia

A similar oversight can be traced to the Christian community. It has been largely mistaken in its lack of analysis and restudy of the righteous nature of God. It has been largely erroneous in its superficial inquiry into the what, how, and why of mankind's iniquity. Short-sightedness in perceiving the brilliance of God's glory and the horror of man's squalor has greatly contributed to the present-day apathy found in many church circles. Major sectors of Christendom have lost touch with Christ's purpose and ministry for His church just because of these blind spots. Evangelism has been moved down too many levels in the scale of priorities. Awe for God's unparalleled majesty, shock at the human quandary, compassion for its critical needs, and zeal for proclaiming God's solutions have all too often disappeared from view. Too much money, time, talent, and energy are being expended in pleasure-seeking and gratification-peddling. The church needs to repent.

There is an urgent demand for a swift return to the gospel ministry where it has been abandoned. Assimilating the gospel message into one's heart is as requisite to faith in the Christian as it is to faith in the non-Christian (10:17). Right at this juncture can be detected the most serious cause of sluggishness and indifference in the church—God's people know His Word very poorly, and they trust it very meagerly. The prophet said it well in behalf of God, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" — (Hosea 4:6a). We need to walk in the steps of Paul's courage and confidence, even if within the capitals of paganism. His declaration to the brethren at Rome should fire up the evangelistic blood of any alert Christian: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of

God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" — (Romans 1:16).

## Paul's Magna Charta

One can appropriately term this assertion of Paul "The Magna Charta of the Christian Faith." It presents the complete skeletal structure of the gospel enterprise and becomes the framework upon which the entire Romans epistle is crafted. It shares with us five fundamental truths, all of which highlight the bad news/good news construct with clear perspective. The remainder of this article will consider each of them in a brief fashion. All of Paul's great doctrinal treatise hinges upon these five key concepts inherent in the gospel of Christ. They are "power," "of God," "unto salvation," "to everyone," "that believes."

God's power in the gospel is to be contrasted with the importance of Moses' law or any other law system to save anyone. The Romans 2:12-16 passage is occasionally marshalled to prove that some heathen can be saved without Christ and His gospel. Any propounder of this theory gets no support from Paul, for Paul notes that people sin without law and with law (2:12). To be acceptable to God on their own merits, both Jews and Gentiles must keep the law perfectly, whether it is embodied in a spoken-written law form or lodged in their heart consciousness (2:13). Those who are a law unto themselves because they have the law concept in their hearts are still monitored by their own consciences. And, observes Paul, the conscience both accuses their thoughts and actions and defends them (2:15). No person has a conscience which accuses all of his thoughts and actions; on the other hand, none has a conscience which defends all of his thoughts and actions. The conscience makes a mixed response, for some thought/actions combinations are good and some are bad. God will judge all such thoughts on the day of judgment (2:16). Will He find many consciences accusing their possessors and thus condemning them? Paul gives a categorical answer: "for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are

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all under sin" — (3:9b). The law is powerless to save.

God's impeccable character is next to be used as the measure for human conduct. What does one find in the gospel on these two counts? God is totally righteous. The gospel verifies His being so. He is righteous in personal nature (1:17; 3:4, 5); He is righteous judicially in the way He governs the moral universe (3:22-26). He is able to treat all persons with justice (hold them accountable for sin) and yet justify (treat as without sin) those who embrace Jesus by faith. He carries out the two seemingly contradictory actions without compromising truth. As for mankind, what does the gospel conclude? Let "every man be found a liar" (3:4b). "There is none righteous, not even one" (3:10). "Every mouth is closed" (3:19). "By the works of the law no flesh will be justified" (3:20a). How fallacious, then, it was for the Jews to seek to establish their own righteousness (10:3). We need to learn this lesson once and for all time.

Gospel salvation is to find its countertype in legal condemnation. The gospel of God in Christ is powerful to rescue humanity from its hopeless predicament. This theme will be developed in depth in Joseph Jones' article in this issue of *Integrity*. For the immediate purpose at hand, we choose to add these few thoughts which follow. Since the very person of Christ is imbued with power and holiness (1:4), it is fallacious to imagine that His gospel would be devoid of these qualities. Paul was eager to proclaim such a gospel in Rome (1:15). Christ's gospel power is available to all (3:22). It redeems the believer in Christ unto justification from sin so that His blood propitiation rightfully removes all sin (3:24-26). On the other hand, the Mosaic law, as representative of all moral law, is inept at saving mankind but forceful in pronouncing condemnation. It is the instrument through which is conveyed the knowledge of sin (3:20). It affords no basis for boasting (3:27), for it brings no justification (3:28). Indeed, its dominance in the life of the law-keeper inflicts death (7:9-11; 6:23). One should prefer to be married to Christ rather than to the law (7:1, 4).

The potential of universal salvation to all the world stands in contradistinction to Jewish exclusivism under the law. When Paul speaks of the gospel capacity to save everyone, he means "everyone" (1:16). To this end was he called to be an apostle that he may "bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles (ethnics)" — (1:5). His status explains why he has a universal obligation to preach to as many as possible: the gospel alone can solve their great problem of guilt before God (1:14). There is a universal need for the gospel because there is a universal failure of humanity to be worthy before God (3:22, 23). The gospel functions on the grace/faith principle by which alone mankind can be justified before God (3:28; 4:16). Legal exclusivism propagates a spiritual propensity toward false confidence, mistaken expertise, and imagined competence (2:17-24). Yet breaking the law of Moses by which one feels an elite superiority makes one guilty of blaspheming God before unbelievers (2:24). God is not the select God of those who build an exclusive system of law trumpeting, but the God of all who will believe and obey Him through the gospel (10:11-13; 1:5; 16:26).

