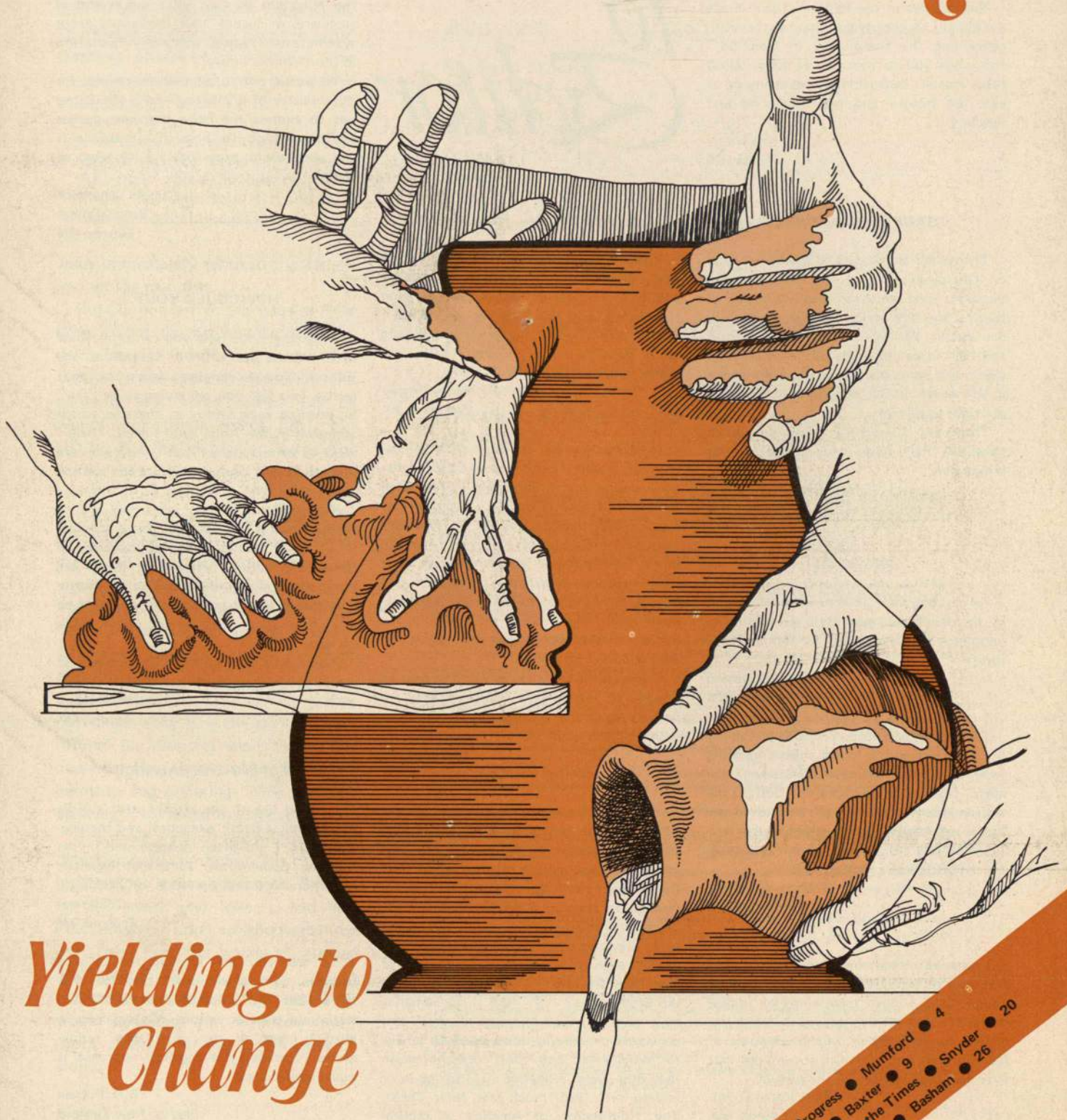


new wine

JUNE 1976
THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
DEDICATED TO CHRISTIAN GROWTH



Yielding to Change

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Repentance • Baxter • 9
Keeping Up With the Times • Snyder • 20
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A COMMON HUNGER

The February issue of *New Wine* reaffirmed to me the direction that we should be going. While I appreciate and concur with the desire not to offend those who might be critical, I also see the necessity of not allowing the criticism to control the progress in the Body of Christ.

The articles in the February issue made me hungry to experience more of the truth concerning the community of God. So I encourage you to continue to teach about these matters because there are many of us who are hungry and need direction and teaching.

Ken Houts
Olathe, KS

THANKS FOR ANSWERS

Thanks for the Forum in the March issue on Discipleship. Praise the Lord that the questions and answers have been put in print! I see how much damage we do with our mouth. We hear only part of the truth and then throw the baby out with the bath water. It's not a matter of how right we are in any issue, but are we willing to lay down our right to be right.

Thank you so much for answering a lot of questions that have been blown out of proportion.

Mr. & Mrs. Bob Inmon
Abilene, TX

ON YOUTH

As a young man, your theme on "Youth" in the March issue gave me a sense of being important and necessary to the Body of Christ.

Steven Miyamoto
Albany, NY

I am a teenager (age 17) trying to live my life for God and I found myself agreeing with the article, "Living as a Christian Teenager." I particularly am praising God for the section "Love of Parents." It showed me how I was leaving the Lord out of my relationship with my parents. I want to express my deepest thanks for that article.

Myra Kenemore
Las Vegas, NV

I especially liked your March issue. I have had a lot of training in working with young people, and I have read a lot of books, magazines and articles on youth. I feel the articles in your March issue were some of the soundest and most Christ-centered that have ever been written on the subject.

Miss Karen S. Hill
Amherst, VA

Letters to Editor

OUR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

Thank you for the April '76 issue. I think many American Christians have gone too far and have become anti-American. My first citizenship is in the New Jerusalem, but I intend to be a good American citizen as long as it does not mean compromising my convictions as a Christian.

Nancy Frazier
Grantham, PA

It has come to my attention with distressing clarity what I believe to be a misconception among many Christians in regard to politics and government, in particular, the election of public officials. I find the attitude widely shared that the Lord will inject into political office whoever suits Him, regardless of whether I vote or not. I hear reference made to the proverbial statement that, "The heart of the king is in the hands of the Lord, and he turneth it whithersoever he willetth."

Does not the Christian as a citizen bear an equal, if not greater, responsibility to participate in the political processes of our nation's government?

Don Handley
Corpus Christi, TX

We have followed, with a healthy mixture of excitement and reservation, the growth of the intercession for nations teaching and movement: excitement because we too feel the need for deep repentance in this nation; reservation because a revitalization of the "American spiritual heritage" is not necessarily deep repentance.

Our reaction to the April 1976 issue of *New Wine* was this: "Ye did run well; what did hinder you . . . ?" (Gal. 5:7). America does need revival, but revival of what? Just because the founding fathers gave lip service to "providence" and "God" does not mean that they were "adhering to, trusting in or relying on" God, much less Jesus Christ. The "foundation of America on biblical

principles" was at best a syncretism with many other very non-biblical principles such as individualism, militarism, materialism and Western rationalism.

Brethren, you have begun to examine the implications of the Kingdom of God. Do not be distracted! The question is this: Will the outpouring of the Holy Spirit be channeled into the kingdom of America or the Kingdom of God, that supra-national vanguard of justice that challenges every system, every nation, and every institution as Christ Himself does?

We write, not to express our despair for the ministry of Christian Growth Ministries, but to express the hope that presupposes any exhortation, the hope that its recipients will continue to press into the Kingdom of God.

Gerald Schlaback
Brad Gilmore
Goshen, IN

HOW COULD YOU?

I just don't see how you can print some of the letters you print in "Letters to the Editor." You are running a gossip column. I realize you feel you are trying to be "fair" in printing such letters as the one which appeared in the April issue signed, "And I want to be left alone," but I think you are disturbing and causing distrust by printing such.

You should strive for what Paul said in Philippians 4:8 "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things."

You aren't printing this magazine just to please people, but to edify and teach.

Lura McDannald
Fresno, CA

KEEPING THE BALANCE

I would like to see articles with a more sound and in-depth exegetical and theological basis. I am often disappointed in the shallow, popularized, somewhat legalistic and literalistic interpretation of Scripture.

C. Platteel
Zeeland, MI

To me you are keeping the balance between theologically-based doctrine type of articles and practical experience-based testimony type of articles. Your success in keeping clear of the usual trite, quick-answer, hackneyed evangelical approach is much appreciated.

B.R. Pubble
Paeroa, New Zealand

Editorial

One of Jesus' first recorded miracles was the deliverance of the tormented man in the synagogue in Capernaum. The power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' teaching provoked the demon into revealing himself. Usurping his victim's voice, he railed at the Lord.

Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God! (Luke 4:34).

Jesus immediately rebuked the demon and set the man free.

But our concern in this issue of *New Wine* is not the deliverance ministry, dramatic and needful as it may be. Rather, our concern is with the demon's first three words: *Let us alone!* For those words not only testify to the demon's hatred for Jesus; they also reveal the stubborn carnal nature (which is also an enemy of God — Romans 8:7). That stubbornness — against which we all struggle — is *resistance to change*. So ingrained is this attitude in each of us that often God must use seemingly harsh methods and painful circumstances to alter our course or adjust our lifestyle.

Of course, the Lord offers a way out if we want it — the same one He offered the disciples when multitudes deserted Him because He spoke of hardship and suffering. "Will you also go away?" He asked the twelve.

But if we are wise, we will resist the temptation to run before His chastening has done its essential work. Rather, we will stand and take it, and like Peter answer, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

Change is painful. But our lives would be filled with infinitely more agony if God ever decided to leave us alone.

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SPIRITUAL PROGRESS:



by Bob Mumford

Change should be a way of life for the Christian. In order to accept this as a statement of fact, we may need to come to some new understanding of "change" as it relates to us as individuals. When we consider undertaking a particular course of action, it pays to have a clear picture of what is involved before we commit ourselves to it. We would all admit to the need for *some* change in the life of the believer — but how much, when, and how?

CHANGE — A QUALIFYING FACTOR

Jesus unequivocally presented the necessity for change in those who desired to join forces with Him. In His conversation with Nicodemus, a wealthy ruler of the Jews who came seeking information on Jesus' life and teachings, He said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Later in His ministry, we hear Him stating, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). At still another teaching session, these words were spoken, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise

perish" (Luke 13:5).

Being born from above, being converted, repenting — all demand change. They all carry an ultimatum — "Change, or else . . ." Perhaps you are thinking, as I did at one time, "Now since *that* change has been made, I've got it made." Or, at least I thought that some day I would come to the place in my spiritual journey where I could settle down and enjoy the sensation of "having arrived." Then I realized that God is on a constantly moving course and if I wanted to keep up with Him, I would have to remain in a veritable state of

flux. I recognized the divine ultimatum, "Change or else be left behind!"

Flux is defined in the dictionary as the moving of anything in continued succession . . . as being made fluid. This description fits perfectly the Christian life as I have found it. The more fluid I remain, the more progress I make. Having the ability to change as God requires us to in no sense infers a state of instability or capriciousness. It does not throw us at the mercy of the elements or to circumstance. In fact, the opposite is true. Remaining fluid in God's hands insures stability — not only in the spiritual realm, but as preparation for meeting the demands of everyday living.

How can change make us more stable? Because the changes God institutes moves us toward that one goal which is eternal, fixed and never-changing. That goal is conformation to the image of Jesus Christ. Change requires being altered . . . becoming different . . . undergoing a transition. It results in transformation — being transformed into His likeness. God's stated purpose for us, as believers, is given in Romans 8:29: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son . . ." We are predestined for this change. It just takes some of us longer to "get with it" than it does others.

What are some hindrances to yielding ourselves into God's hands for conformation to His desired purpose? What keeps us from experiencing the changes necessary for conformity to Jesus' likeness? Well, one major hindrance is tradition. Now, tradition has great value in some ways. In others, it can prove a curse. Traditions can form stable foundations for progress. Other traditions can make progress almost impossible. When we adopt the attitude which says, "We have never done it this way before . . . We always do it that way . . ." This is the way it ought to be and the way it is going to stay," — then we limit the change necessary for progress.

In the sphere of religion, tradition is usually a hindrance. Our God is not

primarily a God of tradition, He is a God of movement. Since He is Life Incarnate, this characteristic is inherent in His nature. Life itself is a constant state of movement and change. When life ceases, death sets in. Religiously speaking, when a person refuses to change, he becomes fossilized. A fossil is a piece of organic matter that failed to change! It has become crystalized or hardened beyond the possibility of alteration.

Ability to change has always been a necessary characteristic of those who desired to follow God. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews, often referred to as the roll call of the faithful, lists men and women who spearheaded advances with God. These are spoken of as having been strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Their description denotes wanderer . . . traveler . . . sojourner. These are all necessary ways of life for those who are looking for "a city . . . whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). The permanent dwelling place of the spiritual pilgrim is with God. Since He is "on the move," we must be, too.

CHANGE — PREVAILING PRINCIPLES

Please study the implications of this statement: *An act of response to the will of God demands, involves and requires constant change.*

This statement means that if I express a desire to know and do God's will, I must lay myself open to change. His will is progressive by nature. It is progressively unfolded to me. I do not know all of His will at once. That would just be too much! I know only so far — or so much — but as I embrace that which He has revealed to me, I then become capable of receiving further revelation.

Christian growth comes one step at a time. Spiritual maturity, like physical maturity, comes one day at a time. Jesus' words to His followers were, "Take up your cross *daily* and follow me" (Luke 9:23). This means we are required to follow Him today even if we don't know where He will lead us tomorrow. As long as He is leading, we need not fear change.

A graphic picture of the necessity to change (and the dire results of not being able to change!) is found in Jeremiah 48:11–12. The lesson drawn from this scripture is one I learned from a godly man named John Wright Follette.

"Moab has been at ease since his youth; he has also been undisturbed on his lees, neither has he been emptied from vessel to vessel, nor has he gone into exile. Therefore, he retains his flavor, and his aroma has not changed. Therefore behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I shall send to him those who tip vessels, and they will tip him over, and they will empty his vessels and shatter his jars" (NAS).

Without going into the historical background of this lesson, let us merely apply it to our thoughts on change. Here are four principles for our consideration:

- (1) Change is necessary.
- (2) Change is a matter of choice.
- (3) If change is not effected, certain conditions will be manifested.
- (4) If there is no voluntary change, there will follow a corrective measure.

Looking again at our scripture, we note that "being at ease and undisturbed" are not attitudes conducive to change. We see that Moab had resisted change; that, as a result, he retained his original flavor and aroma; and that judgment was coming to him. The "tipper of the vessel" and "the shatterer of the jar" were about to disrupt his status quo.

