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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.

Integrity

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is also a vital part of this conference." The lectureship includes an hour devoted to "Fellowship in Worship Renewal," led by Dr. DON FINTO, pastor of Belmont Church in Nashville, Tenn., a congregation with roots in the Restoration Movement. The program is to conclude with a carefully-planned service of prayer for healing and wholeness, regularly used by the host Bering Drive congregation.

"Too often we have resembled the apostles in Luke 9:46-50," says Dr. Lynn Mitchell, an elder of the Bering Drive congregation and a co-planner of the conference. "Pride and exclusivism breed separation and division. Servanthood and childlike obedience bring people together. These are the themes our conference will develop."

"It is possible to argue ourselves into isolated corners in the name of 'sound doctrine,' and to forget practical Christian service and daily obedience to Jesus Christ," adds Edward Fudge, another Bering Drive elder and co-planner of the conference. "Yet these are the primary goals and inevitable fruit of 'sound doctrine,' according to all the New Testament."

There is no charge for the lectureship, and private accommodations will be available for a limited number of guests. Persons desiring information may write: Bering Drive Church of Christ, 1910 Bering Drive, Houston, Texas 77057, or call (713) 783-2340, or contact Edward Fudge, Box 218026, Houston, Texas 77218, Telephone (work) 713/227-3111; (home) 713/578-7837.

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Having the Grace to Change

I

"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mold, but let God remold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves toward the goal of true maturity."

Romans 12:2 (Phillips)

From every direction we face forces, values, pressures, and powers that would squeeze us into a mold not after the image of our God. In this issue, we look at how we as Christians can find the resources to grow and change, not according to our world, but according to the will and reality of God.

Our source for an initial change and for continued renewal is grace; but, as Perry Cotham reminds us, not just a doctrine of grace, but the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ken Slater helps us to see spiritual change not in a fearful, reactionary way, but in a hopeful and creative response to the Holy Spirit who is renewing us from within. It is unpredictable where spiritual change may lead us. Craig Watts discusses one such possibility when he takes a biblical look at authority and points us to the only one who deserves our complete loyalty. Joseph Jones teaches us (from Sept. 1975 *Integrity* we thought appropriate to reprint this month) that it is our responsibility to create a church family atmosphere that encourages room and time for change.

It is only with our eyes on Jesus that we will find the change that can be described in such unqualified terms as born again, transformation, and new creation. We must not let the values of our age obscure our vision of him.

"...but when a man turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

II Corinthians 3:16-18 (RSV)

Bruce Kilmer
Co-Chairperson, Editorial Board

Having the Grace to Change

II

Trying to be "good enough" was a main pursuit in my preteen and teen years. Feeling an intense longing to please God, I worked hard at trying to fulfill the do's and don'ts, but with erratic success. As my senior year in high school approached, I still wanted God, but otherwise felt deep dissatisfaction with my religion. So I prayed, asking God: "Is that all there is?"

The next time I was at the church building, I "happened" to walk into the church library (three wall shelves in the cry room) and picked up J.B. Phillips' book *Your God Is Too Small*. God used this book to impress upon me something that I knew as a fact, but did not understand deeply—that Jesus really was and is the Son of God. His presence then and now became very real to me, and this deeper understanding filled my brain and my soul.

About this same time my Sunday School teacher began talking about God's grace and about the Holy Spirit. It was the first time I had heard about God's grace, and the first time that I had heard that the Holy Spirit might be involved with life during "modern" times. Reading Phillips' book and hearing the teachings on grace and the Holy Spirit changed entirely the way I would from then on pursue a spiritual life.

Spiritual change is God's responsibility. Our responsibility is to ask. "Ask and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Matthew

7:7,8). When we ask with open hearts and without preconceived ideas of what the answer will be, we leave ourselves open to the word of God working in us. Sometimes we resist the answers, though knowing they are true. But that means we are holding onto something "for dear life" that will become our spiritual death.

Have you ever read *The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis? It is one of the few books I reread periodically to help me reevaluate what is gripping my life. In this book, Lewis portrays various characters standing at the edge of a magnificent, crystalline heaven, choosing to cling to symbols of selfishness, pride, or unreality, and ultimately losing the ability to "enter in."

I am susceptible to the same possibility of preferring something else over God. So when I ask, "Am I letting anything come between you and me, Father? Is there more you want me to know?" He orchestrates my life in such a way that I know, without a doubt, that He is actively involved in answering me, maturing me and changing me.

Bruce and I hope the articles in this issue encourage you to be able to say as certainly as Paul:

"I feel sure that the one who has begun his good work in you will go on developing it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Phillippians 1:6 (Phillips)

Diane Kilmer
Co-Chairperson, Editorial Board

Integrity offers bound volumes of series of issues that focus on one theme. These volumes are \$2.00 each, or \$1.50 each in lots of ten or more.

Unity and Christian Fellowship (2 issue volume)

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Grace—And How We Miss The Point!