Finally, the principle of salvation by grace through faith stands distinctively over against the principle of acceptability before God by meritorious legal achievements. Christ's gospel is effective for rescue to the believer in His flawless life and vicarious death. God's righteousness in this gospel is available for all those who believe in the faithfulness of Jesus to accomplish the Father's atoning work. (This concept is the actual gist of what Paul affirms in Romans 3:22-26). Indeed, all who are justified before God are justified, Jew and Gentile alike, by His grace operating through this faith principle as it applies to Christ (3:29-31). This mode of function stands in mutual exclusiveness to any attempt by humanity to earn a good standing before God. The Jews sought to achieve righteousness by works rather than by faith, but they failed dismally. They accepted the wrong way and discarded the right one; as a result, they stumbled over Christ (9:31-33). Many have copied this foolish choice. To believers alone is Christ the fulfillment of law

unto the achievement of righteousness (10:4); to unbelievers He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense (9:33). Nevertheless, God has laid Him in Zion for all humankind to be confronted by Him (9:33). Merit by law-keeping attempts to cancel out Christ's importance; faith in Him and His work holds Him forth as indispensable. We have no basis for questioning which side God is on.

This, then, is the summation of the matter. God is righteous altogether, but mankind has sought to suppress this truth by its unrighteousness. Its denial of Him and His primacy has brought the curse of all sorts of sinful excesses. Just as humanity at large can seek to supplant God with idolatrous devotion to the creation, so also can people of law treat a law code as an idol to take God's place. All are equally guilty before God and need His righteous answer afforded in His Son. One can well paraphrase Paul's sentiment in Romans 1:16 without violating any principle of truth: "For I am not

ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

These convictions are well expressed by the lyrics of a dearly-loved hymn:

"Christ for the world! we sing;  
The World to Christ we bring  
With loving zeal —  
The poor and them that mourn,  
The faint and overborne,  
Sinsick and sorrowworn  
For Christ to heal."

\* All Bible quotations are taken from The New American Standard Version.

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## God's Response to the Human Predicament: Jesus the Incarnation

JOSEPH F. JONES  
Southfield, Michigan

The announcement of Jesus' impending birth from the angel to Joseph assumes the predicament of mankind, and the basic purpose of the incarnation. To the supposed father the angel declared, "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). This coming event was in fulfillment of God's purposes as spoken by the prophet Isaiah to the effect that a virgin would conceive and bear a son, and that his name would be called Emmanuel, which means, "God with us." The predicament of the world (the whole world, not just the Jewish na-

tion) is portrayed as sinful, and alienated from God; consequently, the need for mankind to be reconciled with God. The apostle Paul saw the incarnation as precisely this: God with us in the person of Jesus Christ, breaking barriers of enmity, reconciling hostile man to himself (II Cor. 5:21).

Sin in Biblical perspective is not only an act of wrongdoing, or failure to do right, but a state of alienation from God. The apostle sees humanity as "dead through trespasses and sins," "sons of disobedience," living in the passions of the flesh, and by nature children of

wrath (Eph. 2:2,3). He further describes sinful man in relationship to God as separated, alienated, strangers, "having no hope and without God in the world." Men and nations are divided with a "wall of hostility" (Eph. 2:14). This debilitating ongoing state of hostility signifies the rupture of a personal relationship with God, a betrayal of the trust he has placed in us. Sin is personalized as an ugly, malignant power holding humanity in its grasp, with man unable of his own struggle to liberate himself.

Through the Christian centuries church theologians and other leaders have attempted reappraisals and redefinitions of sin. Augustine and Pelagius engaged in vigorous controversy during the fifth century, each trying to spell out his perception of sin for the church. Pelagius believed sin as basically an outward act of transgression of God's Will and saw man as sufficiently free or able to cease from sin. Augustine maintained that sin virtually incapacitates man from either being or doing good. Born as sinners men lack the power to follow God or even to turn toward God until grace falls upon them, thereby moving them irresistibly toward God and what is good. Luther during the Reformation era reaffirmed what to him was Biblical, namely Paul and Augustine, in his argument with Erasmus on the bondage of the will.

The renowned European theologian, Emil Brunner, felt that while being a sinner, man still has the capacity to address God, to apprehend the gospel and respond to it; while the equally capable scholar, Karl Barth, could not see that "even a capacity for God remains within our fallen nature." Schleiermacher saw sin as the dominance of the lower nature within us, an arresting of our growth toward God-consciousness; and Albrecht Ritschel, sometimes characterized as the father of the social gospel, perceived sin as the product of selfishness and ignorance. Reinhold Niebuhr, rejecting both the Reformation view of sin as too biblically literal, and liberal theology for confusing human weakness and finitude, defined sin as that inevitable result of the tension between human freedom and human finitude. In the more recently characterized "liberation theology," sin is identified as social oppression, ac-

quiescence to injustice, and human exploitation. It is this greed for gain which devastates the poor, dehumanizes and oppresses people; and consequently, salvation is that which frees and humanizes them for meaningful and creative lives. (There is certainly a note of prophetic insight here.)

From my own professional field as a psychologist, it is evident that sin has undergone a radical transformation in popular culture religion, where as Paul Vitz argues, "psychology has become a religion, in particular, a form of secular humanism based on worship of the self." (*Psychology as Religion*, p. 9) Sin is equated with negative thinking of defeatism, sickness or instability; and the cure may lie within self, family, or group therapy rather than in a divine sacrifice for sin. Guilt may be eradicated, in this newer perspective, more through catharsis than through repentance.