The metaphor Jeremiah uses in projecting his lesson on change is that of winemaking — an occupation quite common in his day. The new wine, while it was still cloudy with the remains of crushed grapes, was put into a bottle. As the dregs began to settle, the winemaker took the bottle and poured the contents into a second bottle. Undesirable sediment and ferment were left behind in bottle No. 1. After another period of settling, the wine was poured into bottle No. 3, leaving behind still additional objectionable content. What happened each time the wine was poured into another

vessel? The wine became increasingly clear, sparkling and aromatic.

Applying this metaphor to Moab, the point is clear. Jeremiah had said, "Now look at Moab, He has never changed and he still smells the same. Ferment and sediment! Whenever you come up against him, instead of God-ordained changes, he manifests habits, tempers and personality traits of the carnal life. Every time you bump into him, some of that comes spilling over."

What about you and me? If we adopt the moabitish attitude, we can expect the same objectionable odor. If, when a new bottle appears on my horizon I respond with, "I don't want to be poured into a square bottle. I like it here in this round one. I have always been round and I intend to stay round," soon I find my vessel gets tipped and there I am — round in a square bottle. I complain, "I don't like it here. I refuse to yield to the situation." But there the Lord leaves me until I am willing to look at things from His viewpoint. Eventually, I become square, yielding to the will of God in my present circumstances. Sediment starts separating. He smiles and comments, "That's good. Settle here awhile."

Before long He returns with an octagonal bottle, and in I go! My reaction is, "This is just too much! I'll never be octagonal." But God quietly counters, "I'll wait." As the sediment of the self-life once again begins to settle in the octagonal vessel, and the wine becomes more and more clear, I come to realize something of His purposes for me. Even though I do realize the need for change, it doesn't always follow that when God appears with a triangular bottle that I will greet the next pouring with open arms. I should, for it is preferable to permit the Lord to pour me from vessel to vessel than to have Him send a "tipper" or a "breaker of the jar."

However, if such stringent action becomes necessary, I may at first respond to the tipping and breaking with the conclusion, "Certainly this cannot be of the Lord!" But then I hear the words, "Yes, I am here again.

You see, if there is no change your taste and your smell remain the same." Finally I understand and respond, "Lord, I do want to follow You, but I had no idea that You required continual flux." As I gain new understanding, His desire to produce the sparkling clear wine of the Spirit is revealed. He wants my life to have the fragrant aroma of His workings. He wants me to be able to add flavor to any situation in which He may place me, whether it is round, triangular, square or octagonal. This demands yieldedness and flexibility on my part.

Wouldn't *you* rather have the "vessel to vessel" procedure, and even the "tipper and breaker" if it comes to that necessity, than to remain the same all of your Christian walk? I would. The object of all God's workings and changing of circumstances is to bring us into an adaptability which insures our following Him. *Every believer must undergo change or chastisement.*

It is also my conviction that no portion of the Church of Jesus Christ will be left unchanged in God's sovereign dealings. The Bride must be prepared for the Bridegroom — no more wrinkles or spot on the wedding garment.

CHANGE: NECESSARY CHARACTERISTICS

Below are three characteristics which are evidenced in those who are maturing in this understanding of change. Check these simple ABC's and see how you rate. Moab would not have scored very well on these tests, for his desire to be at ease and undisturbed did not afford fertile soil for spiritual maturity and progress. These three "states of being" indicate our ability to respond to God's leadings toward conforming us to the image of His Son.

A. Openness to biblical change.

Revelation 2:7 brings this admonition: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches . . ." We need to keep our

ears tuned to hear His voice. He hasn't said it all yet. Or, at least, we haven't heard it all yet! Do you think there might be some things we haven't yet discovered? It isn't "new" truth — only new to us. It is a restoration to His original plan and purpose. We refer to it as *present truth*. The first-grade student begins his journey into mathematics by learning that two and two add up to four. Sound geometrical equations are contained in a textbook he picks up by mistake, but he cannot figure them out at age six. But, as a sound foundation in mathematics is laid, the answers in that geometry book will later literally jump off the pages.

We must keep ourselves open to new biblical truth. We must remain open to biblical change.

B. Total commitment to Christ and His purposes. All other purposes, processes and particulars are expendable.

This means that anything that does not directly contribute to the ongoing purpose of God for my life, I am willing to change, adjust, or get rid of (if necessary). There will be no, "We've never done it that way before." Instead, there will be a willingness to change if it means advancement in Christ. There are some things we haven't experienced yet. Get ready to embrace them as they are revealed to you.

C. Willingness to adventure with Christ in the steps of Abraham.

Abraham went out, not knowing where he was going. Read his story in Genesis 12:1 through 25:8. The Lord just asked him to follow. He presented Abraham with a blank contract and asked him to sign it — the details were filled in as they went along. Because Abraham was willing to move out into the unknown, he became a wanderer who earned the right to be called "father of the faithful" (Romans 4:11).

This does not necessarily mean resigning your present position and responsibilities to sit on a curbstone waiting for the Lord to come along

and do something. Rather, it means that you are willing, as best you know how, to move in God's adjustments and changes for your life — even though there may be some surprises ahead and some untraveled paths up the way.

Change involves circumstances, situations, spiritual understandings, people, geography, and lifestyle. Changes in these areas do not come easy; but if they do not come as He directs, the flavor and the aroma of your life will soon send out tell-tale evidences of your lack of ability to adventure into change at His command.

Here is one word of warning: Sometimes people change outwardly but never adjust inwardly. They are like the one who sang, "I left my heart in San Francisco . . ." People may physically leave, but *never actually leave*. This is not change as God desires change. We must submit our inner desires and responses for alteration, also.

CHANGE: SYMPTOMS DENOTE NEED

Now that we have gone over our ABC's, here is a second test. *How do I know if I need change?* It is often difficult to detect questionable flavor and aroma in one's own life. We are used to ourselves just as we are. Others may sense the need for us to change before we do. However, we list below seven symptoms that indicate a need for change which only you can detect. Symptoms are quite often subjective — *how we feel lets us know that something is wrong*. Take your pulse, blood pressure and temperature on these seven symptoms.

(1) A sense of dissatisfaction or restlessness.

(2) A sense of being resisted. Nothing you seek to accomplish seems to turn out right.

(3) A sense of frustration with circumstances, situations, people and present responsibilities.

(4) A sense of lack. You know there must be something more that you haven't yet discovered. This drives

many people into a more fervent search for God.

(5) A sense of being useless. This is the "fifth wheel" syndrome. Others seem to be actively and profitably engaged — but you really do not have a goal.

(6) A sense of being out-of-date — or feeling that God has moved on and left you behind.

(7) A sense of spiritual lethargy. The Scriptures, worship and your prayer life have lost their appeal.

CHANGE: PRESCRIBED HELPS

Thus far in our attempt to understand change, we have laid out some of the *principles* involved in change, some *characteristics* necessary as we consider changing, and set out seven *symptoms* likely to be present when change is needed. Finally, we take a look at some *suggested helps* toward effecting the changes God has ordered. Remember, we are of little value to God unless we adjust to His purpose for our lives.

These steps toward placing ourselves in a position where God can effect His desired changes are not presented in a neatly wrapped package. They require individual applications. They all contribute to making us fluid and pliable in His hands. These steps were brought to me by the Lord working His vessel-to-vessel process in my own life.

1. *Open your garden to God and to the friends He brings with Him.*

The inner life of each of us is like a private garden where no one can trespass. Each of us, individually, must open the gate and invite others to enter. Song of Solomon 5:1 gives a word picture of such an open garden — entering and bringing along friends to enjoy the spices and honeycomb to be found there.

It is one thing to open one's innermost life to Christ; but it's quite another thing to accept and entertain the guests He brings with Him. This is a risk we take when we invite Him to be Lord of our lives.

If we are ever to change, we must be willing to open our gardens to others.

We may want them to take off their spiked shoes before they start stomping around in our herb beds, but it is still better to have some torn-up garden patches than to fossilize behind a locked gate.

Yes, in order to develop resiliency, we must open our lives to others. Not just our homes and dinner tables, but those private quarters where the real person resides.

2. *Adopt a self-imposed ruthlessness on attitudes, actions and habits which are not Christian.*

This means no more Freudian excuses. No longer valid is the complaint, "My grandmother rejected me . . . she favored my brother . . . My third-grade teacher made me feel inferior to the others . . . My parents went off and left me at home without telling me why . . ."

Is that really why you are so hostile, withdrawn and critical? Take a good look at yourself. If you are always tardy, face up to it. If you are a chronic liar, deal with it. If you are lazy, admit it. If you are overweight, don't rationalize. Tell yourself bluntly, "Look at me . . . I'm fat!"

Look at yourself honestly. Be ruthless in dealing with anything that doesn't measure up to Christ's standards of acceptable attitudes, actions and habits. Get help and counsel if you need it in dealing with the problem. But don't excuse it.

3. *Recognize that the nature of change is reciprocal.*

God intends that fellow believers admonish, encourage and strengthen one another. This is one of the blessings of relationship. The members of the early church depended upon each other for help in Christian growth. They learned to give and take, and so must we.

If we are going to give advice, we must be willing to take it. God may choose some unlikely instrument to point out your problem area. Swallow the pride which tempts you to reject counsel or correction from others not as educated, wealthy or mature as you are.

4. Learn to listen.

Learning to listen is important. It entails using both ears and all that is in between. Most of us immediately become defensive when we are challenged. The very words, "Bob, could I have a word with you?" threaten us. But, *to hear with advantage* requires being honest and ruthless with ourselves.

Have you ever spoken with someone about the possibility of change? Usually, you can actually see and feel their resistance. Most of us who resist change fail to understand what others are saying *because we don't want to hear*. Some words of wisdom in Proverbs 17:10 may help. "A rebuke goes deeper into the one who has understanding than a hundred blows into a fool" (NAS).

A wise man will receive correction, but you can take a foolish man, give him a hundred stripes, and he will look at you and ask, "Uhhh . . . what did you do that for?" He doesn't understand. This leads us to look at the next suggested step.

5. At times we must accept correction by faith.

I saw this principle at work when I had to confront a brother concerning his relationship with his wife. Immediately, all of his defense mechanisms stormed into operation. After he had steamed for about twenty minutes, I tried again. "Brother, you are not hearing me. You are mistreating your wife." That started another verbal barrage.

When he finally calmed down, the conversation went something like this:

BOB: Hold it! Now listen to me. *I want you to take by faith what I am saying to you!* Do you believe that I am a man of God?

ANSWER: Yes, I do.

BOB: Do you believe that I love you?

ANSWER: Yes, I do.

BOB: All right. I am asking you to take by faith what I am saying to you and the Lord will confirm it to you. You are mistreating your wife. Will you receive it?

ANSWER: I wouldn't receive it from anybody else; but, yes, I will receive it.

RESULT: That night the offender was awakened from his sleep and the Holy Spirit began to show him what was involved. "This is what you have done . . . This is what you haven't done . . . This is what you should have done . . ." Finally, he *saw and heard* what he could not comprehend previously. He *had* been mistreating his wife.

How can a stubborn person be convinced that he is stubborn? Or a person who is so full of pride that everyone sees it except himself, be convinced that he is proud? Defenses immediately go up when we are presented with the truth about ourselves. Let's be slow to reject correction. Let's take it by faith and God will honor our willingness to listen.

What if someone comes up to you and says, "There is something about your attitude that turns me off." Do you turn *him* off right then and there? Or can you accept by faith, even though you faithfully read your three chapters from the Bible every day, pray long and fervently, and fast once a week, that someone is tasting and/or smelling something that emanates from Adam — the old self life? He is probably reacting to something that you have not felt necessary or been willing to change.

6. Be patient with yourself and others.

Another verse from the Book of Proverbs helps us here: "He who rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with the tongue" (28:23 NAS). Be certain to underline *afterward!*

By now we should realize how hard change is to come by, as well as how necessary it is. So we must give ourselves and our friends time to come to an understanding of the need, and to work up the courage to do something about it. "Slowly and painfully" are usually the forerunners to improved aroma and flavor. These results follow *afterward*.

Here are some examples of the

"slow and painful" reactions when we are confronted with a need for change. "Oh, how can anyone say I am proud? I was just trying to do my best." Or, "Surely no one can accuse *me* of not being submissive to my husband. I mend his socks and have the meals on time and . . ." But afterward — when God in His own time and way reveals the true picture, the aroma and flavor will manifest themselves. "Oh, now I see it! How could I have been so blind?"

Which is better? (A) To rebuke someone and afterwards see him come to a place where he understands; or (B) To flatter someone and never see him change? If all we say to him is, "You are the finest Christian I ever saw . . . if there were only more like you . . ." what chance of change is there when he is feeding on such flattery?

If you do detect the smell of flesh, either in yourself or another who shares this understanding of how to change, it's better to face it than to let it continue polluting the air. Don't forget, though, to be patient and allow time for God's confirmation.

7. After you have made the change, rejoice in the Lord, worship Him, pray, take a little rest — and then get ready for the next change!

Let's imagine that you have come to a place where you can say, "Thank you, Lord for showing me that I have been miserly. I am glad to be pried loose from bondage to dollars and dimes. It is good to enjoy doing things for others — even for myself once in awhile. Now I am ready for heaven." Is that final conclusion valid? By all means, rejoice in your newly acquired freedom. But you can be sure that God is standing by waiting to go to work on the next five or six changes He has on His agenda for you. Remember, your "conformation" to the image of His Son is God's goal.

Vessel to vessel! Less and less of the sediment of self! More and more of the sweet savor and aroma of Jesus! These are the workings of our God. Permit Him to bring His goal to reality in your life. ☞



Changing direction.

by Ern Baxter

Before we discuss the subject of repentance, we first need to stress the importance of good foundations in the Christian life. Most of the problems we encounter as Christians and many impediments to our personal growth derive from our failure to have laid sound foundations at the very beginning. If we were to ask, most believers would probably say, "I've laid a good foundation." And yet in talking to those same people about repentance it's amazing to find that most know nothing about it. Whoever brought them to the Lord, failed to give them a sound beginning.

I want to illustrate this point with a painful, but humorous personal experience. During the Depression years, I was unable to afford many things; including getting my teeth fixed. By the time I could afford dental work, I needed a number of fillings. Not being a lover of pain, I searched the list of dentists, and found one advertised as "painless." And Dr. Painless, was as good as his advertising. He filled five or six teeth and hardly hurt me at all. I

thought, "That's terrific." But about six months later, my teeth began to ache incessantly. Instead of going back to Dr. Painless, I consulted another dentist, who, after taking x-rays, said, "I think I know who filled your teeth." When I named Dr. Painless, he said, "That's what I thought. Your x-rays reveal that he was painless because he didn't remove all the decay, but instead just filled in on top of the decay."

"Now," my new dentist continued, "you're going to suffer more pain than you would have, had he done a good job. We must take out his fillings and drill out not only the decay he missed, but more besides."

