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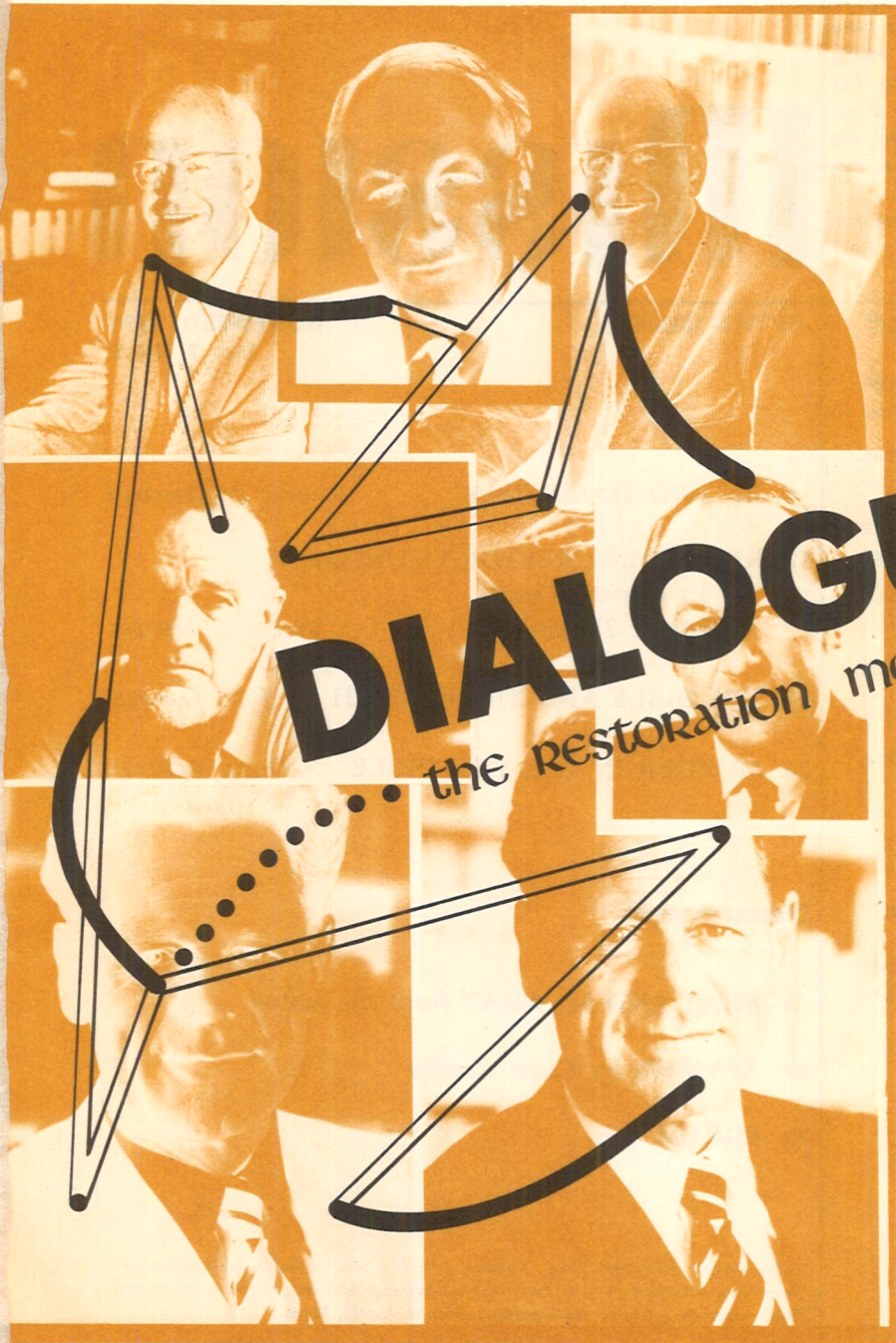
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NOVEMBER 1973



DIALOGUE
the restoration movement

Mission

“. . . to explore thoroughly the Scriptures and their meaning, . . . to understand as fully as possible the world in which the church lives and has her mission, . . . to provide a vehicle for communicating the meaning of God's Word to our contemporary world."

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JULY, 1967

Mission

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What and So What

from the editor

IN THE FOREWARD of his best selling novel, *The Winds of War*, Herman Wouk quotes the words of the French Jew, Julien Benda: *Peace, if it ever exists, will not be based on the fear of war, but on the love of peace. It will not be the abstaining from an act, but the coming of a state of mind. In this sense the most insignificant writer can serve peace, where the most powerful tribunals can do nothing.* I think Benda is right about war and peace. But his principle can be applied to all areas of human relationships. Relationships which are lasting and worthwhile, which are strong and meaningful are based not on the fear of something but the love of something. They come about not through the abstinence of involvement because of fear but through the presence of sharing because of love. They cannot be legislated, dictated or enforced. They can only be lived, nurtured and encouraged.

What I am currently concerned about is our church and our involvement or lack of involvement with others who confess the name of Jesus Christ. I am concerned with our inclination, in moments of fear, toward isolationism. I am concerned lest we become blind to the vision of our ecumenical heritage and deaf to the prayer of our Lord for the unity of all believers. As I said in my inaugural essay in *MISSION*, December, 1972, we should lift up our eyes to the possibility of an emerging world wide church which will forget denominational labels and which will be more faithful to its Lord than any segmented, segregated, pigeon-holed group ever could be. For this reason I advocate that we should be ecumenical in flavor, listening to other voices and conversing with other communities, thus avoiding the narrowness of isolation and the barrenness of prolonged navel gazing.

