

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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personal or impersonal) nor my "neighbors" (wherever I may be), neither strangers nor my friends—no one should be exempt from my looking out for the best for them, sharing with them what I have, bestowing the benefit of the doubt, offering them another chance.

Jesus' command telling us to "be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" seems a little more understandable when we hear Jesus state it another way:

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

John 15:12

— Diane

* * * * *

The articles in this month's *Integrity* discuss various aspects of change and growth in the Christian life. We are thankful for this month's authors — Stephen Greene, Curt Lloyd, Dan Matson and Craig Watts — and we deeply appreciate their encouraging teachings toward our living our lives "like the Father."

Bruce and Diane Kilmer
Co-Chairpersons
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Perfect Like The Father

The minute I read it I knew it was impossible: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48) But I went ahead and tried to be a perfect person and, of course, I couldn't.

But why, then, did Jesus say, "Be ye perfect"? What is it that He thought we could do or be that would make us so like our Father? William Barclay defines the kind of love God has for us like this: a regard for each individual with that unconquerable benevolence and goodwill which will seek nothing but her or his highest good.

Unconquerable benevolence and goodwill—a kind of love that sends rain and sunshine to the just and the unjust; an unconquerable benevolence that gives gifts and heals and comforts though few turn back to say "thanks"; an immense goodwill that desires to forgive because "they don't know what they are doing"; a seeking-the-highest-good kind of love that submitted a willing Son to die for us "while we were yet sinners."

How can this perfect kind of love be mine to give? For one thing, God grows it in me — little by little, struggle by struggle, choice by choice, person by person — as I listen and obey His Spirit, as I acknowledge and turn from sins He shows me I'm keeping, as I imitate His Son.

"And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."
Philippians 1:6

". . . Walk by the Spirit. . . [for] the fruit of the Spirit is love. . ."
Galatians 5

"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. . ."
Romans 12:2a

". . . But we have the mind of Christ."
I Corinthians 2:16b

As God's love matures in me, *no one* in my life should be exempt from receiving this God-given love—neither my enemies

(Continued on page 68)

STEPHEN GREENE

Campbell, California

**Let us discern for ourselves what is right;
let us learn together what is good.**

Tragedy.

It is a word that well describes the suppression of knowledge. It is the direct result of a human characteristic of ours that tends to encumber our minds and hinder progress toward better ideas and more efficient ways of doing things. This tendency can prevent us from dropping false ideas and accepting ideas that are more knowledgeable, accurate, and truthful—and are thus better than what was believed before them. The problem arises when a specific tradition becomes a dogmatic structure that we cling to as being the very will of God and causes a cessation of any and all progress in that area. In such a case, the tradition becomes not only harmful, but also immoral, for we have allowed tradition to take precedence over truth-seeking. What is this terrible disposition that can and has prohibited our advancement in knowledge? Some call it bias or prejudice or closed-mindedness. I believe all of these, in a conscious or unconscious form, are outgrowths of intellectual dishonesty and self-deception, which, in turn, are the products of a maladaptive pride.

Reassuringly, many Christians consider honesty, in the sense of truthfulness, to be vastly more important than tradition. Yet most seem to be so concerned with being sincere in their beliefs that they tend to lose sight of what sincerity is all about. They let sincerity in beliefs become more important to them than sincerity in seeking truth. They take up the useless practice of being sincere about being sincere, and in this way they deceive themselves into think-

ing they are doing God's will when in effect they are doing nothing more than following the dictates of their own. There is no denying that they are sincere in their beliefs, but their sincerity in following truth has been left behind. Such Christians have lost the real essence and purpose of sincerity: *honesty*. Whenever we say we are sincere in our belief, in truth we should most carefully try to determine whether or not we are, in actuality, simply providing excuses for following the traditions we have been brought up in and thus tend to believe and follow.

Honest Truth-Seekers

We need to recapture that dynamism and vitality that is an intrinsic part of a person who is actually sincere in learning about and following truth, who is striving to be open-minded, and who wants to be intellectually honest. You see, if we are actually sincere about following truth then we will actively search for truth, eagerly accept truth, and earnestly follow truth — whatever truth may be. An open-minded person is not just a person who is open to new information and different viewpoints: an open-minded person is one who is open to new information and is ready, willing, and eager to accept and guide himself or herself by a careful, honest, rational evaluation of this information. A person who is intellectually honest is one who accepts the facts, whatever they may be. The intellectually honest person must follow what she or he learns wherever it leads, no matter what implications that knowledge has, and regardless of any doctrines or beliefs that knowledge may challenge.¹

If we truly desire to make ourselves sincere,

genuinely sincere, about truth-seeking, and if we can trust ourselves enough to engage in a courageous spirituality, then we must be open-minded and intellectually honest, and the sincerity and courage will be demonstrated in our lives by studying, thinking, learning, acting, and more studying (truth-seeking, of course, knows no bounds). This will produce the kind of faith in our lives that is living and dynamic, not static and dead. It is not a faith in beliefs but a faith in reality. Some have criticized this kind of faith as a distressingly weak faith, saying that such a person's beliefs are always subject to revision and change. But it is, essentially, the most powerful faith of all: faith in reason and truth.

