

Integrity

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■ INTEGRITY is published each month and seeks to encourage all believers in Christ to strive to be one, to be pure, and to be honest and sincere in word and in deed, among themselves and toward all men.

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Miscellanea

A New Year Begins: This issue marks the start of our seventh year of publication. Some suggest that the land should have rest during the seventh year; others think that since seven is the perfect number, this year should be the best of all. Wags aside, we are taking some steps to assure a better quality of material during the next year. We are also changing our page size for technical reasons, resulting in a slightly larger page and improved margins. Those who bind their copies will benefit from a different grain direction and a standard size. This is a good time to pause once again and thank all who have supported us financially. I am sure the Lord smiles at us sometimes. Recently our bills were larger than our bank account. While we were trying to figure out how to meet the deficit a brother in Florida was sending us a check for all we needed!

NACC: We are looking forward to seeing some old friends and making some new ones at the **North American Christian Convention**, Cobo Hall, Detroit, July 8-11. This is a *teaching* convention—think of all the college lectureships combined into one big event. With a couple of exceptions—Harold Ockenga and Oswald Hoffmann—speakers will be from the Restoration Movement. *It is my hope that many of the noninstrumental brethren will accept a special invitation to the Thursday evening session, at which Andrew Hairston will speak* (8 p.m., Cobo Arena). I will be participating in a unity workshop fostered by Fellowship, Inc. (4 p.m., Thursday).

Women and the ERA: This issue includes a response by Harold Key to Norman Parks' article which appeared in March. I would like to stress that there are two issues involved in this discussion, and they should by all means be distinguished. One's support of a broader role for women in church and society does not necessarily imply his support of the ERA. Both issues are attracting a lot of attention. Since Parks' article was published, readers have generously supplied us with material on the ERA. Most of it has been negative. The March issue of *Mission* was a special on "Women in Christ Today," edited by Bobbie Lee Holley. When the *Firm Foundation* published an article which ventured a defense of girls praying in devotionals (April 1), the editor received "more than a score of replies," three of which were printed May 13. Although the arguments are sometimes embarrassing, the debate is generally very healthy, and we need to give respectful attention to all sides.

Two Lecture Series: In the months ahead *Integrity* will sponsor two very important lecture series. The lecturer in the first, to be held at the end of the summer vacation, will be **Roy Bowen Ward**. Then in early winter **S. Scott Bartchy**, who was highly praised for his presentations last January, will return for another series. Detailed announcements will be published very soon.

—HL

Priests at Work

HOY LEDBETTER

You shall be called the priests of the Lord,
men shall speak of you as the ministers of our God.
—Isaiah 61:6.

He loves us, and by his death he has freed us from our sins and made us a kingdom of priests to serve his God and Father. To Jesus Christ be the glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.
—Revelation 1:5-6.

Come as living stones, and let yourselves be used in building the spiritual temple, where you will serve as holy priests, to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ.
—1 Peter 2:5.

The church has received grace; it must return glory. There are, of course, many ramifications of this succinct summary of the Christian experience. Not only does the church return glory for grace received, but it is also God's agency for communicating his grace to the world so that it, in turn, may glorify him. Thus the church functions as a holy priesthood, whose responsibility is to lead the world to worship its Creator. Worship is a very broad term in the New Testament, comprising every acknowledgment to God of his claims upon us. That is why Paul can say his "priestly service is the preaching of the gospel of God" (Rom. 15:16) and call the dedication of one's life to God his "spiritual service of worship" (12:1).

Priestly work which has as its objective persuading non-Christians to glorify God will occupy our attention in this article. Since it will be the basis of the discussion, I ask you to note well and keep in mind Paul's word to the Colossians: "**Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech**

always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one" (Col. 4:5-6).

Respect of Outsiders . . .

While the early saints knew that it was not their prerogative to judge outsiders, they also knew that they could not ignore the outsiders' judgment of them. And if overseers were required to "have a good reputation with the non-Christian public" (1 Tim. 3:7, NEB), so were the rank and file to "give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God" (1 Cor. 10:32). This concern for the impression the church made on the watching world is stressed in positive terms in Paul's plea to the Thessalonians: "Make it your aim to live a quiet life, to mind your own business, and earn your own living, just as we told you before. In this way you will win the respect of those who are not believers, and you will not have to depend on anyone for what you need" (1 Thess. 4:11-12, TEV)

Although it is not easy for us, in this

remote time, to discover the exact situation at Thessalonica, it is obvious that this passage envisions an excessive religious excitement and restlessness which resulted in meddlesomeness and neglect of secular employment. The problem was one which would damage their reputation among non-Christians as well as deprive them of economic independence. It is not difficult to imagine that, among other things, some of the Thessalonians were annoyingly aggressive in their attempts to convert others and that their religious excitement was so overwhelming that they had quit, or at least had become neglectful of, their jobs.

