

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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his friends had experimented with E.S.P. Well, that did it. I blew up. How they got ahold of those hallucinogenic things in a so-called Christian community, I'll never know. That very morning I changed my sermon topic. I was going to preach on "Mini-skirts, on Many Christians, Means Much Hell," but decided that the occasion was of such urgency I must preach on "Popping E.S.P. Pills." I said anyone who has been taking those devilish, demonic, Satonic, and mind-blowing E.S.P. pills should repent and walk forward. (No one came forward, but one kid floated out the back door. Haha. No, no, just kiddin'. Laugh where it hurts, that's my motto.)

Next day I went to work here at the

Texaco Station. The elders were nice, but they've grown soft on the real issues. So now I'm pumping gas for the Lord, and once in a while, when I see a "Honk if You Love Jesus" sign, I say, "Not every one who honketh shall enter the kingdom of heaven." I can get it out in 1.4 seconds.

When the Baptist Joybus rolls by, I shout, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you for the remission of sins. Acts 2:38."

Last week my theological education came in handy. I gave my fill-the-void answer to a motorist who drove in for gas. My heart roared when he said, "Yes."

"P.T.L.," I said.

He said, "Fill my void with high octane, and make it snappy." □

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TRYING TO LEARN

It seems appropriate, as we begin our tenth year of publication, to repeat an admonition which we take to heart and have always attempted, in one way or another, to pass on to our readers, and for which we are indebted to the author of Ephesians: "Try to learn what pleases the Lord."

That there is an intellectual side to this exhortation need not be argued with anyone who subscribes to a religious journal, although we may need an occasional warning that fundamentalists as well as liberals may frustrate God's pleasure by a less than satisfactory approach to Scripture. The temptation to use the Bible merely to confirm our own convictions, rather than as a means of really trying to learn what pleases the Lord, is stronger than we sometimes suppose, and one who cannot resist, or even recognize, this temptation is hardly fit to lecture another on respecting the authority of Scripture.

But the context of Paul's appeal, which emphasizes practice rather than precept, indicates that learning what pleases the Lord is more than intellectual. By the phrase "try to learn" he means that we are to learn by trying, to learn by doing. We can never really know what pleases the Lord until we learn it by experience.

What the Bible says about the fellowship of brethren, or the liberation of women, or the decision-making process in the church—to mention some issues of great concern to our readers—is only half of the truth. The other half we will possess when we experience the fullness of fellowship, when we practice impartial freedom, and when we personally participate in the authorized mode of church administration.

We are learning. There are many encouraging signs that the Spirit of truth is guiding contemporary disciples into all the truth. Thank God! □

Resisting the Slanderer

DON HAYMES

Memphis, Tennessee

Within the past two years, some members of the Churches of Christ have again raised the important—and complicated—question of whether a Christian may enter a lawsuit against another Christian for slander, libel, or any other violation of the law. Writing in the *Gospel Guardian*, a journal circulated among members of the various Churches of Christ opposed to "institutionalization" of church activities, Dan Walters answers the question with an emphatic "No!"¹ More recently, Ira Y. Rice, Jr., presented with the possibility of legal action by an attorney for Mission Journal, Inc., as a result of his apparent infringement of Federal copyright laws, has also denied the right of Christians to seek legal redress in secular courts²—as he has on previous occasions, when accused of publishing libelous statements.

Since both of these men are, by their own admissions, prospective defendants in litigation, one may assume that they are not, exactly, "disinterested observers." Where Mr. Walters is concerned, I know nothing of his particular case other than what is revealed in his brief article, and I do not wish to impute to him either guilt or innocence in the matter. But I agree

with him that "the question of going to law against brethren should be considered by every Christian." I also believe that the question of whether a Christian may, with no fear of retribution, utter slander or publish libel against other Christians, should likewise be carefully considered.

Both Mr. Walters and Mr. Rice rely on 1 Corinthians 6:1-8. According to Mr. Walters, this text "teaches that it is against God's will for a Christian to sue another Christian in the secular court system." For Mr. Rice, the text contains "clear, simple teaching to Christian brethren." If their interpretation and application of this passage is correct, then what recourse is available to a Christian who has been injured by the slander of another Christian?