PERRY C. COTHAM

Brentwood, Tennessee

What is the key word in our doctrine? What is the most important concept in Christianity? What is the most important word in the theological dictionary? I suspect that the answer to these questions is a five-letter word—"grace."

Grace is what Christianity is all about. The apostles' belief in the reality and centrality of grace was so strong that it led them to invent a new style of letter-writing. Instead of the conventional "hail," the opening greeting of all of Paul's letters takes the form of a prayer for "grace and peace." And rather than ending with the usual "farewell," each letter ends with a further prayer that the grace of the Lord Jesus be with them.

The concept of grace is the key that unlocks the New Testament. There are a lot of people, even religious people, who read the New Testament as a book of moral maxims, or mystical aspirations, and cannot make "heads or tails" of it. Every book of the New Testament is part of a grand portrait of the fact of grace and must be read as such. We cannot make sense of the New Testament in any other terms.

There are many scriptures that refer to grace:

- "We are saved by grace through faith" (Eph. 2:8).
- "the God of all grace" (I Pet. 5:10).
- "the Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29).
- "the grace of our Lord Jesus" (Acts 15:11).
- Jesus to Paul: "My grace is sufficient" (II Cor. 12:9).
- "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18).

We are familiar with these verses. Many of us are grace-oriented; we like to talk about the idea of grace; we like to confess how few congregations in our brotherhood actually discuss grace or know what it is.

Yet questions still come to our minds: (The fact that we have this word in our vocabulary does not mean we understand it.)

- After baptism, how does grace help us? Is grace a kind of celestial battery charge administered through sacraments?
- How do we frustrate or deny the grace of God?
- How is God's grace different from His love?
- Does grace mean that I am going to be saved no matter what?
- Does God continue to give His grace or is it a once for all grant?
- Was there any grace in Old Testament times? "The law came through Moses, but grace and truth through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).
- How do we grow in grace?

One persistent problem that has nagged the church throughout history is that its saints have missed the point about grace. And I wonder if that might not be true for us. How do we miss the point?

Grace is Specific

We miss the point by speaking of grace in abstractions rather than specifics. It is true that grace is a wonder; it is amazing. And grace really cannot be described. It can only be experienced. "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all." Or, "I Stand Amazed in the presence, of Jesus the Nazarene and wonder how he could love me . . ." The world is full of many wonders—wonders of nature, of science, of craftsmanship—but they pale into insignificance beside the wonder of the grace of God. And that grace cannot be defined adequately nor described adequately. It cannot be expressed. Paul said:

"Thanks be to God for his inexpressive gift." (II Cor. 9:15). Since it cannot be described, it can only be experienced.

Because grace is inexpressible, ineffable, and inexhaustible does not mean that grace is not specific. Grace, in Christian terms, is not the least bit abstract. It is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot talk about grace apart from Him. Grace is defined by who Jesus Christ is, or better, by what Jesus does.

The New Testament words of *agape* and *charis* are very similar in meaning. It would not be fair to make them identical. We can have love for friends and family, those who deserve to be loved. If God's love is His love to the loveless, love toward those who do not deserve it, then this is very close to what we mean by "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul describes God's love "while we were yet sinners." If we had ceased to be sinners, then we might feel we deserved this kind of love. But loving us while we are unworthy is inconceivable and inexplicable.

Incidentally, there is an equivalent to grace in the Old Testament. The word for it is "chesed," translated "loving kindness" in the King James Version. In the Revised Standard Version there is a more adequate translation in "steadfast love." This is what the love and grace of God are all about—a steadfast love that is reliable, constant, inexhaustible, and trustworthy. The Jews have felt this steadfast love in God's selection of Israel as a chosen people.

Grace Describes Relationship

We miss the point by speaking of grace as an object rather than a relationship. The grace of the Lord Jesus is not an object, a "thing," some impersonal quality. It can only be described in personal terms. Grace is not something God Himself gives us; it is the way God gives us Himself. Grace is God's personal relationship with us. But His relationship is unlike most human relationships, which are based on merit, need, or appeal.

This relationship based on grace is not based on merit (we don't deserve it, nor is God obligated to give it), need (God does not need

us as we need him), nor appeal, nor even good. The Bible is quite emphatic in asserting that God's relationship to man is not based on the fact that man offers something to God, but on the fact that God offers everything to man.

Grace is a relationship that involves mercy and forgiveness. If I willfully hurt someone and thus destroy the relationship, what I "deserve" is to be condemned and punished. But this will never heal the hurt or restore the relationship—this is done only when the one who has borne the grief and the pain of being wronged is willing to forgive and show mercy and kindness. That mercy and forgiveness must come from the one I have hurt. In God's system, grace is offered to us, but we must ask for it.

We miss the point by speaking of grace in terms of license rather than liberty. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German Lutheran who was martyred by the Nazis, wrote in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, of the terms "cheap grace" and "costly grace." We can flippantly talk about grace covering all our sins, but then never live out the implications. Grace is costly in our lives. Bonhoeffer wrote: "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance. . . Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

Let me share one of the great paradoxes of the Christian faith. Our salvation is free; it is the free gift of God. And yet this salvation costs us everything. This is true by the very nature of salvation, not because God attaches certain work stipulations. There is no written contract of legal rules to follow to receive salvation and yet "love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all."