Honesty demands that we recognize and acknowledge that every preacher who ever preaches in our pulpits and every teacher who ever teaches in our colleges is the recipient of the faith and work of someone in another Christian tradition. One only needs look at the book shelves to discover the degree of fellow-

ship we espouse in the building up of our faith and in the quest for answers to our common human questions. Integrity compels us to realize that every time we worship, whether in the reading of the scriptures or the singing of our hymns, we share in our worship the labors of Christians from innumerable backgrounds. How enriching it has been in the building up of our faith in Jesus Christ.

In light of this *MISSION* affirms the need for a coming of a state of mind—a state of mind that is not dominated by fear, nor intimidated by politics, nor bound by tradition. We affirm the coming of a state of mind that is willing to live by faith—that is willing to cross lines, break down barriers and destroy man made perimeters. We believe that the houses of community and communion, brotherhood and fellowship, unity and understanding, work and worship, truth and honesty can never be built out of the bricks of alienation and separation and held together by the mortar of fear.

So What? Simply this. There are voices in the Churches of Christ which need to be heard in the world wide arena of religious dialogue. There are also voices in the world wide religious dialogue which need to be heard in the Churches of Christ. Isolationism can only be supplanted by involvement. This is *MISSION'S* goal. We are providing a forum for open dialogue, communication and exchange among contemporary writers and thinkers who are making a difference in their religious traditions and in the world religious scene. In the tradition of Jeremiah we intend “to declare among the nations and publish—to publish and conceal not.”

With this in mind we sent Robert Marshall, *MISSION'S* Review Editor to Europe this past summer. In this issue he introduces you to his adventure and we trust it will become your adventure in the months to come as we dedicate ourselves to the highest level of quality in religious journalism. As he says, it is time for “An End to Silence.”

VLH

AN END TO SILENCE

ROBERT R. MARSHALL

AT FIRST IT WAS ONLY an idea, an idea that became a plan, a plan that became a trip, a trip that became an adventure.

It is an adventure about which I will be reporting to the readers of *MISSION* in the months to come beginning in the January issue.

As in the case of many ideas, my idea-that-became-an-adventure had its birth pangs. In thinking back it was even conceived in the pain of a question with which I have wrestled for at least ten years. During those years I have frequently struggled to explain the prevailing insularism of Restoration Movement Churches. Why is it that we have essentially isolated ourselves from the rest of the religious world?

Is it because of rightful protest against

others who are wrong? Could it be because of pride? Or fear? Inferiority?

The one thing that seems clear to me is that there are probably a number of explanations. Some of our isolation may be due to legitimate anxieties and a justifiable sense of theological separation from those with whom we have varying — and frequently marked — degrees of difference. Probably some of our independence is born of pride and superiority. Some of it may now be attributed to the difficulty of taking those first baby steps in communicating when there has been such a protracted era of isolation. Some of it may be because of such practical concerns as the need to erect a provisional vocabulary so that real communication may take place. And, surely, some of our insularism persists because of an antibiblical impatience that be-

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Robert R. Marshall

believes all efforts must secure immediate and favorable response.

Surely in this list of explanations we must put fear, particularly that special variety which kills interaction in the prenatal stage, because a potential participant fears the uncomplimentary label of "liberal" or "compromiser." No matter what we say to the contrary there seems to be a deep suspicion of anyone who crosses certain lines, even if it is to discuss or proclaim Christ!

But the more I have thought the more I have become confident there is another very possible explanation which, if correct, is much less threatening! Is it possible that much insularism is not ill-intentioned, not born out of any conscious hostility. Could it be — again, I am unable to say — a simple matter of neglect?

Is it possible that for no other reason than neglect have many of us failed — not refused but failed — to establish some kind of contact with others? And by "contact" I am referring to the most modest and basic interaction of all: two people meeting and talking.

opening the dialogue . . .

Some time ago I mentioned to MISSION'S editors and trustees my desire to

interview a number of theologians, scholars and newsworthy persons. In addition to the interviews I wanted to visit a number of foreign publishers and two outstanding research and study facilities (The Institute for the Study of Christian Origins at Tübingen, Germany and Tyndale House at Cambridge, England). I put the idea forth originally as an extension of my work as book review editor. I suppose every reader has had the desire to meet certain authors and discuss further either the contents or implications of what the author has said. If the average reader has that feeling, I think I as a book review editor experience it with even a greater intensity!

The idea was given approval early in 1973. And with the formal approval there began some anxieties. What would famous men think of a person whom they did not know writing to ask for a private meeting? What kind of audacity would it be for a representative of a small journal to request the valuable time of well-known personalities?

In my original plans I sought to see and interview 12 men (I know 12 is an honored number but here it is coincidental): William Barclay, F. F. Bruce, Martin Lloyd-Jones, Hans Küng, Malcolm Muggeridge, G. R. Beasley-Murray, J. B. Phillips, John A. T. Robinson, H. R. Rookmaaker, Francis Schaeffer, John Stott and Helmut Thielicke. My interest in seeing these specific men was based on their writings, their significant contributions, and their newsworthiness. Each is well-known as an author, theologian, scholar, editor, commentator, translator, preacher, or leader — or, a combination of these. The men represented different religious points of view: Catholic and Reformed, Presbyterian, Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Church of the Brethren and independents.

I summoned my courage and began writing. I remember sending those first

letters, accompanying them with my fervent prayers that my desires were the Lord's will. I even prayed that the Lord would contravene my attempts if the plan was not what he wanted.

yes, yes, yes . . .

After three weeks the replies started coming in. I was pleased: the first seven said "yes." Küng said "yes;" Rookmaaker said "yes;" so did F. F. Bruce, G. R. Beasley-Murray, Martin Lloyd-Jones and Helmut Thielicke.