In verses five and six, Paul asks:

Can it be that there is no man among you wise enough to decide between members of the brotherhood, but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers?

I infer from that question that Paul intends disputes between Christians to be resolved *within the church*. Few will deny that such a policy can be both prudent and practical—*when all parties to the dispute are members of the same congregation*. In such a case, the procedure outlined in Matthew 18:15-17 becomes the obvious course to take. The injured party goes to the person who he believes has wronged him, and attempts to reconcile

1. Dan Walters, "Sued by a Gospel Preacher," *Gospel Guardian* (August 1, 1976): 19.

2. Ira Y. Rice, Jr., "Mission Journal Threatens Us with Lawsuit for Reproducing Scott Article on Abortion," *Contending for the Faith*, Vol. IX (February, 1978): 2.

their differences (18:15). If he cannot persuade his brother to repent and redress the wrong, the injured party may again confront his tormentor, this time in the presence of witnesses (18:16). If the transgressor refuses to repent, the injured party may then take his grievance before the church; "If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (18:17).

It should be noted that this passage carefully follows the provisions of the Deuteronomic Code:

A single witness shall not prevail against a man for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed; only on the evidence of two witnesses, or of three witnesses, shall a charge be sustained (Deut. 19:15).

This canon is repeated in 2 Corinthians 13:1 and 1 Timothy 5:19. (And, as we shall see, this code bears directly on the treatment of slander and false witness.) In 1 Corinthians 5:4-5, Paul orders that congregation to execute its judgment in these terms:

When you are assembled, and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Later, in 2 Corinthians 2, Paul recalls this painful occasion, and offers new advice:

For such a one this punishment by the majority (*hupo tōn pleionōn*)³ is enough; so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow (2 Cor. 2:6-7).

3. While the Bauer/Arndt-Gingrich lexicon nominally assents to the RSV rendering of "majority" for *pleionōn*, these scholars seem to prefer to translate this term as "the others" or "the rest," meaning *all* the other Christians at Corinth: "In this case his punishment would have been determined by a unanimous vote of the church, rather than by a majority." W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (The University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 695f. This is only one of the ambiguities which arise when "pattern authority" is sought from this passage.

In my opinion, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 should be read in the context of the entire letter, in which Paul rebukes the "proud . . . arrogant . . . boasting" members of the Corinthian church and demonstrates conclusively that they have nothing of which they can be proud. The Corinthian church is bitterly divided: over partisan loyalty to various leaders; over pride in "wisdom"; over an incestuous sexual relationship; over uncatalogued instances in which brothers have "defrauded" and "wronged" one another (6:8); over relations with prostitutes; over the propriety of marriage and celibacy; over the use of meat which has been offered in pagan temples; over the apparel and social demeanor of women; over the failure to "discern the body" and care for one another in observing the Lord's supper; over the nature, purpose, and apportionment of spiritual gifts; over disorderly worship services apparently monopolized by tongue-speakers; over the resurrection and the nature of the resurrection body; and, last but certainly not least, over a proposal from Paul that they contribute to a relief fund for the Jerusalem church.⁴ In the background of their bickering is the clash of cultural values and ethnic prejudices resulting from the attempt to bring diaspora Jews and Hellenistic pagans together in the same church. The resort of the Corinthians to lawsuits is only a symptom of their alienation from one another, not the cause of it!

Elusive Justice . . .

1 Corinthians 6:1-8 should be read with particular reference to chapter 5 of the same letter—the original was not divided into chapters!—and to 2 Corinthians

4. See John C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (New York: Seabury Press, 1965), esp. pp. 95ff. See also Richard A. Batey, "Paul's Interaction with the Corinthians," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 84 (June, 1965); 139-146, and *Jesus and the Poor* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 54-65.

as well. Matthew 18:15-17 appears to parallel the procedure that Paul here recommends to the church in its dealings with gross and unrepentant immorality and in settling disputes between brothers. Another saying of Jesus may also shed light on Paul's strictures against "going to law":

And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last copper (Lk. 12:57-59).