Christians, especially, have taken upon themselves the responsibility to be honest and truth-seeking. We do not have the option of capriciously choosing whether or not to accept certain ideas. We cannot arbitrarily decide to accept those ideas we like and reject or ignore those ideas that displease us. We need to continually repledge ourselves to accept the facts, the knowledge that we obtain, regardless of any traditional ideas or concepts we believe in that may be called into question as a result of what we have learned.

Choosing Unexamined Faith

We need to make sure that we are actively pursuing an interest in truth rather than an interest in perpetuating our own traditions and biases. Unwillful ignorance can be excused (but not overlooked—it should be corrected at the earliest opportunity), but willful ignorance and rejection of facts is not to be tolerated. Those

who do tolerate and even encourage such ignorance are not believers in the pursuit of truth, but are believers of false traditions and false doctrines. These believers possess, not a true faith, but a blind, unenlightenable faith. One writer stated it this way: "There exists an unfortunate, yet all-too-human tendency to try to preserve a good idea at all costs—even if it requires bending the rules of rationality and common sense to serve one's own ends." Another has stated the same idea very simply with these words: "What a fool believes he sees, no wise man has the power to reason away."

Those who refuse to critically evaluate their own personal ideas have no legitimate claim to being honest or open-minded. They are simply not sincere in seeking truth. They are sincere only in maintaining their own preconceptions regardless of how new observations they make impinge upon those preconceptions. This is total hypocrisy. Those who claim to be Christians, who yet reveal such attitudes by their conduct have lost, no, have *willfully rejected* any legitimate basis for being described as Christ-like.

Reference

Stephen H. Schneider and Lynne Morton, 1981, *The Primordial Bond: Exploring Connections Between Man and Nature Through the Humanities and Sciences*, New York: Plenum Press, P. 149.

Stephen Greene is a college mathematics major in California. In the past he has served Churches of Christ in various capacities; and is currently active in political and scholastic pursuits.

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The Image of the Enemy

and the Vision of Faith

CRAIG M. WATTS

Carbondale, Illinois

For faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, having enemies is not a mere option. It is an inevitability. Unfortunately, we sometimes think of that as something abnormal and as an indication of our lack of spirituality. Numerous times I've heard well-meaning disciples say, "I don't have any enemies; I'm a Christian," to which I am often tempted to reply, "Is that right? Well, I do have enemies precisely because I am a Christian." The simple truth is that faith does not erase the likelihood of our having enemies. In fact, it may increase their number. However, faith does dramatically transform the way we view our enemies and relate to them. At least that will be the case if the God in whom we have faith is not some truncated tribal deity, but rather the God who reached out in love to the entire world in Jesus Christ.

Most of us have a great difficulty not assuming the worst about the motivation and intentions of any person or group who opposes us in our quest to attain our chosen goals or preserve our interests. When our best hopes and efforts are threatened, it is remarkably easy to paint horns on our opponents and imagine that the most sinister of impulses drive them. Only with some effort are we able to entertain the notion that their souls may be no darker and their aspirations no more diabolical than our own.

But little support can be found for the effort that it takes to see a human face and hear the beating of a human heart in the enemies of our nation. To the contrary, numerous influences in society militate against any inclination to understand "the opposition" on their own terms. From hamburger commercials that depict "them" as uncreative and lifeless inhabitants who live without choice in a gray

world, to the covers of news magazines with scowling faces of Communist leaders or huge hammer and sickle tattooed bears clutching at a globe, the message comes through that our nation's enemies — and the Russians in particular — are the antagonists of all that is good, true, and beautiful. Even cartoons convey this conviction. Anthony Ugolnik, an American of Russian ethnic origin, tells of conversations with schoolchildren whose only exposure to Russia was through Boris and Natasha cartoon characters, but who were convinced that Russian schoolchildren are frequently shot for chewing gum (*The Christian Century* (11-9-83, p. 1012).