John Stott replied with a warm "yes" but acknowledged a scheduling problem. He would be away in Asia and Canada and could not meet me when I first suggested. I changed dates and he graciously accommodated my new suggestion although he would be home only four days from a two and one-half month absence when I would interview him in mid-July.

For over a month I heard nothing from Francis Schaeffer, the founder and director of L'Abri Fellowship in Switzerland. Then I heard from a mutual friend that Dr. Schaeffer might be away from L'Abri on a speaking tour. I called Jim Sire, editor of Inter-Varsity Press, to ask for help in locating Schaeffer. Sire's secretary said that he was out of town but gave me a number in Tennessee where he might be reached. When I called the number the receptionist said that Mr. Sire was expected soon but had not yet arrived. I left my number with a request that he return my call. That afternoon Jim Sire answered my call. I quickly told him my problem of having written Francis Schaeffer and the probability that he was away from L'Abri. Could he help me locate Francis Schaeffer? I will always remember his reply. There was a smile in his voice when he said, "Yes, I think I can help you. Francis Schaeffer is standing about 100 feet from me right now. He's just

getting ready to give a speech!"

The next morning Francis Schaeffer called me from Tennessee and we agreed on June 22 as the day for an interview at L'Abri.

Word came from Mrs. J. B. Phillips that her husband was seriously ill in the hospital and would not be able to resume his normal scheduling for several months. I sent my apologies for invading his recovery time with a request involving additional work. But it is still my hope to meet J. B. Phillips in the months or years ahead.

After writing John A. T. Robinson in England I learned through Mr. Peter Hewitt of Westminster Press in Philadelphia that Robinson was to be in the United States in a series of speaking engagements and public appearances in connection with the release of his latest book *The Human Face of God*. Mr. Hewitt kindly gave me Robinson's itinerary and I wrote to Robinson about the possibility of an interview during a week he was to be in southern California. By mail he agreed *if* his hosts in Pasadena could work it into the schedule they were compiling. To make a long story short, I was assigned by his hosts an appointment for an interview but the day before the appointment they called acknowledging a slip-up. Robinson had been promised for two appointments at the same hour, and since the other contact had been made first, I had no choice but to defer to them.

William Barclay, the famous commentator and biblical scholar at Glasgow, wrote a very warm letter suggesting that he would prefer writing something for me rather than a personal interview. He nevertheless welcomed me to come whenever I could.

Malcolm Muggeridge replied that he would gladly grant an interview but that an assignment with the BBC prevented him from setting a specific date. He arranged for me to call after my arrival

in London so that we could then choose a mutually acceptable time.

So, of the twelve persons originally contacted I did not receive a single unqualified "no"! All said "yes"! And although William Barclay declined the idea of an interview, he nevertheless offered an alternate suggestion on how he could make a contribution to MISSION.

I was pleased beyond measure! As it finally turned out I did not see Robinson because of scheduling conflict. Nor was I able to see Malcolm Muggeridge for the same reason. And, obviously, any talk with J. B. Phillips will have to await a future date.

I must confess to you that one of the most pleasant parts of my venture was that initial response. Not a single "no!" And, the "yeses" were not merely businesslike and formal "yeses". Without exception the men went out of their way to write cordial and friendly affirmations.

warmly welcomed . . .

And, if I have one overall generality that consistently impressed me it was the degree of warmth, helpfulness and friendliness *all* the men awarded me. For example, in several cases the men invited me to their homes for interviews: Küng, Schaeffer, Thielicke, Stott. In several there was more than an interview involved: there was frequently table fellowship, the cordiality and closeness of a meal together. I shall never forget a Sunday dinner with Francis and Edith Schaeffer, an afternoon tea with Hans Küng (with Scott Bartchy and Fred Norris), a luncheon with H. R. Rookmaaker, and a morning tea with G. R. Beasley-Murray. And, I shall never forget the degree of love given me by Scott and Diane Bartchy and Fred and Carol Norris who, in the case of Scott and Fred not only helped me arrange and conduct the

interview with Küng, but allowed me the opportunity to meet and spend time with their lovely families.

I should repeat for emphasis the degree of kindness I received from all. Such kindnesses were not the exception, but the rule. Each of the persons interviewed has a back-breaking schedule in such fields as teaching and writing and speaking. But, although each interview transpired on a disciplined time schedule, the associated kindnesses always overwhelmed any sense of economy. Francis Schaeffer granted his interview in the midst of a two-day special L'Abri worker's conference. John Stott met with me for an hour and a half during the first week back after two months away from home on a world-wide tour of seminars, special studies, and discussions throughout Asia and Canada. In one of the greatest displays of kindness Martin Lloyd-Jones not only allowed, but insisted on, a *second* meeting when we discovered a mechanical mishap had rendered defective the recording of our first interview.

On my visit to Tyndale House at Cambridge Derek Kidner (the warden) and Norman Hillyer (the librarian) took time out for me during the week of the famous Tyndale Lectures and accompanying meetings of the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research. Possibly the most sacrificial kindness was that of G. R. Beasley-Murray who gave me two hours on a day the Beasley-Murrays were packing household goods for their imminent move to the United States. (Dr. Beasley-Murray has resigned his position as principal of Spurgeon's College in London and accepted a teaching position at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.) Or, a runner-up was the pleasantness of Mr. Christopher Mungeam of Inter-Varsity Press in London who cheerfully spent the latter part of a morning with me describing the workings of Inter-Varsity despite an earlier dentist's appointment and the

consequent "paralysis" from a shot of Novocain!

surprises . . .

Already at home people have asked me my "favorite." I can honestly say all are truly unique. People have asked me about special moments or surprises. This is difficult because there were many. There was a special excitement attached to meeting Kung and Schaeffer because I had tried to read their entire corpus of books in the months immediately preceding my departure.