Our good works grow out of gratitude. Gratitude must characterize our dealings with God because grace characterizes His dealings with us. In the New Testament, doctrine is grace and ethics is gratitude. We deny the value of good works only when they are used to claim moral righteousness before God. Martin Luther wrote: "Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works."

Grace that is properly understood never inspires the feeling "I can do anything I please."

W.H. Auden comments that: "Every crook will argue: 'I like committing crimes. God likes forgiving them. Really the world is admirably arranged.'" This would be like a banker saying that "Because my boss trusts me and will forgive my mistakes, I should embezzle from him at every opportunity." The most convincing answer to the question, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound" is an emphatic "God forbid!"

There are two polar responses to grace and both are deadly wrong. One is legalism, which frustrates grace by seeking righteousness by works of law and religion; the other is antinomianism, which is license. The legalistic magnifies law so as to lose sight of grace; the antinomian is so dazzled by grace as to lose sight of law as a rule of life for the ordinary situations.

Who Needs It?

Is there anyone who does not need it? Stop and think where we would be without grace. There is no way that we can restore and heal people without grace. Little wonder that religious counselors rely on the Word. People get themselves so entangled, so ensconced in sin that they cannot extricate themselves. The only answer is grace.

Even non-believing psychotherapists realize the value of grace. See Rollo May's *The Art of Counseling*: "Man would indeed find himself in an impossible situation were it not for 'grace.'" May admits this is a theological term but says there is a corresponding term: "clarification." May says that the more you realize the value of God's grace, the more likely you are to say "I am chief of sinners." Thus we are relieved of the burden of arrogance.

The bottom line in our lives is that if God has dealt graciously with us, then we must deal graciously with others. When we are realistic about ourselves and the kind of world we live in, then we humbly acknowledge that we all need grace. Yes, it is probably true that some of us will need grace more than others—but we had better not set ourselves up as judges as to who needs a greater endowment of grace. Remember that Jesus said the "publicans and

the prostitutes go into the Kingdom before you Pharisees." How kindly do we deal with moral failures? Alcoholics? Convicts? Sometimes we give grace to others, but not to ourselves, and thereby insult the Lord.

We live in a world where time cannot be returned nor the past relived. All sins that we have committed are now history. Many of our wrongs cannot be made right. We have conflict and compromise; at times we choose between the lesser of two evils. We never know perfection. Under law there are commandments that we have broken—legal norms under law once broken cannot be reclaimed; but ideals under grace can be reclaimed.

Finally, we should note that grace does not come to us like a bolt out of the sky in some once-in-a-lifetime experience. It is more like a steady rain or perpetual sunshine, always there when we are ready to plug into it. And that's what is meant by "growing in grace," or when we pray or sing "God grant us grace" to accomplish some great task. Paul speaks of "pressing on." It is more appropriate to speak of "becoming" a Christian rather than being a Christian, in one sense. Or, we are both "being" and "becoming" a Christian. "O to grace, how great a debtor, daily I'm constrained to be. Let thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to Thee."

Grace will continue to surprise us, bringing us little serendipities as we live our lives. Grace is insidious. When you look for it from the left it comes from the right. Grace is no longer grace when it ceases to surprise us.

"God, thank you for dealing graciously with us through the gift of yourself in the person of Jesus. Instill in us the humility and the courage to deal graciously with others, both in our judgments and in our actions. As your children, grant us grace for the living of these days. Through Jesus. Amen."

Dr. Perry C. Cotham is currently working as a labor education specialist for the Tennessee Center for Labor Management Relations. He served nine years as a professor of speech and political science at David Lipscomb College. He and his wife Glenda reside in Brentwood, Tennessee near Nashville.

Change

KEN SLATER

Lansing, Michigan

The young man sits with the church leader; dejected, confused. "She was so different then," he says. "Over the last few years she has changed. She isn't the same person I married eight years ago. I don't know what to do."

Across town a young woman visits with an older Christian sister. "I can't believe how much he has changed. I never dreamed that he would turn out this way." She continued, "When we married I prayed he would change and he has. He is so excited about becoming a Christian."

Both spouses had changed, but each change brought with it a very different feeling. One had engendered feelings of confusion and anger, the other happiness and joy. Although both sets of feelings stemmed from changes in a marriage partner's life, they present very contradictory situations. The reason for these contradictory feelings may be related to how many view change in our world. We often categorize change as one of two types: theirs and ours.

Robert Frost wrote, "Most of the change we think we see in life is due to truths being in and out of favor." We champion our change as progressive. We oppose their change as destructive. We hold to our right to instigate change, but point out the anarchy of their change. Such struggles are repeated time and time again in the world around us. Change is constant and universal.

Change often manifests itself in the church in a similar manner. "Our" and "their" truths compete for preeminence within fellowships. "Our" change will enhance the spirituality of the congregations, while "their" change will lead to division.