Justice was an expensive and elusive commodity for minorities in Roman courts. In the provinces, Roman magistrates were notoriously corrupt and unstable. Paul's own life was prolonged only by the special privileges of citizenship, but Felix allowed him to languish in prison in Caesarea in hopes of a bribe (Acts 24:24-27). For those who were not citizens, who belonged to an ethnic minority, and whose religious beliefs were deviant and suspect, "justice" could be swift and merciless. There would be no "forgiveness and comfort" from a Roman tribunal, once sentence had been handed down. Surely Christians could be more nearly certain of justice and mercy in the hands of their brothers.⁵

One may reasonably conclude that Jesus and Paul intended the early Christians to settle their disputes among themselves, within the local congregation. Such discipline, equitably administered, is one of the features of "New Testament Christi-

5. For an intriguing overview of the "passion for litigation" which turned first-century courtrooms into circuses complete with hired cheerleaders, see Jerome Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), pp. 210-220. For light on Roman attitudes toward Jews and Christians, see the contemporary accounts of Suetonius and Tacitus, handily excerpted in J. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius* (London: SPCK, 1965), pp. 1-4. See also James 2:6.

anity" most in need of "restoration."⁶ But how may this teaching be applied to the case cited by Dan Walters, in which a Christian who lives in Texas claims he has been defamed by a Christian living in North Carolina? How is a Christian living in Tampa, Nashville, Austin, or Podunk to defend himself from slanderous statements, innuendoes and insinuations published by his "brother" in San Francisco, Abilene, Philadelphia, or Birmingham?

If the congregation of which the offender is a member refuses to discipline him—or, in fact, aids and abets his activities—may the congregation of which the injured party is a member take action? Is it possible for the bishops and members of one congregation to claim jurisdiction over a Christian who is not a member of the flock meeting at that place? What happens when, as is so often the case today, there is a *third* congregation involved, of which neither of the parties is a member?

Suppose that both parties agree to submit their case to another brother or group of brothers, as 1 Corinthians 6:5 has been assumed to suggest;⁷ by what authority and by what means could such a tribunal *enforce* its decision? What would be the powers and responsibilities of such a "third party"? Would not the creation of any sort of extracongregational tribunal be a step toward establishing a supra-episcopal authority? Or, at the very least,

6. According to Tertullian, such discipline played an important role in the congregations of Rome and Carthage, even at the end of the second century: "There is, besides, exhortation in our gatherings, rebuke, divine censure. For judgment is passed, and it carries great weight, as it must among men certain that God sees them; and it is a notable foretaste of judgment to come, if any man has so sinned as to be banished from all share in our prayer, our assembly, and all holy intercourse." Tertullian, *Apology* 39:3-4, tr. T.R. Glover (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 175.

7. See Eugene W. Clevenger, "Litigation Between Brethren Prohibited," *Gospel Advocate*, Vol. CXVIII (July 8, 1976): 435.

inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother; so you shall purge the evil from the midst of you. And the rest shall hear, and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you. Your eye shall not pity; it shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot (Deut. 19:16-21).

Jesus amends this teaching in Matthew 5, denying his followers the "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" imperative of Deuteronomy: "Do not resist one who is evil [*mē antistēnai tō ponērō*]" (Matt. 5:38-39). But the utterances of Jesus do not sanction the actions for which he specifically denies retaliation: his admonitions are directed to interpersonal relations. The one who strikes another person, or sues another in order to take his possessions, or the one who forces another into servitude (Matt. 5:39-41), is not to be treated in the same way by his Christian victim. The Christian is not to meet physical violence with physical violence and, furthermore, in this text he is told to give to every beggar or borrower who asks (Matt. 5:42).

Resist the Slanderer . . .