I have taken the opportunity to give this very brief and sketchy historical overview of the church and society's interpretation of sin in order to (1) sharply visualize man's predicament on the other hand, while, also, (2) setting the context for a more vivid presentation of God's dealing with man's predicament: the incarnation of Jesus, "God with us." Having surveyed these various attempts by some of the brightest minds of Christian history, I am reminded of the terse comment of that Cambridge scholar, Herbert Farmer, who reasoned: regardless of how we may describe sin or label it, "there remains a radical wrongness in man."

### **Incarnation: God's Answer to Man's Plight**

It is the judgment of all Christian writers (New Testament) that man cannot overcome sin through human ingenuity or effort. D. G. Bloesch says it so simply yet forcefully for all of us, "The solution to the problem lies in what God has done for us in Jesus Christ." And what is it that God has done for us His creatures who have so miserably marred His creation and muddled His world? Not some grandiose plan, some wisdom transcending that of the ancient Greeks, or some esoteric knowledge which

might enable a few who could grasp it to be saved. Never! What He has done is to come to us Himself, in the Person of His Son who became man in all the dimensions of humanity. There has never been a more eloquent way of saying this than in the apostle Paul's rapturous affirmation: "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." (II Cor. 4:6)

### **The Logic of Incarnation**

It is one of the miracles of inspiration that New Testament writers can speak of Jesus of Nazareth as both fully human and fully divine within the short compass of our Scriptures; while the mystery of this biblical affirmation has occasioned countless volumes in the history of Christian thought. New Testament writers affirm and accept this "mystery of godliness" (II Tim. 2:16), that, "He was manifested in the flesh." When Paul wrote to Timothy, "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion (godliness)," he employed a term translated "confess" which means, "confessedly," or "without controversy." The translation might well be rendered, "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance"; yet, while this event is characterized as mystery, the church of apostolic days seemed to accept this mystery now manifested, that God the Son had become flesh. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (John 1:14). Paul speaks of "the gospel concerning His Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power . . ." (Rom. 1:3, 4). That some in the early church may have begun to deny the historic incarnation is recognized by the apostle John as serious error and heresy. "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus (i.e., that Jesus Christ has come in flesh), is not of God." (I John 4:2, 3) This was (is) true antichrist, to deny that God the Son came in flesh.

What then is the logic of incarnation? Why the controversy about incarnation? It is affirmed by biblical writers and most of the church historically that man hasn't the power or the wisdom to right this "radical wrongness in man." He cannot in human ingenuity and effort undo the mess he has made, nor rectify the wrong inflicted on self and others; he needs power which transcends human limits, the invasion of Divine power to cope with the human mess. But the Divine power must not be detached from humanity or finiteness, for while being divine it must also be able to empathize with man in his limited and human nature. Consequently, to deal with sin adequately, to meet the demands of divine justice and holiness on one hand, and yet be sympathetic to man's humanness on the other, there must be a blending of the divine-human in a unique way, and this leads to the necessity of the God-man, a being fully God yet also fully man. And this is precisely what the incarnation message claims: God became flesh, dwelling among us. "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion."

### **The Humanity and Deity of Jesus Christ**

There is ample material in the gospels to establish Jesus' true humanity. His physical life is set in the stream of a human genealogy (Matt. 1:1-18; Luke 3:23-38). His virginal conception by the Holy Spirit does not affect the biblical record that his birth was a normal human one (Mt. 1:25; Luke 2:7; Gal. 4:4). Jesus' years seemed to follow normal growth and development (Luke 2:40-52) within a home and family (Mk. 6:1-6). The Jesus portrayed in Scripture was subject to normal physical limitations: weariness, sorrow, hunger, and thirst. Intense agony of soul and body preceded his excruciating physical death, from which he at first withdrew. Jesus in his humanity experienced the full range of human emotions: joy, sorrow, love, compassion, astonishment, anger. Jesus' humanity is further confirmed by the temptations which confronted him. The testimony of the gospels is summed up in Hebrews, "tempted in every way, just as we are — yet without

sin.” (Heb. 4:15) The biblical teaching is clear: “Whatever else he may be, he is a man.”

To speak of the deity of Jesus Christ brings us face to face with the staggering truth which lies at the heart of the Christian faith, that Jesus Christ, being true man, was also true God! He was God’s Son in a unique way that no other human being ever was or will be. The uniqueness of Jesus’ deity or Sonship with the Father is set forth in John 1:14 previously quoted: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.” *He is the only Son (monogenes)*. This Greek term is a compound word, made up of *monos* “only” and *genos* “kind,” meaning “only one of a kind.” Used four times in the gospel of John (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18), *monogenes* in every instance emphasizes the unique, “one of a kind” sonship of Christ.

While the texts asserting the deity of Christ are predictably among some of the most debated in the New Testament, we suggest the following as giving clear weight to the claim of deity for Jesus Christ: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1-2) “No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.” (John 1:18) Thomas affirmed, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). “The church of God, which he bought with his own precious blood.” (Acts 20:28) Further references implying the deity of Jesus would include Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:8; Col. 2:2; I Tim. 1:17; I John 5:20. It is not our intent here to delineate further the exhaustive evidence for Jesus’ deity, but to accept it as biblical affirmation; and then to point toward the unique conclusion that this Jesus of Nazareth, born to woman (Gal. 4:4), was true God, true man: the God-man who alone was able to deal with man’s sinful predicament.

The biblical evidence then is that Jesus is true man and true God, two realities combining in one authentic person. Yet this is mystery as the New Testament writers declare, and will always remain such; but this does not deter each generation from fresh examination of the incarnation in greater depth. If we fail in this task,

others will attempt it as is historically evident, often with error and confusion. Only a glimpse can be made here of how the church through the ages has struggled with this Christological problem.

