

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

## Integrity

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# Integrity

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RENEWAL, UNITY, AND RESTORATION *(continued from page 122)*

that these distinctions are done away with, for there is diversity within the body, but that they are transcended. And the same can be said of the theological differences which we are so concerned about, and which were also of no little trouble in the early church. But such differences can never be settled by an externally imposed creed, such as we have developed in connection with our tainted restorationism, but they must be resolved within the fellowship of the body, in which each member has his own respected function, his own liberty of thought and expression, and his own responsibility to arrive at his own firm conviction, and wherein all other members view him as one in whom the Lord is pleased to dwell.

Finally, and practically, it is our duty to tune our God-given minds into harmony with His mind, and, from that perspective, to pray for unity just as Christ did, to give to our teaching that same emphasis on the essential oneness of the church which distinguished Christ's pioneer ministers, and to leaven the schismatic world by practicing what we preach. Perhaps, by the grace of God, we can rescue our movement from the psychology of exclusionism and reclaim its original vision of the church of Christ upon earth as essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one. □

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## FROM THE EDITOR

### SOME POINTS FOR CONSERVATIVES

One hundred years ago, in February, 1878, when a Texas congregation objected to receiving a black member, David Lipscomb wrote in the *Gospel Advocate*:

We believe it is sinful to have two congregations in the same community for persons of separate and distinct races. That race prejudice would cause trouble in the churches we know. It did this in apostolic days. Not once did the apostles suggest that they should form separate congregations for the different races. But they always admonished them to unity, forbearance, love, and brotherhood in Christ Jesus.

Although Lipscomb acknowledged that "race prejudice would cause trouble," he saw only one judgment to be rendered upon the maintenance of separate congregations: "it is sinful." Apart from the casual interest it may evoke as a note on our calendar, his statement is instructive for at least two reasons.

First, Lipscomb demonstrated that a conservative may have as keen a social conscience as anyone else. Given the time and place in which he wrote, we must, from our perspective, regard him as extraordinarily progressive in terms of racial integration.

In the second place—and here is the point for us—his position was based upon the Bible. He confronted the people of his time with a "thus saith the Lord," even when dealing with a problem which "would cause trouble." He did not wait for the execution of civil law to create a climate wherein the church could comfortably do what was right, but he appealed to the highest authority of all: God's will. And that should be the basis upon which the church challenges the world today.

It has long been my conviction that the social sins of conservatives have been due to their selective perception, and not because of any weakness in the revelation which they profess to follow. The more seriously one takes the Scriptures, the more evangelistic he should be with regard to human equality, rights, and freedom. If we conservatives fail in this respect, it is not because of *what* we read but *how*.

## Job Revisited—A Mirror of Friendship

DAN G. DANNER

Portland, Oregon

I sometimes have been amazed that the Wisdom literature was given canonical status by the ancient Hebrews. Solomon and his wise men represented a type of conservative philosophical movement which was not unusual for the time in the ancient world. But that virtuous and good people are rewarded in this life and that wicked and bad people are punished and reach an early grave is not a truth that many of us can today identify with. Neither could Job.

There is no doctrine of an afterlife in the Old Testament, at least not until the Jews experienced the assimilation of Persian and Greek ideas with their own in the exile. The picture of Jewish belief in post-exilic times and in the New Testament is very different from what one reads in the Wisdom Books. Such is the nature of acculturation. Since Yahweh was a God unknown and unknowable to man, it was totally dependent upon God to reveal Himself. He made Himself known in the arena of historical events; Yahweh was the God who worked in history. Therefore *in history* God either rewarded or punished mankind. The Book of Proverbs allows for the very simple and rational notion that since God is just He would reward in history, not in some immortal state, those who were just and upright. The wicked, by the same rationale, received punishment this side of Sheol, that is in this life.

Such a cosmic arrangement was demanded and wise men in Israel adumbrated it thoroughly and piously. And why not! It made sense and it proved the justice of a God who is known by His works in the drama of history.

But Job became the true test of this conservative point of view. What about the man who suffers *in this life* more than his due? What of the man who understands his own finitude but who, at the same time, has realistically taken account of his own life and found that he is suffering beyond the just causes of his own selfishness? Has he robbed the poor? Has he adulterated his vows to family and friends? Has he been insensitive to the plight of the disinherited?

Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar are convinced that Job misread his own condition. Sitting in the public garbage dump, covered from head to toe with ulcers festering in pain and anguish, there was only one answer: Job was a type (a stereotype!) of a person who did not take seriously the justice of the God who acts in history. "If you suffer, Job, it is for a single, cosmic-cause-and-effect reason: you are a gross sinner. You suffer, Job, in direct proportion to your wickedness. Justice so demands!"