We must not suppose that these Christians seemed to themselves to be doing anything improper. Undoubtedly they thought their behavior was the correct response to keen religious excitement. But when people become "too heavenly-minded to be of any earthly use," when they needlessly disrupt pleasant relationships within the community, and when they neglect their employment and thereby place an extra burden on others, they cannot function effectively as priests, for they frustrate their true mission by losing the respect of unbelievers. This may not be a big contemporary problem, but it is common enough to warrant a reminder that we should conduct ourselves wisely toward outsiders.

Wisdom Needed . . .

The wisdom required in Colossians 4:5 is practical Christian wisdom, "good judgment in the face of demands made by human and specifically by the Christian life" (Arndt-Gingrich). The need for cleverness among disciples who face a hostile world is indicated in Jesus' directions in Matthew 10:16: "I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." This

requirement naturally reminds us of the cunning serpent who deceived Eve—especially so since the same Greek word for "wise" is used to describe him (Gen. 3:1, LXX). At any rate, we cannot defeat the enemy if we let him outsmart us; and we must never underestimate his intelligence. "Consecrated common sense," as L.B. Radford calls it, is imperative. But unfortunately, as Jesus said, "the children of this world are considerably more shrewd in dealing with their contemporaries than the children of light" (Lk. 16:8, Phillips).

But cleverness must be balanced with integrity, lest it degenerate into culpable craftiness. The innocence of the dove is therefore enjoined. Perhaps the best illustration of this quality is Paul's approach to the Corinthians: "We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4:2). Every word in this statement is important; it should receive more than casual attention from those who take their priestly service seriously.

Stephen's Wisdom . . .

But let us return to some specific applications of wisdom. In Acts 6 the word is applied to the seven servants, and to Stephen in particular, of whom it is said, "They could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke." Here wisdom is manifested in "theologically informed and irresistible utterance." Because wisdom in this passage is tied so closely to the Spirit, we may assume that Stephen's speech was a divine gift. For this reason many today, who do not expect to be similarly endowed, do not see much similarity between themselves and Stephen. But to blame most of our failure on the Holy Spirit would be blas-

phemy. The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Over 200 years ago Samuel Johnson said, "The mental disease of the present generation is impatience of study, contempt of the great masters of ancient wisdom, and a disposition to rely wholly upon unassisted genius and natural sagacity." And back in 1931 T.S. Eliot wrote, "The majority of mankind is lazy-minded, incurious, absorbed in vanities, and tepid in emotion, and is therefore incapable of either much doubt or much faith."

This situation has hardly improved. Despite the unlimited tools for learning at our disposal, we lack the motivation and discipline to prepare ourselves to challenge the responsiveness and wit of a generation which in a large measure has exchanged the opium of religion for the religion of opium. A successful priesthood presupposes a theological maturity which is expressed in full communion with the Holy Spirit. This is a fundamental first step in fulfilling our responsibility of leading the non-Christian world to glorify God.

Personal Faith . . .

But there is more to our ministry than "irresistible utterance." We must also manifest a personal unwavering faith in God's activity in today's world. In recent years I have had to face some pretty heavy troubles, which have been a real challenge to my faith. My experiences have led me to "prove [*probe* may be a better word here] what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:2). When I desperately needed to know that God was there, I discovered anew James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God . . ." The context of this verse deals with the problem of facing various trials, the exact nature of which is not spelled out, but it does not matter. What we need in the midst of

personal trials is the wisdom to see that God is there and that he is active on our behalf even when we are suffering. Such wisdom may be had for the asking, provided we ask in faith.

This wisdom is a valuable asset in our priestly ministry. Those who are healthy and prosperous do not bolster my sagging spirits by talking about how good God has been to them. I only wonder why he has not been that good *to me*. But when people assert their faith in the midst of trials, then my ears perk up. Their wisdom leads me to glorify God for the grace I have received.

Heavenly Wisdom . . .

But James has more to say. In his third chapter he contrasts two kinds of wisdom. One is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. It leads to jealousy, strife, rivalry, selfish ambition, disorder and base practices (14, 16). The other is true wisdom, from above. It is reflected in friendliness, gentleness, a peaceful disposition, willingness to yield to others, openness to reason, tolerant thoughts and kindly actions, and freedom from prejudice and pretension (13, 17). This passage makes an excellent commentary on Colossians 4:5. We need to study these characteristics carefully, for some of us have been spectacularly successful in avoiding them, either because we have a mean disposition or because we have a warped conception of what it means to compromise the truth. When we are cold and callous toward others, are narrow in our fellowship, love controversy, abhor losing an argument, fail to listen respectfully when another speaks, talk down to people, are prejudiced, always have to look good even if we must fake it, and cannot live in harmony with our own kind, how can we hope to have a good reputation with the non-Christian public?