The "surprises" would have to include a number of relatively insignificant matters like the physical appearances of some of the men. Kung is very handsome and looks more like a champion tennis player than a scholar and theologian. Schaeffer is so thoroughly acclimated to life in Switzerland that he is for all practical purposes Swiss in appearance with his knickers and long socks and hiking shoes. For some reason I had thought that Helmut Thielicke might be short and stocky and somber. To the contrary he is about my height (6 ft. 3 in.) and girth (secret), and has a powerfully deep voice and commanding appearance. He has a great sense of humor which makes its appearance in almost every statement. During our conversation we were served some refreshments. There was a heat wave in Hamburg and I selected a big (with emphasis on volume) glass of orange juice. Thielicke had something a little stronger — as, I might add, many Europeans do as a matter of routine. Anyway, during our preliminary chit-chat Thielicke and I were discussing the disrepair of my German and his English. While talking he took a sip of his beverage and then said: "However, when I have enough of *this* I can speak perfect English — or, for that matter, almost any language, even some I don't know."

John Stott is taller than I expected, and thinner, and has a certain prophetic intensity that shows itself in his eyes and even the timbre of his voice. He was tanned and vigorous looking — a partial result, I presume, of two weeks in the Arctic that included birdwatching.

However, appearances were not my biggest surprises. Neither was my biggest shock the air controllers' strike in Germany that caused a delay my first day in Europe on my flight to Stuttgart, which in turn caused me to miss a late evening train, and, in turn afforded me my first "opportunity" of spending a night in the Stuttgart *Hauptbahnhof* (rail station).

No, the most dramatic thing that happened to me was, in fact, not a single event: it was the repeated experience of those joyfully "mysterious" happenings that I could never have arranged. It was the surprise of meeting people in strange places that knew people I knew, or people who were seeking the same thing I was seeking, or people who helped me on my way! One case will illustrate many others, and all testify of the Lord's work, not mine! The day I left Los Angeles I took TWA flight 760 to London. It was a 747 and, so far as I could tell by a casual survey, every seat in the big jet was occupied. That is, every seat except the two empty ones to the left of my aisle seat. At first I thought two empty seats were an added blessing but after awhile I was beginning to wonder if someone might be "avoiding me!" It was almost time for the flight to leave, and just before the doors were closed, two young people in their early 20's entered. I helped them get situated. We introduced ourselves and soon after they got seated the plane was moving. As the plane taxied away we were all quiet during those moments when separation from loved ones and surroundings becomes painfully real. But when our conversation resumed it was the young man — his name was Steve —

who was asking about a book I had stored in the rack in the seat in front. "Isn't that Rookmaaker's book?" he said. "Yes," I replied, "are you familiar with it?" "I know of it but I haven't read it. I know of Rookmaaker because of his association with Francis Schaeffer."

What a surprise! People who knew Francis Schaeffer! But the biggest surprise was to come. For, we three were to find out in the first moments of our flight to London that we all were headed not only for the same continent, and the same country (Switzerland) but the same village (Hüemoz) and the same exact place: the chalets of L'Abri Fellowship. I have since thought about the degree of probability of three persons who had never met coming from an area with a population of 8 million people, taking a flight on the same day, sitting next to one another, and without previously planning, having many similar religious convictions and heading for a common and very specific destination seven thousand miles away!

But such were my surprises! There were others! Like the time I was eating dinner with a group of people I had never met before and upon introducing myself two people immediately asked me questions: one, if I knew a specific member of the faculty at Pepperdine University; the other, if I knew Stanley Shipp? As it turned out Stanley had helped this woman to discover deeper life in Christ in a moment of despair and loneliness. Or, while riding the train from Geneva to Hamburg the passenger directly across from me was, of all things, the wife of a minister who serves as an evangelical chaplain in a large district hospital in Berne. Or, the time I walked into a library in Cambridge and met a doctoral candidate with whom I had gone to school only two years ago. Or the time in downtown Hamburg, upon returning from the interview with Thielicke, while walking down the

crowded street, I almost literally "bumped into" the woman (and her husband) I had met on the train!

A list of "surprises" must inevitably include two moments which might have been the most emotional laden for me. They involve Francis Schaeffer and John Stott. Following my interviews with each, just before goodbyes, both suggested that we bow in prayer. Both prayed for the great movements of our Father in contemporary events. Both prayed for the church's ability to be all that it should as God's people in such a challenging time. But soon both prayed for our specific ministries. Schaeffer prayed that God would bless me in writing — and as a preacher and teacher of the Gospel. Stott prayed that our Father would raise up from the midst of a current famine great preachers of the Word! He then prayed specifically for my ministry, for my family, and even for the congregation at Torrance.

I must admit that I was somewhat dazed that men whom I never met would receive me warmly, talk to me freely, answer questions I put to them, spend hours of their time — but then, to pray for my safety and the blessing of the Father upon me, my ministry, my family and congregation, and upon the staff and readers of MISSION!

as you read, remember . . .

In the months to come the interviews will be printed as conversations-in-print in MISSION. We send them forth with the prayer that you will be informed and challenged by them.

Please remember a number of things as you read the interviews. The interviewees will not always say what you want to hear, but this is no less reason that you should at least know what the men say.

Although there are varying degrees of technicality, we have attempted to keep

the interviews broad enough for the main body of our readership!