Job knew the conservative wing of the Wisdom movement as well as did his so-called friends. He, however, was not persuaded. It was God who was to blame. Yahweh is the sole cause for the way things are in the universe; who can fathom this transcendent and Wholly Other Cause? There is no devil to blame—the devil does not make Job do what he fears as blasphemy. No, only God. But being so “other” than man, so distant and unlike man, God cannot “feel” with man. Job thus pled for help—a witness in the heavens to plead his case before Yahweh, like the ancient Babylonians who, for each individual, had gods to intercede before the pantheon of higher gods too involved with celestial happenings to be concerned with the frivolity of the human condition. Job requests a fair hearing, a trial in which God is called to testify and make charges. The old patriarch cries for an umpire to “call the shots” and determine Job’s fate. He is willing to accept justice; his problem is that he is convinced there is no justice. Why does God interfere in His providence with the affairs of people? Better to die and be done with the mess. Life is absurd.

Through the dialogue with his friends Job yells out for friendship. He wanted someone to feel what he felt. He sought no agreement theologically—he sought merely one who could sympathize with his suffering and finitude, someone who could, for a moment, know of his doubts and pain. But to no avail.

Instead, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar preach a doctrine Job already knew. They come to comfort by defending a God Job knew did not exist. They prepared a sermon on the tragedies of sinful living and pontificate it to a man undone and confused. They make Job out to be a *particular* type of a *generalized* theological model—the wicked who needs to see his punishment as God’s acts, the wicked who needs but to turn again to the Creator and Sustainer and be healed. All will come back to point one; pragmatically, Job should see that his wealth and good life would be restored four-fold. That would be little to ask of Job! “Just think, Job, success, wealth, the good life and long mortality. Why not?”

“Because I am innocent,” says Job—“oh, not innocent in any total or comprehensive sense, but innocent in terms of *correspondence*—my guilt and my lot in life do not correspond; something is wrong and out of kilter. I need a friend.”

Pity me, pity me, you that are my friends;  
for the hand of God has touched me.  
Why do you pursue me as God pursues me?  
Have you not had your teeth in me long  
enough? Job 19.21-22

Only the donkey and the ostrich can feel with him. His friends offer only theological arguments, defenses of a doctrine of God, insensitive sermons to one whose ears are festered with boils and ooze with pus.

The lessons for me as a Christian today are clear enough. They speak of my self-righteousness and human-oriented sermons; they speak of my constant stereotyping of the wicked; they speak of my generalizing the person who suffers and moans at my doorstep, in my classroom, in the newspapers. I learn of my lack of involvement for the sake of my own good name, of my concern for my heavenly home, my warm and comfortable God who answers my prayers. I read Job and see a despicable picture of myself pretending to be a friend to sinners.

And then I think of the Man for Others, the Man of Nazareth who showed the greatest victory over evil to be one of suffering love. I think of Job’s relentless cry, and his relenting acquiescence to God. Woe to him who would be so familiar with such a Holy One. Woe to him who would dare “walk and talk” with One so Wholly Other. Woe is me. “What reply can I give thee, I who carry no weight? I put my finger to my lips” (Job 41.4).

Seeing Job anew as a friend I see myself in truer light. I know I am nothing. I struggle in faith to believe, in doubt to believe—Lord, help my unbelief. I struggle with

Job to learn that the hard facts of life cannot be ignored or denied. The values I cherish, the little gods I manufacture and worship, are all torn away before my eyes. One thing stands, one final Reality appears to be the process by which all things come into being, exist and then pass away. It is the Ground of Being that does not change. What else abides? What else is there? God gives and He takes away. That is what Job ultimately saw. From Him we come, in Him we take a stab at life, to Him we return.

Job learned this insight in a great struggle of faith and doubt. The faith is laid in a

foundation of utter despair of reliance upon any or all lesser causes and in resignation which has faced, and accepted, the best and the worst that life can offer. Standing before The Almighty One, no person is clean. We pass in this faith-struggle from doubt to affirmation, from fear and hatred of this One to trust and even love.

Whom else have I in Heaven?  
When with You, I care not for earth,  
Though my flesh and my mind waste away,  
My mind’s rock, and my portion is God  
forever. Ps. 73.25

But along with Job, I discover something else. I discover the true need I have for a friend and how frequently my own attempts at friendship are futile, condescending and ugly.

Somber I go, yet no one comforts me,  
and if I rise in the council,  
I rise to weep.  
I have become the jackal’s brother  
and the ostrich’s companion.