Yet it goes without saying that this text offers no license to the Christian who

would oppress other Christians. And the Christian who would prosecute his brother for rape, robbery, or murder should not, in my opinion, condemn the one who would prosecute the slanderer. James, in fact, calls upon the Christian community to "resist the devil [*antistēte tō diabolō*]" and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7). In a parallel passage in 1 Peter 5:8-9, the devil—or "the slanderer"—is described as one who "prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour." Again the Christian community is admonished to "resist [*antistēte*] him." Those who would "spiritualize" the devil ignore his pervasive presence in the affairs of men as the New Testament understands him. I see no simple resolution of the tension between the teaching of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 5:38-42 and the teaching of the early church given in James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:8-9. Students of the New Testament better qualified than I will have to wrestle with that difficulty. But I see a clear obligation to resist the slanderer. In the present situation, each of us will have to decide for himself what form his resistance will take. If the Christian community will take responsibility and act responsibly, then perhaps it will not be necessary for the courts of the state to intervene. □

Virtue and Morality: The Stages

SARA L. BROWN

Dexter, Michigan

In all generations there has been discussion of the eternal question: "What is virtue?" Socrates dialogued, Aristotle expounded, philosophers philosophized, and yet the question continues to be asked. Virtue and moral right have a number of different connotations, proba-

bly colored for many by culture, geography, and race. In our society the behaviorists theorize that all behavior is learned and, therefore, moral behavior is developed entirely within given cultural mores. Such theory promotes nonuniversal and, therefore, relative (or even situational)

morality. Yet there are a number of studies being done which suggest there are absolute, universal moral values which cut across cultural diversities and depend more on maturation than on one's skin color or national origin. This view of moralism is classified as "innate" because it occurs in all persons, and "developmental" because it follows a given sequential progression from childhood to adulthood. The theory has a "cognitive" correlate because it is based on the foundation that morality is rational and logical.

The Spiritual Dimension . . .

In addition to Piaget and Kohlberg's three aspects of morality (innateness, cognition, developmental), I would add a fourth dimension: Spiritual. For I believe that the Spirit guides us to a higher moral plane when we place our lives in his hands—that the Christian has not only a higher motive to achieve virtue, but that he has help along the way.

Although I cannot say (as can Piaget and Kohlberg, from whom I have drawn my conclusions) that I have researched the moral codes of many people across many cultures, my experience and my religious beliefs have led me to postulate that concepts of "virtue" and "right" are a part of the whole developmental growth of mankind. Just as a child develops knowledge of his physical body and its capacities in a sequential framework (e.g., he sits before he walks before he runs before he does chin-ups); just as a child develops psychologically (from the self-centered baby who only eats, sleeps and wets to satisfy his own inner needs to the adult who feeds and nurtures a child of his own); just as the child develops mentally (from one who *knows* nothing to one of infinite possibility)—so does the child develop morally (from one with no moral concepts or feelings of the worth of others to one who gives his life as a doctor in a leper colony, a nun, etc.).

Just as with the other mentioned areas, within this moral development there are many stages of growth. For purposes here, perhaps three are distinctly evident:

First Stage (*child to age 11 or 12*)

1. Moral laws are absolute and arbitrary.
2. Immoral acts are seen as separate entities.
3. Behavior is not seen as affecting others.
4. Authority figure is viewed as superior.
5. Punishment is the only deterrent to immoral behavior.
6. Relative "badness" is measured by consequence.
7. Relationship with authority figure is unilateral.
8. All must be equally punished or rewarded.

Morality at the first stage is governed entirely by a sense of fear of punishment or desire for reward. Rules and laws are to be followed, not understood. The consequence of immorality ("badness") is punishment. The child does not see a lie which goes undetected as being as "bad" as a lie which is found out, regardless of the intent or motive of the "liar." The authority figure (parent, teacher, preacher) is seen as a superior, handing down arbitrary rules and punishments. There is little attempt on the child's part to negotiate those rules and punishments. Egalitarian rule is viewed as essential.

Second Stage (*11 or 12 years—adulthood*)

1. Moral laws may be relative and rational.
2. Moral acts are seen as affecting others and as relating to one another (social).
3. Relationship with authority figure is more mutual.
4. Immorality is "bad" because it betrays or hurts others (friends, family).