Dehumanizing the Enemy

The promotion of irredeemably negative portraits of foes is not a pointless activity. Only as we view our enemies as creatures who are fundamentally different from ourselves are we likely to pull out all stops in the struggle against them. The extremes to which we are willing to go in order to prevail over those who oppose us and our nation is to a great extent determined by our perceptions of our opponents. So long as we see the enemy as a people similar to ourselves, sharing hopes, fears and loves not terribly different from our own, we are more capable of treating the enemy with respect and moderation even in the midst of conflict. However, as conflict escalates it becomes increasingly unpopular to portray the opposition in a way that would encourage genuine insight or appreciation of their concerns.

Instead, what tends to be promoted in both official and unofficial ways is an image of the enemy which will provoke fear, disgust and hatred. The consequence of this is the

breakdown of moral obstacles which would otherwise block the use of methods that normally would be recognized as cruel and unjustifiable. Inhumane treatment of others is permitted only when they have been sufficiently dehumanized in the eyes of the general population. When the enemy is seen as the incarnation of evil, devoid of redeeming features, our consciences can be clear as we support all-out efforts to destroy them.

Our own habits of hate were reflected in those whom we often think of as the chief villains of the first half of the twentieth century. In Nazi Germany, the road to the Jewish holocaust was paved in part by a metaphorical language which fostered insensitivity on the part of the Aryan public to the suffering of the Jews. Persecution, the deprivation of rights, and the extermination of the Jews was tolerated and even encouraged only because the people had become accustomed to hearing Hitler speak of the "Jewish bacilli" and refer to them as a "disease," "parasites" and "demons." "The incessant official demonization of the Jew gradually modified the consciousness even of naturally humane people," observed Richard Grunberger in *Twelve-Year Reich: A Social History of Nazi Germany* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971). People who could not normally be considered morally insensible could react with surprising callousness because they had ceased to view the Jews as genuinely human.

The dehumanizing depiction of the enemy is by no means a modern phenomenon. It has a long history in the American experience, from the colonial period to the present, and virtually every other country has parallels. Alexander Leighton warned his Puritan colleagues that it was necessary to recognize the bestial qualities in their opponents, even though the Puritans themselves naturally desired peace. "But we must understand with whom we live in this world, with men of strife, men of blood, having dragon's hearts, serpent's heads." In view of the fact that their enemies were so inhuman, Leighton found it necessary to encourage the faithful to "work with one hand and with the other hold the sword." In a similar way Cotton Mather could refer to the Indians as "pieces

in Satan's grand design for conquest." The Indians were seen as outward expressions of all the unruly passions of the flesh which must be overcome and destroyed.

Power of Irrational Images

In the midst of conflict and social upheaval, dehumanizing metaphors can play a powerful role. All too often, negative images of the enemy can do more to influence thinking and behavior than carefully reasoned arguments or empirical reality. Researched evidence is rarely as compelling as an often repeated, officially sanctioned image which strips the enemy of all positive human characteristics. Thought becomes secondary to the hostility evoked by the image. All inclinations to sympathetically understand the reasons that others might be at cross purposes with us are crushed by seeing the enemy as an inhuman, bestial entity whose motivations are unimaginably corrupt and whose aspirations are nightmarish. The worst moments in the enemy nation's history are dwelt upon as though they were characteristic, while acknowledgement of positive accomplishments are left unexamined.

In times of wars and severe conflict the development of negative images of the enemy are promoted most vigorously. This is crucial since a values reversal takes place in time of war, and behaviors are encouraged which in civilian life would be recognized as criminal. As J. Glenn Gray has noted in his classic study *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle*, "The basic aim of a nation at war in establishing an image of the enemy is to distinguish as sharply as possible the act of killing from the act of murder by making the former into one deserving of all honor and praise. . . Thus, the typical image of the enemy is conditioned by the need to hate him without limits" (p. 131, 133). Psychological preparation for war is as important as physical and strategic preparation. Plans and weapons are ineffective unless those who are to do the fighting are filled with impressions of the opposition which would inspire repugnance and demand unrelentingly aggressive action against them.

In the modern era, the Nazis were not the on-

ly ones who were in the business of dehumanizing those whom they opposed. The World War II correspondent Ernie Pyle discovered that "the Japanese were looked upon as something subhuman and repulsive, the way some people feel about cockroaches or mice." (*Last Chapter*, New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1946, p. 5). In the newspapers of the day it was not unusual to find advertisements depicting toothy Japanese under which ran the caption "Rat Poison Wanted." Such a representation blatantly invited the extermination of a people. It was this image that helped make the use of the atomic bomb on Japanese cities acceptable, though the power of the weapon could conceivably have been demonstrated on Japanese soil in a relatively unpopulated area.