Within the church we are tempted to take on the same definitions of change used by the world. We often see change in the direct terms found in dictionaries:

"To put or take another."

"The substitution or succession of one thing over another."

"Alteration in the state of quality of anything."

Powerful words such as "to take," "substitution," and "alteration of quality" ring home in our discussions of spiritual matters just as they do in political and social matters.

The question is, should such phrases be part of the Christian's view of change? Should we apply our secular concepts of change to spiritual matters or is there an alternative view of change that can be applied? The answer to these questions is that there must be a differentiation in how the Christian views and applies a concept of change.

If change means nothing more in the church than it does to the surrounding world, then there is little difference between the church and other socio-political groups. Issues are politicized, lines are drawn and the "we/they" approach begins to rule.

Indeed, a Christian theory of change must be different. Christians are called to view changes from a vantage point not used by others. The apostle Paul provides a description of change in II Corinthians 5:17. He wrote, "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come."

The biblical alternative to substitution and alteration is a completely new creation. God's new creation is a total change caused by divine grace. Human change is only a redistribution or rearrangement of what is present in human life. The new creation is God's achievement worked in men and women. People become changed creatures when they are in Christ.

Although this union with Christ is on a plane above simple human understanding, it produces

a concept of change that is far more than an abstraction. First, it is meant to bring about changes in individual lives. Paul reminded the Romans, "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).

We are to be transfigured in such a way that our entire approach to life is different. By renewing our minds, many of our approaches to life's situations are redirected, including our ability to cope with and make use of change.

The second concept of change found in this new creation is that the lives of changed individuals link together to form a much larger change agent. Ephesians 2, Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12 and 14 tell of people who lived in secular society and acted as change forces within their worlds, because they had a different view of change.

The Christian concept of change is therefore not founded on scare words such as take, succession or alterations, but rather on words like Holy Spirit, fellowship and creation. By using the latter set of words to define change, the Christian can overcome the problems often associated with change in the surrounding world.

It was undoubtedly the Christian perspective on change that allowed people who were Jews from birth, who were schooled in the Law and who lived by all of the traditions of their fathers, to accept the changes that Christianity posed for their lives. Consider the magnitude of change necessary to believe that Christ was better than the angels (Hebrews 1), that He was greater than Moses (Hebrews 3), and that His covenant was superior to the one before (Hebrews 10). Such ideas called for people to change the very core of their beliefs; to literally reverse what they had always believed. Only the new creation type of change was sufficient to sustain the turmoil that was created for Jewish Christians.

From the first century on, Christians have been confronted with change. Whether this change was viewed from a Christian perspective or a secular perspective usually made a

great deal of difference to the people involved, even in relation to seemingly insignificant issues.

One older gentleman from Texas tells of a change that confronted some congregations within the Stone-Campbell movement in the 1920's. It was proposed that the Lord's Supper be offered to people at the evening assembly if they could not attend in the morning. In retrospect, an apparent minor change became a major issue to some because of how they conceived the idea of change in the church.

It was reported that some groups took a secular view of this change. It quickly became a "we/they" issue. Those in the majority either accepted or rejected the change. In the process some were hurt and discouraged because they were the minority. Other groups took an approach to the change that set aside individual passions and considered the fellowship as a whole. The result was very different for these groups than for those who followed the more secular route.

How many times has such a scenario been repeated? The church will always be faced with questions of change, but the key is how we choose to handle the changes. If we attempt to solve them on the basis of "there are more of us than there are of them" we will be no better off than any other socio-political group. And just as the human cost can be counted in these groups, so it will be within the church.

The people of God must learn to approach change situations as new creations. They must learn to think in "their" terms. If each could do this, the threats to our heritage, traditions and faith could be eliminated. The relationships strained by change could be relaxed. The fears brought by change could be diminished.

God's way allows us to change. As His people we can face change because He has changed us.

Dr. Kenneth Slater presently works as an administrator for a county mental health program. He, his wife Donna, with their two daughters are members of the Holmes Road Church of Christ in Lansing, Michigan where they both serve in many capacities. Ken has been an *Integrity* reader since 1970 and we are particularly thankful that he joined the *Integrity* board last year.

Between Two Authorities Romans 12:14-13:10 and Civil Disobedience

CRAIG M. WATTS

Carbondale, Illinois

Nearly twenty-five years ago a young minister sat in jail in Birmingham, Alabama. He was serving a brief sentence, *not* for destroying any property, or for harming any person, or for stealing anything. Rather, he was confined in jail for refusing to comply with laws that upheld racial segregation, and for non-violently protesting against legalized inequality. While in that jail this young minister composed an open letter explaining to his critics the rationale for his actions. The statement of this minister, Martin Luther King Jr., deserves to be heard again today. He wrote:

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. . . One may well ask: 'How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?' The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. . .

Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. . . Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust.