5. Badness is measured by motive and situation.
6. The punishment should fit the crime and the situation.

At this stage, morality is governed by a sense of social acceptance, love of family and friends, and a perception of "moral action as autonomous good essential to the intact functioning of any social unit" (Kohlberg). In the child's development, this stage is evident when mother's explanation, "because I told you to," is no longer acceptable to the child. Here the person begins to act out of responsibility to society (albeit usually his own, immediate society) and self-discipline. When the adolescent begins to see that his actions affect his own relationship with his friends and family, he begins to temper his behavior accordingly. This is the stage at which one is most concerned with outward moral expression and sins of action and verbal expression, rather than those of thought (such as prejudices, jealousies, selfishness, etc.).

Third Stage (*maturity*)

1. Moral laws are absolute, but rational.
2. Morality is internally based and motivated.
3. All mankind is valued equally regardless of circumstances.
4. There are no double standards.
5. Own conscience values are placed above cultural standards (e.g., legal, ethical, mores).
6. Motivation for morality comes from within.
7. Immorality is avoided because of effect on relationship with the higher being and violation of one's own conscience.
8. The standard of virtue comes from a higher being (be it Nature, God, Buddha).
9. The greatest punishment is alienation from the higher being and violation of self.
10. The greater being is seen as the authority figure (moral issues).

This mature stage of morality is one which probably few of us can understand or ever reach in practice. It sounds ego-centric, and yet it is the most principled as it is governed not by fear of punishment, fear of disfavor from or of hurting others one likes, but from a desire to live up to one's own self-expectations and a perception of the expectations of a higher being. It is that one does *right* because he cannot violate right. Virtue for virtue's sake. To do otherwise is to violate oneself.

When we reach this stage, we will have truly internalized our beliefs into a system that is *ours*, not one borrowed from our parents, peers, or society. It becomes *my* moral code, and to violate it is to violate myself. It is at this stage that we become more aware of the subtle sins of deceit, jealousy, prejudice, preference for those who *like* us, etc., because at this stage inner immorality (not just that which others can see, measure, or be affected by) is seen more clearly in opposition to my conscience and the standards of the higher being. All mankind—not just my own family, culture, society—are regarded as of equal worth. (I cannot feel that my family's lives are more valuable than those of others, that my "roots" are to be regarded more highly, or that my nation is the one on whose side God is.) I now become motivated to do right because I know it is right, not because someone or society tells me it is right. My conscience is my highest guide, and it may force me to look at moral issues acceptable to society (e.g., abortion, military duty, death penalty) as violations of virtue.

Why is it that many of us are locked into the first or second stage of moral development when viewing the Christian morality? There are probably numerous reasons, but two stand out in bold letters:

1. From our earliest years, we were taught *not* to do something because we would be hurt, punished or ostracized. However altruistic many of our behaviors appear, most of us continue to do good into adulthood to please or become more

acceptable to others. We teach children to avoid the *act* rather than the *intent of the act*. "Don't lie because you'll get caught in the end" is not an uncommon warning to adults and children alike. Even Aristotle's famous philosophy, "truth will prevail" (however true it may be), hints at this consequence. Why can't we explain how the *intent* of a lie, stealing, murder, or prejudice is harmful to our own development and to our intimate relationship with God and our fellow man?

How often have we heard sermons on the topics of Esau's unacceptable sacrifice, Moses' error in speaking to the rock, and Uzzah touching the ark of the covenant, rather than sermons on the attitudes (e.g., rebellion? egocentricity? etc.) behind the actions. The idea expressed is always the *act* and its consequences, not the *intent*. It frightens us (as the six-year-old child is frightened) into a moral system based on fear of consequence. But . . .

2. Maybe even more important is our basic belief that the laws of Nature and of God are not made for man and developed for his own good: they are arbitrary and irrational. Moral laws are not arbitrary; they may be supra-rational, but they are not irrational. Just because *I* cannot understand why God had to send his own son to die on the cross "to become sin on my behalf" does not mean God arbitrarily selected this as one of a multiple of possibilities. It must be *the* method of absolution and atonement.* We probably have difficulty understanding this atonement because we are within Stage II of development and because we allow our culture and historical perspective to mold our Moral System.