I learned from that experience that you either take some pain in the beginning or you take more at the finish. I learned that if you don't get all the dirt out at the beginning of your Christian walk, but try instead to cover it over, someday God must pull the covering off and dig deep to get the rest of it. I think it's much better to let people have their pain in the beginning. This applies especially to repentance.

Now, we can't talk about repentance without talking about sin. Although sin is a whole different subject, we must touch on it in discussing repentance because Jesus came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). "Repentance from dead works" is exactly the way this part of our "Christian foundation" is described.

Dead works proceed from moral separation, and for every man outside of Jesus Christ, everything he does, no matter what form sin takes in his life, is constituted dead works. Now you may say, "What do you mean 'the form sin takes'?" In the Roman epistle, Paul speaks of at least three kinds of sinners. First are the gross sinners. Most of us tend to look upon these as the "real" sinners — the homosexual, the immoral person, the idolator. The whole gross, sensuous, sordid mess of improper human relationships that find expression in the carnal appetites constitutes sin to many people.

But in the second chapter of Romans, Paul goes on to say, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man,

whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things." Those who boast, "I don't stoop to that kind of human behavior," I would call "philosophical sinners" — "academic sinners," or "intellectual sinners." They're too busy sinning with their brains to sin with their bodies; too busy trafficking in Freud and every other kind of literary unbelief to participate physically in sin. All their sinning takes place in their ivory towers.

Then there is a third class which Paul notes: the religious class, and this is the touchy area. Paul said, "Behold, thou art called a Jew . . ." (Rom. 2:17) and then proceeded to expose the hypocrisy of the religious sinner.

Years ago I talked to a young Hindu man in India who told me that neither tobacco nor alcohol had ever touched his lips, nor had he ever laid a hand on a girl. As he listed all the things he *hadn't* done, he sounded exactly like Saul of Tarsus " . . . touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." But when I pressed the claims of Jesus Christ upon him, his response was to place his list of external moral accomplishments over and above Jesus Christ. Unwilling to confess the intellectual and "sophisticated" sin in his life, he claimed his own "religion" superceded God's prescribed righteousness. So when we talk about the basic nature of sin, we must realize that a sinner is not always characterized by gross sin.

In the New Testament there are 9 Greek words for sin, and 21 lists of sin, consisting of 202 defined sins. Eliminating repetitions, we find 103 specific sins listed. Although it is important to view sin as definitive acts specified in God's Word, there is a danger that we may fail to deal with the *nature* of sin. All works of unregenerate men, whether they be gross sinners, philosophical sinners, or religious sinners, emanate from moral death and are therefore *dead works*. They are the works of men dead in trespasses and sin.

The essential principle of all sin is

selfishness, most comprehensively defined in Isaiah 53:6: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." *"Every one to his own way!"* The equivalent in the New Testament is 2 Corinthians 5:15: "He died for all that they which live should *not henceforth live unto themselves* but unto Him who died for them and rose again." Isaiah and Paul are in agreement that sin is essentially "doing what I want to do in any given situation as opposed to what God wants me to do in that situation." All of us have fallen into its trap. Thank God we have something to take care of sin; its called repentance. So, having made our point that repentance has to do with sin, we want to speak of repentance itself.

In the Old Testament, there are two words translated "repent." One means "to lament or to grieve," or to "undertake a different course of action." It is used both of God and man. The other word, used extensively by the prophets, is generally employed to express the common idea of repentance. It means "a radical change in one's attitude towards sin and God."

In the New Testament there are also two words translated repent. One is similar to the first Old Testament word. It means "a feeling of concern or regret." It comes very close to remorse, but remorse is not necessarily repentance — it just means you feel bad. But the other New Testament word, "metanoëia" means "a change of mind" or "to have another mind." Actually, repentance is changing your mind from what you have believed on any given subject to what God has revealed on that subject. "Metanoëia" is also associated with the word "turn," and implies a personal decision to turn from sin and enter into fellowship with God.

In the contemporary approach to the sinner, there has been too little emphasis on repentance. Not only must the sinner change his mind about God, himself, his actions, and the world around him, he must also take definite moral action to implement his

change of mind. To further define this process, repentance is the informing and changing of the mind, the stirring and directing of the emotions to urge the required change, and the action of the yielded will in turning the whole man *away* from sin to God.

When we approach a sinner let us never be afraid of making him morally responsible for coming to God. The first time I read the writings of Charles Finney, the great revivalist, I closed them and said, "He's a humanist." I resented the fact that he laid moral responsibility upon men. At that time, because of my background, I held the very extreme view that man was totally incapable of doing anything. This, of course, is not correct. Man *is* capable of hearing the Gospel. Man *is* capable of making the decision to say, "I will turn to God." What he is *not* capable of is doing it — it takes the grace of God to actually turn him. But he is capable of *deciding* to do it, and he must be held morally responsible for that decision of will by which he says, "God, here I am. Turn me and I shall be turned."

REPENTANCE DEFINED

We are indebted to Finney, especially for some of his definitions, which are almost in the ultimate. Here is Finney's definition of repentance: " . . . it implies an intellectual and a hearty giving up of all controversy with God upon all and every point. It implies a conviction that God is wholly right, and the sinner wholly wrong, and a thorough and hearty abandonment of all excuses and apologies for sin." When Finney says, " . . . an *intellectual* and a hearty giving up of all controversy with God upon all and every point," I appreciate his inclusion of "intellectual." Much evangelical preaching assumes you have to cut your head off in order to believe with your heart. But God talks to our minds, we make decisions with our minds. Repentance likewise speaks to the mind. People who say the mind plays no part in conversion ought to have tremendous revivals in mental institutions.

The "conviction that God is wholly right" establishes a significant, ongoing principle. If we accept this principle at the beginning of our Christian lives, then in subsequent encounters with God, on any issue He will be wholly right again.

Finney also defines repentance as "a thorough and hearty abandonment of all excuses and apologies for sin." That means we must honestly face the gravity and depth of our sin, so that we may appreciate the totality of God's cleansing grace. Vance Havner, a well-known Christian author, is quoted as saying, "Today cheap grace is being preached and received by cheap faith resulting in cheap Christians."

Before we go into repentance scripturally, there is one other quote from Havner which provides the delicate balance to what we have shared thus far. "It is no easy matter so to preach repentance as not to discourage truly humble souls, or so to proclaim God's forgiving love as not to encourage presumption and carelessness." Where is the balance between confronting a man with, "Mister, as a sinner you must wholly agree with God that you are lost and undone, and you must turn from your sin," and yet letting him know, "God's love is as wide as the ocean, and He will forgive all your sins, and save you"? That delicate balance is not easy to maintain! We must preach repentance to those responsive to God without sending them away under a burden of discouragement, while at the same time, not stripping the love of God of its demand for moral responsibility so that the same people go away presuming upon God's grace.

FOURTEEN REASONS FOR REPENTANCE

We want to examine a number of scriptures on repentance. Why is repentance important? Let me list fourteen reasons. (1) Repentance is important because God commands it; immediately and universally. In Paul's address upon Mars Hill he says, "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). God's

command requires universal application and immediate response.

(2) Repentance was a reason for Christ's coming into the world. Luke 5:32, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Stated positively, Jesus Christ says, "I am come to call sinners to repentance."

(3) Repentance is part of our Lord's commission to us. Luke 24:47 says: "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations."

(4) Repentance is necessary to avoid destruction. "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3,5).

(5) It is necessary to eternal life. "God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). One cannot have eternal life without repenting.

(6) Repentance is necessary for forgiveness. A number of scriptures attest to this.

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19).

However, one of the most graphic illustrations of this is in Luke 17:3 where it says, "... if your brother sin against you, if he repent, forgive him." It doesn't say merely if he sins against you *forgive* him. Your forgiveness frees you, but without repentance, it will not benefit him. Forgiveness, to be complete, must be wanted. Let us assume that my friend Bill has wronged me. I approach him while he's still angry with me and say, truthfully "Bill, I forgive you." He may well say, "Who asked for it?" I can't force my forgiveness on him. My forgiveness benefits him only when he repents, or asks for it.

Neither does God lay forgiveness on us. The Word says, "If we *confess* our

sins, He is faithful and just to *forgive*..." God cannot automatically forgive. If He did, there would be no need to preach the Gospel. A person must exercise that act of will which says, "I was wrong, please forgive me." The cleansing is as much in the repentance as it is in the forgiveness.

(7) Repentance is necessary for entrance into the Kingdom of God. "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). It is required if you're going to be involved in the Kingdom of God on earth.

(8) Repentance brings the knowledge of truth. Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:25, "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." He was speaking here about people who were "opposing themselves" by being stubborn in their error. The point made here is that one cannot know divine truth if he has an unrepentant heart. Failure to repent blocks the stream of revelation and insight. No amount of academic ability can deal with moral blockage. The only hope for these people who are opposing themselves lies in Paul's double proviso: (1) "If God... will give them repentance" so that (2) they can then "acknowledge what the truth is." In other words, though they are in error and confusion, the real problem is not in their heads, but in their *wills*. If they will acknowledge that they are wrong, i.e., repent, then the blockage will go and they will see the truth. You see, you can be a brilliant doctor, and a bad man. Or a brilliant chemist and a bad man. But you can't be a good Christian and be a bad man. Divine knowledge, intellectually apprehended, is tied in with moral obedience. You just can't know God if your will is not committed to God.

A registered nurse I knew once cared for an internationally famous man, noted for his brilliance. Later, she said to me, "I never want to take care of a man like that again. He was brilliant in many areas but when we came to a question of spiritual things he was in absolute darkness. All of his academic equipment could not cope

with the simplest spiritual truth." There are men who can become so obsessed with what they are outside of God, that they create an almost impenetrable blockage.

When we first moved to Vancouver, we rented an apartment owned by the professor of anthropology in the University of British Columbia. A very genteel, courteous man and extremely intelligent, he was the author of a number of definitive works on anthropology. We chatted on a number of occasions and once while we were discussing our vocations, I had the opportunity to press the claims of God and Christ on his life. In a manner that I'll never forget, he pointed to the mass of technical literature on anthropology on his bookshelves and said, "Rev. Baxter, my mind is so filled with this, that I couldn't possibly receive what you're saying." There was something so final about his words — it was almost like I was hearing him pronounce his own death. So final was it, that I refrained from pressing the issue.

If one can go beyond the redemption point, I felt this professor had. It almost seems like there's a point where God says, "Look, I've had it." Paul says in connection with such people that "if peradventure God will give them repentance." Their last hope is that God, out of the grace of His heart, would allow them to wake up concerning themselves, to cease taking advantage of the grace of God, to acknowledge their error, and genuinely repent.

(9) Repentance is God's desire for all men. "The Lord is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). It's interesting that the Word doesn't say they should come to Christ, or come to grace, but to repentance. Repentance here stands for everything else. If a man comes to repentance, he changes his mind about his direction, about God, about eternity, about Christ. Repentance is "the totality of change that receives the totality of God's revelation in Christ and in the Scriptures."

(10) Another reason repentance is important is the one we noted at the beginning of this article. It is part of our Christian foundation, a foundation of repentance from dead works (Heb. 6:1).

(11) Still another reason, John the Baptist preached it. "Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2).

(12) Jesus preached the same message in Matthew 4:17: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

(13) The apostles preached it. "And they went out and preached that men should repent" (Mark 6:12).

And finally, (14) Paul preached repentance. Paul, speaking of the nature of his ministry in Acts 20:21, said that he testified "... both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Everywhere Paul went, that was the opening note of his preaching. Repentance. You must change your mind. There must be a change, and it starts by hearing the truth.

FACTORS LEADING TO REPENTANCE

Having established the importance of repentance our next question is: What leads men to repent? First, the goodness of God. "... despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" What goodness? Well, the goodness that keeps us alive, in spite of our sin. The goodness that sometimes is mistaken for indifference. If God seems to let us go for a while in our sins, that's not indifference, that is goodness and long-suffering. Never mistake God's long-suffering for indifference. Sooner or later, God is morally responsible to deal with sin because He is the author of universal morality. He is the God who made the laws, and He too, must abide by them. Someone has said that if God were to violate one of His own laws, the whole universe would disintegrate, because "He upholds all things by the word of His power" (Heb. 1:3).

So while God, in His goodness, has a right to be long-suffering, by His own words, He can by no means clear the guilty (Num. 14:18). God's long-suffering will not continue beyond a man's failure to repent. His goodness is intended to lead us to repentance.

The second thing that leads men to repent is the general call of the Gospel given by Christ. "I've not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Matt. 9:13). The whole purpose of Christ's coming was to open the way to God, letting men know that God was graciously disposed toward them, if they would turn from sin. If they would come to God He would set in operation all the machinery of forgiveness, regeneration and sanctification. Jesus Christ's whole purpose in coming was to proclaim that the entire force of God's divine goodness would begin to operate if men would repent.

The third thing that leads men to repent is preaching. "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah" (Matt. 12:41). If a man repented under the preaching of Jonah, a lesser prophet, but wouldn't repent under the preaching of Jesus, the men of Nineveh who repented under Jonah would rise up in the day of judgment and charge those of Jesus' day with a greater sin.

Fourth, what leads men to repent? Rebuke. "If thy brother trespass against thee rebuke him; and if he repent forgive him" (Luke 17:3). Sometimes repentance is prompted by a rebuke. How many of us are faithful to rebuke one another, or mature enough, when rebuked, to accept it and repent?

The fifth thing that leads men to repent is godly sorrow. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation" (2 Cor. 7:10). In saying this to the Corinthians, Paul has specifically in mind the man who was living in incest with his stepmother, whom, in 1 Corinthians 5, he had instructed the elders of the church to ostracize. Urging them to let him come back lest he "... be swallowed up with over-

much sorrow," Paul indicated that the man's godly sorrow had worked repentance. Godly sorrow is a sorrow before God in terms of what one has done, and it works repentance.

Sixth, what causes man to repent? The divine gift of repentance itself. The very ability to repent. "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). I believe that the built-in nature of the Gospel is such that if a man will respond to it God will grant to him the ability to repent. It should give us great courage, when we're approaching people, to know that as we present the Gospel, God is there to give them the ability to change their minds.

PRINCIPLES RELATING TO REPENTANCE

Now we want to explore another area. Throughout Scripture, it is evident that major principles are frequently linked together, and in studying repentance, we must not neglect its "friends." By examining repentance in the context of its correlative themes, we not only balance our understanding of it, but we also protect ourselves from error.

The first associated principle is contained in Revelation 2:21. Speaking of Jezebel, our Lord says, "She *willeth* not to repent." The will is associated with repentance. We stated earlier that in all effective preaching, you inform the mind, and stir the emotions, but ultimately, you must also command the will. A listener may agree with what you say, and even get excited about it, but if he doesn't take action on it, he is not saved. In the parable of the sower, the one who received the good seed with joy received it intellectually and was stirred emotionally, but he had no root. No action took place except on the surface. Therefore, for genuine repentance the will must be motivated.