Dehumanizing images abounded during the Vietnam War. The Vietnamese were "gooks," somehow less than "real" humans. We were told that they didn't feel like us or value life as we do. Such characterizations opened the way for incidents like My Lai. One soldier states, "I was literally turned on when I saw a gook get shot. When a GI got shot, even if I didn't know him. . . that would bother me. A GI was real. When Americans got killed, it was a real loss. But if a gook got killed, it was like stepping on a roach" (quoted in Mark Baker, *Nam*, William Morris and Co., Inc., 1981, p. 85).

Twisted Images

It is a curious phenomenon that there is a tendency, on the one hand, to depict the enemy as sub-human in sentiment, morality and dignity, but on the other hand, as super-human in regard to the ability to overwhelm the world with all that is vile and deadly. The enemy is both a race of vicious animals—the most prominent enemy currently being a dangerous bear—and an advanced and ever advancing "evil empire." The enemy is a paradox beyond comprehension, the embodiment of the mystery of evil.

Thus there can be no room for serious negotiation or compromise, no possibility of finding a mutually acceptable living arrangement. For, as we are often told, our nation's

chief enemies, the Communists, have no scruples, they are wholly treacherous and utterly determined in their quest for world domination. Hence, there can be no more reasonable, indeed, no better moral response to such foes than to seek their total elimination through any means possible. The ultimate conclusion to the logic implicit in the dehumanizing images of the enemy was all too clearly expressed in President Reagan's unguarded, "joking" comments made in August 1984 into a supposedly dead microphone: "My fellow Americans, I'm pleased to tell you today that I've signed legislation that will outlaw Russia forever. We begin bombing in five minutes."

Which Enemies Should We Love?

Jesus offers a startling contrast to the way we commonly envision our foes. We create and accept images of our enemies which portray them as devoid of any quality which might make them lovable. But Jesus gives the legitimacy of such images a heavy blow with his command, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you" (Luke 6:27, 28). Jesus' words and life militate against the dehumanizing, demonizing depictions of our enemies by calling us to see them through the lens of divine love.

But isn't Jesus' command intended to guide us in our relationships with our personal enemies? Surely he didn't intend for us to apply his command to national and political enemies as well. It is an unwarranted extension of our Lord's words to seek to make them cover those who threaten the well being of our country, isn't it?

On the contrary, the distinction between personal enemies and national enemies is one that we have inserted between ourselves and Jesus' command. There is no evidence that he ever intended that distinction to be made or that he would even have recognized it as legitimate. In fact, if we will allow Jesus' own life and behavior to clarify and define his words, we will discover that the love of enemies comes into play most obviously in his relationship with those peoples who were traditional political enemies of Jesus' own nation, Israel. By word

and deed he challenged the well established animosity the Jews had toward such groups as the Samaritans, tax collectors, and the Gentiles. And through his own life, Jesus opened the way for others to see their enemies from a perspective not previously entertained.

For example, the bitterness and disdain that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans is not hard to understand when one looks at their history. It was not without reason that the Jews considered the Samaritans to be a people who were unscrupulous, corrupt and utterly untrustworthy. No doubt a case could be made from the Samaritan perspective that the Jews embodied these same qualities. What is more significant, however, is that Jesus refused to live in light of the well-established image his contemporary fellow Jews had of their enemies, the Samaritans. His life and teachings suggest an alternative vision of enemies and a correspondingly "graceful" way of responding to them.

Breaking the Image

First, Jesus contradicted the practice of depersonalizing and transforming the enemy into an abstract hate-worthy entity in the parable of the Good Samaritan. In its original setting, the parable must have been as shocking as would be a speech extolling a good Communist at a meeting of the John Birch Society. In this parable, Jesus negates the tendency to strip away all favorable features of members of the opposition. He confronts the habit of viewing enemies one dimensionally by presenting his hearers with an unexpected picture of a virtuous individual man who *happened to be* a Samaritan. He made the Samaritan in his parable an example of the positive traits that Jesus' compatriots would never have imagined possible in the enemy. Here in the despised foreigner was the very embodiment of faithfulness to the greatest commandment. A member of the opposition is depicted as an example of a true neighbor. In a powerfully direct way, Jesus confronted the commonly held image of the Samaritans as unscrupulous opportunists who care for nothing but their own advantage. He put a smiling face on those who had been made faceless and he gave a

compassion-filled human story to those who had been deprived of such a story by the dynamics of hate.

