

*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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### SOME PROBLEMS WITH THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT *(continued from page 18)*

*and Responsibility of Private Judgment*, for private judgment is not a right to be casually exercised, but a responsibility to be faced with all seriousness. It is not an attitude which places personal whim above the Bible, but an approach which regards Scripture as the highest authority. And since the Bible insists that "each one must arrive at his own firm conviction," only the person who practices private judgment can be said to fully recognize the authority of Scripture.

Another problem we have with the Bible is in carelessly ignoring the fact of history. A few things have happened since the Bible was written, and their effect on the way we look—and *should look*—at the Bible must not be ignored. It is good to talk about taking *the Bible only*

as our rule of faith, but not unless we recognize that that is rarely, if ever, done. It is extremely doubtful that any of us—even the most honest—ever live by that rule, for we constantly read into the Bible ideas that we have derived from the pressures of our own culture and tradition.

Of course, such pressures, or the blight of ignorance, may make an authoritative interpreter—such as a church hierarchy or a body of scholars—seem very attractive to us. But the right of private judgment, while it leaves us open to many mistakes, stands on the authority of the Bible, and it must never be relinquished. Who are we to question what God wants? □

NOTE: We are exercising our option of combining the July and August issues in order to give our volunteer workers time for vacation.

July/August 1978

# Integrity

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### PROBLEMS WITH THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT

We have often heard the charge that brethren who believe in unity in diversity do not accept the authority of the Bible. Of course, such accusations may be made recklessly by people who ignore all evidence to the contrary, but, without denying the prevalence of reckless speech, I suggest the possibility of a more charitable explanation. Perhaps the careless talk is not all on one side.

One reason for misunderstanding may be the way we have defended each person's right to arrive at his own firm conviction in religious matters. The "right of private judgment" has been the cornerstone of Protestantism since the 16th century, and one might think, therefore, that the expression is so well understood today that it would need no explanation. However, even to heirs of the Protestant tradition, the phrase may imply an unacceptable view of religious authority.

For instance, the common exhortation "attend the church of your choice" may be in harmony with Reformation thought, or it may not be, depending on what is communicated to the hearer. If it is understood as "one church is as good as another, so just pick whichever one you want, since it really doesn't matter as long as you are satisfied," then we may well be wary of the suggestion, for no one who takes his church affiliation seriously will believe that one church is as good as another. If, on the other hand, it is understood as "you must choose for yourself which church you will attend, since that is your responsibility under God," then it is a valid call to exercise the right of private judgment.

In the one case, the authority for religious decision is purely subjective; it resides in the person himself. In the other, he uses his God-given ability to reason in order to learn and evaluate for himself what claims to be a message from God; and this is the right of private judgment which none of us has a right to evade.

Therefore it is really better for us to speak, as a 19th century author did in the title of his book, of the *Right*

(continued on back cover)

## For Freedom Christ Has Set Us Free

ROBERT M. RANDOLPH

Wellesley, Massachusetts

*For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery (Galatians 5:1).*

The concept of Christian freedom is for many—both Christians and non-Christians—difficult to understand. To the uncertain Christian, the notion of freedom in Christ is intellectually accepted, but hard to practice. To the non-Christian, Christians often seem to be the most bound of men and women. They are tied by their rites and rituals, but most tightly by their fears. Freedom in Christ becomes, in fact, a myth to be talked of but never enjoyed.

Harvey Cox, in his new book *Turning East*, has investigated the appeal of Eastern religions for many in contemporary America. For increasing numbers, the philosophies and religions of the East are seen as a resource in coping with life or as a solution to the problems life presents. They may be a tool or a solution. Among the reasons for looking East, the most common are the following: First, people are looking for simple friendship, and they find it in the groups practicing beliefs rooted in the East—groups as varied as the devotees of Hari Krishna and the practitioners of Transcendental Meditation. Secondly, there are those looking East seeking a way to experience life directly without the intervention of ideas and concepts. They are looking for a kind of immediacy. Delayed gratification is not for them. Thirdly, these individuals, these seekers, are looking for authority.

Wishing to avoid uncertainty and doubt, they seek truth.