Job 30.28-29

□

## Renewal, Unity, and Restoration (2)

HOY LEDBETTER

A few years ago the first issue of a new periodical carried a feature article which contained so many misapplications of Scripture and distortions of New Testament Greek that I felt constrained to send a response to the editor. He never published it, but he did send back a letter in which he insisted on the importance of playing it safe and asked me whether, if I were driving on a mountain road, I would get as close to the cliff as possible or would stay on the inside. The problem with his argument, quite apart from its irrelevance to the questions under discussion, was that it was being used (as it has been many times in other situations) as a cloak for a sectarian stance. Not only does the concept of "playing it safe" look suspicious in the light of several passages in the Bible, but what is actually safe must be determined within context; the slogan "slow down and live" may be an invitation to disaster if one is flying a plane or driving a car on a busy expressway. And so it is with the religious life.

The idea that we should always take the so-called safe course has, I think, done a great deal of damage to the unity of the church. And since renewed Christians should be expected to exhibit the divine mind in all of their dealings, we need, in this connection, to probe deeper into the divine mind as revealed in the teachings of Jesus, where we may find that, because we have been too careful, we have fallen far behind the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith.

### THE "RECKLESSNESS" OF GOD

Unfortunately, we do not always share the divine certainty that the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. In Jesus' parable of the weeds in the field, the servants are forbidden to gather the weeds from among the wheat, lest in gathering the weeds they uproot the wheat along with them. The astonishing thing in this parable is that God considers it safe to let the weeds grow with the wheat. It has often been pointed out that serious attention to the obvious meaning of this parable would have made the martyrdom of alleged heretics impossible. Of course, as Shakespeare noted long ago, the real heretic is the one who builds the fire, not the one who burns in it. But what is wrong with such violent preservers of the church?

It is not that they are necessarily deliberately vicious people, but that they look at things from the wrong angle. And this parable is a corrective to their earthly outlook, for it asserts the amazing fact that, in the words of J.A. Findlay, "good seed *can* survive at all in a world in which, by all reasonable human calculations, it should have been choked to death long ago."

"By all reasonable human calculations" is the way too many of us make our decisions. When we evaluate God's power by all reasonable human calculations, we will never have God's confidence that his good seed is indestructible, and we will consequently seek to root out, sometimes quite violently, all sorts of innocuous aberrations.

When the church is renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator, it will desist from handling the problem of diversity according to human calculation, for God is far more reckless in his dealings with men than we are.

Our underestimation of humanity is also indicated in the parable of the seed growing secretly, in which it is made clear that good seed is capable of bearing fruit *of itself*. It can grow without the aid of what James Denney called our "irreligious solicitude for God." Even our perverted nature is capable of more than we sometimes think, and God recognizes this.

That God is a great risk-taker is illustrated in the parable of the lost sheep. "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it?" But human calculation wonders, What about those ninety-nine who are left in the wilderness? Is not leaving them there too much of a risk to take? It is a risk, no question about it. But the *possibility* of loss of the ninety-nine must be weighed against the *probability* of loss of the one. And that is why God takes risks, because of the higher good that may come of it.

According to reasonable human calculation, God can be pretty careless in his dealings with human beings. For instance, in one parable he is pictured as the master who girds himself and has his servants sit at the table while *he* serves *them*. For obvious reasons, that is not a precedent which many masters of slaves would care to follow.

When Jesus said in Luke 17:21 that "the kingdom of God is within you," he was speaking to—of all people—Pharisees. This is one reason why many interpreters believe that the Greek phrase "within you" should be translated otherwise, for it would be inappropriate, so some think, for Jesus to say to Pharisees that the kingdom is "within you." It may be that we put more distance between ourselves and the Pharisees than the facts warrant. At least it should be remembered that, according to Acts 15:5, the church in Jerusalem contained "some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees." This party of the Pharisees was a great deal of trouble to the early church, since they tampered with what many of us call "the plan of salvation," and it may be that some of the more liberal brethren regarded them as weeds in the field. But if so, no one ventured forth to pull them up, for the evidence indicates that they were never cut off from the fellowship. God can put trust in people who do not seem to be altogether trustworthy. And I like that idea, because one of such I am.

### TOO LENIENT WITH SINNERS?

For many people I know, one of the most troublesome passages in the Bible is the well-known parable of the prodigal son, which Joachim Jeremias more accurately calls the parable of the Father's Love. In that story, the father welcomes the son back without even allowing him to finish his well-rehearsed confession, or to make any promise of reforming his manners. A good many Christians have been bothered by the fact that the father demands no fruits of repentance, insists on no promise of future fidelity, or requires no assurance that the young scamp would not run away again. By all reasonable human calculations the father was just looking for trouble in being so easy on his wayward son.