Because a man is morally responsible for what he *wills* to do, he is therefore personally responsible to *will* to be saved. Before Finney's emphasis in my life I had made the mistake of confusing man's ability to do anything

with his ability to *will* to do anything, and there is a great difference. I don't believe a man can convert himself. I don't believe a man can do anything other than say, "I will." But the minute he says, "I will," God gives him the strength to turn from sin unto God, and to do what God wants him to do. Man has the ability and responsibility to say, "I will."

The second principle associated with repentance is *faith*. "Repent ye and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). In Acts 20:21, Paul capsulates his whole message to Jews and Gentiles as "repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance and faith go together. To speak of salvation by faith without including repentance is to give the impression that faith is simply an intellectual acquiescence to a proposition devoid of any corresponding moral response.

Unfortunately, this is too often what we find going on in evangelism today. "Do you believe you're a sinner?"

"Yes."

"Do you believe Christ died for you?"

"Yes."

"Will you receive Him as your Savior?"

"Yes."

"Sign here."

Having assented intellectually to three legal requirements, the person has the idea that he is automatically a Christian without the repentance necessary to effect commensurate moral changes in his life.

Dr. R.A. Torrey tells the story of a man in one of his great Australian meetings who said he wanted to accept Christ, but was having a problem becoming a Christian because he was a drunkard. Dr. Torrey later reflected that he was sure it was the Spirit of God that prompted him to turn on the man very sharply and say, "Do you want to stop drinking?"

The man was so taken by surprise that he said, "No, I don't." Faith and moral action through repentance go together. We see this scripturally in the account of Jesus and the rich young ruler. When Jesus required him to

prove his professed faith by a tangible act, selling all he possessed, the young man went away.

Thirdly, baptism is linked with repentance. Acts 2:38: "Repent and be baptized." Someone may ask, "Can't I repent without being baptized?" Why would you want to? If repent means changing one's mind and wholly agreeing with God on everything, and God's Word says repent and be baptized, why would the question even be raised?

The fourth principle linked to repentance is conversion, meaning "to turn around." "Repent ye therefore and be converted" (Acts 3:19). In Acts 26:20, conversion is expressed by the phrase "turning to God." It says, "... they [Gentiles] should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." This verse echoes John the Baptist: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:8). Again we are faced with the necessity of manifesting evidence in support of our decisions. If we truly intend to turn to God, agreeing with Him on any given point, then the fruit of that agreement will be a change in our behavior which will be "meet for repentance."

IS REPENTANCE MEANT FOR BELIEVERS?

The final question we want to deal with is an important one: Do Christians repent? The answer, very simply, is, wherever there is sin, there must be repentance. I remember the days when I devoted much of my energy to preaching revival sermons. Revival means to restore health and vitality to life that has ebbed or fallen into subnormal conditions. My only predicament was that there seemed to be no revival material in the New Testament. If I wanted to preach on revival, I had to go to the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, etc. This bothered me because I thought that surely there should be revival texts in the New Testament. Eventually I found that there *are* revival texts in the New Testament, but they don't surface until about A.D. 96, in the book of Revela-

tion. The reason is that the book of Revelation stands in relationship to the churches of the first century as the prophets stand to the nation of Israel. Just as the ministry of the prophets was necessary to call the Israelites back to the Lord after their loss of initial excitement over the exodus from Egypt and entrance into the promised land, in the same way, the book of Revelation was calling the churches to rekindle the vitality that had waned since Pentecost and the early days of the church. Just as the prophets never taught new doctrine, but always called God's people back to foundation truth, so does the revival material in the book of Revelation. Our Lord says to the Ephesian church, "Remember therefore from whence thou followed and repent and do thy *first work*." So it is necessary for Christians, if they have fallen, to repent.

What was the sin of the Ephesians? They had left their first love. Now, *leaving* your first love is different than *losing* it. If you leave something, you can go back to the place where you left it to find it again. Although the church at Ephesus was one of the best of the seven churches of Asia listed in the book of Revelation, they were admonished for having left their first love. Where had they left it? They left their first love at the point where they stopped being loving in pressing the claims of truth. In Revelation 2, Jesus praised the Ephesian church by saying, in effect, "I know your works and your labor; I know that you've judged those who falsely claim to be apostles, and proved them to be liars. I know you have kept the church clean and sound in doctrine." But when Jesus added, "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against you," I believe that He was referring to the fact that they had become so severe and so dedicated to being right, that they had moved into legalistic rightness and had lost the touch of love.

We, too, as Christians dedicated to truth, must see that we don't fall into the same trap; becoming unlovingly dogmatic, unChristlike and severe. It is so easy, when we are so convinced we

are right, to become self-righteous in pressing our claim. Like the Ephesians, all of us have been guilty of unloving legalism at one time or another.

At a recent conference, I was faced with the unpleasant task of confronting a prideful young man who was unlovingly and dogmatically pressing the principles of discipleship and submission upon other Christian men who were unfamiliar with these concepts. When God gave me the opportunity to gently reprove him, I said, "Young man, very few of these men stand where you stand. Many of them are hearing this teaching for the first time. Yet you act as if they should instantly appropriate your understanding of these things." I said to him, "You must realize that truth must be ministered in love. Truth divorced from love is no longer truth, for once the love factor goes out of truth, that truth becomes a distortion and a caricature."

When we speak to others about truth we must communicate a loving concern for them, right where they are. We must love them more than we love proving our doctrine is right.

The one thing the Lord held against the Ephesians was their lack of love in doing right things. Did you know that you can be so right that you are wrong? Because your manner of proving your point can make the right thing wrong. Truth is not a legalistic set of facts, but rather a life stream that flows and produces change by the power of love.

Now Jesus not only spoke to the Ephesian church of their need to repent, but also, for differing reasons, to the other churches. In Revelation 2:16, He confronted the church at Pergamos with the things He had against them. Then He said, "*Repent* or else I will come unto thee quickly and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." To Sardis, in Revelation 3:3, He said, "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast *and repent*." To Laodicia (v. 19), He said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, *and repent*."

The seven letters to the seven

churches in the book of Revelation are revival messages to churches that started out right, but now needed to repent. They needed to agree with God. Yes, Christians must repent. Wherever there is sin, there *must be repentance*. Wherever there is deliberate error and turning away from truth, there must be repentance and turning to God.

Repentance in all its forms is the primary plank in every Christian's foundation. We do no one a service when we offer him what Vance Havner calls "easy grace." We are doing no man a service when we don't force him to a deep examination of his own life. We do no man a service by being "Dr. Painless," and not drilling out all the decay. We do no man a service failing to tell him bluntly and straightforwardly that he cannot really come to God until he is prepared to agree with God wholly on whatever God has to say to him about every area of his life. True repentance is an absolute necessity for a proper foundation for building a vital Christian life. ▼

Monthly Day of Prayer and Fasting

At the Chicago Church Summit Conference in September 1975, national Christian leaders established the first Friday of every month in 1976 as a day of united prayer and fasting for all Christians in America.

New Wine, in conjunction with Intercissors for America, will be publishing each month a suggested prayer focus so that the collective effect of all our readers' prayers may be concentrated upon a specific area of need.

On June 4, the prayer focus will be: Transcendental Meditation (TM) and its deadly influence in our families, schools, businesses, and government. Pray that followers will see the spiritual abyss into which TM leads, and will find their quest for peace and personal fulfillment in Jesus.

BIBLE STUDY

change

One of the many names for God in the Old Testament is Jehovah-Elohim which means "The Lord the Eternal Creator." Scripture shows us that "Elohim" not only creates life, miracles and material things for His people, but also ever-changing situations to *prove* His people. Our willingness to change in response to the God who changes not (Mal. 3:6) is the basis for our transformation into the glory and image of His Son.

(Bible Study answers are found on page 17.)

1. Read Deuteronomy 8:2 and give God's four main purposes in leading the children of Israel around the wilderness for forty years.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
2. God moves into every area as He effects change in our lives. He will even use mundane things like diet to show us our hearts.
 - a. When God changed the Israelites' menu to manna, what was their reaction? (Num. 11:1) _____
 - b. What question did they ask? (Num. 11:4) _____
3. What happened when God saw the reactions of the Israelites? (Num. 11:10) _____
4. One of the most drastic changes God ever required of Israel came with the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist. John commanded that they turn from dependence upon temple sacrifices for the covering of sins to (Luke 3:3) _____ for the _____ of sins.
5. According to Luke 7:30, the religious leaders of that day showed their unwillingness to adapt to this new move of God. They _____ the counsel of God because they were not _____ by John.
6. Jesus, the greatest of all changers, knew man's basic reaction to something new to be negative. We see in Luke 5:36-39 that He understood that those who had drunk of the _____, or tradition, would not _____ the new.
7. He was well aware that new wine must be put into

_____ so that both might be _____.

8. Mark 7:13 records one of the most common reasons why people miss God's purposes: _____
9. 2 Kings 18:1-5 shows us that God's people tend to resist the moving of God by continuing to rely on past instruments of salvation. Hundreds of years after the death of Moses, they still rallied around _____ that he had made. Hezekiah called it _____ which means "just a piece of brass."
10. Perhaps the most revolutionary departure from tradition and one of the most difficult transitions that Jesus required of His disciples was his teaching in John 6:48-56 that He was the (v. 48) _____ and that they must (v. 54) _____ and _____ to have _____.
11. In the following scriptures, Jesus called upon those around Him to change. Pick out the words in each verse that imply radical change.
 - a. John 3:3 _____
 - b. Matthew 18:3 _____
 - c. Luke 13:5 _____
12. As Jesus moved about He could adapt to the will of God in any situation because He only did the things that He had (John 15:15) _____ and (John 8:38) _____ of His Father.
13. 1 John 2:6 teaches us that the same is expected of us as we abide in Christ because we are to _____ even as He _____.
14. The Apostle Paul certainly knew how to accept change in every area, including provision, as he was prepared to be (Phil. 4:12) _____ and to _____.
15. In John 16:13 Jesus accurately predicted the on-going revelations of God in our lives when He said that the Holy Spirit would "_____ you into all _____."
16. We can expect the Holy Spirit to change us into (2 Cor. 3:18) _____ from _____ to _____.

ECHOES OF THE SPIRIT

Significant Events in the Body of Christ

Politics and Christians

Thousands of Christians in America are becoming actively involved in intercessory prayer for the nation through Intercessors for America, "If My People," "the Spirit in '76," and other special bi-centennial efforts aimed at turning our nation back to the fundamental principles of God's Word.

Moreover, many are being further challenged to help bring about the kind of government that is pleasing to God and conducive to Christian living. *Support for Action, Inc.* — a grass-roots movement aimed at influencing the government through concrete action at a local church level — is one such group of Christians.

Organized by three Texas laymen — Wyatt W. Lipscomb, James D. Norvell and Richard Fugate — *Support for Action* has developed "A Christian Action Campaign" — a step-by-step program able to help any local church (1) mobilize Christian voting power, (2) obtain and distribute relevant information concerning candidates, including a summarized evaluation of candidates by mature, respected, godly leaders, (3) replace non-Christian laws with laws based upon Christian principles, and (4) put godly men into office.

Support for Action aids Christians in spearheading local action through a four-point offensive which provides objectives and tactics for accomplishing each goal.

(1) *Operation Jericho*. God instructs His people in 1 Timothy 2:1-2 and in Romans 13:7 to accept government as

ordained by God and to pray for and honor those in positions of authority. Operation Jericho is a program designed to bring all elected officials under the prayers of God's people and the preaching of the Gospel. Public officials are invited into local churches to be "honored." During the service each official is introduced to those church members who are committed to pray for him weekly. In the city of Garland, Texas, where Operation Jericho was employed, fourteen churches came together to honor U.S. Senator John Tower. From this concerted effort, 1,000 Christians covenanted to pray weekly for him.

In 1975, six hundred churches across the United States participated in Operation Jericho, surrounding public officials with the preaching of the Word of God and the prayers of godly people — the two most powerful forces on earth!

(2) *Operation Goliath*. The first objective of Operation Goliath is to register Christians to vote. The potential Christian vote in this country numbers 50,000,000. Since often our leaders are elected by 20% or less of the eligible voters, the influence of Christian voters in any election can be decisive.

The second objective of Operation Goliath is to evaluate candidates and inform Christians of the evaluation. A local board of "1 Timothy 3" men evaluates the candidates from a non-partisan, scriptural perspective. Such an evaluation pressures both parties to seek the Christian vote, and to adhere to scriptural principles.

Garland, Texas has utilized the evaluation method in school board and city council elections most effectively. In the first election in which this method was used, no candidate receiving a low evaluation was elected.

(3) *Operation Josiah*. Once Opera-

tion Jericho and Goliath have been employed, it becomes possible to begin to replace non-Christian laws with statutes based upon Christian precepts. Christian legislators need to have laws already written up for them to introduce. *Support for Action* has the machinery — a Christian law school with legislative drafting expertise on its staff, a Biblical Law Research and Education Institute prepared to conduct seminars and conferences on biblical law among Christian lawyers and judges.

(4) *Operation Daniel*. The goal of Operation Daniel is to utilize the talents of Christian professional men — lawyers, businessmen, etc. — to enunciate God's principles of justice, truth and righteousness, helping to elect Christians to public office.

America's Christian heritage was forged out of action. In our country's early years, godly men were directly involved in the shaping of our government. *Support for Action* believes our government needs to be placed once again in the hands of those who fear and reverence God.

Our present vacuum of moral leadership has been brought on by years of Christian neglect — a feeling that Christians shouldn't get involved because politics are "too dirty," or an apathetic attitude of "What can one Christian do?" But only as Christians begin to get involved in the actual workings of government can they preserve Christian liberty and provide good government for our nation. The responsibility rests with the people of God!

For further information on how you and your church can become involved in "A Christian Action Campaign" write: *Support for Action, Inc.*, Suite 607, 705 Avenue B, First National Bank Tower, Garland, Texas 75040.

Charismatic Conference

An estimated 60,000 Baptists, Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Mennonites, Methodists, Pentecostals, Presbyterians and other Christians will converge on Kansas City for one of the largest, most comprehensive ecumenical gatherings ever held from July 20-24, 1977. The occasion will be the 1977 Conference on Charismatic Renewal in the Christian Churches. Arrowhead Stadium, home of the Kansas City Chiefs, will host the general ecumenical sessions each evening while many other sites will be used for denominational gatherings, workshops and worship.