By pointing to sacrificial goodness where it was least expected, Jesus began the process of forging a new vision of the enemy which would necessitate a new attitude on the part of his people. In this parable Jesus issued a damning indictment of that stereotyping which encourages us to view an adversary (national or personal) as the fountainhead of cruelty and injustice in the world. Instead we are called upon to open our eyes to the humanity, the tenderness, the creativity, and the nobility in those who supposedly have none. This does not mean that we must deny or excuse every appalling evil we recognize in our opponents. However, only as we are receptive to the possibility that our enemies may have something to teach us about goodness will we be able to see them through the eyes of Christ.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus not only challenged his hearers to look upon the enemy in a new way, he also provided them with an opportunity to see themselves from a new perspective. Even as he created a window through which to view the Samaritan enemy, he held a mirror before his audience that they might see themselves in a way they had not previously entertained. The demonizing of foreign adversaries and the deifying of one's own people and causes most often go hand in hand. On the one hand, an idolatrous belief structure which bestows the place of paramount importance to one's own nation often leads to an excessively negative image of any national opponent. And on the other hand, a dehumanizing image of the enemy typically produces a gratifying sense of self-righteousness. Jesus confronted such self-glorifying in his great parable by depicting those who were the very symbols of respectability and the religious establishment, the Levite and the priest, as spiritually deficient people who looked to personal safety and ritual purity rather than being willing to accept risk or inconvenience for the sake of loving compassion.

In contrast to "normal" tendencies, Jesus refused to minimize the failings of his own people while magnifying the indiscretions of the

enemy. Even when Samaritans acted "in character" by being inhospitable to Jesus and his disciples, Jesus did not react with the sort of vicious indignation which was displayed by his companions, James and John (Luke 9:51-56). The disciples were quick to suggest that fire from heaven should be called down to incinerate the ungracious crowd. But Jesus directed not so much as one harsh word to the Samaritans, but rather he turned his rebukes to his own. Rather than allowing them the luxury of making the incident into an opportunity to demean the enemy and glorify themselves, Jesus made it an occasion for critical self-examination for his followers.

Seeing Through God's Eyes

Jesus seems to remind us that those whom we consider enemies are more like us than we want to believe, not only because they can be better than we generally imagine but also because we are worse than we usually admit. If we will pay closer attention to Jesus we will come to realize that it is not only those who are opposed to us who are enemies but we ourselves have been enemies—enemies of God. With characteristic irony, Kierkegaard remarked that Christ commanded us to love our enemies because only by so doing can we ever love God, since we have made God our enemy. But as the apostle Paul proclaimed, "While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10). Though we were hostile and undeserving of mercy, God gave his Son for us. By seeing ourselves as enemies who have been recipients of love, we are forced to reassess our image of our enemies as bestial entities worthy of all the destructive impulses within us. Again, this does not mean that we are to close our eyes to the sinfulness or corruption of our opponents. What it does mean, however, is that we must recognize that, as Will Campbell has put it, "We're all bastards, but God loves us anyway."

Nevertheless, ultimately our vision of enemies is not to be primarily based upon either the goodness or the sin we share with them, nor upon other assumed commonalities of humanity. Rather it is the fact that our enemies, no less than ourselves, are people for whom God hung on a cross. A failure to love our enemies and to view them as subjects of God's care and concern is to fail to bear testimony about the true nature of the gospel. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer once remarked, "The cross is not anyone's private possession; it belongs to all and is intended for all. The cross says that God loves our enemies. . . Everything depends upon our ability to see our enemy as a person God loves and for whom he has given his all. . . Jesus Christ died not for the respectful and peace-loving but for sinners and villains, for the disrespectful, the haters, the murderers. In our hearts, we see fit to associate only with our friends, with the just and respectful. But Jesus dwelt in the midst of his enemies. That is where he wished to be, and we are supposed to be there also" ("Loving Our Enemies," *The Reformed Journal*, April 1985, p. 19).

The image we have of our enemies and the way we treat those who are opposed to us, to our kin, and our nation could very well be the most significant indication of the authenticity of our faith. We cannot do violence to our enemies without desecrating the self-giving sacrifice of God for the world in the cross. If our lives reflect the gospel of Jesus Christ, our encounter with our enemies will not be seen as an opportunity to help purge the world of evil by destroying them. Rather, we will view such an encounter as an opportunity to bear witness to the power of the gospel by reflecting an unexpected love like that which we ourselves have received from our Lord. No longer will we view our enemies as candidates for annihilation but as possible citizens of the kingdom of God.