Inevitably readers will think of questions they wish I had asked. I already sense that a number of people will write to say "Why, of all things, didn't you ask . . .?" and the question they set forth will be, I am sure, a legitimate and sterling one. But please remember that each interview had specific time limits and I myself did not get to ask nearly all the questions I had. Just for fun, as an exercise in frustration, sit down sometime and try to condense to an hour the questions you would ask of a man like F. F. Bruce who, as an editor-educator-author has his finger on scholarly developments and has himself written about 20 books on subjects as varied as tradition, the speeches in Acts, the trustworthiness and reliability of the Bible and the relationship of Old and New Testaments. With men like that how does an interviewer touch much more than the hem of the garment? And such was the challenge of each interview!

Please remember that an interview is a conversation and thus both parties talk or ask about subjects which they deem important. In short, in an interview, as in other forms of conversation, I did not get to talk exclusively about what I wanted to discuss!

Please remember as you read that the interviews are not always intended to suggest positions you need to adopt or even re-think, although this is surely the case in some instances. As much as anything the interviews are *newsworthy*: they feature conversations with men in the religious world who are among the most significant contributors! It is my conviction that our readers will be enriched by knowing more about each of the persons! Whether you agree factually or theologically is not a necessary requisite! However, I should hasten to add that you will be amazed, and probably pleased, at some of the areas of agree-

ment in such a wide field of scholars, preachers and theologians.

Remember, also, that it will be impossible for us in printing the interviews to give all the interpretive setting they justly require. But, just so no one forgets, we are well aware of the differing reception our interviewees have received throughout the world. The fact that we print an interview with Hans Küng, for example, without "equal time" from his critics does not in the least imply that we are unaware of their objections. And the same may be said for men like Helmut Thielieke, who is an enigma to many "labelers" because he defies the efforts of even the most skillful pigeonholers. And surely this could be said of Francis Schaeffer, who has been strongly upbraided for his handling of philosophical data, for his so-called absolutism and authoritarianism.

and finally, thanks . . .

It would be rude and unloving if I did not express appreciation to many who by their help share in presenting these interviews in the months to come.

I must start with my wife, Glenna, who is at all times a partner in all that I do, and I might add, gives more richness to "partner" than I could ever deserve in two lifetimes. In the beginning she helped with the logistics of planning and scheduling and corresponding. But, once home, she volunteered to transcribe the hours of taped interviews into typewritten manuscripts. She performed this arduous labor of love in her "spare time" which, for those who know her, will cause a smile of irony.

I am especially indebted to both the present and former MISSION editors-in-chief, Vic Hunter and Roy Ward, for receiving my idea and helping to nourish it to fulfillment; to the MISSION board of trustees, but especially Arthur Miley, the intense and visionary former chairman of the board, who sustained much

of the burden of actualizing the plans; to the elders and members of the Torrance Church of Christ, who not only allowed me to be away almost four weeks but, by their love and interest, inspired and strengthened me in this mission. I dedicate this entire series to the Torrance Church with whom I talk and listen constantly and from whom I have learned how conversation in love may transpire in a rich diversity.

Finally, I must add that the trip of interviews which occupied over three weeks was one of the most expanding times of my life. I feel blessed and enlarged and humbled. It would be presumptuous of me to consider myself "friends" of the people I interviewed.

But I confess a tremendous affinity for each which, I hope, is in some small way reciprocal. I shall hope for renewed opportunities to see each of the persons again, to write about their thoughts and ideas and other contributions, and perchance to build a rapport out of which may come additional exchanges.

I send forth these conversations with no attempt to represent them as more than they are. They are the first and feeble efforts of one person whose confidence in Christ and love for his brethren prompted him to see nothing wrong and everything right in discussing with others the only person in whom such a varied set of individuals has found such gracious measures of love and meaning! III

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Restoration

Restoration

REGARDING RESTORATIONISM

An American church historian reflects on the theology and history of the American Restoration Movement.

VICTOR L. HUNTER

ROBERT T. HANDY is Professor of Church History at Union Theological Seminary, New York City. Dr. Handy's particular area of emphasis is the church in America with attention to the problems of church and society in the last hundred years. He is active in several historical societies, including the American Historical Society, American Studies Association, American Baptist Historical Society, and he has served as president of the American Society of Church History.

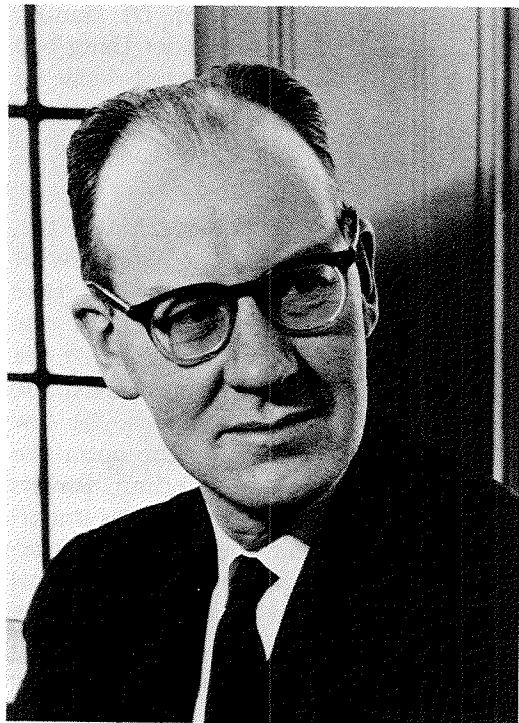
Among his books are *Members of One Another* (1959), *American Christianity*, two volumes (with Shelton Smith and Lefferts A. Loetscher) and *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities* (1971).

In addition to his teaching career he has served as a local pastor and as a chaplain in the United States Army. He has been active in the ecumenical movement, stressing the importance of churches of different denominations in

local communities undertaking theological study together. He is on the editorial board of the *Library of Protestant Thought*, on the Executive Committee of the Commission of Faith and Order, National Council of Churches, and on the Commission of Faith and Order, World Council of Churches.