Immediately following the New Testament era the apostolic fathers (A.D. 90-140) speak highly of Christ in an effort to deal with an offshoot of Jewish Christianity known as Ebionism, which in effect denied the divinity of Jesus by making him simply the human, though divinely appointed Messiah, leaving the gulf between God and man unbridged; and likewise, the fathers sought to cope with a movement known as Docetism, which in contrast with Ebionism solved the problem by excising the humanity of Christ. Jesus only seemed (Gk. *doceo*=seem) human. The roots of this view lie in the Graeco-Oriental convictions that matter is essentially evil and that God could in no way be subject to such human feelings and become incarnate in a body of evil matter.

Many have been the efforts of leaders in the church to define more precisely their understanding of the problem of how Jesus Christ could be both true man and true God, from the ancient and well-known movements such as Gnosticism, Arianism, and the hypostatic concepts down through the sixth century, the Middle Ages, and the Reformation era. Approaching the modern era we see interpretations which range from the mythical view to the evangelical position set forth by the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) which affirmed that Jesus Christ is a perfect union of God and man, “acknowledged in two natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, and inseparably;” yet further, that Jesus Christ “was and continues to be God and man in two distinct natures and one person, forever.” In the oneness of His person Jesus could address sin and Satan, bringing full empathy to man who struggled with the overpowering presence of evil against his humanness; and at the same time bringing nothing less than the power of God in Him, crucified but raised, to conquer the forces of evil, to forgive and redeem man the sinner, empowering him to live victoriously in Christ.

Admittedly, there is no final human analysis

of the incarnation, for it is to be believed with the heart and confessed with the lips (Rom. 10:6-10). Paul’s terse summary still burns in our hearts that “Great is the mystery of our religion: He was manifested in the flesh.” (I Tim. 3:16). And because He was manifested in the flesh He came and dwelt among us (John 1:14), or literally, “lived in a tent or tabernacle.” The picture employed by John probably “refers to God’s dwelling in the midst of his people as he had done in the tabernacle of the Old Testament. . . In John 2:19-21 Jesus takes the place of the temple so that in a real sense God dwells in the midst of his people in the person of Jesus who is the visible expression of his glory.” (cf. Frank Pack, *The Gospel According to John*, Part I, p. 35-36).

Bruce Milne offers very appropriate insights on Paul’s summary sentence in I Timothy 3:16, “Great is the mystery of our religion: He was manifested in the flesh,” with which we may conclude this essay on incarnation, God’s answer to man’s predicament. He writes:

## Seeing Jesus

PERRY C. COTHAM  
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Some Greeks once came to Philip, one of the Twelve, and declared “Sir, we would like to see Jesus!” (John 12:21). What motivated their request, how they perceived Jesus, or how and in what way they reacted to this encounter we are not told. But the fascination with Jesus, at least in the western world, has continued to this day.

How we see Jesus is not a matter of small import. If we want to see what a man or woman is meant to become, we must look at Jesus. If you believe, as I do, that Jesus was humanity at its best, completely fulfilling all that humankind is intended to be, then a proper perception of Jesus as a person becomes a crucially important task.

“The apostle’s caution neither invalidates reverent attempts to explore the mystery, especially in the interests of refuting error, nor implies uncertainty about the fundamental reality of Jesus Christ as true God and true man; but it recalls the limits to our understanding of these realities and reminds us that the person of our Lord reveals its deepest secrets to those who approach like the Christmas shepherds, in humble faith and adoring worship.”

(Milne, *Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief*, IVP, p. 149.)

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that he sent his apostles into the world to preach the word and to immerse believers. To young people, Jesus is presented as the only person to have lived a sinless life, a model of moral purity whose ideal life was an exalted expression of what humanity should strive to become. To older, mature Christians, Jesus is the paradigm of the faithful and omnipresent friend, the one who will never forsake us.

## The Complexity of Jesus

These images of Jesus are both valuable and faithful to the Scriptures. And yet, there are so many dimensions to the life and teachings of Jesus that we always face the danger of seeing him only in comfortable and stereotyped ways. I've often recalled John Killinger, then a professor of preaching at Vanderbilt, telling a class in which I was enrolled as a student, about writing an experimental sermon on this theme. He entitled it "You Can't Nail Jesus Down." The title of the sermon was then, and remains, almost sacrilegious, but it served to remind us that there is an elusiveness, a complexity, a depth about the life and words of Jesus which continue to challenge us to earnest, intensive study as well as to courageous action. When a person tells you what he finds significant about Jesus, that person is telling you almost as much about himself/herself as is being told about Jesus.

This assignment, to write a brief article on Jesus' earthly life, was not one that I would have requested. My first thought was that, paradoxically, the assignment was so easy that it was hard. How do you say anything that is new and profound about the best known historical figure in all the western world? Rather than attempting a succinct summary of the life of Jesus, I would like to share with my readers some of my perceptions and understandings which have impressed me the most. We need to be reminded that we see Jesus as we see all other significant people in our lives — through our own experiences, our needs, our interests (especially self-interest), our desires, and even our prejudices.

One of the most damaging pictures of Jesus is a portrait which has been painted throughout

the centuries. This portrait envisions him as a mild, meek, and gentle "do-gooder" who ceases his activity often to declare new ethical teachings. However, the New Testament image of Jesus is not a "stained glass window" type of shepherd or teacher formulating original doctrinal positions. Jesus did make some unusual and unique claims for himself, but his teaching that God is love, that we are to live as his children, that justice and mercy are more important than worship ritual, fit squarely into the tradition of Old Testament prophetic preaching.