The idea that God is too easy on sinners did not originate with the prodigal son's

elder brother. This wrongheadedness is at least as old as Jonah, for when God decided not to destroy the Ninevites, "it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." He asked the Lord to take away his life, for he just couldn't stand to live with such a gracious God. Unfortunately, he was not the last preacher to grieve over the power of God's message to move certain unacceptable people within the sphere of his grace. There are some with whom we hesitate to share the kingdom of God, even when they put on sackcloth and fast, for no amount of repentance will make them just like us. The drag-net does not distinguish between good and bad fish, and we would prefer not to fish in certain waters than to have to live with some of those we catch.

Lacking renewal unto the knowledge of God and therefore acting by our reasonable human calculations, we demand conformity where God allows liberty. Contrary to his wishes, and in complete distrust of his power, we violently pull up the weeds that appear, and at the same time do untold damage to the field. Refusing to allow tender plants to grow at their own pace, or even to believe they will grow at all without our help, we constantly yank and tug on them until we disable or destroy them. Instead of concentrating our efforts and intelligence on the sheep that are lost, we focus all of our powers on the ground we have gained, staying with the ninety-nine and building a fence of orthodoxy around them in the vain hope that no subversive influence will penetrate it. Refusing to believe that the kingdom of God can possibly be within those whose religious or social or moral virtues may be suspect, we disqualify all citizens whose ecclesiastical papers are not in perfect order. And because our hearts are so narrow that we cannot appreciate how big God's is, if we are not presumptuous enough to find fault with him directly, we at least do so with the objects of his love and find some excuse to drum them out of the family.

### THE RESTORATION MIND

After this brief sampling of the divine mind (and it is only a sample), I would like to turn to the restoration mind. A few years ago in our community, one brother said to another that he did not believe it was a sin to have instrumental music in worship and that he thought the Lord's supper could be eaten at times other than Sunday. In thorough exasperation, the other brother replied, "If I believed that, I wouldn't believe anything at all, and I would quit going to church." For a while I filed that statement away in my memory under the heading of "the dumbest things I have ever heard," but since then I have had to upgrade it a bit. In a way it is not dumb at all, but, given the presuppositions in which this man had been trained, it is a quite logical deduction and a good illustration of a significant development within the restoration movement.

Our movement, holding to Thomas Campbell's thesis that "the Church of Christ on earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one," began with the noble purpose of uniting the Christians in all the sects. But many of Campbell's successors have come to feel, although they might not state it so blatantly, that "the Church of Christ on earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally *us*." What has happened to us? Well, for one thing, the uniting of Christians in the sects is precluded by a refusal to acknowledge that those in the sects are Christians. From that point of view, there really isn't anyone to unite. But how did we arrive at this notion?

We did so when our unity movement became so dragged down with our restorationism, with its notions of uniqueness and exclusionism, that we moved from the world of reality to the world of fantasy. Restoration came to mean the restoring of certain arbitrarily selected features of the early church, which reflected our understanding of such matters as terms of church membership, worship, ministry, and organization. This so-called model church has never existed, either in the New Testament or in all of history, but was a fanciful composite put together from some knowledge of the various characteristics of several first-century churches and from some speculation on our part as to how they ought to have been. In the course of time we stopped talking about *seeking* to restore the New Testament church and began declaring that we had actually restored it. While we still called ourselves a unity movement, we were actually defending our right to exist as a separate denomination. Our original ecumenical objective has not only been overshadowed by our restorationism, but has essentially been replaced by it. (This development, of course, is not unique with us; it has been the plague of restoration churches generally, of which there are many.)

### NOT UNITY BUT SALVATION

In the *Restoration Quarterly* (third quarter, 1961), Jay Smith said of the mainline Churches of Christ: "Restoration is not preached among us primarily for the purpose of uniting the religious world, but as the only valid means of salvation." Assuming that this appraisal is true, we should not wonder that many of Campbell's descendants are among the severest critics of his outlook. Such overwhelming significance is attached to restoring our ecclesiastical stereotype, with all of its incidentals, that one cannot go to heaven without it. That is why the brother whom I mentioned would quit going to church if he had to acknowledge that one could be saved while using instrumental music or eating the Lord's supper on Wednesday evening. He had long been exposed to preaching which emphasized with monotonous frequency that these were essentials to the restored church, which in turn was essential to salvation. He was like a man hanging from a cliff by a chain: if one link broke, it did no good to talk about the others. Belief in the various features of the pattern church were just as important to him as belief in God.