As a generalized reason for their actions, Cox offered this composite comment from one seeker:

I tried everything. I read all the books, went to lectures, listened to different teachers. But all that happened was that I got more confused. I couldn't think straight anymore. I couldn't get myself together or make any decisions. Then I met him, and what he said finally made sense. Everything finally clicked. I knew he was for real. I could just tell from the way he spoke that he knew. Now my confusion is over.

The appeal of the East has underscored some important failings in our world. The need for fellowship and real friendship is a constant that is often sadly lacking. That immediate gratification is a reality does not surprise me when we think about our consumer oriented society that emphasizes getting and holding things regardless of need. Cox is correct in arguing that there are only so many things we can get, and now we are moving into a time when experiences are being sold as cars once were. And Eastern religion is a new experience!

### Rest Without Risk . . .

These insights are important and worth our thought, but I want to concentrate upon our quest for authority, our desire



to escape from our freedom. Many of us desire to rest without risk. As Coretta Scott King told a leading figure in the television drama *King*, "I'll tell you why you did it. You did it because you are 50 and afraid." And we are 50, or 40, or 30 and afraid. And the desire to rest is understandable. But I would like to set this desire against the words of Paul to the Galatian Christians as he argues that they have been set free to experience freedom.

As did the Galatians, as do those Cox describes, we often incline toward those things which limit our freedom. In Galatians Paul had to respond to those who argued that his doctrine of freedom from the law was an invitation to license. That is, since we are saved by Christ, and not by the law, we may as well behave as we please. For some this was a real invitation to excess, but I do not think this tempting extreme is our problem today. For most of us, our temptation is not that Christ has given us freedom to do as we please. Rather, because we have grown up in a Christian context, there is a constant sense that we may have missed something, that the values we accepted were accepted without examining the alternatives, and that we cannot know their value until we have known their alternatives.

### A Sense of Loss . . .

We secretly lament that we missed the sexual revolution. And in a time that glorifies experience, our sense of loss is magnified. Mid-life crisis, here we come! And the words of Paul, "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control . . ." seem abstract, distant, and offer little solace. But our proclamation as Christians remains that these virtues are to be endorsed and sought. The collective experience of the Christian community, as well as the word of the Apostle, tells us that this is the way we are to go if we are to know the true meaning of freedom.

Troubled, uncertain, we seek to limit our freedom and define our boundaries by subjecting ourselves to the authority of others. Christianity is a historical religion with a tradition to be drawn upon, and tradition can become our authority. Within our fellowship we have tended to assume that knowledge about the Bible, insight into the Christian faith, reached its pinnacle in the 19th century with the work of those who led the great movement of which we are a part—the Restoration Movement. And as the years have passed, we have refined the thinking of our church fathers, repeated it, and held to it, fearful that we might depart from the faith as they delivered it to the saints. All too often we have known our conclusions before we have begun our study of the scriptures, and we have cut ourselves off from the cross-fertilization of ideas that comes from dialogue with other communities of faith.

### Antidote to Traditionalism . . .

No one is ever completely free from tradition, but the only antidote I know of to a binding traditionalism is to recognize that each generation must rediscover the Christian faith for itself. The doctrine of adult conversion argues that each individual is called to discover for himself the heart of the Christian faith—"I believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God"—and to work out the implications of that confession within the context of the Christian community. There is little difference between being baptized upon birth and translated into the Christian community, and the pattern we often see of children being coerced into baptism at 9 or 10 without any sense of discovery, wonder, or newness at what it means to confess that Jesus is the Son of God; without knowing that in fact that affirmation should be the first step into the realm of freedom that allows individuals to explore, to grow, to be made new as they grow in experience, faith and under-

standing. I have real empathy with those who find it difficult to believe that one must restore, or rediscover, the Christian faith in each generation. There is something extremely unsettling about the idea. Will I recognize the Christianity my seeking children discover? Probably not, but better our discomfort than their rejection of the second-hand faith we bequeath to them.

### Individual Faith . . .

I know that some of these ideas are discomfiting. I can sense, "Yes, but what . . .?" As a chaplain and teacher I often hear from others in our community the demand for support in various acts of decision-making so that they will not have to stand alone with a decision they have made. "Give us rules, give us guidelines. Let us speak in concert with others and then we can speak what we know is right." My suggestion in response is that often we cannot speak in concert with others. Often we will be lone voices for the views we hold.