The charismatic renewal is a movement of spiritual awakening and power occurring today in all Christian denominations and groups. It focuses on the reality of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit within the Christian people. Often referred to as Pentecostalism, the movement is not confined to Pentecostal churches, but has in the last ten to fifteen years arisen significantly in traditional Protestant as well as Catholic and Orthodox churches. In every denominational setting, and across denominational lines, charismatic renewal is marked by demonstrative praise of God, an awareness of His presence and guidance, deep reverence for the Bible, and by healing, visions, prophecy, and strong commitment to Christian witness in the world.

As the movement has developed, it has given rise to a sense of unity among participants from different churches. For several years leaders of the movement have expressed a desire to bring the different denominational streams of the charismatic renewal together into one large river of spiritual renewal. The 1977 Conference on Charismatic Renewal in the Christian Churches is seen as a major step toward the fulfillment of this desire. It will provide an opportunity for common witness to what the Lord is

doing today in the churches and in the world at large.

Designed to be ecumenical rather than nondenominational, the conference will not seek to submerge differences between churches, but will encourage free expression of denominational character through a series of denominational charismatic conferences taking place simultaneously within the context of the general conference itself. In addition to the general sessions held daily in the stadium for the entire conference to share in prayer, praise, song and worship, and to listen to major addresses by speakers from various traditions, a major portion of each day will be devoted to workshops and general sessions sponsored by the different church related groups.

The responsibility for the administration of the conference is in the hands of Charismatic Renewal Services, Inc. of South Bend, Indiana. The conference as a whole is under the pastoral direction of an ecumenical planning committee. Dr. Kevin Ranaghan, of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Service Committee, is the planning committee chairman. Other current members of the planning committee and the groups they represent include: Rev. Larry Christenson, Chairman, Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Services; Mr. Brick Bradford, General Secretary, The Presbyterian Charismatic Communion; Rev. Robert Hawn, Executive Secretary, The Episcopal Charismatic Fellowship; Rev. Ken Pagard, The American Baptist Charismatic Fellowship; Rev. Nelson Litwiller, Mennonite Renewal Services; Rev. Carlton Spencer, General Chairman, Elim Fellowship; Dr. Vinson Synan, General Secretary, Pentecostal Holiness Church; Rev. Ithiel Clemmons, International Field Secretary for Missions, Church of God in Christ; Dr. Robert Frost and Rev. Bob Mumford, well-known independent teachers in the charismatic renewal.

It is believed that an ecumenical gathering of this magnitude, bringing together in prayer and worship so many Christians from so many

churches and groups still separated from each other, will have a great impact on the cause of Christian unity and on the evangelization of contemporary American society.

For further information contact: Charismatic Renewal Services, 237 North Michigan St., South Bend, Ind. 46601.

Cerullo Proclamation

Evangelist Morris Cerullo, president of World Evangelism, Inc. in San Diego, California, has launched an all-out campaign to call the nation's government officials and lay people to unite in an effort to return the United States of America to the principles of righteousness and godliness upon which it was formed two hundred years ago.

This bicentennial message will go out through three main channels of communication. One of these will be a series of two-day prayer conferences which are scheduled to begin sometime after July 4, 1976. The conferences will be conducted intermittently in approximately fourteen of the largest metropolitan areas in the United States. Rev. Derek Prince and Rev. Ern Baxter will be taking an active teaching role in these meetings.

Another aspect of the plans will be the presentation of a one-hour documentary on America's Bicentennial, to be aired over nationwide television around the first of September, 1976.

The major thrust of the entire effort, however, is a special bicenten-

BIBLE STUDY ANSWERS (From page 15)

1. a. To humble them; b. Prove them; c. To know what was in their hearts; d. To see if they would keep His commandments. 2. a. They complained; b. Who shall give us flesh to eat? 3. The anger of the Lord was kindled greatly. 4. The baptism of repentance; remission. 5. Rejected; baptized. 6. Old wine; straightway desire. 7. New bottles; preserved. 8. Tradition. 9. The brasn serpent; Nehushtan. 10. Bread of life; eat of His flesh; drink of His blood, eternal life. 11. a. Born again; b. Converted; c. Repent. 12. Heard; seen. 13. Walk; walked. 14. Abased; abound. 15. Guide; truth. 16. His image; glory; glory.

nial proclamation which will be widely circulated through the various media, and sent to all government leaders on a national and state level, as well as to churches of every denomination and to lay people who request a copy.

The proclamation calls for those in positions of leadership to humbly seek God's help in enabling them to ensure greater integrity in political leadership, and to become "living examples" of the principles upon which the nation was founded.

It also urges all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation, to unite before God in continual prayer during this bicentennial year, and to recommit themselves to principles of honesty, integrity, and morality.

Just prior to the signing of the proclamation, Rev. Cerullo expressed his deep concern for the condition of the country:

"This bicentennial year could be the most important year in our country's history; first, because of the conditions which exist today; second, because it is our bicentennial year; and third, because connected with this bicentennial year we are facing the decisions of an election year.

"We believe that there is in this nation the power to turn the nation around. We don't believe the answer is in new laws . . . but it begins in the heart and in the spirit of the people of this country."

Rev. Cerullo then signed the first numbered copy of the proclamation and presented it to Congressman Bob Wilson of California, who will in turn enter the document in the Congressional Record — a copy of which goes to approximately 50,000 leaders across our nation.

The main purpose of this bicentennial thrust, according to Cerullo, is "to get this proclamation into the hands of God's people and to get God's people to begin to pray." To help this worthwhile effort, we have reproduced the proclamation on the following page. If you would like to receive a free, postage paid copy of this document from World Evangelism, Inc., write to: PROCLAMATION, P.O. Box 700, San Diego, California 92138.✉

Special Bicentennial

☆☆☆PROCLAMATION☆☆☆

The True Spirit of '76

"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

(Proverbs 14:34)

Because of the great attention being given celebrations in honor of this nation's 200th anniversary, we feel that it is necessary to draw the attention of the people to the true spirit upon which America was founded . . . the spirit of prayer and intercession with which our forefathers sought God's guidance in the affairs of this great country . . . and urge a national renewal of the principles embodied in our history. Thanking God for the grace which He has visited upon the United States for the past 200 years, we set forth the following proclamation as the true Spirit of '76.

WHEREAS . . .

the nation of the United States of America is now engaged in a tremendous yearlong Bicentennial celebration marking the 200th year since the birth of this great nation; and

WHEREAS . . .

1976 is not only our nation's Bicentennial year, but is a vital presidential election year marking the first presidential election since our country has been torn by the aftermath of Watergate; and

WHEREAS . . .

Bible reading and prayer have been removed from our public schools, thus contributing to deterioration of our country's morals; and

WHEREAS . . .

there is in this nation a collapse of moral principles and a growing permissive, even plauditory, attitude toward sexual licentiousness, pornography, the use of drugs and alcohol; and

WHEREAS . . .

there is an ever-increasing crime rate in this nation which has seen American streets become unsafe for its citizens with wanton killing, mayhem and other violent crimes rampant; and

WHEREAS . . .

certain radical factions within this country have avowed to mar America's Bicentennial celebration with street demonstrations, civil unrest, and violence; and

WHEREAS . . .

we are engaged in dealing with a world full of political upheaval, internal strife, and revolutions; and

WHEREAS . . .

there exists in the Middle East, between Israel and the Arab countries, a volatile situation which is leading into the end time events prophesied in God's Word, the Bible, which are to occur just before the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ;

NOW BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that those in positions of leadership in this nation be called upon to search their hearts and come before God in prayer and repentance, asking His help not only to provide greater integrity in political leadership, but to become living examples to call the people of this nation back to the principles of righteousness and holiness upon which this country was founded;

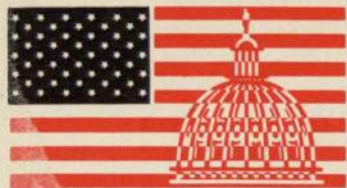
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the citizens of this country, regardless of their religious denominations, be called upon to unite their hearts in continual prayer before God and to seek His face through a regular program of intercessory prayer and fasting throughout the Bicentennial year, and that each and every one of them be challenged and encouraged to rededicate their lives anew to the principles of honesty, integrity, truthfulness, and moral uprightness set forth in the Word of God and befitting the nation of the United States of America which was founded upon these principles.

I hereunto set my hand and affix my seal this 12th day of February in the year of our Lord 1976.

Signed

Morris Cerullo
Morris Cerullo, President
World Evangelism, Inc.





INTERCESSORS REPORT

Beginning this month and continuing until the end of 1976, New Wine will feature a special "Intercessors for America" report focusing on areas of need for intercessory prayer. Included will be specific prayer needs in the government, crucial issues and bills before Congress, background information on situations being missed or distorted by the news media and specific answers to prayer. We hope this feature will encourage and aid you in praying for our nation during this bicentennial year.

It is a joy to see the mounting prayer emphasis in America! Derek Prince, author of *Shaping History Through Prayer and Fasting*, notes in his recent newsletter: "From many contacts and sources of information available to me, I would judge that there are now more Christians regularly praying and fasting on behalf of the nation than at any previous period in its history — and that this number is growing steadily."

Evidence of this rising interest in intercessory prayer for the nation is reported in the *Intercessors for America* newsletter which has now reached a monthly distribution of 50,000 with new requests exceeding 1,000 per week. The March and April issues report the following main items of interest.

CHRISTIANS IN PUBLIC OFFICE

In his New Year's address, Billy Graham urged Christians to get involved in the political process. "... we need men and women of integrity and Christian commitment who will run for political office this coming year."

IFA has had several reports of qualified, born-again men and women declaring their candidacy for public office. A legislative aide in Congressman John Conlan's Washington office

says he knows of fifteen to twenty candidates making their first bid for U.S. Congress. Many had no prior inclination to run, but are responding to the sovereign stirring of God in their hearts. We need to pray for more candidates of God's choosing to come forth and faithfully convey the truth God has placed in them.

TERRORISM STALKS THE U.S.

Last year, reports of planned terrorist activity began to surface. In the July 21, 1975 issue of *U.S. News and World Report*, an article was headlined "Threat for Bicentennial Year — Terrorists Getting Ready." It reported that radicals are building up arsenals and setting revolutionary war plans for 1976.

The January 26, 1976 issue of the same magazine focuses on "Terror in Schools," painting a grim picture of gang warfare, stabbings and clubbings, extortion, abduction and destruction of school facilities across the country.

Our law enforcement agencies concede it is almost impossible to control or prevent terrorist activity. While this is true in the natural, God's people have the assurance that God's power, released by the prayers of God's people is "mighty . . . to the pulling down of [enemy] strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4).

A recent report from California states: "Police believe they have broken the backs of the two most powerful terrorist organizations in the state." Let's continue to use the weapon of prayer against terrorism.

IN THE NAME OF EDUCATION

Americans are now awakening to the rapid decay in public education. Controversy over school textbooks, federal funding of questionable education programs and publicity on declining scholastic achievement have height-

ened our awareness that something is wrong. JoAnn Abrigg, president of "Committee for Positive Education" provides the following insights:

"Where once the function of schools was to foster the intellectual development of the child by providing essential basic skills . . . and by instilling our heritage, the purpose of education today is to use the child as a means by which society can be changed."

Mrs. Abrigg notes that two trends or movements are responsible — *Behaviorism* and *Secular Humanism*. *Behaviorism* states unequivocally that the human being has no mind, no consciousness, no soul . . . that he is simply an animal, nothing more. From this premise, education becomes nothing more than a conditioning process.

Secular Humanism is a religion, a way of life, an all-encompassing ideology. The *Humanist Manifesto* states that there is no God, every man is his own creator, there is no right or wrong, ethics are situational. There are no absolutes, and no feeling of nationalism because all society must eventually be conditioned to living in a global collectivist economy under a one-world government. The aim is to rid children of all beliefs, standards, and values such as belief in God, belief in moral standards of right and wrong, patriotism, etc. which they say have been instilled by the parents.

We still have time to reverse current trends in education. By becoming aware of the spiritual forces at work in our educational system, through concerted parental effort, and through intercessory prayer we can stop the enemy and raise God's standard in our schools. ☞

If you wish to receive the monthly IFA newsletter write to: Intercessors for America, P.O. Box D, Elyria, Ohio 44035.



KEEPING UP WITH THE TIMES

A model-T church for a modern age?

by Howard A. Snyder

Someone has said the problem of the present is that the future is not what it used to be. It's true! We are now living under the "pressure of the future" in a way that has never before been true during the history of man's pilgrimage on planet Earth.

Man today is moving into a kind of society that is qualitatively different from anything yet experienced by human personality. Although this time of ferment and transition shows marked similarities to the first-century Roman world, it is bringing man to a situation unprecedented in history. Man himself has not changed drastically, but human culture has evolved to the point where man finds himself in a substantially different world. Needless to say, this fact has tremendous implications for the church and its structure.

Many are inclined to doubt that the world is fundamentally different today. Unconsciously reaching for stability, we prefer to think that society is not basically dissimilar from what it was in the past: It is merely more intense, moving more quickly! But empirical evidence reveals a more unsettling picture.

Alvin Toffler assembles an impressive array of fact and opinion in support of the uniqueness of the

modern age in his book *Future Shock*. Toffler points out that "a growing body of reputable opinion asserts that the present movement represents nothing less than the second great divide in human history, comparable in magnitude only with that first great break in historic continuity, the shift from barbarism to civilization."¹ And Toffler cites economist Kenneth Boulding's comment that "as far as many statistical series related to mankind are concerned, the date that divides human history into two equal parts is well within living memory. . . . I was born in the middle of human history, to date, roughly. Almost as much has happened since I was born as happened before."²

The key facts here are the cumulative impact of technology and the resulting acceleration of change. What has happened within the lifetime of every person who will read this book is that the rate of change has so rocketed

upward that more change — and more significant change — takes place within one year than occurred in literally hundreds of previous years. And the rate continues to rise. This means that, unless there is a major catastrophe to stop this spiral, the few years between now and the year 2000 will see more change than has occurred since Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees. It will be as though all the political, scientific, industrial, social and religious revolutions of the past four thousand years were crowded into one short lifetime.

AN ACCELERATING WORLD

Perhaps the two most eloquent symbols of the new age are the billboard and the TV commercial. Both tell us much about the kind of world we and our children will inhabit.

Both the billboard and the commercial are increasingly ubiquitous. Wherever one goes one is bombarded by their messages, and the images they project are nearly inescapable. This is symptomatic of the monolithic, pervasive, dynamic culture being formed today. It is inescapable, as I saw every time I drove along one of Sao Paulo's busy expressways; it is insistent. There is no "refuge from the world"; there is no private world any longer. It is not necessary for Big Brother to see us. It is sufficiently harassing for us always

*HOWARD SNYDER served for 6 years as a missionary in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Becoming involved in the work of the Church in another culture prompted him to a rethinking of the fundamental mission and structure of the Church in today's world. His conclusions are set forth in the book, **The Problem of Wineskins.***

to see Big Brother and receive his messages! And today Big Brother is not the government or some political leader; he is computerized, nearly autonomous technology.