MISSION sought this interview on restorationism with Dr. Handy because of his outstanding ability as an interpreter of the Christian tradition and its relevance for contemporary life.

HUNTER: Historically speaking, the Churches of Christ are a result of a unity movement among various denominations. This movement has become known as the restoration movement. The plea has been made that unity can come among Christians only when they recognize that the Bible contains a pattern, valid for all times, in which the life,



Robert T. Handy

organization and worship of the church is outlined; that the way to unity is to restore that biblical pattern in churches today. I would like to explore with you the theological ideas behind such a plea and to examine the movement in light of the history of the church. Would you begin by reflecting on the historical circumstances which gave rise to the American restoration movement?

HANDY: Well, I think that in the early nineteenth century the various traditions of Christianity in the United States were feeling their way into a new situation. The churches were trying to find their way of surviving and growing, of fulfilling their witness, and of accomplishing their mission in a quite new setting in which they had no support and no control from the state. A considerable bitterness and controversy developed as the various groups began to collide with each other, both in cities and on the rapidly moving frontiers of the country. The older idea that a

Christian church represented the true position, the only true position, and therefore had to win out over its rivals, was still strong even though everyone more or less accepted the idea of religious freedom and religious pluralism. This was accepted as the way to handle the religious situation in view of the fact that there were so many competing units but still the old image that somehow "we've got to win" was very, very strong. What we can call the "image of Christendom" persisted. So, the various groups were very bitterly contending. There was a great deal of bitterness internally in the various denominations too, as various parties within them struggled to establish themselves as the dominant interpreter of their tradition. In this mood of bitterness and fighting among preachers, angry words were uttered and contentious books were written. But a good many Christian people were sore at heart over this; this can't be the Christian way, they said; this is not the way of peace and love. How do we find a new unity? How do we escape all this? Well, the idea took hold that all the traditions are mistaken in one way or another, and that there must be a way to find a position to which all genuine Christians can move. Some said that the way was to leave their denominational homes and to rally in a new movement which would be authentically first-century Christian; this was the great vision behind the restoration movements of the early nineteenth century. Now, one of the problems with this is the thought that you can somehow jump over all the centuries in between. It assumed that you could go back to read the biblical documents as though Thomas Aquinas, for example, had never lived, and by his work and witness influenced how we read the scriptures. It assumed you could act as though Calvin had never been, as though his interpretation of the Bible and the tradition had not been given. It was as though you

could go back to the first century as if Martin Luther, with his scintillating insights into the nature of the doctrine of justification by faith, for instance, could be dropped out. It was as though Puritanism in New England had never been, and that the Puritan stamp had not been put on American religion; as though the reformation tradition had not influenced the Church of Scotland in certain ways. Some of the leaders in the restoration movement came out of the Scottish context. That was the difficulty in the restoration way of recovering unity.

HUNTER: So you're suggesting that almost at the very beginning of this movement there was developing an ahistorical attitude toward the history and tradition of the church?

HANDY: Yes. There was a great vision there, an alluring vision, but also a built-in difficulty. The vision was a great one and an understandable one that has tugged at many Christian hearts, from all communions since. In one sense it was very historical, wanting to get back to authentic history, wanting to get back to the vision, the feeling and excitement, the sense of commitment and mission of the early centuries. But it assumed that this vision had not been clouded, influenced, shaped, enlivened and enriched by what had happened in between. Thus there was at once excitement and vision in the movement, but also difficulties.

HUNTER: You've spoken, then, of the ideal of getting back to the Bible but sometimes the problems that that raises with becoming ahistorical in our vision of what happened between the first century and the nineteenth or the twentieth century. The emphasis, of course, has been on the Bible, and one of the catch phrases of the restoration movement has been, "Let's go back to

the Bible." On one occasion, Dr. Handy, you suggested that Alexander Campbell had a high, but inconsistent view of biblical authority. I wonder if you could elaborate on that statement?

HANDY: Yes, I'll be glad to try. When I say that he had a high view of biblical authority, I mean he did take very seriously the importance of the Bible in describing and transmitting the message and work of Jesus Christ, the disciples and the early church. He saw that the church is dependent upon the Bible for its self-understanding, for its growth, for its vision and for its understanding of mission. He saw the importance of the Bible for the Christian in his high view of biblical authority. Yet there were inconsistencies, I think, that, in emphasizing the authority of the scriptures, he viewed them as law and he did not pay sufficient attention to the "livingness" of the Bible, to the fact that the Bible is always pointing beyond itself to the eternal creator, to the living Christ, to the continuing work of the Holy Spirit. The Bible as authority is always pointing beyond itself to the authority of God — God as we know him through Christ, God as he comes to us through the scriptures. So that my own emphasis here is that we should not only think of going back to the Bible, but in a sense, going ahead *to* the Bible, and in a way, *with* the Bible. That is, the Bible is not only an authoritative statement; it is a living religious document which takes on its deepest meaning only as we may be touched by the Spirit who is present and the Spirit who is coming.

HUNTER: You're suggesting then, I presume, that the Bible, to be valid at all, can't stand out there on its own, but in the very life of the church it has to be interpreted, it has to inform the answers which we make to present-day situations. In light of this, what is your

An idea that there is a blueprint or a pattern that is valid for every age simply seems to me to break down, and would mean we could not be ministering most faithfully or witnessing most fully to Christ if we are too narrowly or rigidly bound by it.

attitude to the restoration principle as a theological concept? What are its strengths and its weaknesses?