Craig Watts' articles are familiar to long-time *Integrity* readers. He, his wife Cindy, and their two children live in Carbondale, Illinois where Craig is the minister of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

He who walks in integrity walks securely. Proverbs 10:9

Beatitudes

Mark 7: 24-30

The proud came to see him.

Indignantly, they saw the unwashed hands of his men.

A woman whose little girl Satan took fell at his feet and begged.

She became obnoxious to his men.

“Send her away,” they said.

He said, “Yes, God’s children are hungry. They must be fed first.”

She said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, Lord, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

He said, “It is wrong to feed others first.”

She said, “Blessed are those who mourn, Lord, for they will be comforted.”

He said, “Their bread should not be shared with their pets.”

She persisted, “Blessed are the meek, Lord, for they will inherit the earth.”

He said, “If they hunger and thirst after righteousness they shall be filled.”

She said, “Please, Lord, one crumb under the table.”

He paused, “You shall have mercy, for you are pure in heart.

You saw God, while others saw dirt.”

She said, “Am I a peacemaker, Lord”
Am I His child?”

He said, “You are now neither Greek nor Jew!
Can you bear that insult?”

She said, “Lord, I only care about my daughter.”

He said, “Leave in peace, Satan is gone.”
“You alone understood my parable.”

— Daniel C. Matson

Dan Matson has his own law practice and is a city attorney. In the last few years Dan has concentrated on his paintings.

which have been exhibited throughout Michigan and the Chicago area. He and his wife Marlene live in DeWitt, Michigan.

Help in the Midst of Change

CURTIS D. LLOYD

Grand Ledge, Michigan

It has been said, “Nothing is certain except death and taxes.” During the past year I have been with several close friends through the experience of death. On April 15th each year I pay my taxes and often I am audited, but I am not a cynic — I am a Christian. Even though some things are not welcome in my life, I believe being a Christian makes a difference.

I would like to add “Change” to the list of certainties. The world we live in is experiencing change at a greatly accelerated pace. Such rapid change is disorienting and explains many apparent irrational acts by human beings all around us. I expect people in general to grab onto quack cures, involve themselves in escape devices, and to throw themselves into hedonistic adventures — all to escape the unknown, the frustrating, or in this case, change. Change often disorients because we are unable to understand what is happening. I think we humans are often more frustrated with the source, the pace, or the frequency of change than with change itself. What disappoints me, though, is that Christian people often behave no differently when faced with life’s dilemmas.

My experience in the Church is rather broad because of my travels for years among the brethren. Most of what I have seen is exciting and causes me to remain optimistic when I see brothers and sisters faced with dramatic challenges. Yet the response to change of some has kept a nagging question in my mind: “Do Christians have a resource that will allow them to behave in a different fashion than the worldly person does? If the answer is ‘yes,’ why is this behavioral difference not demonstrated more often?” The truth is that all too often we do not react well to the pressures of change and we demonstrate this in our poor behavior. The price of such actions is very high indeed! A very good friend of mine often says, “The cost of

a divided Church is an unbelieving world!” It is time that we looked directly at this issue in a practical way and put the knowledge we possess into action, so that the world at large will take Christ’s message seriously.

A Starting Point

I am convinced that our actions stem from our view of God. J. B. Phillips in his book, *Your God Is Too Small*, suggested many erroneous views of God. To illustrate, one view is of God as a Cosmic Policeman just waiting to arrest or zap us for wrong actions while another view presents God as a Benevolent Grandfather that is indulgent. I know people who must subscribe to these and other bogus views of God because I know how they treat others in various relationships. If I am correct, I had better go back and endeavor to understand my God as never before, because my actions that stem from this understanding not only represent me, but reflect on my God.

In a recent issue of *Integrity*, Ken Slater put forth an excellent article on “Change.” Having the opportunity to discuss this and other views with Ken, I can say wholeheartedly, I agree with his thoughts on the issue of change. He places the correct emphasis on change, as it touches the Christian, when he cites II Corinthians 5:17. We are “a new creation” which should thoughtfully cause us to act in a different manner. Nowhere will this be more apparent than in our human relationships. Ken suggests sensitivity in dealing with others by “learning to think in ‘their’ terms.” No question about it, this old world needs a lot more sensitivity.

Suggestions For Each of Us

I want to suggest some practical ways to deal with change in our individual lives and hence in the corporate life of the Church.