A second trait of the billboard and the commercial is their high degree of transience. Twenty years ago a jingle or advertising slogan might last for years. But the rate of change has so accelerated that now the advertising message, and even the product, lasts only a matter of months or even weeks. The impressive fact is accelerating transience. The billboard is not a permanent structure; it appears or disappears overnight. The message is printed on disposable paper, for it is a disposable message. Today's "urgent" message is discarded tomorrow, replaced by another. This transience is starkly typical of the new age, as Toffler shows. We are increasingly predisposed to think in terms of temporariness, not permanence. Within a year or two much in our lives changes — not merely familiar products, but our car, clothes, reading material and (for an increasing percentage of people) even our homes, friends, jobs, associations and ideas. Contrast this with the lives of most of our grandparents.

Another characteristic of billboards and commercials is their high degree of sophistication. Huge amounts of money and talent go into advertising messages whose life is measured in only weeks or days. It is a joke that TV commercials are often more entertaining than the programs they sponsor, but this is a serious fact and only to be expected when one considers the money and sophisticated planning and analysis that go into every second of TV advertising or every square inch of visual advertising. Ben H. Bagdikian observes, "The most highly paid writers, actors, musicians, and producers in the world are not those that create education for the young, or drama for adults, or political programs for others. They are the men and women who create television commercials."³

Advertising is no laughing matter! It is, if anything, one of the most signifi-

cant facts of the new technoculture, and increasingly so. It shows the shape of the future: society's greatest resources of money and talent being used to transmit a high-impact, high-transience message in order to achieve a specific, predetermined result.

Which leads to another trait of the billboard and TV commercial: their high degree of manipulation. Not only is the advertising message predetermined; it is largely fictitious. The product hailed as "the favorite worldwide" is probably not really such by any empirical criteria. Products do not in fact deliver what the advertisements promise. It would be pitifully naive, however, to suppose they are therefore ineffective. Quite the contrary! They achieve precisely what they are intended to achieve. They "create reality" — that is, an image — that predisposes a significant minority of recipients to respond as intended, normally to buy a particular product or use a particular service.

Political advertising at election time suggests one possible future significance of this tendency toward manipulation and falsification. We are moving into a technological society where planning and predetermination characterize nearly all areas of life.

All of this means that people today are subjected to a higher number of messages, and that these have both greater impact and less truth content. And these tendencies are rapidly accelerating.

These facts are significant in themselves. But I would call attention particularly to the direction they point and to the statement they make about the future.

When we look at the various crises of today — ecological, political, ideological and economic — and then combine these with the fact of acceleration, only one conclusion seems possible: Time is running out. We must face very seriously today the fact that the children being born at the present time will probably be the last generation of humans to inhabit the planet. They may well make up the final generation to reach maturity on Earth.

Such a conclusion is, of course,

highly conjectural. Yet there is an impressive array of empirical fact which, if not mixed with a rosy belief in human perfectibility, points ominously in this direction. Let us take a brief look at some of the evidence.

I have already mentioned the increasing transience and rate of change in modern society. The question is, Can the pace accelerate indefinitely? Historian Arnold Toynbee says in his book *Change and Habit*,

In the technological [realm], both progress and the acceleration of progress leap to the eye. At the present time, both are in full swing. Their impetus is unprecedented and portentous. Here, manifestly, we are in the presence of a factor that is confronting Man with a new challenge — the greatest, perhaps, of any that have yet confronted him. Though technology is man-made, it is now challenging Man's ability to retain the power of planning, directing, and controlling his own future by the continuing exercise of the freedom of choice that is one of the distinctive characteristics of human nature. This inanimate apparatus that Man has invented to serve human purposes is now threatening to make a declaration of its independence of its inventor. It is threatening to carry Man whither he would not.⁴

This fact of acceleration hits us wherever we turn. We are accustomed to seeing population growth graphs shooting vertically off the page. But similar graphs could be drawn in many other areas — the information explosion, energy demand, urbanization, the increase in basic scientific discoveries. Rapid acceleration in increasingly compressed time spans pushes the graphs steadily upward to the point where they approach the vertical. But when the graph line reaches the vertical, *it must end*. Acceleration is not an infinite process; it is finite and eventually must stop or else bring catastrophe. This is seen most clearly in population growth: Either it must slow down *radically*, or it will reach the catastrophe point where space, water, oxygen and food run out. And ultimately it makes little difference

which runs out first.

History simply cannot continue to accelerate at an ever-increasing rate. Eventually, something drastic must happen. Our civilization is like a jet airplane, accelerating ever faster and faster. But there is a finite limit to how much speed that airplane can withstand. Unless it slows, it will eventually reach the disintegration point. It is not made to transcend the boundaries of space and time, and neither is man-made culture.

SATAN'S FINAL STRATEGY

Given this configuration of developments, the church today should be paying close attention to the Word of God.

Paul warns the church that "we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

The battle to end all battles — literally — is on the horizon. And the enemy is not really communism or socialism or materialism; neither is it capitalism or imperialism or the Establishment. It is more subtle still.

The arch enemy is Satan, of course; but like vintage radio's Mr. Chameleon, Satan has a thousand faces. And the church today must be able to unmask him in his two most deceiving contemporary disguises.

The first disguise of the enemy is (for lack of a better term) *spiritism*. Involved here are astrology, the occult, non-Christian mysticism, and such antirational, subjectivist phenomena as drug-taking, Transcendental Meditation and similar behavior. The common denominator here is a turning away from the real world, a turning inward to focus on one's own feelings, mind or inward state. The switch to the outside world is turned off; the inner world is switched on and becomes the only world that matters. As Timothy Leary has said, "Render unto Caesar everything material."

But is this demonic? Yes! Because it splits God's world into two irreconcil-

able parts and cuts the nerve between thought and action, between the subjective *I* and the objective world. It is deception because it fools a person into thinking that the only world that matters is what goes on inside his own head or body or feelings. It cancels out the possibility of genuine Christian experience, which is both inward and outward. Worse yet, it plays into the hands of Satan's strategy for the last battle.

The other satanic disguise — only gradually and grudgingly coming to be recognized — is *technique*. This is the opposite of spiritism. Its only focus of attention is the outside world, the observable reality. Its only ultimate concern is to find the best possible way to do a thing. But this becomes tyranny, for once the best way is found to build a car, elect a President, sell a product or obtain any other result, all other means are superfluous and doomed to extinction.

Today technique is building a society in which everything depends on technology. A complex technological pyramiding takes place in which ever more advanced technology is necessary to deal with society's problems. The realities of modern technology make ideology obsolete and focus attention on means, not ends. The important question is not *Why?* but *How?* And what is technologically possible is therefore good. Technology replaces ideology, and esthetics becomes cosmetics.

But is this satanic? Yes! Because it cancels out all questions of ultimate purpose and meaning, and puts all life on the level of the "penultimate," the next-to-last. In the comfortable world of technique the fundamental questions of why and whither are forgotten. The future may promise a totalitarian technotopia not greatly different from Orwell's *1984* or Huxley's *Brave New World*. Such a possibility is anti-God because it becomes a God-substitute and reduces human significance to the level of the machine.

The church's enemies today are spiritism and technique. Both enslave man, one by locking him inside his own experience (admittedly a wide

world but only seemingly transcendent), the other by locking him into a comfortable, colorful, kaleidoscopic room with shrinking walls. In either case, there is finally no escape. Life is either experience without action or action without meaning.

But here comes Satan's dirty trick, and the meaning of the final battle: the marriage of Spiritism and Technique. It looks impossible, but it is happening. Technique is a "clockwork orange," a mechanical sponge. It absorbs everything and reduces culture to methodology, including spiritism and religion.

It is here that *1984* and *Brave New World* were prophetic. In both books a state-controlled, synthetic religion or religion-substitute was provided to put meaning in life and keep all behavior within predictable and thus manageable limits. This insight is much more significant than the question of whether Orwell or Huxley were right or wrong in the details of their respective anti-utopias.

It is here also that today's counter culture has most profoundly deluded itself. The serious drug-users, the communal drop-outs, the Consciousness III children thought they were bringing a new revolution. They were deceived by the kiss of publicity into thinking they were succeeding. But the attention of the media was the kiss of death, and only the first step toward their absorption into the technological society. And behind the curtain one hears the muffled sound of demonic laughter.

For in reality the antirational, the subjective, the experiential pose no threat to technique. The technological society is perfectly willing to make room for the transcendental meditators and the acid heads, as Jacques Ellul has convincingly pointed out.⁵ For their introverted world is divorced from action and therefore not really revolutionary. It takes more than "consciousness" to bring off a revolution once technique has the upper hand. Such behavior is even welcome in technotopia, for it keeps the natives quiet, believing they are accomplishing something.

This is Satan's trick, and it suggests the shape of the church's last battle. What happened then to the old enemies of lust, greed, immorality, idolatry, sloth and so forth? They're still around. They're still demonic, and still fully employed. But the principalities and powers under Satan's dominion today are seen particularly in spiritism and technique, gradually merging into one demonic, monolithic plan.

THE CHURCH TODAY AND TOMORROW

What do these developments mean for the church — for both the wineskins and the wine?

1. *In our present world the whole question of church structure takes on an increasing urgency.* As acceleration increases, only those churches which are structured flexibly and biblically will be able to keep up. These churches will offer the best conditions for the church truly to be the messianic community in these days — and to withstand persecution when it comes.

The church will increasingly have to choose between a charismatic and an institutional, or bureaucratic, model for its life and structure. Technological development, the population explosion and other factors are speeding up the pace of change and squeezing humanity into a potential global ghetto. This acceleration of change puts new strains on all institutional structures.

Alvin Toffler in *Future Shock* argues that "the acceleration of change has reached so rapid a pace that even bureaucracy can no longer keep up." This means that "newer, . . . more instantly responsive forms of organization must characterize the future." We are seeing the "collapse of hierarchy" as "shortcuts that by-pass the hierarchy are increasingly employed" in all kinds of organizations. "The cumulative result of such small changes is a massive shift from vertical to lateral communication systems."⁶

Whether this is good or bad for the church depends on whether the church is structured according to a charis-

matic or an institutional model. Biblically, it is clear that the church *should* be structured charismatically, and any church so structured already is largely prepared to withstand future shock. But churches which are encased in rigid, bureaucratic, institutional structures may soon find themselves trapped in culturally bound organizational forms which are fast becoming obsolete.⁷

A biblical conception of the church will make clear that the church is essential to the gospel, for it is the Body of Christ. At the same time, it will be clear that man-made institutions and structures are not themselves the church; they are not hallowed. But a biblical *concept* of the church is not enough. Local churches must *incarnate* the biblical reality by structures for worship, witness and common life such as we have been discussing in this book.

2. *The church needs to be watchful* (Mt. 24:42; 1 Thess. 5:6).

These are days when Christians must be clear about what the church *is* and what it *is not*. Just as many false Christs will come in the last days, so many counterfeit and apostate "churches" will litter the spiritual landscape. We must not be led astray by our own fuzzy ideas of the church.

The church must be prepared, both as individuals and as the Christian community, for the lash of persecution and the lure of the antichrist. This means the necessity for both doctrinal clarity and authentic community — for both orthodoxy of belief and orthodoxy of community, to use Francis Schaeffer's phrase.⁸ Under the threat of persecution, life in community becomes both more difficult and more essential. Thus the priority of structures which are flexible, mobile, inconspicuous and not building-centered.

3. *The church of the future must be biblically sound and experientially authentic.* It must know a mysticism joined with action, profound experience wedded to practical exercise. The church must be a genuine community in which wholeness of life grows out of praise to God and fellowship with all men in Christ, without resort to

demeaning techniques. The church must grow because of genuine spiritual magnetism, not by religious technology or contentless experience.

4. *The church must live and walk in the Spirit* (Gal. 5:16–26). It must learn in a deepening way the day-by-day guidance and direction of the Spirit of God. The Spirit must be free to produce the fruit and gifts which keep the church healthy and vital.

These are days in which the church must learn to "hang loose," to maintain its independence from the world and its dependence on the Spirit. Today's followers of Christ must learn the full significance of the pattern of the children of Israel in the desert, who went or stopped when the cloud moved or stayed. They must learn to wait upon the Lord, to be sensitive to his leadings and to depend less and less on the arm of flesh. Many local churches could benefit spiritually from applying the principle suggested by Robert Girard in *Brethren, Hang Loose*: "Anything in the church program that cannot be maintained without constant pastoral pressure on the people to be involved should be allowed to die a sure and natural death."⁹ Which is another way of saying that the church's life is to be based on the exercise of existing spiritual gifts, not on organizations and programs.

God in Christ has provided marvelous resources for the abundant Christian life. He gives us the strength to serve and endure. My prayer for the church is that she will relearn what the early church knew: These resources are not just for the individual Christian. They are for the community, the church! May God grant that not only isolated believers but *the whole Body of Christ as a community and a people* may walk in the Spirit until it rises triumphant to meet Christ in the air.

In many ways, we Christians today are reliving the New Testament age. These are days of rapid church growth, and yet also of uncertainty, apostasy, threatening persecution and, above all, the expectation of the return of Christ. This was the situation of the

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June Essay
of the Month

What to do
when God says,
"Change."

Removing The Mask

by Pam Ezell

When I was seven years old my mother died, leaving my father, my three-year-old sister Sandi, and me. Because I was the oldest child I felt responsible for my little sister, so I tried to be brave and hide my feelings.

Six months after my mother's death, my father remarried. From the beginning, my stepmother and I were in competition for my father's affection, a contest which continued until her death when I was thirteen.

My father was crushed by the double tragedy life had dealt him. He loved my stepmother and couldn't understand why she had also died. I remember how overwhelmed my sister was by the death of the only mother she had ever known. It may sound harsh, but I felt very little at the time of my stepmother's death except sorrow for my dad and sister. I had convinced myself that my stepmother had never really loved me, and so, by my independent attitude, I had prevented her from getting close to me.

During all the years of my childhood I cannot recall crying in front of

anyone. I was strong and independent. I had trusted and depended on my real mother, but with her death I determined never to allow myself to be hurt again. Instead I decided to manipulate and control my friends, family and circumstances by keeping people at a distance. I began to feign self-confidence, and learned to hide the real me. My family thought of me as an intelligent, happy child because I never let them see how inferior and insecure I really felt.

During my junior high years, I pretended to enjoy a personal relationship with God, but inside I felt bitterness and resentment toward the One I blamed for the death of both my mother and stepmother. I felt that God, just like everyone else, had failed me.

By the time my father remarried again, I had so polished and perfected my totally false personality that my family remained unaware of my calloused feelings towards God and my stubborn, independent nature. But my new stepmother loved me and, against my wishes, probed into my heart,

exposing a lot of previously hidden emotions.