We need to remember that this is why some brethren react with such frenzy when their separatist stance is questioned. They are not just fighting for good ideas, but for their very religious life.

I do not wish to quarrel with restorationism in its true and proper sense, and I certainly do not intend to suggest that all restorationists are sectarians, since there are many magnificent exceptions, but I strongly stress that restorationism in general has succumbed to one tragic error, and that is its failure to restore the one thing needful, the one unfailing characteristic of the early church—its ecumenical spirit. And since we have been thoroughly conditioned psychologically to reject this ecumenical outlook in favor of less significant concerns, we must have nothing less than a total renewal of the mind so as to be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is good, acceptable, and perfect, in this respect as well as in all others.

In Romans 12, immediately after calling upon the Romans to "be transformed by the renewal of your mind," Paul says, "I bid every one among you not to think of

himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him. For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." This passage, which is a book within itself, brings us to renewal in relation to the Pauline concept of one body in Christ, about which, unfortunately, I can only comment briefly. (But I recommend that you read Eduard Schweizer's little book *The Church as the Body of Christ*.)

### THE MEANING OF THE BODY

In his teaching on the body, Paul brings to bear upon Christian thought the Hebrew notion of solidarity. The Hebrews (whose language, by the way, contained no word for body) thought of man as an individual only after seeing him as part of a larger whole. Man was not man except in binding relation to others. True humanity consisted in one's incorporation into his people and into God's history with his people. Paul coupled this concept with the Greek word body, a common figure for coherent unity. Hence, the word body, for Paul, describes man in encounter, in his relationship to God and his fellow man. From this point of view, there is no real difference in Christ's body which died on the cross and his body the church, since both are the means of his service to the world.

Applied to the church, the word body does not denote a group of Christians who have banded together with the common goal of tolerating each other, but it is a fellowship *in Christ*, which derives its unanimity from the oneness of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. This fellowship deserves the name body, not in the mere Greek sense, but because as a part of the heavenly fellowship it participates in God's unifying encounter with the world.

In eating the Lord's supper, the bread which we break is a participation in the body of Christ. But we must not ignore, as the Corinthians did, the most important words of institution, "This is my body which is *for you*," because the phrase "for you" gives the real meaning to the word body. The church should be "for you" just as the body on the cross is "for you." Lacking this aspect of sacrificial service, it is not the body of Christ.

While the New Testament does not formulate an order of worship, it does prescribe an attitude. If we fail to see ourselves as Christ's organism for unifying the world, or if we fail to see our fellow participants as those in whom Christ's presence in the world is manifested, we cannot eat the Lord's supper without condemning ourselves. And a communion which has created so many divisions over the Lord's supper needs to take this lesson home.

Since the Lord's supper is a concrete manifestation of the body, it is not something that can be eaten individually. Hence it is not a sacrament, but a fellowship meal. This is why I am bothered about the common practice which forces someone to stand up in our Sunday evening services and partake of the supper by himself, or even worse, to go off into a separate room. Such practices rule out real participation.

Renewal within the one body, the one new man, means that there is no rich or poor, no slave or free, no male or female, no Greek, Jew, barbarian or Scythian. Not

*(continued on back cover)*

## Comment

by NORMAN L. PARKS

### HOUSTON:

#### THE END AND THE MEANS

The little lady is a model of Christian decorum. Yet she had been aroused by the "minister" to accompany his wife and other agitated members to the Houston "pro-life" convention to save America. For, as he had said, the homosexuals, infant murderers, libbers, atheists, and Communists were scheming to take over the country through the adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment.

"Have you ever read the Equal Rights Amendment?" she was asked.

Well, no, she really hadn't. The preacher had told them what it would do. But she listened patiently to the reading.

Section 1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Section 3. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.

Is that all of it, she asked, in a puzzled voice? Has not something been left out? Where were those provisions about homosexuals, abortionists, unisex restrooms, and compulsory military service for women? Yes, and about churches having to hire women in the pulpit? These were the things the preacher had talked about!

These things, she was assured, were the product of the preacher's hysterical imagination. If the ERA was ratified, abortion and homosexuality could still be made crimes without violating the Constitution. And as for the drafting of women,

Congress has always had that power and has never chosen to exercise it. The ratification of the ERA would not affect the defense power of Congress in any way.