Jesus' life included an important teaching ministry, to be sure. Those words of his selected and reported by the gospel narrators are all weighty, some of which are highly difficult sayings. But his ministry entailed much more than uttering words. It meant demonstrating the love of the Father by innumerable concrete actions. In the gospel accounts we see Jesus as a real person stained with dust, sweat, tears, and finally, blood. He was a strong man of action who was quite specific in his commands and answers to those who sought to understand him.

## Jesus, Manifestation of the Kingdom

The overriding concern of Jesus was the Kingdom of God. As in the case of the Jewish apocalyptic writers, Jesus also looked forward to the establishment of the Kingdom of God in the near future (Mt. 6: 10; 10: 17; Mk. 1: 15). But Jesus differed from the typical apocalyptic expectation by proclaiming that in one sense the kingdom had already been inaugurated in his own ministry of healing and reconciliation (Lk. 11: 20; 16: 16; 17: 20-21). For Jesus, therefore, the Kingdom of God was already present germinally in all his mighty deeds, although its full manifestation still lay in the future when God will bring about the final consummation of all history. Interestingly, the early church did not continue to proclaim Jesus' message about the kingdom of God, but rather the fundamental proclamation of the early church became a message about Jesus' death and resurrection (the kerygma).

Jesus had a full and unequivocal response to those who suffered pain and alienation. There can be no doubt about the kind of people with whom Jesus chose to identify. These people were the "sinners," society's outcasts, the poor, the sick, the hurting, the victims of oppression and injustice. On the other hand, Jesus was usually in a state of tension with those who were prosperous, powerful, and well-situated by worldly standards. There is no doubt that the signs and wonders on behalf of the weak and lowly were intended to provide acceptable bases for faith in him as the Son of God, but to deny that he used his power simply for the sake of loving and helping others is to miss a vital portion of the meaning of his example. Truly he was, in the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "the man for others."

Those of us who have been in church ministry know what it is like to be caught up in church power games, political moves, and church empire building. In subtle ways we have made worship attendance and local church involvement become the ultimate test of one's commitment to the Lord and the kingdom. As I peruse the various periodicals published within my own fellowship, I find a great emphasis placed on the church — church membership, worship attendance, church growth, church organization.

Not only did Jesus refuse to make the church and the kingdom synonymous—he said a great deal about the kingdom and almost nothing about the church—his ministry was almost exclusively outside "the church." In fact, when Jesus went to church the experience generally turned out to be traumatic for everyone concerned. For instance, on one Sabbath when Jesus was teaching, he stopped to heal a woman of an 18-year infirmity. This led to an immediate censure by the ruler of the synagogue (cf. Lk. 13: 10ff). On another occasion, upon entering the synagogue, Jesus encounters a man with a withered hand. After healing the man, the ever-observant Pharisees immediately held counsel with the Herodians in determining ways that could destroy Jesus (Mk. 3: 1ff). Then there is that embarrassing incident with those hard-working, respectable moneychangers and pigeon-dealers in the Temple at Jerusalem (Mt.

21; Mk. 11; 19; Lk. 19, John 2), and that scandalous inaugural sermon in Nazareth where the Pharisees must have been set on edge by his declaring "good news for the poor" and breaking the chains of the oppressed (Lk. 4: 16ff).

## Jesus' Lifestyle

The lifestyle of Jesus constantly presented a challenge to first century Jewish culture and nowhere was this more evident than in his frequent table fellowship with sinners. Pharisaic tradition emphasized the need to be "holy" or separate, in accordance with the demand of Leviticus 19: 18, and the rabbinic rules and regulations were designed to protect the Jews from people or things that were impure. The faithful Jew's table of fellowship was to be shared only with others who were pure, for to do otherwise was to risk bringing impurity on oneself. Against this background, Jesus; lodged openly with sinners (cf. Lk. 19: 5) and called them into discipleship (Mk. 2: 14). Indeed his regular dining fellowship was so much a part of his normal pattern of behavior that his enemies were saying, "Behold a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Mt. 11: 19). Again, we might note that this table fellowship, unlike that of any Jewish rabbi of whom we have record, was more than a mere social convention. It was part of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom, a demonstration that God loves and accepts sinners even before they have given evidence of the seriousness of their penitence. The father in Jesus' story of the prodigal son was eager to have a party in honor of his straying son long before the son demonstrated his repentance, thus aptly describing Jesus' mission in calling sinners rather than the righteous (cf. Mk. 2: 17).

Another dimension of the lifestyle of Jesus which must have baffled and challenged his contemporaries was the simple and non-pretentious existence which he led. Jesus himself commented upon his economic condition when he reminded his disciples that even creatures such as foxes and birds have dwelling places but that he had no permanent dwelling. What a contrast to the public image of our nation's best known religious leaders! (For example, one television

evangelist has built a theme park that has the third largest number of visitors each year, following only Disney World in Florida and Disneyland in California; another heads a university which has well over \$200 million in assets.)

Some have viewed the 60s and early 70s as a time of reform and social consciousness and the years since the early 70s a "Me First" period, as typified by the jingle "Have it your way." There is no doubt about the existence of a compelling doctrine which adopts the attitude "I will live for myself; I live my own life; I will do what I want to do and be what I want to be and it is nobody's business but my own."

The life and words of Jesus totally repudiate this self-serving, secular doctrine. To Jesus, each human possesses infinite value and deserves respect and opportunity to become all that his/her Creator has given him/her to become. Jesus treated the female on a basis of equality with the male. He redefined the concept of service (*diakonia*), the word for the menial task of waiting on tables, and summoned his disciples to adopt his style of active service (Mk. 10: 44-45; Lk. 22: 26). In John's gospel narrative the action of footwashing is given as an example of active service initiated by Jesus (13: 15, 34).