HANDY: Let me just say at the beginning and in support of your emphasis, the Bible itself grew out of a living community. It is to continue to be a book of that community, a living book in a live community. The tremendous validity of the restoration principle is that all that we do within the life of the church must revolve around the witness of Jesus Christ and must revolve around the insights that the apostles gave us; but it isn't any simple or mechanical going-back to them — it's a living continuation of them. In your opening statement, you used the word "pattern" — "is there a pattern for the church in the New Testament?" That's a better word than the one sometimes used — that there is a blueprint for the church in the New Testament. I think "pattern" is a little better word, but it still can convey wrong impressions. How can there be a pattern in the first century that is going to be a fully valid pattern for all the churches throughout the centuries? Think of how different our situation is in the twentieth century from the situation of the apostles and disciples in the first century, in terms of population, in terms of what we know now about the nature of the universe, of which they had no clue, in terms of the pace of life today, in terms of communication around a globe that they didn't even

know existed. So an idea that there is a blueprint or a pattern that is valid for every age simply seems to me to break down, and would mean we could not be ministering most faithfully or witnessing most fully to Christ if we are too narrowly or rigidly bound by it. Rather, what the New Testament gives are principles, images, visions, inspirations, ideas by which we must live, and which we, in the role given to our generation must make come alive in our structures and our organizations.

HUNTER: One of the methods employed in the restoration movement, or perhaps *the* method employed to interpret the Bible, has been that in order to have authority for what we do today we have to have a direct command or approved example. You spoke a moment ago about the relationship of culture in which the early church was living and the very different kind of culture in which the church is living today. When we begin to talk about commands or examples, how does one make a separation between the principles involved which are given in one culture and the application of those in a different culture?

HANDY: I think, in a way, that is the very essence of living the Christian life. The gospel, the teaching and ministry of Jesus Christ, comes to us through channels that are clearly influenced by culture. The very languages which are used

are cultural products. The very philosophical concepts which are used are culturally conditioned (i.e., Paul's "The things that are unseen are eternal," is a Platonic philosophical principle). We can't communicate to each other except by using the materials that a culture gives us. So this is not a simple question. In a way, it is the very heart of how we live the Christian life, and as I see it, what we have to do is to always keep in mind that there is a tension between the person of Jesus Christ and the message he gave us, and the cultural forms which embody it and through which we receive it. The gospel itself, with its centrality on the person and work of Jesus Christ, comes to us in cultural patterns, for he himself spoke in the language and with the concepts of his time. So there is a continual tension between the gospel and the channels through which it comes to us. The channels can be kept open to the gospel, and not be a strait-jacket for it. The continual living of a life of prayer, of re-reading the scriptures can help us to keep the channels of communication purified as we use them.

HUNTER: Would you suggest that the structure that the early church found itself developing was a matter of its own culture, and that they were trying to work out the principles of the Christian gospel in the best way they could within that culture and therefore many of the ways in which they did things were determined not by eternal principle but by applying the gospel; and if so, can you give some examples of that?

HANDY: Yes. For example, in the early church there were the governing styles that went along with the Roman empire. It's clear that a lot of the language, a lot of the customs developed in the early church were in a way borrowed from the Roman imperial patterns. In fact, this was probably a good thing to do at that particular time. It was

using what was familiar and available to convey the message of the gospel and to structure the church. The problems come when what is right and useful in one century tend to get perpetuated as though it were central to the gospel itself. What is very useful to one century may be dysfunctional or harmful in the next century, and may no longer be an effective channel for the gospel. It may then be mistaken for the gospel and may become an obstruction to its communication. A form of church life that was usable in the first century or the fifth century, or the thirteenth century, or the nineteenth century, a form of church life very appropriate for those times, may now be an obstruction to us and may no longer help us with persons who were shaped in the late twentieth century culture. So we may have to say that something that was perfectly good for a decade ago or a century ago, and was then an effective channel for the gospel, isn't any longer today. We have to cast around and find new patterns; we have to keep looking back to the first principles which are enlivened by our worship, by our present relationship with eternal things, so that we can work out structures and forms for our own time that are actually truer to the central insights of the gospel than what we may have inherited from yesterday.

HUNTER: Then you are suggesting that we do not confuse the essence of Christianity with the structure in which that is worked out?

HANDY: I am doing that, but I am also saying that structures are very necessary, and you can't react against them and say we don't want any more organization. You have to have structures to convey the gospel at all, to do your work; but one must be clear that the structures are instruments that we use for a given task at a given time.

HUNTER: Dr. Handy, you have spoken of the need for structures and yet there are many people who are very concerned about the effort in ecumenics to go to super-denominational structures. The super-denomination concept seems to me to be fraught with many problems. Could you speak to that?

HANDY: Yes, I'll try. It may be that the way ahead for the church, the whole church, in this time of richness, variety, pluralism and differentiation among persons, is to develop the concept of the church in much more spacious terms. Of course, there must be in the church the fundamental commitment to God and Christ, and a certain basic desire to live in the light of the gospel tradition. But we must also accept the fact that there are many ways of understanding and transmitting this tradition. These many ways may be necessary to each other if we are ever going to live under the will of an infinite God; we're finite and we can come nearer to comprehending infinity as we respond to a part of it and reflect it to someone else, and welcome the reflection another tradition has for us. It may be that our church union plans so far have tended to be too much in terms of given denominations. We need to think in spacious terms of a whole church in which there are various theologies and various liturgical stances which are not competitive but which are complementary and supplementary. At certain times in the lifestyle of a particular individual, one of these may appeal more than another and may round this person out as a Christian.

HUNTER: If we then recognize that the restoration principle is one theological method devised by men to understand the nature of Christ and the work of the church, then we must also recognize that there are other theological methods that are valid. One of the

problems that those in the restoration movement have is a recognition that it is possible to be biblical while not necessarily being a restorationist. Can one be biblical without necessarily being a restorationist?