#### WHAT IS THE ERA ABOUT?

Then what is the purpose of the ERA, she wanted to know. The answer was that, for one thing, it would require women to be given equal pay for equal work and put the power of the federal government back of the requirement. Well, certainly women ought not to be discriminated against in pay, she agreed. Also in matters of promotion. She did not think that an employer should refuse to promote a woman because of her sex, while giving a man the preference. Another purpose of the ERA is to prevent the courts from enforcing laws and rules which deny females equal protection of the law, as, for example, in inheritance or the control of property. She thought that this purpose was also good, particularly as it applied to the laws of her home state which reduce women to second-class citizens in matters of inheritance. In Tennessee, for example, when a wife dies without a will, even though she has living parents, all of her property and jointly-owned property goes to the husband for life. But if the husband in the same situation dies, only one-third of his property goes to his wife and the remaining two-thirds goes to his parents! Again, where the wife with children dies, all of the property goes to the husband. But if the husband dies, only one-third goes to the wife and the remaining two-thirds goes to the children! There are scores of similar discriminations embedded in the common law of the states which the ERA would cancel. And under federal law, divorced wives may be denied retirement under Social Security.

#### MEANING WHAT IT SAYS

The words of the ERA are easy enough to understand, the little lady agreed, unless they conceal something not obvious to the reader. The answer is that the ERA

is perhaps the clearest and simplest amendment ever proposed for ratification. It gives women no new rights. It simply rules that where a right is present, it must be applied equally to male and female. Whatever rights males have, females cannot be denied them. The purpose of the amendment is to put an end to the denying to a person a right solely because of being a female. It proclaims the Biblical doctrine that with respect to rights "there is no male or female." That and nothing more. Does this mean, then, that a school board could deny a teaching position to a prostitute without violating the ERA? Certainly, if the decision is based on prostitution and not on sex, and applied equally to both men and women.

The ERA has nothing to do with abortion, homosexuality, atheism, Communism, alcoholism, or prostitution. By no stretch of the imagination would it require the election of an alcoholic, or a prostitute, or a lesbian to a public school position. There is a vast difference in a bank denying credit to a person simply because she is a female, and denying credit because she is a prostitute. The ERA would indeed say to a bank that persons could not be discriminated against in the matter of obtaining bank credit because of sex. This is a widespread abuse today.

But do not lesbians and pro-abortionists support the ERA? And is not this enough of a reason to oppose it? How absurd! They also support pure food laws and social security. Should we oppose pure food laws because lesbians believe in them? The number of lesbians in America who support the ERA are but a handful when compared with the tens of thousands of hard-working mothers, loyal housewives, and Bible-loving Christians who believe that women should have equal rights before the law.

#### "ON TO HOUSTON"

In spite of the basic purpose of the ERA, a lurid campaign to defeat it has been sponsored by numerous Church of

Christ clergy in many states. In some congregations efforts have been made to enroll every woman on a letter-writing team to swamp the state legislature and Congress with letters of opposition. Preachers' wives were put on tours to churches to fire up the women with the most extravagant claims against the ERA. Churches sponsored anti-ERA rallies. Literature sent out by a few sources was reproduced and distributed by thousands of sheets which if accepted seriously would brainwash innocent souls.

The "pro-life" convention at Houston was made a center of interest and thousands of misled women were persuaded to make the long bus trip to Houston. The fact that women from Texas and Tennessee—the two states in which the Church of Christ is the strongest—overshadowed all other states reflects the extreme organizational effort within the church. Probably few of the thousands of women who made the Houston trek had ever read the ERA and fewer still had ever participated in a rational discussion of it, which would have required them to identify the discriminations which females suffer and how the ERA would be implemented to eliminate those discriminations. All they had were the canned and mostly preposterous arguments against it coming out of the preacher's study.

#### THE ALLEGATIONS QUOTED

The church handouts were calculated to exploit the fears and prejudices of their readers. Those who oppose abortion could be led to oppose the ERA by alleging that the amendment would establish grand-scale abortion at public expense. It apparently mattered not at all to these propagandists that the ERA has nothing to do with abortion—the end justifies the means. Those who fear homosexuality could be turned against the ERA by alleging that the ERA would put lesbians in the school to teach little children. While the ERA has nothing to do with homosexuality, once more the end is made to

justify the means. Let us look at some of these inflammatory statements.

(1) "If the ERA amendment passes, our money will go to support the murderers of innocent babies." This statement reflects the "big lie" technique. Tell a thing so big that people will have to conclude that there must be something to it! Abortion is legally acceptable in most states to women who can pay for it. The only issue in Congress has been whether under medicaid poor women, victims of rape, and child victims of incest can be aided. And this has nothing to do with the ERA.

(2) "Our daughters and granddaughters will be drafted in the armed forces." The ERA is not needed for the drafting of women. If Congress can exempt males below 18 and above 40, it can exempt all women.