"I want to help you," she would say. "I want to get to know you, but first you've got to be willing to open yourself and let me in. You've got to open your heart and risk being hurt."

Outwardly, I promised to be open and honest, all the while knowing I had no real intention of changing. By now I had discovered how easy it was to agree with someone, faking a change in action without a change in attitude.

For a year or so I was able to maintain a good front. I fooled my family most of the time, and eventually I even began to fool myself, closing my own eyes to the deception I was living. I constantly lied to my parents about my friends and was always sneaking behind their backs. When they asked me a question about God, I gave the answer they wanted to hear, but continued to hold bitterness in my heart.

At age sixteen I could honestly say not one person knew the real me. I had paraded behind facades for so long and had mastered the art of deception. Deep inside I wanted to be an honest person; I wanted to change, but all my own efforts at change were futile.

During this same period of time, my parents' involvement in Christian work was centering more and more on discipleship and cell group relationships, and I began to see that a close relationship with someone could help me change and give me the security I longed for. After much thought, I asked my father to be my shepherd, to watch over me and give me spiritual oversight, as well as advise me in every area of my life. I thought submission to authority would be the panacea for all my problems, and miraculously transform me into an honest, real person. I thought my shepherd would change me and make me good, but it didn't work.

Some months later, my parents confronted me with my deceptive behavior. They were tired of playing games and said that unless I rooted the deception and independence from my heart, I would end up a useless, miser-

able person. They persuaded me to fast with them for a day and pray for God to help me change.

The following week a cassette tape arrived in the mail. My father felt I should listen to it. The tape, entitled "The Importance of Decision," by Derek Prince, was clearly directed at my problem. It explained that a decision to change is a matter of the will. We *decide* by our own will what we do and don't do. I already had recognized and admitted my deceptive traits, but now I had to make a *decision* to change — not merely hide my feelings and flaws — but express and change them with God's help.

Sounds so easy — but it wasn't!

For the first time in my life I had to deal with my false assumptions about God. I had to learn to trust Him, and I'm still learning how to relate to Him.

I began to be myself around my parents and friends. I started exposing my true character, with all its flaws, even at the risk of being rejected. I found it difficult to let other people see what I really thought about, and

occasionally I would be put down for believing in something radical or different. But I don't regret expressing my true self and letting others see me.

After years of bullheaded independence, I'm finally learning to feel needed and am starting to depend on others. I'm learning not to hide my feelings and hang-ups, but to deal with them — head on. I am learning to constantly change.

Sometimes I look back and think about my false personality. I remember the frightened, insecure little girl who never let anyone know how hurt she really was, pretending to be strong and happy. The difference between the old me and the new me is as different as night and day. God deserves all the glory for my transformation.

Change requires three things: decision, God's help and hard work. Sometimes the rate of change in my life seems so slow that I get discouraged, but the end result of change is worth all the effort. It may not always be easy, but with God's help anyone can change. ♣



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KEEPING UP WITH THE TIMES

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early church. First-generation Christians thought Christ would come back. He didn't.

What about Christians at the end of the twentieth century? Like the first Christians, or like believers in A.D. 999, we could be mistaken about the times and seasons. Perhaps Jesus' return is near, perhaps not. In any case, the church is clearly facing difficult days. Many believe that if Christ does not return soon, then some great catastrophe is surely coming.

But dare we hope for a miracle? Is it possible that God in his grace will grant another reprieve in human history, another chance for the church to really be the church? Is this the meaning of the Spirit's new stirrings in our day? Is it possible that God yet has a great kingdom task for the church to perform?

The church seems impotent before the ecological crisis, for example, or in the face of mindless technology or the worldwide web of political power and

intrigue. But the weapons of our warfare are spiritual, not carnal. Using the world's weapons, the church does not stand a chance. But when the church uses God's weapons (Eph. 6:14-17), it is the world which becomes weak.

These are not days for the church to turn inward, curl up in a corner and passively await the end. The world has yet to see what the Spirit can do through the church to establish God's kingdom on earth. God's "new thing" may have a greater beginning in *human history today* than we have thought possible.

In any case, these are days for extreme watchfulness: for alertness to what is happening in the world and for careful attention to God's Word to the church through the Scriptures. And these are days for great expectancy, for God's arm still is not shortened. He is still the God who says, "I will do marvels."

And it is the Lord Jesus who still says to the church: "Watch, therefore . . ." ♣

Footnotes

¹ Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*, p. 12.

² Ibid., p. 13.

³ Ben H. Bagdikian, *The Information Machines: Their Impact on Men and the Media* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 287.

⁴ Arnold Toynbee, *Change and Habit, The Challenge of Our Time* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 29.

⁵ Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkerson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), pp. 375ff.

⁶ Toffler, *Future Shock*, pp. 143, 139.

⁷ Toffler (citing Max Weber) reminds us that bureaucracy, as an organizational form, appeared with the rise of industrialism, and suggests that it is passing away as many societies move into a post-industrial phase (*Future Shock*, p. 126). If this is true, it may be highly significant for denominational and other ecclesiastical organizations, and perhaps suggest even a "post-denominational" phase for the church.

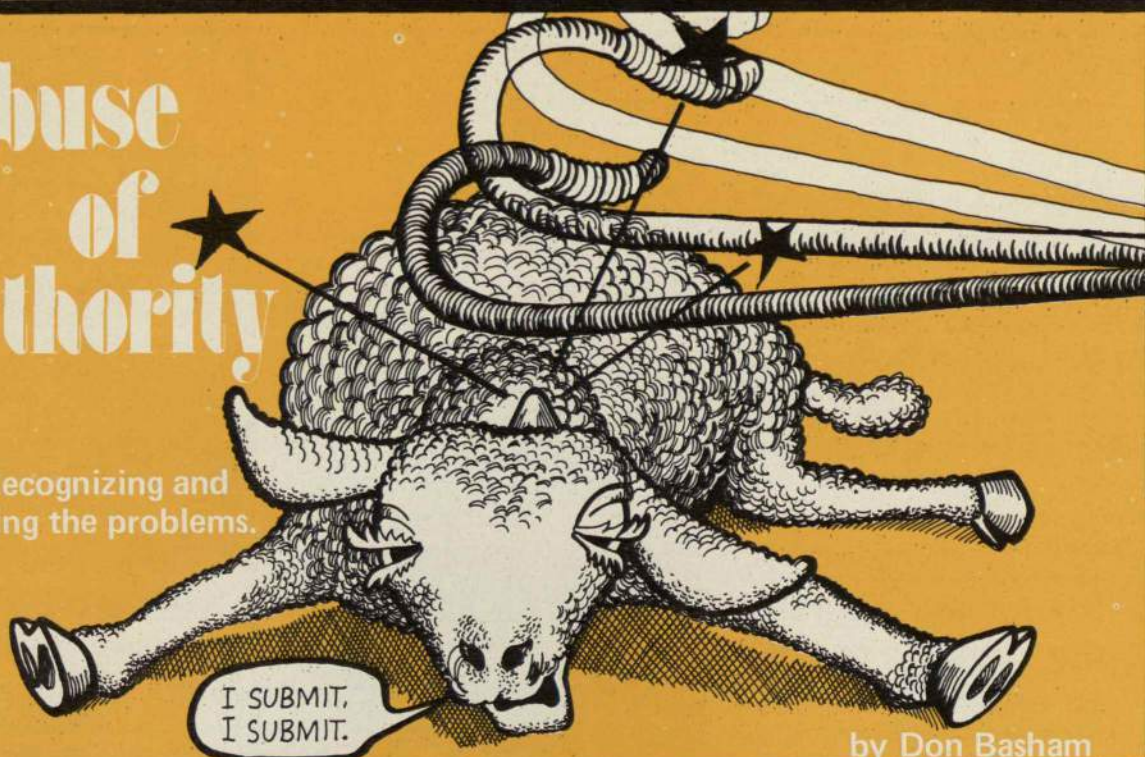
⁸ Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Church before the Watching World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1971), p. 62.

⁹ Robert C. Girard, *Brethren, Hang Loose!*, p. 73.

From *The Problem of Wineskins* by Howard A. Snyder. © 1975 by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and used by permission from InterVarsity Press.

Abuse of Authority

Recognizing and correcting the problems.



by Don Basham

Times of spiritual growth inevitably prove to be times of spiritual controversy. *Growth* necessitates *change*, and by nature, we tend to resist change, especially in the area of our religious lives. Traditional religion's views and practices die hard in each of us. A religious conservative has been accurately described as one who believes that nothing should ever be done for the first time.

Such conservatism is the force that has opposed every step of spiritual renewal and restoration in the history of the Church with determined, even violent resistance. In the more recent past, such controversy flared intensely around the charismatic renewal and the restoration of healing and speaking in tongues. Then it was rekindled over the ministry of exorcism, or casting out demons. Now the Body of Christ is passing through an even more intense conflict over the "shepherding-discipleship-submission" controversy.

Before we discuss some of the mistakes and abuses of authority accompanying this particular phase of spiritual restoration, we might well pause and thank God that something of immense importance is transpiring. Beneath all the criticisms, rumors,

abuses, mistakes, conflicting testimonies and counterclaims, something good is happening. Major adjustments which are essentially healthy, are taking place among the people of God. The very fact that the devil is stirring up such misunderstanding and confusion is a clear sign to those of us who have endured previous storms that God's eternal purposes are being worked out in the tempest over "discipleship."

SORTING IT OUT

What we are struggling with is the inevitable tension which accompanies every phase of spiritual renewal and restoration; what I call "the gap between revelation and realization." For it is one thing to see certain principles clearly in Scripture, but quite a different thing to apply those principles effectively in daily life. Consequently, early applications of newly-discovered truths are often unrefined and marred by mistakes.

The immediate task facing us with the controversy over "discipleship" is the need to sort out the just from the unjust criticism and the real from the fabricated abuses. It is an humbling

experience for those of us involved in "shepherding" or "discipleship" to find that some grossly unwise actions carried out in the name of "discipleship" have truly hurt and offended Christian brethren.

Often, the problem may be no more complicated than the prideful expressions of an over-zealous "shepherd" who is offending other ministers in his area by his patronizing and superior attitude toward all who are not yet "into discipleship."

Some of us, listening with real sorrow to legitimate objections to such behavior, have secretly wished a thunderbolt from heaven might singe the scalp of one exhibiting such impudence! No wonder Paul warned that an "overseer" or shepherd be "not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:6).

But other offenses have caused more serious damage. More than one account has come to us where some zealous shepherd has over-stepped the bounds of legitimate pastoral care to insist that the wife forsake her Christian conscience and give in to some immoral demand of a cruel husband, all in the name of "submission." Such

abuse of pastoral authority can damage a marriage beyond repair.

In addition to the mistakes, we are also having to confront the problem of those who deliberately abuse the teaching to gratify their own desire for power. Here is an excerpt from one of several letters I have received pleading for help and counsel.

About a year ago I joined a small fellowship led by a man who claims to be an apostle. He prophesied that I should join his fellowship and help him start a church where they hold "all things in common." I gave all my wages and my new car and began receiving an allowance of \$10.00 a week.

The longer the group met together, the more demanding the pastor became. In one meeting he prophesied that anyone ever leaving the fellowship would experience God's full wrath and judgment and that there was no help for us apart from his ministry. He will not accept any kind of personal suggestion or criticism. I finally couldn't stand it anymore and left.

Reverend Basham, I want to ask you two things, What's wrong with that man's ministry and do you think there's any way I can get my new car back?

We could go on listing examples of obvious abuses of spiritual authority. But perhaps it might be more profitable to list some common *kinds* of abuses and why they happen.

REASONS FOR ABUSE

1. *Trying to make it work in the flesh:*

In writing to the Philippians, Paul said "[I am] confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6).

In essence, Paul is saying, what *God* begins, God must finish. Even in discipleship; we may try to accomplish in the flesh what we have heard God promise to do in the Spirit.

In Genesis 15:4, God promised Abraham that his own seed would be as innumerable as the stars in the heavens. Abraham believed God, but then tried to fulfill God's promise his

own way instead of waiting for God to act. He took matters into his own hands and, with Sarai's permission and Hagar's cooperation, sired Ishmael, whom he thought would satisfy God's requirement for a proper heir.

The name of Ishmael has become synonymous with man's attempts to fulfill God's will by the arm of the flesh. That very problem is one which has plagued earnest believers throughout the Church's history.

Many abuses of the principles of discipleship/shepherding and submission spring from zealous men who glimpse God's purpose, but who lack the wisdom and sensitivity to implement God's principles God's way.

2. *Disregard for Legitimate Authority*

Some of the more heated controversy over discipleship has arisen in situations where there is a conflict between overlapping authorities. Such conflicts are not easy to resolve. Here is a typical example.

Joe Smith is a member of a denominational church whose pastor is not sympathetic to the charismatic renewal. Neither does the pastor endorse cell groups nor the establishment of committed relationships within his congregation. But Joe Smith and his family, together with three other families in the church *are* charismatic and are involved in a cell group whose members are committed to each other and submitted to a "shepherd" who has no formal ordination; but is recognized in the city as a charismatic leader.

Both the denominational pastor and the lay shepherd are men of commitment and integrity, but each is suspicious of the other. The pastor feels threatened by the influence and effective spiritual ministry of the shepherd, arguing that he has no ecclesiastical endorsement to be a spiritual leader.

The "shepherd" regards the denominational minister as a man missing out on the present purposes of God, and is critical of his opposition to the "moving of the Holy Spirit in our town."

Joe Smith's family and the three

other church families are caught in the middle. They feel God wants them to remain in their church, but also deeply appreciate the ministry and help they receive from the cell group.

The conflict is between institutional authority and non-institutional authority; between *existing* authority and *emerging* authority. Misunderstanding of the nature of authority seems evident on both sides. Each minister needs to recognize and respect God's authority in the other.

Institutional clergymen must recognize that God is at work in parachurch groups. Much vital spiritual ministry is taking place *alongside* as well as *inside* the historic churches. But likewise, the non-institutional shepherd must recognize and respect the legitimate spiritual authority which rests on every duly acknowledged pastor of a denominational church, regardless of his disinterest or even his opposition to charismatic ministry or committed relationships. In such tense situations a much broader understanding of what is meant by "spiritual authority" is needed.

Failure to recognize the legitimate authority and sphere of ministry of both institutional and non-institutional pastors leads to serious accusations and genuine harm to the Body of Christ. We will discuss later some positive steps of correction which may help both the "shepherds" and the "sheep" involved in such conflict.