C.F.D. Moule says that when Paul calls upon the Colossians to "behave with tact towards non-Christians," he "probably has in mind the difference between bold, uncompromising witness to the Christian allegiance when occasion offers, and a harsh, unloving, tactless obtruding of it at the wrong time." While we must make certain that our witness is timely, we must also be sure that we do not neglect real opportunities. "Making the most of the time" is literally "buying up the time." The Greek verb is an intensive form which suggests eagerness, "a buying which exhausts the possibilities available," that is, the opportunities offered by time are to be "tirelessly snapped up and used at the expense of great effort" (Friedrich Büchsel, *TDNT*, I, 128). Opportunity, no less than the kingdom of heaven, is to be thought of as a treasure hidden in a field or a pearl of great value.

Grace and Speech . . .

"Gracious speech" could be speech that communicates grace and reflects the atmosphere in which the speaker lives—which is certainly a scriptural idea. If so, it will indicate that the speaker has experienced — and still experiences — God's unmerited favor. Such a manifested attitude would make the Christian more attractive to the outsider in that it would eliminate boastfulness (one who lives by grace can hardly brag about his own accomplishments). It would also make him more tolerant of another person's weaknesses and thus would rule out the hard manner in which Christians sometimes deal with human waywardness. We may recall in this connection one Biblical qualification for a priest: "He is able to bear patiently with the ignorant and erring, since he too is beset by weakness" (Heb. 5:2, NEB).

But it is more likely that "gracious" in

this passage should be understood in the sense of "charming." This seems to be the meaning of Jesus' "gracious words" spoken in the Nazareth synagogue (Lk. 4:22), and he is our example. Our speech should be pleasant, attractive and witty, as opposed to what William Barclay calls "sanctimonious dullness." This view receives some support from the fact that Paul says it is to be "seasoned with salt."

Salt and Discipleship . . .

Perhaps we can better understand "salt" in this passage if we look at two of Jesus' sayings in which he used the word. He said in Mark 9:49, "For every one will be salted with fire." This statement must be viewed against the Old Testament sacrificial practice of seasoning the cereal offerings (Lev. 2:13), incense (Ex. 30:35), and animal sacrifices (Ezek. 43:24) with salt. The disciples, like the sacrifices, were to be seasoned with the salt of fiery trial, which would purge them of impurities and make them pleasing sacrifices. Salt, then, may imply a quality which makes something acceptable to God.

But in the next verse (Mk. 9:50) Jesus moves from the sacrificial metaphor to the domestic: "Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another." To understand this we should remember that earlier in the chapter the disciples are said to have discussed with one another who was the greatest. Such a discussion was entirely out of place, since it reflected an interest which was incompatible with self-denial—an essential ingredient of discipleship—and which threatened to disqualify them for their assigned mission of exerting a saving influence upon the world.

The idea that salt was essential to preserve food from putrefaction lies behind Jesus' demand that his disciples have salt

(the means of saving the world) in themselves and that they be at peace with one another (without which the saving influence would be lost). As there is no substitute for salt—"if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you season it?"—so is there no substitute among missionaries for total commitment to Christ alone, which rules out all questions of precedence.

Useless Talk . . .

This saving effect of salt is not far removed from Paul's exhortation, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear" (Eph. 4:29, NASV). The meaning of "unwholesome" is shown by what it is contrasted with: the speech forbidden is that which is *not good for edification*. It is not necessarily bad in the usual sense of the word, it is simply useless; it does not serve the needs of the community. Wholesome speech, on the other hand, edifies and imparts grace to those who hear.

Along the same line is Jesus' warning that we will have to account for every "idle word" we speak. An idle word is one which serves no useful purpose. It is better left unspoken, not because it is wicked, but because it is worthless. These verses graphically underscore the seriousness of the Christian's mission. *Whenever* he opens his mouth, he should exert a saving influence.

The Pastoral Epistles are particularly illustrative in this respect. Timothy is urged to "adjure them before God to stop disputing about mere words; it does no good, and is the ruin of those who listen" (1 Tim. 2:14, NEB). Similarly denounced is the one who "is morbidly keen on mere verbal questions and quibbles" (6:14). Such "verbal quibbles" may be innocent

within themselves, but they "give rise to jealousy, quarreling, slander, base suspicions, and endless wrangles." Those who engage in such word-battles may profess concern for the truth, but they are really sick. The Greek verb translated "is morbidly keen" literally means "to be sick," and, while the literal meaning must not be pressed too far, it was no accident that Paul used it in this connection.