(3) "The restrooms of the future will be restrooms for both sexes." To pursue the absurd, male urinals would have to be outlawed, and both sexes would have to wear unisex clothing!

(4) "The colleges will no longer have separate dormitories for men and women." It would take a Philadelphia lawyer-clergyman to show that a woman's dormitory is a violation of "equality of rights under the law." Some colleges already have mixed-sex dormitories, but the Supreme Court would not completely lose its mind under the ERA and order all colleges to provide mixed housing.

(5) "Men will no longer be required to support their wives and children." Now that is the dilly to blame on the ERA. This demagoguery ignores the fact that support of the family has always been a joint-husband-wife affair, even if the wife is not drawing a paycheck. Is not every housewife gainfully employed?

(6) "The ERA will give homosexuals the right to proclaim his or her sin openly, and the right to introduce their sin to our young impressionable children in our schools." And almost invariably the listening mothers are asked, "Do you want your children taught by a homosexual?" This emotion rouser sent a lot of women

to Houston who were unmoved by the other terror-claims against the ERA. Since the ERA deals solely with the rights denied because of femaleness, it would have no effect on the right of a schoolboard to refuse to employ a known alcoholic or prostitute or thief or homosexual. Being a female and being a homosexual are two entirely different things.

The list could be expanded, but this is enough to indicate the hysteria promoted by the Church of Christ clergy. It is reminiscent of the Catholic Church's wild campaign against the child labor amendment, the argument being that the amendment would destroy the home and turn the control of all children over to the federal government. It is rooted in the entrenched position of the clergy in the church. Any clergy prefers the status quo in which it thrives. Ours prefers the subordination of women and the male-club church, and they see in the ERA a moving force which will stimulate women to reject their subjection and demand the freedom which Jesus came to bring. Their claim that the ERA would force the church to accept women clergy and women elders is false, since the First Amendment stands as a solid wall to protect the peculiar doctrines and organization of any religious group.

There is a great danger in the Church of Christ becoming involved in politics. Pioneer David Lipscomb warned strongly against this. When the churches began to involve themselves in the American Protestant Association about 1890 to war against the Catholics, he said editorially that they should have nothing to do with the APA or any other organization aimed at erecting religious prejudices into law. He repeated it when they began to involve themselves in the Anti-Saloon League, arguing that the kingdom of this world should not be used to undergird the heavenly kingdom. His voice is needed again to speak up against the anti-ERA campaign and the massive drive to divert state and federal tax money to support Christian schools and colleges. □

## LETTERS

### Oppressive Consumerism

I was pleased to see the article by Tom Lane in the November issue on the consumer ethic. I believe that one of the major problems facing the church in America is the increasing emphasis Christians are placing on material wealth. Mr. Lane did an excellent job in pointing out that the consumer ethic is bad for both the environment and for the person succumbing to this addiction. I would like to add a third reason to avoid it: the consumer ethic is oppressive to the majority of the people in the world.

By pursuing the consumer ethic we are using our wealth to satisfy our own desire for pleasure rather than sharing it with those needing it for necessities. But even worse than that, in order to maintain a supply of these luxuries at a "reasonable" price, we must make sure that we have the poor with us always. What Christian would force a man to work for such low wages that he could not afford a diet for his children containing enough protein to allow their brain cells to develop properly? Certainly none of us would do that, but we, in effect, force our agents to do just that by demanding such things as coffee, sugar, rubber and bananas at "reasonable" prices. The irony of this is that while we demand our luxuries at prices that assure poverty level wages for the producers of raw material, we sell them machinery necessary to produce those materials at ever increasing prices, thereby guaranteeing that our affluence will increase. For example, in 1954 it cost a Brazilian 14 bags of coffee to buy a Jeep, in 1962 39 bags, and in 1968 45 bags!

Mr. Lane made some excellent suggestions in his article. Jesus had some rather radical ideas on the matter also; see Matt. 5-6; 19:16-22; Lk. 12:16-21. I think the first step each Christian must take is to ask: Why did God bless me? Did He do it so I could live in relative luxury while others exist in poverty? Or, does He want me to be different from those around me in the use of my possessions?

MIKE DAWSON  
Eureka, Illinois

### Change the System?

It seems to me that the author [of "Restoration and Models of the Church"] is suggesting pretty much the same thing as did the children of Israel when they asked Samuel for a king. They thought a change in the system would correct all the evils, but such was not the case. It was not

the system, but rather the people in the system.