3. *Legalistic Exercise of Authority*

Many of the descriptions of abuses of authority which have come to our attention are based, not so much on the usurping of authority, but on legalistic applications of genuinely recognized authority. This seems most frequently true in problems arising between husbands and wives. Many a loving wife, who seeks to obey the scriptural admonition to submit to her husband, is continually hurt and frustrated by the dominating attitude of the husband. Husbands often forget the nature of Paul's admonitions in Ephesians 5. Although the command

to submit is to the wife, "Wives, be subject unto your own husbands as unto the Lord," Paul is *not* saying by that statement, "Husbands, tell your wives that they must submit to you!" No, Paul's advice to the husband is, "Husbands, *love your wives*, even as Christ also loved the church, *and gave himself for it*" (Eph. 5:25).

Any time a husband *demand*s submission or obedience he has lost the ballgame. I remember the night when my wife and I were driving home from a meeting discussing a matter which required a decision. We held different views, and the longer we talked, the more defensive I became until finally, feeling she was challenging my authority, I decided to assert my "influence."

"I'm the head of this house, and the one who makes the decisions!" Then I proceeded to tell my wife we would "do it my way."

Her only response was, "That's right. You are the head of the house," and we drove the rest of the way home in a strained silence. I knew I had acted improperly, but it took me several hours to lay down my "righteous indignation," apologize to my wife for my arrogance, and open the matter once more for mutual discussion. Our final decision was a much more acceptable one, both to us and the Lord, and it proved to me the futility of trying to exercise even acknowledged authority with a harsh dominating spirit. Unless spiritual authority is exercised with Christlike love, the result will be far from Christlike.

4. Failure to See That Different Kinds of Relationships Require Different Applications of Authority

There is a recurring tendency among American Christians to oversimplify problems and thus oversimplify solutions. Repeatedly, Christians take the latest thing God is doing and try to make it the answer to everything. Let a new Christian learn that God really answers prayer — and he sees prayer as the instant solution to every problem. Or the baptism in the Holy Spirit can solve everything. Or deliverance! Or

discipleship! Or submission.

Some of the abuses of authority currently confronting us stem from the mistaken idea that all authority and all submissiveness are to be cut from the same pattern. Not so!

In a recent lecture on spiritual authority, Steve Clark, one of the lead coordinators of the Word of God Community in Ann Arbor, Michigan, described four different kinds of authority relationships presented in Scripture and pointed out the obvious need for a *different* application of authority in each one.

(1) The Elder/People Relationship:

This is the relationship whose basic purpose is the governing of a society. Elders or rulers exercise oversight and administration to maintain a cultural, political or religious society. Such a structure requires recognition and obedience to authority, but does not necessitate a close relationship between elders and people.

(2) Husband/Wife Relationship:

This is a relationship whose basic purpose, becoming "one flesh," is to establish and maintain a family unit. The interchange of authority between husbands and wives and parents and children is both intense and intimate by the very nature of the relationship.

(3) Father/Son or Master/Disciple Relationship:

This is a relationship whose basic purpose is to bring the one under authority to maturity. Charles Simpson's definition of "a disciple," expresses it quite well. "A disciple is one who is under the authority and discipline of another for the purpose of instruction to produce maturity."

By mutual understanding, this is a temporary, rather than a lifelong relationship. When the son or disciple is mature, he is released from the more stringent disciplines of his training years, although, of course, a relationship of love and respect remains.

(4) General/Soldier Relationship:

The general/soldier, or officer/recruit relationship is basically a military function to maintain order and to fight battles. Understandably, the training and discipline in such a rela-

tionship is more exacting. In wartime, instant and unquestioning obedience is required.

Difficulties can arise if there is not proper recognition and distinction of the different kinds of relationships, and the unique exercise of authority required for each one.

Spiritual authority is not simply a question of knowing who's to govern and who's to obey. The husband who treats his wife and children like a drill sergeant treats army recruits, is leading his family toward disaster. But neither can the authority of elders in a society be expressed to the people in the same way as authority operating in the intimacy of a home.

Neither can the general pastoral oversight of an elder among believers produce the character formation nor impart the specific leadership training that a teacher/disciple relationship is designed to produce.

Bearing these distinctions in mind, it is not difficult to see why an oversimplified conception of the principles of authority and submission can lead to multiplied problems.

5. The Dangers of Independent Authority

One final reason for abuse which we must mention is the independent exercise of authority. It is a commonly admitted fact that "power corrupts." The most flagrant abuses of authority reported to us usually involve some pastor or shepherd who's "doing his own thing." That is, he is exercising tremendous authority over others, while recognizing no authority over himself. He's a rebel.

Some time ago, I corresponded at length with some Christians who found themselves under such abusive leadership. Here is an excerpt from one of their letters:

Our church does not have any deacons or elders. The pastor owns the church, therefore, he runs it the way he wants. We have no administrative board, and there's never any financial accounting made to the congregation.

When some of the men went to him and asked to have a church

advisory board appointed, he replied that it was his church and he would run it the way God told him to. No man would tell him how to run his church. He was submitted to God and to no one else.

The letter further commented on the moral deficiency of the pastor:

Many years ago he started inviting young ladies to come and live with him in the parsonage. The problem became so bad his wife left him and now he is divorced. Currently, four single girls are living in the parsonage with him, and when he goes away to preach, one or more of the girls go with him.

We have a nice church that could seat a thousand people, but we don't grow. People come in, stay awhile, learn the situation, and leave.

Although such flagrant extremes are not too common, they do point up the absolute need for every minister or shepherd who exercises spiritual authority over others to be subject himself to the authority of some pastor or group of pastors.

STEPS TO RECOGNIZE AND CORRECT ABUSE

I want to add the following list of suggestions to our other comments as helpful steps toward correcting abuses of spiritual authority.

1. Utilization of "trans-local authority"

Disputes in the New Testament were often referred to authorities outside the local church. The conflict between Paul and Silas and the Judaizers, recorded in Acts 15, was referred to a council of elders in Jerusalem for adjustment.

Many times today, disputes concerning abuse of authority cannot be solved between the offenders and the offended, but must be referred to some outside authority for settlement.

Some historic denominations already have the ecclesiastical structure necessary for handling such problems. Groups in the "free church" or "non-institutional" move of God would find it most advantageous to

utilize the authority of established ministries in helping to care for such troublesome situations.

Charles Simpson has wisely observed that "without trans-local authority, there can be no local unity." It often takes an authority from the outside who can view a problem objectively to discern whether the minister has abused his authority, or those registering the complaint are evidencing rebellion against legitimate authority.

2. Endorsement by a Plurality of Ministries

Another helpful factor in dealing with alleged or actual abuses of authority is the principle of endorsement. Many self-seeking, unsubmitted ministries which ended in disrepute, could have been restrained or saved, had there been a functioning presbytery of ministries in the locality to intervene early in the development of the problem.

It is my conviction that God is working to establish such councils of ministries in every city, who can collectively endorse or correct any individual ministry which may be called into question. If such a council existed, many current troublesome and unethical ministries could either be corrected, or resisted until they either collapse or are forced to leave the community. Either way, God's people would be spared abuse.

3. Every Minister Should Be Submitted to Authority

This principle is akin to the previous one we discussed. It is based on the commonly-recognized fact that "power corrupts." The only adequate safeguard against excessive abuse of authority is that "he who *has* authority is *under* authority." Or, as one teacher put it, "If you are too big to be led, you're too little to lead." All ministers and shepherds themselves need to obey Paul's admonition:

"[I] beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you. . ." (1 Thess. 5:12).

As long as a man — however gifted

in God — refuses to acknowledge his need to be answerable to someone or some group who can advise, admonish, correct and, if necessary, discipline him, we can accurately predict that some downfall awaits him in the future.

None of us is so wise, so self-sufficient or so spiritually mature that he does not require the loving adjustment of brothers who can confront him with the weaknesses and self-deceptions he cannot or will not forsake. The present spiritual warfare is far too dangerous for the individual Christian to face strictly on his own. We need one another.

CONCLUSION

Having admitted the abuses of authority and having suggested some ways of honestly facing the problems, perhaps a final admonition is in order. We live in a day when we are being exposed to the full blast of Satan's onslaught in his vicious role as "the accuser of the brethren" (Rev. 12:10). In light of that fact, we must determine to be all the more loving, patient and forgiving toward one another, lest we contribute fuel to the devil's fire.

We must remember there is no such thing as a perfect pastor or shepherd or the perfect exercise of authority.


We must remember that it is not the Holy Spirit that makes us so keenly aware of our brothers' faults and so blind to our own.


We must remember that in a rebellious age like ours, when there has been little or no recognition of spiritual authority, the appearance of *any* authority seems excessive.

And, finally, we must remember that only through painful experience do we learn both the wrong way and the right way to exercise and submit to authority. If we can learn to submit, even to unskilful attempts to exercise authority, and if we can realize that God tests us by such situations to deal with the "sweet rebellion" in each of us, then we will have moved a significant step forward in the direction of personal spiritual maturity. ♣

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

This month's answers by Don Basham

 **Transcendental Meditation is becoming widely accepted even in some Christian circles. What is the basic error or danger in TM?**

 The basic danger in TM (Transcendental Meditation) rests in the fact that those who endorse and practice it fail to realize they are ensnared in a form of pagan worship. Five or six years ago, when attempts were first made to introduce TM in this country by its founder Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the effort was accurately titled "Spiritual Regeneration Movement" and according to those who encountered it in those early days, it was frankly advertised as "a way to contact God." Later the name changed to "International Meditation Society" and more recently to "World Plan Executive Council." The name changes clearly indicate the determined effort to keep initiates from recognizing the basic religious nature of the movement.

Far from being the "non-religious mental discipline" which its loudest proponents insist, it is, in fact, taken directly from Hinduism. "The Science of Creative Intelligence" is the name given to TM when it is taught as a course in high schools and colleges. *Psychology Today* Magazine, in its April 1974 issue, said: "The Science of Creative Intelligence, as it is called, is clearly a revival of ancient Indian Brahmanism and Hinduism."

The *Los Angeles Times*, on May 12, 1974, said: "TM leaders conceded that the metaphysical base behind TM is a revival of ancient Brahmanism and Hinduism."


Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of TM, is an Indian who became a close disciple of "His Divinity" Swami


Brahomandi Saraswati, once considered one of India's four greatest Hindu religious teachers. The practice of TM draws heavily on the fifth stage of raja yoga known as "pratyahara" which is "the withdrawal of the senses from the external field of perception."

In his published writings, the founder of TM is frankly anti-Christian. The atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central fact of Christianity. But Maharishi says, "I don't think Christ ever suffered or could suffer. It's a pity that Christ is talked of in terms of suffering."¹ He also says that through TM "... very easily a sinner comes out of the field of sin and becomes a virtuous man."² Clearly, by TM standards, salvation through the blood of Christ is nonsense.

What's more, the use of TM's meditative techniques opens one to demon influence. In his own teaching Maharishi says concerning the silent or "psychic" intonation of the mantra, "We do something here according to Vedic rites; particular, specific chanting to produce an effect in some other world, draw the attention of those higher beings or gods living there."³


Those "beings or gods in some other world" from a Christian perspective must be recognized as demons. Many people, forsaking TM for Christ, have later experienced deliverance from the demon torment TM inflicted.


 **In light of the Scripture's opposition to stargazing and astrology, could you explain why the wisemen who followed the star to the young child Jesus are referred to as "astrologers from the East"?**

 The term "magi" originally denoted the priestly caste among the Persians and Chaldeans. It is the same word translated as "sorcerer" in Acts 13:6. The Wycliffe Bible Commentary says, "Matthew uses the term in the better sense to designate honorable men from an Eastern religion."

In all likelihood the men were astrologers. But neither the fact that they were led to pay homage to the new "King of the Jews" whose "star" they had seen, nor the fact that God warned them in a dream not to return to Herod is any indication that God approves of astrology.

In some ways the visit of the wise men qualifies as one of those biblical mysteries no one can adequately explain. Even if they were astrologers engaged in a demonic practice, on this occasion they served God's purpose in pointing out that eventually all false religions and philosophies must bow before the Son of God.

 **Are there advisable limitations in "opening up your heart" to other Christians? Should such personal sharing be mainly restricted to the people to whom you are committed?**

 The question of how and in whom we should confide can be a crucial one. Many of us have endured the pain of confiding in Christians who proved unable to keep our confidence. Later, we've felt betrayed to discover what we shared in confidence has become public knowledge.

I believe the degree of intimacy expressed in our sharing should depend on the spiritual environment in

INSIGHTS

"One may know God without knowing his own heart, but one cannot walk with God without discovering himself."

— Charles Simpson

"The real Christians are the ones who treat their wives, kids and neighbors somewhat like Jesus would."

— Arthur L. Clanton

which we share. In an open, public meeting, we can properly give testimony or request prayer concerning some personal struggle without including intimate details.

In smaller, more committed groups, where real covenant love binds the participants together, we can feel safe in sharing in much more intimate fashion since such committed relationships protect confidentiality. However, I have a growing personal conviction that there are some deep and intimate matters which a Christian should share with only one other person besides God. For unmarried persons that "one other person" could be a parent or pastor. For couples, the primary "other person" should be their mate. Indeed, there is a crying need in many Christian marriages for husbands and wives to be more open with each other. In counseling I frequently listen to a husband or to a wife share hopes and frustrations which should properly be shared with their mates. And I've seen marriages greatly strengthened when couples agree to apply themselves diligently to the task of being more open to each other.

Still, we need to recognize there are times when the "one other person" role falls on the shoulders of the pastor or spiritual shepherd. In difficult marital situations the shepherd, as an authority figure who has been given full right to spiritual oversight by the couple themselves, can bring firm, loving counsel to bear on a husband or a wife who in some serious way may be negligent in respecting or honoring the other marriage partner.

Another implication of the question is, Are there some things in your heart

that you should "open" only to God? This is not easy to answer. For me, there is an area of intimacy in my relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ which I feel I cannot, indeed, dare not share with anyone else. However, intensely personal struggles against sin and weakness may require another approach. I am coming to believe that real victory over these may necessitate bringing them to the light and sharing them with our pastor or shepherd. Thus we acknowledge our inability to handle them in the standard "just-you-and-me-God" manner. Perhaps this is partly what James had in mind

when he said, "Confess your faults one to another and pray for one another, that ye may be healed" (Jas. 5:16). ☞

¹ Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Meditations of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi*, Bantam Books 1968 p. 123.

² Ibid p. 119

³ Ibid p. 17, 18

Each month *New Wine* receives questions from our readers covering a variety of topics and issues. If you have questions for this feature, send them to Questions and Answers, c/o *New Wine* Magazine, P.O. Box 22888, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 33315.

Essay of the Month

We again invite our readers to submit articles on the theme of the month. One essay per theme will be selected by our editorial staff for publication.

Listed below are the themes for the upcoming issues and the deadline by which they must be received in our *New Wine* office.

October — "Forgiveness and Reconciliation" DUE: July 12

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Essays should be written from the writer's own experience and observation (preferably in the form of a testimony) and should be 1500 to 2000 words (or 4–6 typewritten, double-spaced pages). Please include a photograph and short biography of yourself.

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