## Practicing Jesus' Love

The implementation of Jesus' love commandment permeates the Gospels. Jesus demonstrated to us that we cannot love his Father without also loving those children whom he loves. This means that some of us must devote more time and energy to the ministry of reconciliation. It means that maintaining relationships is always more important than maintaining material investments. It means, also, that some of us must work harder at developing a heart of compassion. Many times, especially in Mark's account, the New Testament tells us that Jesus was tender-hearted and easily moved with compassion for those who are suffering physically and emotionally.

The contemporary church still has a great deal to learn from seeing Jesus as he was on

earth. What qualities do you think of when you think of church leaders, such as elders and preachers? One would realistically hope to find a deep sense of love and compassion for broken and hurting people, a true embodiment of the values and lifestyle of their Lord. Drawing on my own experience (which may or may not be typical), I do not automatically associate the traits of deep concern and compassion with church leaders and church boards. At best I associate them with commitment to an institution, with sternness, with steadfastness; at worst I associate them with coldness, with harsh judgment, and even with cruelty.

The Gospels never depict Jesus as being shocked over the condition of any individual behavior of any person. We have no record of his calling any broken person a sinner. He loved each man or woman, even his enemies, wherever that person was found and no question was ever entertained about the value of the one who was loved and restored.

The world of the twentieth century is far more complex than the world of the first century. A handful of nations now possess enough nuclear weaponry to destroy the earthly system many times over. Overpopulation is a common denominator for a number of nations that are plagued by poverty, famine, and disease. In our own nation, the stability of family life is threatened by the increase in children born out of wedlock. Alcohol and other drugs are increasingly a menace to the social fabric of society in general and families particularly. We face questions dealing with the value of human life in our dilemma over abortion, euthanasia, and genetic engineering.

Despite the complexity of our modern world, there is no reason why we cannot think of this man who walked the shores of Galilee as the most devoted and most compassionate friend we could ever have. At this moment, one can be sure, there are millions of tears being shed as people cope with physical pain and emotional pain. During the past few days, at the time of this writing, I have thought of the bereaved and shocked people directly touched by the Edmond, Oklahoma, post office massacre. Elsewhere there are women and children cry-

ing because they have been beat. Aging people crying because they have been abused or neglected. Children crying because they have lost parents and parents crying because they have lost children. Some young woman's crying because she is pregnant and another's crying because she's not. Some families of chemically dependent people crying because their loved ones are on drugs and chemically dependent people crying in hellish addiction because they can't seem to break the addiction. Somebody's crying because the divorce is final and somebody else is crying because divorce is out of the question. Obviously, the world is still a difficult place for humans to dwell, the conflict is intense, and the powers of evil remain immensely strong.

To accept the call of Christ is no easy option. It does not allow us to contract out the business of living into some supposedly antiseptic, holier world from which brokenness, conflict, failure and hurt have been excluded. It

does not mean Jesus as a friend will be physically present for us. It does mean, however, that we can be Jesus to other people. It means, borrowing the language of Jesus' Nazareth sermon (Lk. 4: 16-21), the spirit of the Lord can be on us, that we too can deliver good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for those in all types of physical and emotional bondage, and bring release to those in oppression. The basic issue for us is whether we can actually live the gospel on Jesus' terms. I John 2: 6 states our choice bluntly and concisely: "Here is the test by which we can make sure that we are in him: whoever claims to be dwelling in him binds himself to live as Christ himself lived."

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## The "Faith of Jesus" and Our Salvation

WALTER D. ZORN

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Romans 3:22 in KJV reads: "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." Aside from understanding the ambiguity of this verse, it became a real problem passage for me when I compared modern translations such as RSV, NASB, and NIV which consistently translated one phrase, "faith in Jesus Christ," instead of "faith of Jesus Christ." Why the difference? Was it a significant difference?

I discovered the problem was more of exegesis than grammar. The Greek text simply presents a noun, *pistis* (faith), in whatever case, with a genitive of person (Jesus Christ) after

it. The genitive could be either subjective or objective. If it is objective, then the action of the noun ("faith") finds its object in the genitive; i.e., "faith in Jesus Christ." If it is subjective, then the subject of the action of the noun ("faith") is in the genitive; i.e., "Jesus Christ's faith." Thus, the translator has a choice and the choice must be made on the basis of good exegesis instead of knowledge of Greek grammar.<sup>1</sup>

Many scholars have written about this problem, arguing for the "subjective genitive" interpretation ("Jesus Christ's faith").<sup>2</sup> Since this article must be brief, I will only refer to

them when I feel compelled by their insights.

Several observations should be made about this problem passage. Note the NIV rendering of Romans 3:22: "The righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe." There is a redundancy here. Why would Paul say "faith in Jesus Christ" and "to all who believe." It is really unnecessary and there is no satisfactory answer for this except that the phrase, *dia pisteōs Iēsou Christou*, ("through the faith of Jesus Christ") is to be understood differently than, *eis pantas tous pisteuontas* (unto all who believe).

Not only is Romans 3:22 involved in this exegetical problem, but two more passages in Romans 3:21-26 involve the same decision. The most obvious is vs. 26 where *ton ek pisteōs Iēsou* is translated as an objective genitive, not only in the modern versions but KJV as well: "him which believeth in Jesus." But this is not the normal way in Greek to understand this phrase. Interestingly, all the versions translate Romans 4:16 correctly as a "subjective genitive." *Tō ek pisteōs Abraam* could not possibly be "faith to Abraham," rather the phrase should be translated as in RSV: "to those who share the faith of Abraham." On this comparative analysis, 3:26 should be "the one who shares the faith of Jesus."