The church is imperfect, in that we are all human and in different stages of development. Thanks be to God that he accepts us, if we are willing to submit to him. Therefore, it is the duty and privilege of those who *serve* as elders to set the example in Christian living. He should be aware of the needs and feelings of the flock and do his utmost to provide an atmosphere where each Christian could mature spiritually. After all, each of us are under Christ and sometimes it is an awesome responsibility, when someone looks to you for an answer and you are not sure what the answer is. The only recourse is to look to our God and ask him to direct us in the right way.

In my opinion, the answer to the author's proposal is not to change the system, but rather to change the hearts and thinking of those who may be in error. . . . The Bible model is to have elders in every church, else Paul and Barnabas would not have appointed elders in every church. No doubt, there is a misconception of what an elder should be and how he should direct, but that does not mean that we should do away with elders. Not every Christian lives as he should—should we eliminate (disfellowship) them, because they may not be living up to expectations?

There should be more teaching, more learning in this area. God grant that all of us would be receptive and that each of us would be more Christ-like in our thinking and attitude. But to depart from Biblical teaching is futile and would cause more problems than we have now.

R.N. BIVINS  
Bellaire, Texas

### Correcting the Editor

There is one point in your article, "The Paid Professional Preacher," which I believe is very misleading to your readers, especially those who occupy the pew. You state that as a preacher "one may earn from \$500 to \$700 a week . . ." This represents a yearly salary of \$26,000 to \$36,400. While I realize that some preachers may make that much, I also realize that they are a very small minority. In 10 years of preaching I have never even been acquainted with anyone who made that much.

If the average preacher could make that much you might have a case for the greedy preacher, but as it is, most preachers could enter secular employment and make much more money than they do now.

JOHN A. OWSTON  
Peach Creek, West Virginia

*Due to an editorial lapse, the word "may" was not italicized. However, I doubt that the "minority" is quite as small as Mr. Owston thinks.*

## *the signs of the times . . . don haymes*

### THE ENIGMA OF ELVIS

Almost four years ago, riding a bus to Memphis for a job interview, I fell into conversation with two young ladies from Rocky Mount, North Carolina, ages 14 and 15, also Memphis-bound. For them, the long bus ride was an adventure; it was their first time "away from home." They had cajoled their parents into allowing them to visit relatives who lived somewhere in North Mississippi. But their actual destination was the high stone wall and ornamented, white wrought-iron gate which guarded Graceland, the home of Elvis Presley.

I was amused and amazed by this pair of wide-eyed innocents, who would ride a thousand miles on a bus to spend a few minutes before the fancy gate crafted to resemble a musical score, not daring to hope for a glimpse of their idol—a flaccid, fortyish retired entertainer. I soon discovered that they were not alone. At all hours, in every kind of weather, every day of the year, pilgrims waited at the gate to pay homage to Elvis.

All the world now knows how an 18-year-old truck driver, living with his parents in a public housing project, walked into a Memphis recording studio one summer day in 1953 and laid down four dollars to make a record as a birthday present for his mother. When Sun Records impresario Sam Phillips heard the tape, he knew he had something he had long waited for: "A black sound in the body of a white boy."

Phillips was right, for Elvis fused in his own person disparate elements of American popular culture. What he heard on his tiny table radio and sang in the Assembly of God Church was combined with what he heard and saw in the bistros of Beale Street. Soon his voice dominated every jukebox and pop-music radio station in America, and his on-stage gyrating was a national scandal. Older whites muttered "nigger music" and howled "threat to the morals of our youth." The louder they wailed, the more young people attended his concerts and bought his records. And because of the success of Elvis, what was once "race music" became "rock 'n' roll."

When Elvis died of a heart attack last August at age 42, thousands upon thousands of the faithful—both men and women, middle-aged housewives and long-haired children—descended on Memphis to display their grief. "I came to see my King," one sobbing middle-aged woman told a television reporter; many others said the same. The King they came to see was a shy, simple man, who said "Sir" and "Ma'am" to everyone, whose idea of a good time was to rent a local amusement park and take in all the rides, who had made 31 movies and sold 400 million records, who kept just over one million dollars in a non-interest-bearing checking account, whose body at his death contained a complex and still-controversial mixture of chemicals apparently prescribed by his personal physician. He disliked being called "King," some of his associates have said, "because he believed that only Christ is King."

On January 8, Elvis would have been 43. Pilgrims from all over the world still come, and stand before the gate. Sometimes the unending stream of visitors are allowed to pass through the gate, and see the tree-shaded spot where Elvis now lies beside his mother. Their bodies were moved there, with special permission from local authorities, following a bizarre attempt to steal Elvis' 900-pound seamless copper casket from the mausoleum where it was first interred. There is as yet no credible report that Elvis has risen from the dead. □