- Accept that change can be rapid or it may happen slowly, but in either case it is often frustrating. My father used to shake his head sadly and say, "Curt, when will you ever grow up?" He got so good at expressing himself that he could omit the words, shake his head and I would understand what he was saying. I think God must often shake His head sadly and wonder how long maturity will take.

- Be cautious in taking strong positions on issues. My experience suggests that nothing is easier to do or more hurtful to others who are experiencing a dilemma in the area of such an issue. (Having no children, my wife, Carole, and I possess most of the answers to raising children.) It is easy to take strong stands, in the arena of opinion, until the situation affects you or your loved ones. Suddenly simplistic solutions are not welcome or too helpful. The individual involved in the circumstance has a very intense stake in the matter while to the observer the person's position or behavior might seem fanatical or even misguided.

- Establish a 'problem solving technique' that is biblical, fitting to your personality style, and productive. Everyone has such a technique even if unreasoned. Typical reactions might be to retreat within oneself, to become pugnacious, or some other way of coping. Christians must cope, but the question in dealing with change is, "Will my problem solving methodology be productive?"

- Explore some likely events that will come into your life and decide ahead of the issue or change what your reaction might be. It's nice to deal with the hypothetical and it will be time well spent because nothing will be more practical when the real situation is presented. The military calls this 'basic training' and marriage counselors advise those desiring to get married to go through a period of 'engagement' which usually involves thinking through very specific eventualities prior to the commitment.

- Look closely at the biblical concept of repentance. I fear that we have viewed repentance as a one-time-thing, which it is not! God produces change in our lives, but repentance puts some of the responsibility on our shoulders. Christians must practice repentance daily. Confession and repentance have one of the best correlations to "change" that I find in Scripture. Very few things are more cleansing and helpful to our lives than repentance. Relationships start with my heart and one half of the equation of human relationships can be taken care of ahead of time.

Suggestions For Local Congregations

- View change as dynamic possibility. Look back, if you must, and notice the major and minor changes that have taken place in the Body to bring the group to this point. Change has been a valuable tool. Do not be threatened by change, rather harness it and utilize it for mission.

- Establish a problem solving technique. In my arena of working with churches, I can't help but point out that local congregations have problem solving techniques, too. Until some groups think their procedures through and improve and establish proper ones, growth cannot result.

Practical Solutions Demonstrated

One local congregation insists that all business be brought before the leadership group as a committee report *and then* that no action be taken until the next monthly meeting. They can declare an "emergency" and deal with such an issue at the current meeting, but in nearly 20 years of using this novel approach not once has an "emergency" been declared. This approach allows time for everyone to think, and communicate one-on-one rather than in a group situation. Honest questions can be answered with no embarrassment to anyone. It works for them.

I know of a local congregation that takes a

portion of its monthly meeting to literally examine the Scriptures and explore the group's attitudes on important issues. They discuss such questions as: How ought we and how will we deal with the immoral person? What is the process that we will use in dealing with a doctrinal issue? Addressing such critical issues ahead of time makes practical sense and will undoubtedly keep the group strong during turbulent times. It further lifts spiritual matters to a loftier plane than often is the case. This could work most places, but is rarely tried.

One fellowship had many older single women, many of them widows, as members who felt alone and not needed. They also had great change taking place in the group because of the many young people who were getting married and having children. Looking at two problems carefully, they saw the solution. Quickly they enlisted the older women to get on the telephone and drum up a crowd for the many bridal and baby showers given. They further requested that they bring a small gift that was of their handiwork. What happened? The young brides-to-be and their relatives and

friends were deeply impressed with the outpouring of love. The young women treasured the handiwork of their older sisters and a relationship sprung up in these cases that is really not surprising. Scores of additions were noticed all because leadership saw changing times as opportunities. [Equation: 2 Needs = 1 Fine Solution] I wonder how often identified problems could be wedded like this in the church?

Closing Thoughts

If "The Cost of a Divided Church is an unbelieving world" I am not willing to contribute to further division. I want to do my part to deal with change constructively. How I deal in personal relationships discloses how I view my God. TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

Curt Lloyd, a Minnesota "farm boy," was a full-time minister for 11 years. He recently retired from Great Lakes Bible College, having served in various administrative roles for 18 years. Curt's most recent role as President of GLBC allowed him to visit hundreds of churches on behalf of the college. He and Carole, his wife, reside in Grand Ledge, Michigan.

News & Notes

At Last!

Audio tapes are now available of last October's seminar on "Biblical Interpretation and the Restoration Plea for Unity" held at the Church of Christ at Fenton, Michigan. Speakers were: Dr. Leroy Garrett of Denton, Texas, editor of Restoration Review; Dr. Walter Zorn, professor at Great Lakes Bible College, Lansing, Michigan; and Minister Dr. J. Harold Thomas of Conway, Arkansas.