Although virtue for the believer has a different base, and I think a higher motive

*The author wishes to acknowledge she is ignoring Romans 9, where Paul discusses what seems to be the arbitrary nature of the Creator. However, note that the word *faith* is used throughout that chapter. This concept tends to balance Paul's argument where he is emphasizing the supremacy of the Creator.

than philosophical or humanistic morality (that is, achievement of oneness with God), initially much of our moral behavior must emanate from our mutual relations within society. If, however, our maturation process never reaches the final stage (that of internalization: right seen as oneness with God), we may not recognize virtue when we see it in its absolute form.

Kohlberg summarizes his "From Is to Ought" chapter with a quotation from Socrates. The philosopher says,

First, virtue is ultimately one, not many, and it is always the same ideal form regardless of climate or culture.

Second, the name of this ideal form is justice.

Third, not only is the good one, but virtue is knowledge of the good. He who knows the good chooses the good.

Fourth, the kind of knowledge of the good which is virtue is philosophical knowledge or intuition of the ideal form of the good, not correct opinion or acceptance of conventional beliefs (Kohlberg, 1971).

Christ, the practitioner, says it this way:

If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you surely ought to wash one another's feet. . . . (John 13:14).

I have given them the glory which You have given Me, so that they may be *one* as We are one, I in them and Thou in Me. . . . (John 17:22).

We have only to read the book of John to see that Jesus is Virtue in the flesh, to understand the higher motive to which Jesus felt accountable: that of an obedience to, a commitment to, and a oneness with God. Virtue is the goal to which we should aspire; the Spirit of Christ is the force that unites us in the search. □

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An Open Forum

W. CARL KETCHERSIDE

St. Louis, Missouri

There are some indications that we are growing up and maturing as a people. It has been very difficult to move into the last quarter of the twentieth century because we began as a nineteenth century reformatory movement and inherited all the hangups which are part of a rural and frontier culture. We are now in the Space Age but are still altogether too much preoccupied with issues that have no relevance in our day. The fact that many of them have been debated and argued for more than a century by equally honest and intelligent men who reverence the sacred scriptures proves beyond doubt they are not as clearly delineated and plainly taught as partisan scribes would make it appear.

In the annual Saint Louis Forum which consists of five two-hour sessions, one of those periods is set aside as an absolutely open forum in which any saint, male or female, can give public expression to his or her feelings about the question of the hour. It is still the least attended of the sessions, indicating that most people like to be present when two "professionals" square off against each other, and they can be spectators rather than participants. This too is an inherited tradition it will be difficult to overcome. The "clergy complex" is stronger than most of us realize. It may be the most ardently practiced and most vehemently denied of any of our borrowed trappings.

The last forum found fifteen persons addressing themselves to the question, "What do you consider to be the greatest threat to our Christian witness?" The speakers ranged in age from 19 to 84 years. They ran the gamut from students

in college to retired persons. Among the specific points which they urged as real threats to our effective testimony in this secular age I listed the following. Division in our ranks; a lack of morality and ethics; spiritual illiteracy, coupled with apathy and worldliness; institutionalism and a loss of simplicity in Christ; and a negativistic attitude which destroys hope.

One brother felt we had developed a state of dependency upon a special clergy. Others suggested we held a wrong concept of the church, and were hindered by obsolete translations of the Bible. Fear of men, satisfaction with the status quo, affluency and humanism, were all brought forward as impediments and stumbling-blocks. A very articulate young man felt we were wholly lacking in practical application of the philosophy of the second mile as enunciated by Jesus.

It was a precious opportunity for me to sit in the audience and listen to humble saints, some of whom had come in from the daily marketplace, tell of their inner concerns for the cause to which they were committed. I could have been overwhelmed by the problems they enumerated but my stance was optimistic. The community of the reconciled has never been free of problems from without or within, and so long as it is composed of human beings, never will be. But so long as we realize that we have problems and can identify them, we can move toward solving them. It is only when we congratulate ourselves that "we are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," that we are in trouble.