Timothy is also to "turn a deaf ear to empty and worldly chatter . . ." (6:20). Again, "Avoid empty and worldly chatter; those who indulge in it will stray further and further into godless courses . . ." (2 Tim. 2:16). Such chatter is "worldly," not because it is positively bad, but because it is lacking in spiritual and moral value. It is "empty" because it has no meaningful content. It is "godless" (as some versions render the word; cf. the "godless myths" in 1 Tim. 4:7) because it is not related to the revelation of God in Christ Jesus.

Application . . .

I have given so much space to these verses because, after all these years, we are still hearing in our churches and papers a lot of "verbal quibbles." Much of our controversy is of no spiritual value and is therefore "worldly." Since it does not support the true religious life, it is "godless," no matter how much those involved may speak of God. "It does no good, and is the ruin of those who listen," because it distracts us from our proper mission as Christians. Not only so, but our word-battles, as any of us can testify, "give rise to jealousy, quarreling, slander, base suspicions, and endless wrangles." Anyone who doubts this has not been reading the journals. We can never function effectively as a priesthood of saints and conduct ourselves wisely toward outsiders until we get over this sickness. □

An Elder's View

ROBERT S. RASH

Riverside, California

We hear the question often now, "Why are so many of our preachers leaving the ministry?" This problem prompts the following observations, which perhaps may help congregations and their ministers to work together in their desire to see the Lord's work prosper and grow.

The first and foremost problem is a lack of Christian love by elders in many congregations. We are fellow-workers in the most rewarding work in the world, yet we fail to exhibit that fact by our enthusiasm and love for one another—and this must include the *preacher* too.

Our second failing is our lack of trust of the preacher and his suggestions. I can remember when almost any plan put forward by the preacher in a business meeting was invariably put off or "taken under consideration" because most of those present were afraid it would cost money, or wasn't practical, or might offend some of our older members. What kind of faith is this? If it's a good sound idea and shows at least *some* promise, we ought to make some effort to try it, instead of quietly letting it die. But you may say, "You have a responsibility to the congregation and must exercise that to the best of your ability." But doesn't our responsibility of feeding the flock and seeing that the gospel is spread include a responsible attitude toward trying *good* projects and not trying to bury them under a "do-nothing" attitude?

Thirdly, along the line of trust is our attitude toward our fellow elders. Do we

trust them fully and appreciate their different views and ideas? When one of us pushes his own projects, and another pushes his, where does this leave the preacher? For much too long we have tried to "run" the church like a business, where we base our decisions on whether the money is well spent and returns us so much on our investment. We fail to include God in our plans and decisions when we look at the question of whether the money was well spent. Who can tell when a project that may only convert *one* person may work through God's help to convert thousands? I *must* be able to trust my fellow elders.

A fourth problem is our lack of trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. How many of us believe in the daily watch care that the Spirit of God gives us in our endeavors on this earth? We *must* have a firm belief that God can exercise his helping and guiding hand in *all* of our activities, both spiritual and temporal, if we will only allow him to. We *must* have a deep and abiding faith in God's power through his Spirit to guide our thoughts and actions wherever we are. Without this faith we will become elders in name only, and our congregations will continue to drift along, "keeping house for the Lord," as it has been put. We will find it's much easier for us to just let things go and follow the majority in doing nothing!

Finally, I see preachers leaving the ministry because of a lack of vision in our elderships. How much are you involved in planning where your congregation will

be in 5, 10, or 15 years from now? Are you concerned about the spiritual and numerical growth of your people? We really don't need more "church building" preachers, more preachers to visit the sick and the absent, a new man who will revitalize the educational program, the youth program, or even the bus ministry; but we need elders who will exercise vision and perspective in church programs, who can show compassion, love and understanding in their relationship with each

other, with the preacher and the members, each and every one of them.

When all of us learn to put the Lord's work at the number one spot in our lives and make it have precedence over everything else, then we will not be home watching TV or whatever when we know our Lord needs us. Perhaps we will be able to keep our preachers if we can only remember Paul's words in Romans 12: "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice—this is your reasonable service." □

EDITOR'S RESPONSE TO THE FOREGOING

Having served as a preacher for many years, I would like to respond to the foregoing observations, not negatively, but with a preacher's viewpoint. First of all, our brother is to be commended for asking his fellow elders to examine themselves to see how they may have contributed to the problem of preachers leaving the ministry. And he is certainly right in calling for a greater degree of love and trust.