('Letter from Birmingham Jail'
in *Why We Can't Wait*)

Dr. King's statement sums up the issues that face us as we attempt to live between two

authorities. The legal authority of the government and the divine authority of God do not always walk together hand in hand. At times—perhaps more times than we want to admit—these two authorities are sharply at odds and we must choose between them. At times the governments make laws forbidding what God has required for us or laws requiring from us behavior that God has forbidden. Throughout the centuries the people of God have had to face this dilemma thousands of times, and it has been faced in one degree or another in every nation where Christians exist. The truth of the matter is that there are situations in which we must disobey the law of the land in order to obey the law of the Lord. And faithful Christians have paid dearly for their obedience to God, accepting abuse, imprisonment and even death.

But how is it possible that the government-established laws could be at odds with God's will? After all, doesn't our scripture text tell us that God instituted the governing authorities, that to resist the authorities is to resist God and that the government is a servant of God? Yes, but in order to understand what these claims mean, it is critical that we see them in light of the broader context of the biblical witness as well as in their immediate literary and historical context. Too often, the first seven verses of Romans 13 have been ripped from their original setting in scripture and abused by those who claim that the government has a divine right to our unqualified loyalty. It has been treated as though this were *the* normative teaching on the government within scripture. That is why this passage of scripture was a favorite scripture of Hitler and his supporters, as it was with other tyrants for the past 1600 years. But when these

verses are understood in their proper context, we can see that our responsibility to governing authorities is much more sharply limited than some would have us believe.

What then is the context? The most obvious one is the fact that the passage dealing with the governing authorities is bracketed by two passages that strongly express our responsibility to live in love. Just prior to saying "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities" our text states, "Repay no one evil for evil. . . Beloved, never avenge yourselves. . . No, if your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him to drink." Radical self-giving love is being called for and the renunciation of lovelessness and violence is demanded. And, then, right after the verse that reads, "Pay all of the authorities their dues" the text continues with these words: "Owe no one anything, except to love one another." Love is the limit that this text sets on demands governments can make on Christians. If a law requires something that is unloving or forbids an action that is loving, we must disobey that law. We are to "owe no one"—including the government—"anything but to love one another." And this love is even to be shown in acts of compassion toward enemies. And let us be mindful of the fact that in the Bible there is no distinction between personal enemies and political enemies. We who are Christians are to reflect the unbounded love of God toward all persons because that is the kind of love God has bestowed on us (Romans 5:8, 10).

But in seeking to understand our text we also need to keep in view the broader witness of scripture regarding governing structures. The story of the people of God we find in the Bible is often a story of resistance and disobedience to the political authorities of the world. We have been too forgetful of this fact, so let us review the scriptural account and lift up some notable examples. Remember the record of the birth of Moses early in the book of Exodus? The Pharaoh had issued an order to kill all male children born among the Hebrew people. But Moses' mother, with the complicity of Hebrew midwives, defied the law and hid the baby. Because of this act of civil disobedience, the

greatest leader of the children of Israel reached manhood.

Repeatedly the great prophets of the Old Testament resisted the established authorities and broke the recognized laws. The prophets proclaimed God's judgment against policies which were contrary to God's intention and warned the people against following leaders who were blind to divine truth. Some laws are themselves illegal in light of God's law. The prophet Isaiah sharply accused the political leaders of his day by saying, "You are doomed! You make unjust laws that oppress my people" (Isa. 10:1).

Jeremiah's opposition to the governing authorities was even more pointed. Not unlike some of the protestors of our time, Jeremiah dramatized his opposition to policies of his time by means of symbolic action. Not only did he cry out against the military alliances that his country had entered into for the sake of national security, but he wore a yoke around his neck like an animal wore when it worked. Thus in word and deed he stood against the policies of his nation and urged the nation to "put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon" (Jer. 27:8). This was a bitter message for the proud rulers of the day. They naturally preferred to hear the false prophets who issued seductive promises of prosperity and independence. Jeremiah was accused of treason and was repeatedly imprisoned for refusing to support the misbegotten policies of his nation. But he firmly clung to the dictates of God against the mandates of the political power-brokers. When we look to the other prophets we find similar conflicts.

Some of our favorite stories in the Bible are stories about political resistance and civil disobedience. Since we were little children we have heard about Daniel and the lions' den. But do you remember **why** Daniel was thrown into that den of lions? This Hebrew man Daniel, had favorably impressed King Darius the Mede and was given a high post in his administration. Other officials were envious of his position and wanted to unseat Daniel. They sought for a way to discredit him but could find nothing. Then his detractors came to a remarkable realization:

"We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God" (Dan. 6:5). They laid a trap for Daniel by convincing the king to establish a law which would forbid prayer for a thirty day period. Daniel could have continued praying in secret but instead he opened the windows of the upper chamber of his house and prayed where he would easily be seen, openly disregarding the newly instituted law. The very way he prayed became protest. With much regret, King Darius enforced the punishment that the law demanded by casting Daniel to the lions.