The third passage is Romans 3:25, where the phrase *dia pisteōs* ("through faith") seems to be a puzzle in all versions. Whose faith (*pisteōs*) is being referred to? KJV renders it literally: "Whom God hath set forth to be propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." But what can "faith in his blood" mean? There is no justification for such a thought in the NT other than this literal rendering. On the other hand, the RSV almost paraphrases the verse in order to make sense of it: "whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith." They clearly opt for the "objective genitive" just as they did vss. 22 and 26. Could not *dia pisteōs* ("through faith") best be understood as referring to God's faithfulness? After all, in the context God is the subject of all the action. He "justifies as a gift,"

"puts forward Christ as a propitiation," and if the "subjective genitive" is used, God is "faithful," i.e. "through (God's) faithfulness." Another possibility is that *dia pisteōs* refers to Christ's faithfulness as a propitiation and this was done "at the cost of" (*en*) ("in") his blood. This seems to be the best solution. Therefore, the following translation of Romans 3:21-26 should help us better understand Paul's presentation of his gospel:

- vs. 21 But now apart from law God's righteousness has been manifested, being witnessed to by the law and the prophets,
- vs. 22 Indeed God's righteousness through *Jesus Christ's faith* (fulness) unto all who believe, for there is no distinction,
- vs. 23 For all sin and (continually) fall short of the glory of God,
- vs. 24 being justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,
- vs. 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation *by means of (his) faith* (fulness), at the cost of his blood unto a demonstration of his righteousness because of the passing-over of the sins happened-beforehand
- vs. 26 by the forbearance of God toward the demonstration of his righteousness in the present time in order that he might be known as righteous even in the act of justifying the ones who share *the faith* (fulness) of Jesus.

D. W. B. Robinson wrote:

This interpretation is to be preferred to the usual interpretation, for it makes much better sense to say that God's righteousness *has been manifested* by the character of Christ's work than to say it *has been manifested* by man's faith in Christ, for how can man's faith be said to have demonstrated God's righteousness? Rather, Christ's faithfulness, in death itself, makes possible an atoning sacrifice which redeems lost men, and thus

God's way of righting wrong has been demonstrated in this age.<sup>3</sup>

But does this interpretation agree with the rest of Paul's epistle to the Romans and with Paul's view of salvation?

Paul introduced (1:5) and concluded (16:26) this epistle with a unique phrase: *eis hypakoān pisteōs* ("unto obedience of faith"). For Paul they are inseparable. Faith is obedience to God and obedience is the proper response of faith. This unique phrase, not used again in Romans, actually interprets *pistis* ("faith") for us at 1:17 and certainly in 3:21-26. But "faith" is not Paul's main concern, neither is he "a witness for an inward-turned religion dealing primarily with individual guilt. . . . As long as Paul's gospel is interpreted as the answer to individual soteriological dilemma, that gospel is being severely truncated."<sup>4</sup>

Paul is concerned primarily about "the righteousness of God," as his theme indicates in Romans 1:16, 17:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "the righteous will live by faith." (NIV).

I choose to cite the NIV because many people read and use it in our churches, but there are at least a couple of objections to this translation. One is "righteousness *from* God!" The Greek text simply has *dikaioσynē theou*. It is best understood as a normal possessive genitive; i.e., "God's righteousness"! It is something God has. It is not imputed to man as the NIV suggests. Just as *orgē theou* ("wrath of God") in 1:18 is something that belongs to God and His action, so is *dikaioσynē theou* ("righteousness of God"). Sam K. Williams has argued convincingly that "a leading connotation of *dikaioσynē theou* in Romans is God's faithfulness in keeping his promise to Abraham."<sup>5</sup> In fact, Paul's entire concern throughout Romans is "God's righteousness"! He wants God to be vindicated and not considered *adikos* ("unjust") either by Jews or

Gentiles (Romans 3:5). Indeed, God is vindicated as "righteous" when he fulfills his covenant promises to the fathers and brings all ethnic peoples into "the faith":

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. (Romans 15:8-9as, RSV)

The second objection is "faith from first to last." The Greek text has literally: *ek pisteōs eis pistin* ("out of faith unto faith"). I suggest that Paul has compressed his thoughts in stating his theme in 1:16-17 and at 3:21-22 he picks it up again, only in more detail. Compare 1:17 with 3:22:

Righteousness of God — Righteousness of God is revealed (Pres.) — has been manifested (Perf.) out of (*ek*) faith — through (*dia*) faith of Jesus Christ unto (*eis*) faith — unto (*eis*) all who believe.

The parallelism suggests that the phrase should be understood to read "out of *Christ's* faith (fulness) unto *man's* faith (fulness)." This interpretation is plausible for two reasons. One, *ek pisteōs*, ("out of faith") corresponds with the *ek pisteōs* of Hab. 2:4 (LXX) that Paul quotes. Most scholars agree that Paul normally used the Septuagint (LXX) as here. Only a personal pronoun, *mou* ("my"), has been dropped. Hab. 2:3-4 is unmistakably messianic:

. . . the vision still awaits its time, and will rise to its fulfillment and not be in vain. If *he* delays, wait for *him*, because a *Coming One* will arrive and will not linger; if he draws back, my soul will have no pleasure in him; but *the Righteous One* shall live by my faith.

For Paul, *ho dikaios* ("the Righteous One"), was a messianic title as used by the church-at-large (cf. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14,15; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 2:1, 29; 3:7; 2 Tim. 4:8).