What a reformation would come if preachers and elders in every congregation

would announce a two-hour session in which every person could speak openly, frankly and honestly about conditions, without fear of reprisal. Men who have been trained to speak now need new lessons in how to listen. The input of all the

saints will increase the output of the body. If you want to develop an idea of how to be different, listen to different ideas. Much of our preaching has been a one-way street and some of it has led us down a blind-alley. □

A Hermeneutic That Divides, and Grace

DANIEL GRIGGS

Bethel Park, Pennsylvania

Have you ever stopped to think that the principle "Speak where the Scriptures speak, be silent where the Scriptures are silent" is in violation of its own point? If the statement is not found in the Bible, it says it must not be spoken; it is not found anywhere in the Bible; therefore, it must remain unspoken.

Of course, such hairsplitting logic must lead to absurdities, and I think it has already done so. But the absurdities are not merely mental or verbal aberrations, they are schisms in the Body of Christ, because ideas have consequences.

The three-phase hermeneutic which has governed the use of the Bible in Churches of Christ for a century is divisive. This hermeneutic states simply that a "direct command" or an "approved example" from Jesus or an inspired disciple is to be received as a command to the churches, and that "necessary inferences" are allowed the churches in their obedience to these commands and examples. This hermeneutic seems simple. It is not. The differences in inferences over the past hundred years have led to divisions for divisions. And these divisions are even more tragic because they have muted the call to Christian unity which the hermeneutic was originally intended to implement.

What is the answer? A new hermeneu-

tic might help some, but that is no final answer. The rejection of the restorationist mind-set might reduce schism on theological grounds, but how far should the process go—to the rejection of the Bible as in any way "normative"? This will never do. Updating the level of scholarship will help some, but scholars are notorious for disagreement, no matter how "with it" they may be.

Perhaps the only answer is to cultivate the humility to say, "I don't know." As a child I was deeply impressed by the evangelists who held our gospel meetings, who concluded their sermons by declaring: "I have preached to you the whole counsel of God as I understand the Scriptures to teach it. If anyone can demonstrate in the Bible that anything I have said is wrong, then I will gladly change. But if not, then you should accept the truth." Some may have learned from such statements to claim that "we have all truth," but I learned something else—the importance of openness to truth.

And that brings me to grace. If the church always contains little children and young men, as well as fathers, as Thomas Campbell affirmed in the Declaration and Address, then it must be something other than *knowing* that is important. To argue the three-phase hermeneutic, and to argue against it, are about equally significant.

If you believe and attempt to follow Christ by this hermeneutic, God be praised: you are my brother and my sister in Christ. If you believe and try to follow Christ by another hermeneutic, you are also my sister and my brother in Christ. At some

point we two will disagree. Do not expect me to debate with you: Christ has given us both more important things to do. This may not be a very satisfying conclusion, but we have not been called to satisfy ourselves. □

Kids These Days: Their Questions Don't Fit My Answers

GRADY JAMES ROBINSON*

It's taken me ten years—ten long, patient, faithful years—to polish my answers. They are now ready to be unleashed on the questions of the world, of humanity, and mainly the young people of the church. But wouldn't you know it, just as I get all my information together and filed neatly in alphabetical order, I find that my answers don't fit the questions anymore. It's not fair. I was all set for the big events—the lectureships, seminars, workshops and youth rallies—then, bingo, I'm out of date. Ten years of intense preparation at the preacher school go right down the drain. Now I'll have to run an ad in one of the papers: "Anybody need an obsolete 1968 model youth minister with all the answers for the past generations' questions?"

The one I worked hardest on was the fill-the-void question. You know, the big heavy question about the emptiness on the inside. It took time, but I finally came up with a really super dynamic fill-your-void answer. Now they're not even asking the fill-the-void question.