It would not be difficult to add numerous other examples from the Old Testament of civil disobedience and resistance to misguided government. But is the story any different when we reach the New Testament? Absolutely not. From the beginning we see the way of God and the way of the governing authorities to be at odds. In the gospel of Matthew, the birth of Jesus is greeted, not only by the songs of angels, but also by the barbarism of King Herod. Like the Egyptian Pharaoh at the time of Moses, Herod wanted to preserve his power. When the wise men unfortunately informed him of the birth of the Messiah he ordered them to return after they had located the child "that I too may come and worship him" (Matt. 2:8). Instead they defied the order of the king and did not tell him where the infant Jesus could be found and thus saved Jesus from Herod's murderous intentions. Furthermore, the angels warned Joseph to take Jesus and Mary beyond the reach of the raging tyrant. Clearly this is anything but a recommendation to passively comply with all the demands of the governing authorities.

Throughout Jesus' ministry we find him jarring and clashing with the religious and political powers of his day. Perhaps the most memorable of these uneasy encounters took place in the Temple. Very much in the style of the prophets, Jesus engaged in a dramatic and disruptive demonstration against the corruption that had become institutionalized and legalized in Jerusalem. The commerce that took place in the courts of the Temple had the blessings of the governing authorities, but Jesus challenged the

legitimacy of their authority in this matter by knocking over the moneychangers' tables and sending the animals that were being sold fleeing in all directions. It is not surprising that in the next episode of Luke's narrative we are told, "The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people sought to destroy him" (Luke 19:47). Then, as now, civil disobedience rarely wins friends among those in power.

But the story of Jesus' civil disobedience does not end with his death. The central event of the Christian faith, the high point of the gospel, the resurrection, was itself an act of civil disobedience; for the tomb of our Lord had been officially sealed and guarded as the Roman governor Pilate had decreed (Matt. 27: 63-66). Jesus could arise from the tomb only by refusing to comply with the Roman authority. With such a Lord guiding the apostles, it should be of no surprise to us that they were unhesitant to set themselves against the Jewish governing authorities, the high priest, the council and all the senate of Israel. When the apostles were charged to stop disrupting the community with their message about Jesus, they replied with no uncertainty, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

If we are to be faithful to our biblical heritage, we must echo the apostle's words, "We must obey God rather than men." The early Christians knew very well that if Jesus is Lord, Caesar is not Lord.

What, then, are we to make of those seven verses at the center of our text? We cannot completely unpack the meaning of this message in so brief a study as this. So let us take a look at just a few of the key statements in the passage.

First, Paul writes: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities" (13:1). What does it mean to be subject to the authorities? Some translations say: "Let every person obey the authorities." I think that is a poor translation. Paul could have used other Greek words that were more definite if he wanted to say that. "To submit" can mean "to obey," but not always. Is it possible, then, to submit to the authorities even though we disobey them for God's sake? Yes. We do this by accepting the

government-imposed punishment that we face for breaking laws, though the laws be unjust. Thus when a Martin Luther King or a Gandhi willingly went to jail rather than trying to flee, they were submitting, even though they were not obeying the government. In this they showed that they recognized the legitimacy of governing authorities, even though the government must be opposed when it acts unjustly.

Second, our text says that "there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God" (13:1). Whatever this passage means applies not only to our nation but to all others as well. Too often people have forgotten this as they have appealed to these verses to support their own nation. We must ask not only what this passage means for America, but what it means for the Soviet Union and South Africa, Cuba and Libya. Because the authorities have been instituted by God, are we to take that to mean that God very specifically put the Reagan administration in the White House and Castro and his communist party in power in Cuba? Not at all. The Greek word for "instituted" has nothing to do with approval. It has to do with setting things in order, as a librarian does with books. Some of the books may be very bad but the librarian still puts them in a designated place. So it is with God and the nations. All of the authorities are sinful to one extent or another, but God lines them up and makes them work for his higher purpose despite the corruption and injustice they may perpetuate. The providence of God is greater than the powers of human governments, no matter how mighty they be. Ultimately they will be made to work for God's end, whatever their own intention might be.

But doesn't this passage also say that the governing authority is the servant of God, a servant that works for the good? Yes, it does. That is God's intention for government. And to the extent that the government fulfills this intention it will "not be a terror to good conduct but to bad" (13:3). But the truth of the matter is that governments often fail to be what God intends for them to be and instead end up supporting evil and suppressing goodness. How else are we to explain the fact that our Lord himself was crucified by the hand of the legal authorities and

that only a few years after the epistle to the Romans was written, Nero sanctioned a general persecution of the church throughout the Roman Empire? But even though the governing authorities are always to some extent in rebellion against God, still God can use them as servants for good. In the Old Testament we find the arrogant and cruel King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon being called "my servant" by God (Jer. 25:9). God makes even the evil he despises work for some good purpose. Thus, just because the apostle Paul refers to the governing authority as a servant for good, does not mean that we are to approve of or cooperate of with all of its activities. God uses governments to do things that Christians should never do. The church does not exist for the sake of nations and governments, rather they exist for the sake of the church. It is not part of the purpose of the church to help undergird the power of kingdoms of this world nor to provide functionaries who would exercise this power by violent means. Within our very text the scripture tells us that we are to leave vengeance to the wrath of God (12:19). Instead, we are to do good to our enemies. But God does use governments to do what Christians are forbidden to do lest we destroy our living testimony to the love of God and the future God is bringing. As the apostle Paul writes, the governing authority "does not bear the sword in vain" but "is the servant of God to execute God's wrath on the wrongdoer" (13:4). These actions of official violence are not thereby commended to Christians, but God uses them without approval, as he can use illness and tragedy, in order to fulfill some facet of the divine plan.