Paul's argument is clear. God's righteousness is being revealed in the gospel by (out of) Christ's faith (fulness) for (unto) mankind's faith (fulness). Scripture says: "The Righteous One shall live by faith." Paul's Jewish readers, because of their O.T. background, may have

understood his point more clearly than his Gentile readers. However, the question would naturally arise: Who is the righteous one? Immediately, Paul goes to great length in argumentation to show the predicament of mankind (Jews included!). (See Prof. Ron Fisher's article: "God and the Human Predicament") Thus, Romans 1:18-3:20 is climaxed at 3:10 when from the OT (Psalms) Paul declared: "None is righteous, no, not one!" Then, who is the Righteous One of Hab. 2:4? Jesus Christ, who was *faithful* to God, even to the cross to atone for our sins! This was done even while we were "weak," "ungodly," "sinners," even "enemies" (Romans 5:6ff.).

Jesus' faith/obedience is significant for salvation for all of us. As a climax to his exposition of God's righteousness in saving mankind, Jews and Gentiles alike; i.e. "by faith," Paul wrote:

Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:18, 19 RSV).

Luke Timothy Johnson cogently observed: "The future passive of the verb is important; it is on the basis of his past act that others will be established as righteous before God. The obedience of Jesus is God's way of saving other humans. . . The faith of Jesus is soteriological-significant."<sup>6</sup>

The message is clear: God is faithful (3:3) to his covenant promises (15:8-9a) and reveals his righteousness by means of His Messiah who is also faithful (1:77, 3:22,25,26; 5:18,19). Out of this faith came the possibility for my response of an obedient faith (1:5; 16:26; 3:22; 4:16; 10:9,10). All who have been immersed ("buried") with Christ (6:1-4) have identified with his death, burial, and resurrection to new life. As Paul expressed it from the OT: "No one who believes in him will be put to shame" (10:11).

The obedience of Jesus as *the* means to salvation, manifest particularly in the

paradox of his death, is a favorite theme of NT thought. Obedience in Jesus is his recognition of and response to the absolute priority of God in human experience, a priority demanding ultimate practical commitment touching every aspect of human life, to be sought and preferred whatever the cost. In this attitude of Jesus, which led him to the cross, NT writers found the prospect of Christian salvation.<sup>7</sup>

I am convinced that the "subjective genitive" should govern our understanding of Romans 3:21-26 and the other passages affected by it, for "if Christ's own faith counted nothing, and if men were totally delivered to the sincerity, depth, certainty of their own faith — how could any man ever be saved?"<sup>8</sup>

(This is the first part of a two-part article. The second article will show the relevance of this interpretation in Christian living. It will appear in the next issue of *Integrity*.)

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Other passages besides Romans 3:22 are affected: Romans 3:26; Gal. 2:16,20; 3:22 (26); Phil. 3:9; Eph. 3:12; 4:13. Markus Barth would add Rom. 1:17; 3:25 and 2 Tim. 3:15. If these passages are interpreted properly by the "subjective genitive," then several other passages need a second look: Mk. 11:22; James 2:1; Rev. 2:13; 14:12; Acts 3:16; Col. 2:12; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 12:2; 1 Peter 1:2.

<sup>2</sup>Jesse Paul Pollard lists many scholars who argue for the "subjective genitive" on pp. 19, 20 in his unpublished doctoral dissertation for Baylor University entitled, *The Problem of the Faith of Christ*, 1982. His conclusions support the "subjective genitive."

<sup>3</sup>D. W. B. Robinson, "Justification and the Faith of Jesus," *Verdict* 2/4 (1979) 21.

<sup>4</sup>Richard B. Hays, "Jesus' Faith and Ours (Gal. 3)" *TSF Bulletin* (Sept.-Oct. 1983) 2.

<sup>5</sup>Sam K. Williams, "The 'Righteousness of God' in Romans," *JBL* 99/2 (1980) 265.

<sup>6</sup>Luke Timothy Johnson, "Rom. 3:21-26 And the Faith of Jesus," *CBQ* 44 (1982) 89.

<sup>7</sup>Francis H. Agnew. "1 Peter 1:2 — An Alternative Translation," *CBQ* 45 (1983) 70, 71.

<sup>8</sup>Markus Barth, "The Faith of the Messiah," *Hey J* 10 (1969) 368.

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## Readers' Response

Dear *Integrity*:

Would like to offer encouragement to you in your work. Wish this check could be more, but will add prayers.

Sincerely,  
Helen Murray  
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Dear brothers:

Thanks for the reminder to renew my subscription to *Integrity*. I have enjoyed the articles on suffering. I have gone to Nigeria, West Africa the past six years, and I see much suffering there. It makes a person seek for some answers.

In Christ,  
Darrell Foltz  
Hoxie, Kansas

Dear Brothers-in Christ,

I have been encouraged, built up and stimulated by many of the articles in your publication. I especially enjoyed the writings concerning the work of the Holy Spirit today. May God bless you for your faithfulness in the ministry of His grace.

Steve Vick  
Springfield, Massachusetts

I enjoy *Integrity* and want to see the paper continued.

It seems to me that we as a people have been drifting away and our Christian people need a conservative paper like *Integrity*. Many people today seem so selfish and are so intent upon doing what they desire instead of what God desires them to do.

We pray that we and all of you at *Integrity* may stay strong and that we will never become discouraged.

Sincerely,  
Vincent L. Marvin  
Imperial, Nebraska

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ —  
Keep up the good work.

Earnest E. Lyon  
Louisville, Kentucky

Dear Sir:

We enjoy this paper very much. Enclosed is [ ]. Please keep us on the mailing list.

Your Brother in Christ,  
T. E. Willcutt  
Steens, Mississippi

(Continued on next page)