So too with Christian living. Very often we are alone. Very often we are going to be uncertain, uneasy with the decisions we are called upon to make. Not because there are not those who care about us, those who would help if they could, but because the action we take is supported by our individual faith in God, the God who revealed himself in Jesus, the same Jesus who cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Often we will be mistaken, our decisions will be incorrect, but we can live (and die) with that, for in Christ we have forgiveness. There is then no need to hide behind the excessive authority of tradition. We must recognize the presence of tradition, and respect it and use it. But we must also risk, try the untried, confident that we are exercising our God-given freedom. Augustine's words, "Love God and do as you please," have always been particularly meaningful to me. One who

loves God is free to act, free to not sin, free to grow in the spirit.

### What Freedom Allows . . .

But it is important also that we look at what our freedom allows us to do. "Through love," writes Paul, "be servants of one another." We have been made free in Christ to serve our fellowman. This understanding of the Christian's role was a constant in the early church. The words attributed to Jesus in Matthew, but revealing the existence of the Christian community, emphasize our relations to others: "You have heard that it was said you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." And Paul, writing to Rome, argues along similar lines, "The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" Our freedom makes it possible for us to put aside those natural selfish inclinations we possess in common, and love our friends, our neighbors, and our enemies as we love ourselves.

The future belongs to those who have confidence in their God, and therefore can exercise their freedom in Christ. Their words and lives proclaim their identity as Christians. Secure, they may enjoy their freedom, and they feel it unnecessary that all others agree with them in the varied dimensions of their faith. Their conscience is truly the liberal conscience that Amos Elon speaks of in *The Israelis: Founders and Sons*.

The liberal conscience is often a function of success and not failure. It does not grow of insecurity and weakness, which are more likely to produce a callous fanaticism, but of self-assurance and strength.

Let it be our prayer today and forevermore that we may truly exercise our freedom in Christ as healthy, secure, growing Christian men and women. □



## The Two Models Again

NORMAN L. PARKS

Murfreesboro, Tennessee

GABRIEL: "We will defeat you since we shall fill the minds and hearts of our people with the highest ideals."

SATAN: "Ah, yes, but I will win in the end, for I shall institutionalize all of your ideals." Anon.

"There are three powers, three powers alone, able to conquer and to hold captive forever the conscience of these impotent rebels for their happiness—those forces are miracle, mystery, and authority." The Grand Inquisitor upbraiding Christ for taking the wrong course in the Wilderness Temptation in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

In view of the considerable interest aroused by my article in *Integrity* entitled "Models of the Church," I have agreed to the invitation of one of *Integrity's* staff to respond to George E. Cooper's criticisms of "Models" in the April issue.

This article was thought significant enough by the forceful and incisive editor of *Ensign Fair* to reproduce as a special issue of his periodical for his subscribers and also to print enough for quantity mailing. The leaders (mostly university professors and medical doctors) of a Texas church distributed copies to every member at a Sunday morning service. A New York congregation set up a special Sunday morning study group to discuss the article and devote an extended period to pursuing the various implications stemming from it.

It will no doubt come as a shock to these concerned Christians to learn from Cooper that what they had thought was an article worthy of serious study is at its core "a silly, moralistic, simplistic, and self-defeating antithesis." Cooper advises

his readers that he has liked nothing that I wrote, apparently to provide a base for packing his article with an impressive collection of pejorative adjectives to serve as ballast for his objections and outlets for his irritation. At times he apparently attempts to be "cute" and smart-alecky. One example would be his characterization of the intimate fellowship of the Christian community as "a faculty social, classroom seminar, hand-holding hootenanny, coffee shop poetry reading, and outdoor devotional all rolled into one moving experience." Another would be his reference to the warm interpersonal relations of the *koinonia* as "psychologically chic and threadbare." I had always thought that "chic" referred to attire, but I am a plain-thinking man.

There is nothing "threadbare" about the concept of the assembly as God's means for overcoming the apartheid and loneliness of our social order. The church should be a society of *friends*, the name conferred by Jesus upon his followers. The Lord's Supper should not be reduced to a solemn liturgical mass, but a unity-and-victory celebration. The assembly of saints stands to benefit most from the input of all of the members, not from the solo performance of a hireling, who becomes everybody's proxy ("Don't ask me, ask our preacher, whose job is to have all the answers"). The NT clearly calls for face-to-face communication—"speaking one to another" (Col. 3:10). What Cooper calls a hootenanny is God's meeting-ground "to teach each other and advise each other, with all wisdom." A system of one-way communication, rule by an elite, a fixed liturgy, and a nonparticipant

audience is not only Biblically unsound, but also psychologically injurious.