What, then, do we owe the government? Our text answers by saying that we owe "taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due" (13:7). We owe the governing leaders of the land our sincere and persistent prayers. We owe the legal authorities all the cooperation we can possibly give so long as it does not involve disobeying God. But we always need to be sensitive to the fact that governments have an abiding inclination to be totalitarian, demanding ever more of our lives and our loyalty, more than they have a right

to ask. As Christian ethicist Stanley Hauerwas has written, "No state will keep itself limited, no constitution or ideology is sufficient to that task, unless there is a body of people separated from the nation that is willing to say, 'No' to the state's claims on their loyalties" (*Against the Nations*, p. 123).

The church must be that body of people, a people whose eyes are set higher than the purposes of the nations, a people who are responsive to a loyalty superior to that which we owe to the state. While the authorities of this world glorify themselves out of proportion to their divinely given purpose, pretending that they are the bearers of the truth of God and the focus of God's greatest work, we need to keep in mind the divine message given in the book of Isaiah: "Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales. . . All the nations are as nothing before the Lord, they are accounted by God as less than nothing and emptiness" (40:15, 17).

The nations and their governing authorities have a rightful place, but it is a modest one. When the laws that are established by the authorities hinder us in our worship, to set limits on our love and compassionate service to the world, we have no choice but to disobey the laws in order to truly obey God. It is unlikely that we will all agree on which are the cases where we must take a stand, and exactly what actions should be taken. These are hard decisions, not to be taken lightly. Unfortunately, some people are never willing to take an unpopular stand. But presently there are Christians involved in both legal and illegal protests at abortion clinics, others are demonstrating against nuclear weapons by refusing to pay at least a portion of their income taxes, as well as by protesting in various other legal and illegal ways. Churches throughout the country have stood against the government policy which denies refugee status to those who have fled for their lives from El Salvador and Guatemala, and these churches have courageously, though illegally declared their buildings as sanctuaries for these oppressed people. This last named expression of resistance has received official support from my own denomination and I com-

mend it, but is it impossible to commend every act of civil disobedience that some Christians have felt called upon to perform. Yet even more uncommendable is the willingness of some to go along with every policy and position dictated by the government without seriously considering the Word of God. Such behavior is utterly out of keeping with our rich biblical heritage.

But let us not kid ourselves; a high price is often required of those who are determined to obey God. Sir Thomas More, lord chancellor of England in the 16th century was a devout man. He came to be accused of treason because he refused to take the oath of supremacy recognizing King Henry VIII as head of the English Church. In Robert Bolt's play about the event, *A Man for All Seasons*, there is a striking conclusion. After the executioner kills More, the man removes his executioner's mask and remarks, "I'm breathing. . . Are you breathing too? . . . It's nice, isn't it? It isn't difficult to keep alive, friends—just don't make trouble—or if you must make trouble, make the sort of trouble that's expected" (p.95).

People expect a certain amount of destructiveness, rowdiness, immorality and other such trouble that comes from corruption and self-indulgence. But the trouble that comes from people whose moral standards are superior to those supported by the governing authorities, *that* is unexpected trouble. People too often prefer the trouble that comes from selfishness over the trouble that comes as a result of selfless and determined devotion to the highest and the best. That is why just before the crucifixion the crowds cried, "Give us Barrabas!" rather than "Give us Jesus!" But we who walk in faith have chosen Jesus. And though we continue to live between two authorities, we recognize that only one of them deserves our unqualified devotion. We proclaim which one that is when we confess "Jesus is Lord." Amen.

Craig Watts' challenging articles are familiar to long-time *Integrity* readers. His writing also appears in such journals as *Cross Currents*, *Encounter*, *Christian Ministry*, and *The Disciple*. Craig, his wife Cindy, and their two children live in Carbondale, Illinois where Craig is the minister of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

The Freedom to Grow

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Personal spiritual growth was defined briefly in a previous article in terms of Christian maturity (Mt. 5:48; Col. 1:28) and life in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-25). The Christian life, initially begun in the surrender of one's being to Jesus the Lord and Savior, involves a growth process, development, or maturation; and this is described in the New Testament under the concept of fullgrownness in Christ. But this personal spiritual process is not a matter of mere human exertion, personal striving or individual self-discipline; it is a matter of living daily in the awareness of God's Spirit indwelling or saturating the believer's life, and this Spiritual Source produces fruit in its own likeness. "But the fruit of the Spirit," writes Paul, "is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. . . If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22, 25).