I attended a youth meeting just last month, and not one kid asked about the

deep, meaningless, empty void inside and how to fill it. I know it's there; it was in the sixties, so I know it must be there. They just won't admit it; or maybe they've got too much on their minds. I went ahead and volunteered my fill-your-basic-human-inner-void answer. But they kept asking irrelevant questions about pollution, population, crime control, energy crisis and gay rights. I couldn't believe they could be so far off the real issues. I mean, what's pollution got to do with salvation of lost souls?

And the answer to the population explosion is so simple that I'm really surprised kids these days can't see it. Eliminate filthy illicit sex. And I had a ready recollection on the homo issue while we were in the open forum session. Although I hadn't been asked to speak, I again volunteered my all-queers-are-worse-than-vermin answer. It got real quiet. I think I might have scored on that one. To tell you the truth, the discovery of the lesbian sea gulls in California sent me scurrying back to my sermon outlines. I'd always figured if God wanted homos he'd a made them. So, when some scientist discovered these gay gulls, I think, "Hey, wait a minute, I've got to come up with a new answer." My "Thousand Snappy Sermon Starters" answered it right up for me:

"flee all forms of evil." See what I mean?

Kids these days just don't seem to be as concerned about the gut-level issues like we were in the sixties. Take, for example, mixed swimming. I've got a whole notebook full of top quality answers on this Satanic and lustful habit of some Christian youth. But, believe it or not, they're just not as concerned with this problem (which is prevalent, I'm told, in Southern California and Florida) as we were in the sixties. Today they are asking questions about mixed dormitories and singles apartments. And I don't have one *single*—notice the play on words—not one single answer for that question. When I was in school, mixed dormitories hadn't happened yet. I don't even know the Greek word for dormitory.

I was asked to be on the panel at a recent youth gathering in Arkansas. It is one of the big events of the year for young folks, and I was honored to be on the panel in the open forum. I figured this would be my forte—I mean me with all my ready answers—but I'll be dang if those kids didn't ask the strangest questions. Not one dancing question, or mixed swimming, or fill-the-void, or anything I was ready for. They asked strange questions.

One kid asked what I thought about moonies. I didn't think it was any place to talk about a thing like that, but the question had to be tackled head-on. I said, "Son, not under any circumstances should a Christian gentleman participate in mooning," I said. "Keep your pants up at all times." This got a big laugh. I said, "The same goes for streakin', just no place for it."

I finally got another question later. A young lady said, "What is your view of T.M.?" Like I said, I thought these questions were a little out of line, but being a liberal and rebel at heart, I thought, shucks, I'll answer it. It'll be good for the kids to know all us Gospel preachers aren't overstuffed boobs. I says, "Darlin', without any question or shadow of doubt,

T.M. is one of the most outstanding running backs in the country. He runs a 4.4 forty and would have won the Heisman Trophy if Texas hadn't been number one. Terry Miller is as good as O.J." This got an uproarious laugh too. Actually I have a pretty good touch of humor. I was just getting started when a secretary hollered from the wing and said I had a phone call. After I got there, they'd already hung up. I ran back to the open forum, but they decided to quit early. I kinda hated that. I had lots more answers.

But back to my main thesis. My answers just don't seem to fit the questions very well. I can refute rock music all over the place, but all kids these days listen to is Bill and Gloria Gaither. I listened to one of their albums just so I would really know about them, and their obviously insincere show biz approach to Gospel Music. They're slick all right. They could fool almost anybody, except, of course, those of us who are specially trained for this sort of thing. They were pretty good in spots, but don't worry, no, siree, they didn't fool me. Obviously wrong. Just wrong, that's all there is to it. Psallo takes care of it for me. Just say Psallo every few minutes and you've bout got 'er whipped.

In our recent High School Class, we are studying man-made religions and erroneous denominations. One young man showed blatant disrespect to me and ignorance of the importance of these vital issues. All he could think about was those awful camps where everyone gets naked and walks around. Of course, he didn't know the correct theological term. Occult, he called them. "What are your views on occult?" he kept saying. I said plainly it was not to be discussed in a mixed class. He said, "But what is so secretive about the occultist?" Can you beat that? Used to, Occultist Camps were just in France, but now days there's occultists running around naked in America. The gall of kids these days!

But it got worse when he said he and

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