### EXAMINING THE CRITICISMS

(1) Institutionalization is inevitable, because "the fault . . . is within us, dear Brutus," and therefore we have only to provide the "true" creed, liturgies that inspire, and good traditions to bind on the coming generations, so that no reformer will feel the need to say, "You have heard it said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you. . ." (Cooper).

I believe that Christ knew as much about institutions as did Satan. He took a dim view of the institutionalized Sabbath. He rejected power in all of its institutionalized forms, whether the throne, Caesar's legions, or churchly mystery and miracle. Instead of adopting manipulative controls over men, he came to give men freedom. He had no use for the institutionalized temple which turned his Father's house of prayer into a den of thieves. When the church is institutionalized, it gains an independent existence, separate and above people. Men then may be sacrificed "for the good of the church." When power is institutionalized, it inevitably becomes suppressive. That is why Jesus explicitly barred it among his disciples. The Grand Inquisitor declared that men were miserable until they had yielded up their freedom and their conscience in external control. I am persuaded that he and Cooper are wrong.

(2) The proposition that restoration has to do with people, not institutional structure, is "silly" (Cooper).

I am surprised that anyone would take umbrage at that truism. I doubt that many who worship institutions and hang their hopes on structure would defend them as more than means to an end. Paul in his Roman letter painted on a giant canvas the Adam Age marked by men's alienation from God and subjected to the powers of Sin, Law, Wrath, and Death.

Then he presented the contrasting Christ Age, in which God reaches down to helpless man to *restore* him to Himself—"For as in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive." If Paul's great preaching is true, then *restoration has to do with people*. Man cannot be saved by law, by a book, by an institution called "the church," or by what he does.

(3) The "Models" article oversimplified religious reality by offering only two models of the church, whereas there are many models ranging from "high church" to "low church" to "no church" (Cooper).

I contrasted only two models because Jesus identified only two. He saw in the pagan model the very antithesis of what the Kingdom was to be. The pagan model was hierarchical and power structured. In it the great men "exercise dominion" and the rulers "lord it over" the many. His model was distinguished by the total absence of power. These two are the sum of all models. The authoritarian model may assume different forms, from the Catholic to the "Restructured" Disciples. But hierarchy and dominion are the common characteristics of them all. The growth of authoritarianism in the American Church of Christ is the root cause of such evils as legalism, exclusivism, division, suppression of women, creedalism, clericalism, and intolerance.

(4) There is little evidence that Jesus flatly rejected the principle of hierarchy, or that Paul sought to encourage a *koinonia* of equality, voluntary interdependence, and full participation and responsibility (Cooper).

This bald statement is astonishing in the face of the declaration of Jesus that "it shall not be so among you." There is nothing in the Bible to justify rule over the church by one or a few. Elders in Crete were chosen by all of the members, but they did not choose rulers, but teachers. Whenever decisions had to be made, they were made individually in the New Testament times, as in laying by in store





# Love Thy Neighbor

ALLEN HOLDEN, JR.

San Diego, California

It is impossible to speak of loving my neighbor without dealing with love for God, for the two are inevitably intertwined. My love for my Father in heaven is expressed in the way that I treat his other children. As John points out, "If you don't love your brother whom you have seen, how can you love God whom you have not seen?" Conversely, God's love for me is often best expressed to me by other people, for it is when I am touched, ministered to and made to feel important that God's love is most evident to me.

Paradoxically, a prerequisite for effectively loving others is to have a healthy love for oneself. "Love your neighbor as yourself" presupposes that I already love

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**. . . we are not God, we are not  
supermen and superwomen . . .**

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myself, and that my self-love is constructive and healthy. An important way that I come to love myself is to be loved personally and intimately by other people. Seeing myself as a valuable person who matters to people, I am able to reach out and touch others around me.