The set includes six-90 minute cassettes for \$20. Send your order and money to:

Amos Ponder
1269 Pickwick Place
Flint, Michigan 48507

Contributions

Our contributions are down this year and we want to remind you that we do depend on our readers sharing in the financial costs of *Integrity*. Your contributions are tax deductible.

We want to hear from you

We also request your prayers, letters, ideas, constructive criticism, articles, and love. Thank you!

Integrity Board of Directors

The Reflective Christian and the Risk of Commitment

The Myth of Certainty, by Daniel Taylor, Word Books, 1986, 154 pages.

Reviewed by J. Bruce Kilmer.

"We must know where to doubt, where to feel certain, where to submit."

— Pascal

"The older I get, the fewer answers I have."

— Reflective Christian

Do you find yourself wondering how you ever thought you had all the answers — an answer for every problem, an explanation for every circumstance? Have you ever felt a little uncomfortable with the self-assurance of the fundamentalist Christian critique of society that is so prevalent today? Yet have you been just as uncomfortable with the self-righteous indignation of those who have appointed themselves the progressive guardians of tolerance and reason when they are intolerant of those who have faith in a power beyond this world or belief in a life after death? If you have found yourself in this lonely quandry, Daniel Taylor's book may be of some help to you.

In honesty and humility Taylor looks at faith through the eyes of a fictional English teacher who finds himself caught between two approaches to life: the narrow, isolated world of fearful, angry, loud Christians and the broad "I'll try anything" world of elitist, secular-humanists.

Taylor discusses our doubts with us by alternately writing of his own struggles with the struggles of his fictional character, Alex, a first year instructor at Redeemed College who dares to take issue with the Dean on a matter of opinion. Taylor encourages us to risk faith in spite

of an imperfect church of which we are another imperfect part. He reminds us that if we are reflective at all, we will soon realize that there are many areas where we are unsure and many more where we just don't have a complete answer. But we can go on, growing in faith, if not in answers. In fact, even though we do not have all the answers, we can still have a faith that believes in something enough that we are willing to die for it.

When reading of Taylor's struggles we have company in our own. He quotes T. S. Eliot:

"Every man who thinks and lives by thought must have his own skepticism. . . that which ends in denial, or that which leads to faith and which is somehow integrated into the faith which transcends it."

Doubt is inevitable in matters of faith, but our attitude toward doubt is more significant than having doubt. Taylor believes that without doubt there would be no faith; for without doubt, there would be only certainty. If doubt can be harnessed to serve faith, then we will grow and we can live. Doubt makes its claims on us daily, as we live in the midst of a suffering and perverse world. But it is not doubt which should determine the character of our lives — it is faith!

I am uncomfortable with the sure, simplistic answers of some brothers and sisters, but I am equally uncomfortable with the answers of the world and society. This book provided encouragement for me in my life of faith as it debunked certainty as myth. Anyone who struggles with doubt, with trust, and with commitment will find a companion in Taylor and his fictional character, Alex. They are companions who make us laugh and cry, but most of all, they are friends who encourage us along the way.

Thank you for providing a journal which treats the great issues of the faith and of the Restoration heritage with depth and sensitivity.

I serve as elder in a congregation which exists as a result of a merger between a non-instrumental Church of Christ and an independent Christian church. I read with special interest articles published about unity in the tradition of the Restoration Movement. My church is College Park Christian Church-A Church of Christ, 116 N. Cottage Avenue, Normal, IL 61761. We have been in existence since 1971.

Best wishes for a successful publishing year. . .

Sincerely,

Michael Escoubas
Bloomington, Illinois

"Thanks for *Integrity*."

Bon Stockstill
Springfield, Missouri

"We did receive much teaching from the last issue of *Integrity*. Keep up the good work."

S. Davis
Clarksburg, W. Virginia

"Enjoy your magazine. Thank you."

M. Cash
Lancaster, California

"Your publication is excellent. I appreciate the positive approach you make to everything. The May/June issue which I have just received is a splendid example of this.

Thanks,
Edythe Lane
Wynne, Arkansas

Enclosed you will find a check for. . .to help with your effort in publishing *Integrity*. I appreciate very much your effort. We need more people like you who are concerned about the direction we are going and where we will be years down the road. I appreciate all your writers. You are doing a fine job.

Yours in Christ,
Enos O. Moore
Grenada, Mississippi