The reasons why preachers desert the ministry are, of course, many and varied. Possibilities not to be overlooked will include those about which the church is powerless to do anything: materialistic attitudes, personal problems, or a decision that one has simply entered the wrong profession. It seems safe to say that some preachers should leave the ministry. But many others should not, yet do, and for reasons we perhaps can and should correct.

I have been convinced for several years that one problem the preacher has difficulty dealing with is the **declining status of his profession**. Not only has the ministry lost status within society as a whole, but even within the church the preacher's standing in comparison with that of the elders has markedly declined. When I first began preaching back in the forties, the preacher had much more respect within the community and within the church than he does today. At that time, at least within my circle of acquaintances, preachers were making a strong attempt to encourage congregations to show more respect for the elders. But now there is a widespread feeling among preachers—although many of them understandably doubt the expediency of saying so—that the unilateral authority which elders have assumed is the greatest danger the church faces.

Given this situation, many preachers and elders naturally feel threatened by each other. This is particularly true of the preacher, who, in most churches, can be fired abruptly, perhaps whimsically, by the elders. Not only so, but the preacher *may* feel (and correctly more often than not) that he is better trained for ecclesiastical leadership, is more studious and therefore a better teacher and counselor, and has by virtue of experience a broader perspective in matters relating to the church than the elders. He also knows that he is the one to whom people come with their secret sins, for advice in crises, or answers to more than routine questions. In addition, he *may* have a deeper commitment to the church as a whole, since its furtherance is his life's work, for which, as he sees it, he has made considerable personal sacrifice. In view of his credentials, which the church presumably acknowledged in hiring him, he is understandably frustrated to find that he has no more voice in decision-making within the congregation than the lowliest member, and particularly when the elders announce important plans, of which he must be a part, without asking his advice and consent.

Another factor is the way the preacher must use his time. According to a study published by Samuel Blizzard in *The Christian Century* in 1956, preachers "actually spend most of their time doing those things they feel are least important." (This study is somewhat out of date, but the situation has probably not changed.)

In another study (cited by Glock and Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension*, 145ff.) of Lutheran parishioners, it was found that church members thought their ministers spent their time as follows (the list proceeds in order from

the most time spent to the least): sermon preparation; work for church at large; attending church meetings; office work; giving people advice; visiting nonmembers; visiting members; personal recreation. Actually, as any preacher knows, this belief does not correspond to the facts. Most preachers spend far less time in sermon preparation than they think they *should* or members think they *do*. (Blizzard concluded that, out of a ten hour work day, ministers spent 36 minutes in sermon preparation!)

One significant revelation of this study (and I think this applies to us as well as Lutherans) is that the ministerial activity which the members most approved of was not what they perceived the ministers as actually doing the most. For instance, visiting nonmembers and visiting members (in that order) were thought to receive the least of the preacher's time, but those activities (in reverse order) had the greatest importance in the members' approved list. And office work was last on the approved list.

Assuming that these findings give a reasonably accurate picture of what is happening among us, today, it seems that the church and the preacher need to reach a consensus with regard to which activities should receive priority. If both feel, as they apparently do, that office work and "Mickey Mouse" jobs in general should occupy minimal time, then steps should be taken to make this possible. If ministers feel that more time is necessary for preparing sermons and Bible lessons (which I think the majority should), then they need to communicate this to the congregation. The congregation, on the other hand, should try to understand that no individual member does or can observe all that the preacher does, and that the fact that a particular member has not been visited very frequently is not necessarily a sign that the minister is not "visiting members."

Preachers generally think of themselves as heralds of God's word. That is what they prepared themselves for, and that is what they understand their scriptural calling to be. Often so many trivial duties are imposed on the minister that he feels he cannot function as God intended, and so he sees very little point in functioning at all. When preaching becomes a mere job it competes very poorly with other job opportunities.

Another dimension has been added to this conflict regarding the preacher's sense of mission in recent years. In many places preoccupation with heresy hunting in conjunction with

a general attitude that "we have the truth" has made it difficult for the preacher to lead his congregation into new spheres of learning without risking suspicion or rejection. Some quit because they feel compelled to evangelize, but cannot do so within the churches they know.

Another cause of frustration is the minister's consciousness of inability to fulfill the church's expectations of him. From time to time he discovers that members are displeased with him. He may have failed to call on someone, perhaps because he forgot, perhaps because he was too busy with other matters. Or he may not have been friendly enough with someone. He understands the criticism and therefore feels guilty. He may tell himself that he has done his best, that anyone who knows his schedule or his weakness will understand. But still he feels guilty over what he has left undone. And he may get so tired of that burden that he gives up entirely. Not only do the congregation and the preacher need to have a clear understanding of what may rightfully be expected, but they also need mutual reassurance.