In order to effectively love other people, we are going to have to open ourselves up to them. This requires an end to all our "jive talkin'" and a return to genuine honesty. The masks must be removed, the barriers broken and the defenses destroyed. And our first admission is that we are human—we're not God, we are not supermen and superwomen, and, in fact,

we are not that different from the rest of the human race. For too long we have tried to convince the world that we've got it all together; that we have perfect faith, untainted by a speck of doubt; and that we are the most integrated, peaceful, trusting people this planet has ever seen. Baloney! Being a child of God gives us God's Spirit to try to gradually change us, and it guarantees us amnesty for our rebellion and craziness; but it in no way removes us from the race of *homo sapiens*, nor does it prevent us from continuing to rebel and act crazy. Our friends, family and fellow workers can see this; it's high time we admitted it ourselves.

We cannot love our neighbors with our eyes closed, though. I think that too often we are suffering from tunnel vision, only seeing things directly in front of us. Anything that is off to the side, that is different, painful or demanding, is outside our field of vision. There was a song popularized by Spanky and Our Gang in 1968 which invites us to look around, see what is there, and respond.

If you take the train with me  
Uptown through the misery  
Of ghetto streets in morning light  
They're always night  
Take a window seat, put down your *Times*  
You can read between the lines  
Just meet the faces that you meet  
Beyond the window's pane

Come put your girl to sleep some time  
With rats instead of nursery rhymes  
With hunger and your other children by her  
side  
And wonder if you'll share your bed  
With something else that must be fed  
Fear may lie beside you  
Or it may sleep down the hall

Come and see how well despair  
Is seasoned by the stifling air  
See a ghetto in the good old sizzling summertime  
Suppose the streets were all on fire  
The flames, like tempers, leaping higher  
Suppose you lived there all your life  
Do you think that you would mind?

And it might begin to teach you how to really care about your fellow man. You see, the whole world is not just like La Jolla or suburban Long Island. We have chosen to restrict our field of operations to places that we like, that are comfortable to us, that are safe, sanitized, sterilized and sanforized. When's the last time we spent some time in the ghetto or the *barrio*? When we do get down there, it is usually in our nice, new, air-conditioned chariots, which whisk us through as fast as possible, usually on the freeway which destroyed neighborhoods and

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**We have chosen to restrict our  
field of operations to places that  
we like, that are completely  
comfortable to us, that are safe,  
sanitized, sterilized and sanforized.**

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homes in its path. And we avert our eyes, lest any ugliness come into our lives. I invite you instead to open your eyes to the real world, a world that does include poverty, despair, sickness and danger. Cross the tracks, open your eyes, talk and listen; and it might help you to understand, and care for, some of God's creatures.

If we are serious about carrying out Jesus' injunction to love our neighbors, we are going to have to get up off our overweight posteriors and do something about it. It is ironic that Christians spend an enormous amount of their time warming pews in weatherproof buildings. It may well be that we ought to attend church meetings less and get out and mingle with the world more. However, our greatest enemy is apathy. More hours are spent watching the one-eyed idiot box than we

care to admit. Even given the value in a lot of what is shown on television, it is difficult not to question whether our time is wisely spent when such a large portion of it involves docile viewing. The way that we are so wrapped up in hedonistic entertainment is reminiscent of the late Phil Ochs' song, "Outside of a Small Circle of Friends" (1967).

Look outside the window  
There's a woman being grabbed  
They've dragged her to the bushes  
And now she's being stabbed  
Maybe we should call the cops  
Try and ease the pain  
But Monopoly is so much fun  
I'd hate to blow the game  
And it probably wouldn't interest anybody  
Outside of a small circle of friends

Is Monopoly—of television, or the yard—so important that it prevents us from ministering to those who need it?

Even when we do get fired up to act, we too often look for the ego-building, mind-blowing, high-glamor activities, too proud to wash feet or empty bedpans. Many are willing to go halfway around the world to spread the gospel, but few can find the time to help a lonely neighbor down the street. Most of the ministry needed involves simple acts to those near us. *Listening* to people is a tremendous gift that most of us can cultivate, and it is often one of the greatest needs. Our parents, children, neighbors and fellow disciples would like our ear more often than our mouth, but to effectively use the former usually requires disengaging the latter.

It is with Jesus of Nazareth that I begin to get things into proper perspective. I learn to love God, for I see the length to which he went for me; I love myself more, because I am valuable to the Father; and I am moved to love other people, for they are created and loved by the same Lord as I. I invite you to join me at the cross, to learn with me again the real worth of people. And it might begin to teach you how to *really care* about your fellow man. □