Now growth of any kind assumes a certain degree of freedom, and anyone who has grown gardens or children ought to know this. Yet it seems that in family life (yes, even nice Christian families perhaps more so than some others) and in the church, we have either failed to see the essentiality of such freedom or have fearfully closed our eyes to it. In either event, personal spiritual development may have been seriously thwarted.

Even a cursory reading of Galatians will enable the believer to see Paul's focus on the need to be free in Christ. "For freedom has Christ set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another" (Gal. 5:1, 13). That freedom in Christ can be abused Paul readily acknowledges, yet this is no reason for the personal or institutional

curtailment of freedom that so many have experienced in either family or church life.

Freedom is that essential atmosphere in which growth may occur; it is the opposite of a constricting, stifling, thwarting environment. It implies the freedom to question openly and honestly, in search for reality, or truth. The child who has his questing spirit stifled by immature or embarrassed parents is hardly apt to grow into an open, whole person. The teacher who is threatened by probing questions in class ought either to experience more growth in his security in Christ or give up his teaching for the moment. It is not uncommon that in church classes, or even college classes, this freedom to question is grievously restricted.

Freedom to grow implies the right to be skeptical at times, to maintain honest doubts, to acknowledge that one does not have all the answers and may not even understand the questions adequately. If one denies the freedom of an honest skepticism, he will turn seeking into bitterness, disillusionment, and disbelief.

Freedom to grow implies the need to be oneself, and yet be loved and accepted by others. Many marriages might well be held together and strengthened if the spouses could tolerate each other's need to be true to self. Parents may be threatened by allowing a child to express his true feelings; hence he is squelched, never allowed the freedom to get angry (or at least to express anger). It often seems more essential in our church and college related teaching efforts to confirm young students and adults in their limited understandings and prejudices than to grant them a genuine freedom to be true to themselves. Let us not confuse the abuse of freedom with the need to be true to one's self.

Freedom to grow implies, interestingly enough, the liberty to make mistakes, even to

be wrong. What fear has swept over us as parents, or college or church teachers, that if persons are granted freedom they will make mistakes, they may not get the "right answers," or may come out differing from the mold through which we were forming them!

Paradoxically, to the apostle Paul, freedom in Christ began with surrender—not a denial of personhood or genuine autonomy, but an effort to yield one's whole being to the working and

willing of God in Jesus Christ. "For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

Dr. Joseph F. Jones has been part of the *Integrity* ministry for many years and is presently President of the Board. He continues to provide many hours of marriage and family counseling weekly and continues to minister to the Troy Church of Christ. Joseph, his wife Geneva, and two of their six children reside in Southfield, Michigan.

Fellowship Through Service — Houston Lectureship

HOUSTON—Speakers from across the Restoration Movement will promote servanthood, humility and practical obedience to Jesus at an April 10-11 conference hosted by Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston, Texas.

Keynote speaker REUEL LEMMONS, editor of *Image* magazine and longtime editor of *Firm Foundation*, will set the lectureship's tone at a fellowship meal Friday evening, in an address entitled "How to Stop Disfellowshipping Each Other." Veteran minister Dr. J. HAROLD THOMAS, Conway, Ark., is to discuss "Fellowship and Services as Christian Lifestyles" at a luncheon on Saturday.

The meeting stresses the practical, say its planners, and two speakers will explore "Opportunities for Fellowship through Service" on Saturday. They are GENE SHELBURNE, Amarillo Tex., evangelist and longtime editor of *The Christian Appeal*, and Dr. ROBERT FIFE, Johnson City, Tenn., professor at Emmanuel School of Religion and well-known preacher and author.

Saturday morning panelists will target two groups Jesus himself specifically enumerated for service: the sick, and people in prison. Describing "Fellowship through Service to the Sick and Troubled" will be: VIRGIL FRYE, Churches of Christ chaplain at M.D. Anderson Tumor Institute in Houston; Dr. JOE

HIGHTOWER, a Rice University professor and volunteer director of Hospitality Apartments, which provide free temporary housing to cancer patients' families while in Houston for treatment; JIM WHITEHEAD, head of Christian Child Help Foundation, Houston; and CAROL JOHNSON, a licensed counselor serving with Christian Family Counseling Service, also of Houston.

Saturday afternoon slates panelists BOB GUTLEBEN, VANCE DRUM and WES WHITT to encourage "Fellowship through Service to Prisoners." Gutleben heads The Christian Connection, a jail ministry and rehabilitation center for ex-convicts in Sebastopol, Calif., where he also preaches for the Church of Christ (instrumental). Drum, who was recently interviewed in *Christianity Today*, serves as Protestant chaplain for the notorious Eastham Unit, Texas Department of Corrections, near Crockett, Tex., and is an ordained minister in The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Whitt founded and directs Christ's Prison Fellowship, a massive evangelistic and strengthening ministry directed at Texas penitentiary inmates and supported by Churches of Christ.

"Personal ministry demands much spiritual energy," planners note, "so corporate worship
(Continued on the next page)