Finally I must mention financial security. When a preacher reaches the middle years, he hears a lot of talk among his friends about retiring. And he knows he will never be able to retire as they do. He (probably) has no home of his own, no pension, and very little savings. His salary has never been large, and he has always thought he should set a good example in supporting the church and other good works. He knows he should trust God, but at the same time he remembers what Paul said to the Corinthians about *equality*. So he feels it is unfair that other brethren should have their homes, retirement property and pensions, while he has nothing. He also knows that older preachers are not popular, that he has no security in the church—that it can send him away and forget him very quickly. So he decides to look out for himself, and the best way to do that is to find another kind of work. What impels him is not so much a materialistic attitude as a sense of justice.

Why preachers leave the ministry is a complex question to which none of us has a complete answer. But the typical preacher has had to wrestle with the problems I have mentioned, and various others. Any one of them is enough to nudge some out, and a combination of them would create a tremendous temptation even for the most dedicated. We need to know that.

REACTION

ANOTHER LOOK AT INTEGRITY AND THE ERA

HAROLD KEY

St. Louis, Missouri

At the risk of being labeled "male chauvinist pig," I want to respond to the March article "Integrity and the ERA" by Norman L. Parks. I realize I do this at the risk also of confusing the many who are certain that I am a blatant modernistic liberal. Most of the older preachers, professors and editors within Churches of Christ know that for the past twenty-five years I have been generally considered a heretic. This has not been my wish but it has been because I have always rejected the legalistic basis for attempting to have a right relationship with God.

Perhaps all the readers of *Integrity* know what legalism is. It is that pathetic attempt to reduce the will of the Heavenly Father for His children to a legalistic code of law and the subsequent effort to be put right with the infinitely righteous and holy God of the universe upon the basis of doing fully and completely all that He tells men to do. I reject such an approach to God because it is impossibly futile and it is a rejection of the grace God has offered us through Jesus Christ (cf. Gal. 5:4, 5).

I have refused to make anything a test of Christian fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. But this is by no means the same as being indifferent to the value or detriment of things or positions over which there have been serious differences of opinions. Neither pro-ERA nor anti-ERA is really a condition of salvation and therefore neither should be a

test of Christian fellowship. But this does not mean that ERA and opinions about it are matters of indifference.

My first college study of the Constitution of the United States happened to be in a class under Dr. Parks at David Lipscomb College in 1941. I still have the textbooks we used. Let me refer to the constitutional text itself. Article XIV (or the Fourteenth Amendment), Section 1, states: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law; *nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of law.*" (Italics supplied to focus attention upon the last clause.) Section 5 adds: "The Congress shall have power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article."

It seems to me that everything which is a genuine matter of justice in the treatment of women is already adequately covered by the Fourteenth Amendment. This Amendment is the recognized constitutional basis for legislation and enforcement against racial inequities among us because it specifies "any person" and "all persons" who are citizens of the United States. This would seemingly include

women also. Is there any more valid reason to have an amendment to singly specify sex than it is to have amendments ad infinitum singly specifying each and every human distinction?

If the advocates of the ERA protest that equal justice has not yet been extended in actual practice to women as a whole, then I certainly agree. It is especially shameful that women who perform the same work as men should be paid less by their employer simply because they are women. However, such injustice is not because the Constitution fails to grant the protection of women, but because enforcement is lacking.

Dogmatism . . .

But, be the Constitutional matter as it may, there is a more questionable aspect of Dr. Parks' article in *Integrity* to which I want to object. This aspect is a tendency so often in common with militant advocates of any position either left or right. It is the mistake which has been encountered over and over among militant legalists in the church in the past. What is involved is the tendency to equate one's understanding of the truth with the exact truth itself. When anyone elevates his own understanding of truth to an identification with absolute truth, this results in an attitude of infallibility. Such arrogance treats disagreements with harsh judgment of the motives and character of the ones who differ.

While doubtless the article in *Integrity* does not intend to assume such a dogmatic position, it seems to me that it has come close to falling into such a trap. The author deplors what he terms "extreme inflammatory claims" on the part of opponents of ERA, yet unfortunately, his article seems to be far from being free of rather inflammatory claims itself. His choice of adjectives describing anti-ERA efforts are often emotionally toned. For example: "big lie techniques," "notorious bulletin clippers," "slavishly copied," "gutter type opposition," "irrational fear

tactics," "bigoted opposition," etc. The very first sentence of the article begins: "In the prevailing belief in the male-dominated Churches of Christ that women are an inferior order of humanity . . ." Doesn't the author realize that his categorical indictments are somewhat incendiary also?

Perhaps all of Dr. Parks' charges are correct. Perhaps it is true that women are regarded particularly as an inferior order of humanity in some churches by some people. And then, again, perhaps this is not correct. Even if I believed such, I would certainly hesitate to make such a positive assertion. But even with all the legalism there is, I cannot honestly declare that I know of the definite existence of a single such congregation, to say nothing of the entire denomination's holding such a belief. Even the anti-woman-teacher sect within Churches of Christ does not convey the impression their position is because they believe women are an inferior order of humanity, but because they believe the New Testament Scriptures forbid women to teach.

Whatever criticism one may have of the hermeneutics practiced by Churches of Christ, their practices are based upon their belief that the Bible teaches such. It is uncharitable to impugn people's motives because we disagree with their interpretation of Scripture. Faulty exegesis is not necessarily the same as a wicked heart. Unfortunately, indictment of another's character because of disagreement in interpretation of Scripture has been a common fallacy in sectarianism. It is ironic that each legalistic party always accuses those who differ with them of not respecting the authority of Scripture. Yet all the while, each sect appeals to the Bible as the basis for its claim to be the true Church.

Churches of Christ have traditionally shared with other fundamentalist denominations the affirmation that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God. The American Restoration Movement of the nineteenth century asserted the repudiation of all

human creeds in favor of the Bible as their only source of faith and practice. The issue regarding Churches of Christ in relation to the proposed "Equal Rights Amendment" is not meanness of heart toward women but conditioning to a manner of hermeneutics.

Text in Context . . .

And with respect to Dr. Parks' hermeneutics, I suggest he consider the thrust of Scripture relating to the role of women. Although the New Testament writings do not teach any inherent superiority of man over women, they do assert rather emphatically a difference in relationship. The Biblical statement which is so often appealed to by proponents of "equality" for women, including Dr. Parks (who terms it "Holy Writ"), is Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

In both the immediate context and that of the entire Galatian epistle, this verse has to do singularly with the means of justification before God. It is not very sound hermeneutics to isolate a verse and ascribe to it a meaning quite apart from its context. This proof-text approach to the Bible is the forte of legalists. But they have no monopoly upon this method, as Dr. Parks' article illustrates. The Galatian churches were being troubled over whether righteousness before God is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ or by fully and completely keeping the commandments of God. Paul affirms in Galatians 3:26 (consistent with the entire epistle) the one and only way by which any one and every one alike can be put right with God. And that way is "in Jesus Christ."

Later, the same apostle wrote in Ephesians 5:22-24 concerning the relationship between the sexes, "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is

himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands." And again by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:3, "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." Paul writes on for thirteen more verses affirming the basis for and the implications of this man-woman relationship as "teachings even as I have delivered them to you." He returns to the subject briefly in 1 Corinthians 14:33-36 in an apostolic order to the church for restoring decorum to their gatherings. "As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be *hypotassesthosan* (in Greek), as even the law says . . ." If Dr. Parks objects to the word "subordinate" as being the best translation of this Greek word, still it is impossible to escape the fact that it does refer to submission on the part of women to the headship of men in human relations.

Now I can understand how someone might not like these and other similar passages (which are "Holy Writ" also). But I cannot see how we can ignore them. We might wish they were not there, but they are there and were obviously intended to teach a certain definite and distinctive relationship between the sexes. (And while we declare Jesus made no such sexual distinction Himself, it is still bothersome that there were no women among the Twelve Apostles whom He chose to be His most authoritative representatives after His glorification.)

The teaching of submission on the part of one to another follows a principle of orderliness rather than one of inferiority. While Philippians 2:6 states that in essence the Son was "on an equality with God," Jesus did not insist upon equality of headship. His self-emptying proves that "the head of Christ is God."

Even in a democratic society of equals, when for the sake of order people submit

to the ones they elect, no one should regard those who submit as being of an inferior order. The authority is not at all inherently in the ones elected but is a given authority for the sake of orderliness. So it is in a congregation, the overseers are by no means of an inherently superior order, but are given to the church for orderly development.

Personally, I happen to trust the Biblical teaching as the wisdom of our infinite

Father. Perhaps my being a man makes it easier for me to accept what I think He says through Scripture with regard to human relationship between the sexes. To those Christians who differ with me in this, while I obviously believe you are mistaken, I shall not impugn your motives. I accept you and love you as my brother or sister in Jesus Christ. Will you not do the same toward me and all others whom *you* feel are mistaken? □

REVIEW

SEX IN BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

■ *Secrets of Eden: God and Human Sexuality* by Jim Reynolds. Austin: Sweet Publishing Co., 1975. 191 pp., paperback.

It is a lamentable fact that Christians generally have failed to set their views of sex on a solid theological foundation. Not only have our lips stammered when asked to explain *why* extramarital sex is wrong (our usual resort—appeal to fear—has been especially impotent since the advent of the permissive age), but positive attitudes have also been lacking.

Fortunately, Jim Reynolds has written the first (as far as I know) Biblical-theological book on the subject by any member of our brotherhood. This book is much more than a handbook of ready answers to sexual immorality, for Reynolds seeks to restore physical intimacy to the honorable position in human relations it has in the Bible. Sex, far from being shameful, is seen as a valid part of pious living. Says the author, "The married man or woman who prizes prayer but who does not hope

to experience God in sexual passion needs not praise but Christian therapy. He or she should not be described as spiritual, but rather as disembodied." Only in this way can we account for inclusion in the Bible of the erotic Song of Solomon—a very troublesome work for our ascetic forefathers, whose allegorization of it is not without modern supporters.

One terribly expensive mistake of our so-called liberated society is its failure to appreciate the Biblical view that "sexual intercourse is more than a fusing of genitals. It was literally an intercourse—a *flowing through* of personalities that afforded a deep knowledge of the uninhibited self." Accordingly the word *know* is no mere euphemism, for "what is in fact conveyed in sexual intercourse is a knowledge both of one's self and of another."

Reynolds obviously believes the Bible and regards it as the ultimate source for understanding the deeper meaning of sex. Scripture references permeate each chapter, each problem is discussed against the Biblical background. Two chapters are

devoted exclusively to sexuality in the Old and New Testaments. The discussion is adequate, and all we could expect in view of the book's format, but one could wish for more detailed exposition of certain passages (1 Thessalonians 4, for instance, receives only passing reference).

One particularly valuable feature is the extended discussion of post-Biblical tradition, for the church is still perpetuating some hangups which began with the second-century fathers. Failing to know our history, many of us, in Reynolds' view, "have been destined to repeat the distortions of a generally anti-sexual tradition."

The sexual revolution in America must be seen as part of a larger picture. Much more comprehensive than sexual promiscuity is our alienation from God and the consequent failure to keep ourselves and other human beings in proper perspective. Although many good things are happening, American hedonism is still a form of idolatry, wherein sex "can be both a vehicle of self-deification and the expression of a despair that seeks to escape from the self by the deification of another"—in either case an egocentric rather than a theocentric outlook—and the only answer is conversion. The same answer applies to an inadequate, unfulfilling sex life in marriage: "Nowhere does the Bible offer a man fulfilling covenant relationship with a woman before that man is in covenant relation to God."

If Reynolds is right (as I believe he is) in saying "we cannot be intimate in unequal relations," this has some important implications for our current discussions about women. One chapter is devoted to women and the new creation, in which the equalitarian and subordinationist positions are fairly treated, but little clues to our need for a higher view of women tend to show up elsewhere too. For instance, this statement from the chapter on tradition: "The subjugation of women, though rationalized by reference to the fall, was to some extent rooted in the antipathy to physical sexuality . . ."

The book often points out (either implicitly or explicitly) the failures of Christians to cope with departure from the Biblical ideal. But why have we failed? In one respect, the book itself is at least a partial answer, for our thesis has lacked depth and breadth. But even if we always *said* the right things, we would not be persuasive, for many of us, as Reynolds correctly reminds us, are materialistic, undisciplined pleasure seekers who tend to avoid in-depth relationships and are therefore poorly qualified to assist young people who are wrestling with their own sexuality. Again the stress is on right relationships which can only be achieved when we put God back at the center.

In the three important chapters on divorce, homosexuality and abortion, the book comes to terms with some of the most ticklish problems the churches face. How many churches have been split and how many hearts broken over the question of divorce! And more and more we are being called upon to deal with homosexuality and abortion *within the church*. If for no other reason, we should read this book for the insight it provides into these persistent problems.

The title of *Secrets of Eden* implies that through the fall man has lost something vital to complete happiness. Sexual sin, like every other sin, not only does positive harm, but it also deprives us of being all we were meant to be. God's saving grace is not frustrated by our futility or perversion, but only by our stubborn hearts. This book conveys his call to remember from whence we have fallen.

The book is designed so that it can be used in discussion groups or more mature Bible classes as well as in private study. Hence there are thirteen chapters with questions (very helpful) and suggested works for additional reading (especially valuable for teachers) at the end of each. Dr. Reynolds has provided us with an excellent text for group study. By all means let us make use of it. —HL