HANDY: Let me say in the first place that I think the restoration principle is one that does make an important contribution to any Christian tradition; that is, I think it does point to something important to be grasped, especially by those who are not in the restoration movement. But another biblical principle is that of continuity, and this is a principle that the high church people see quite well. This position has its particular dangers too. But the principle of continuity through the centuries is essential; it does link us with the early centuries. There are other ways of being biblical which pick up from different points. For some it is the idea of being as faithful as we can to the first century pattern. For others, it is being as faithful as we can to the continuing church through the centuries. For still others, it is emphasizing the importance of the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord, and for them being biblical means re-emphasizing again and again that understanding of faith, and then in our time trying to express it in appropriate ways. There are those who, as they read the Bible, are very much impressed with the witness to the continuing work of the Holy Spirit and for them, being biblical means living again the Pentecostal experience and seeking the continuing presence and operation of the Holy Spirit in the world of today, and they've got a lot to say—they are being biblical in calling attention to the work of the Holy Spirit in the world.

HUNTER: You've mentioned the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in the

church today. Among the Churches of Christ there are a large number of people who are finding their faith revitalized, and finding new commitment, who attribute this to the work of the Spirit. This is creating a great deal of tension. What is the role of tension within the life of the church as it tries to work out what it should be doing in fulfilling Christ's mission? Should we be afraid of tension?

HANDY: I can't speak specifically of the situation in the Churches of Christ, but I can talk about the creative uses of tension—indeed, the necessity of tension, if there is to be real life and growth and movement. For various reasons there is a tendency in many churches to be afraid of tension. Now it is true that tension can be destructive, especially where there is not open communication between persons and where there is not a continual reference to the gospel of Jesus Christ from which we in the church get our central inspiration. Tension can be harmful; it can lead to decisive breaks between persons and to fruitless battles. There is destructive ten-

*... a certain
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and can allow
both sides to grow.*

sion, a useless kind of controversy that we are properly afraid of, but a certain amount of tension—you see it one way, I see it another—can be creative, and can allow both sides to grow as we inform and challenge each other. This kind of tension can allow both parties in a

disagreement to grow, to accept each other despite differences, to accept each other as wanting to work in good faith as Christians in today's world. For example, one person may be deeply oriented to the biblical message, exegesis for us today, and another one may be possessed by the Spirit and feels that the Spirit has been using him or her in Christian mission. Between such people differences can be creative, they can be exciting, they can contribute to growth. So when different schools of understanding, different schools of interpretation develop in a congregation or in a denomination it can be a sign of life and movement. There is also, of course, always a danger that human selfishness, stubbornness and competition enter into the picture; there is always a danger that we begin to mistake our interpretation for the gospel itself. Tension is both necessary and dangerous.

HUNTER: It is interesting that you have mentioned the revival of interest in the work of the Holy Spirit in the church today. The restoration movement has basically had a rationalist approach to scripture. How did the Enlightenment influence the restoration movement and how do you view the rationalism that has been a part of that tradition?

HANDY: Well, it is quite popular now to be very critical of the limitations of the Enlightenment perspective. It's very easy for us to talk about how its understanding of human beings was too intellectualistic, that it didn't deal enough with human feelings, that it tended to look upon the individual in isolation and not see enough his relationship with his social group. The Enlightenment did recover some very important things. It did show some of the ways that human reason could be employed in the interest of building an orderly and a peaceful human existence.

I think the problems come when we don't accept the positive contribution which the Enlightenment made in our reaction to its limitations. We are all, in a sense, post-Enlightenment people, and many of the achievements of our culture—and they're quite great—come out of the Enlightenment perspective, but on the other hand, many of our problems, such as the over-emphasis on technical reason, also tended to arise out of Enlightenment views. It seems to me that the Enlightenment made some very important contributions to the understanding of scripture. It *is* proper to see the scriptures as a book like other books. It *is* proper to use our reason in understanding it. The difficulty comes when we fail to use other ways of reading the scriptures; we fail to see it as a book of the church, to be studied in the living stream of the life of a people of God. We must also read it with our emotions, and realize that the flat words on the page are conveying feelings, and eliciting personal commitments from us. Another way to read the scripture is in the attitude of prayer, where one invokes and invites the presence of the Holy Spirit, who will only come when *he* will, not when we wish. All of these things are important and to fail to do one is to deprive ourselves of part of our fullness as human beings because we are emotional and rational, we are affectional and we are dependent upon others as well as being dependent upon ourselves.

HUNTER: In the restoration tradition, the concepts of unity and restoration have been the two important emphases. In the past half century, however, in the thinking of a considerable section of our people, the ideals of union and restoration have tended to fall apart as two concepts that are not coordinate or mutually dependent. Would you care to comment on this problem?

HANDY: Yes. I think this is a case where the healthy tension between those two principles was lost, so they became contradictory, and have tended to fall apart. The early great hopes that unity might come by way of the restoration emphasis rather narrowly construed didn't turn out, and what actually happened is that another family of denominations was added to the American denominational spectrum. Both principles are important for a fuller under-

*What is the difference
between a denomination
and a movement?*

standing of the gospel, both are necessary for us if we are to really fulfill our mission today. So again, I would look for a more spacious definition of unity which can include within it different points of view as complementary and not in opposition to each other. I think there is something in the restoration tradition which has to be kept before us all. For me personally, the unitive dimension is especially the need of our time, but not in a narrow sense—not in the sense that we've got to find one system which will somehow be fully adequate to the gospel today.

HUNTER: What is the difference between a denomination and a movement?

HANDY: Well, in a way I think that a denomination is a particular church form that developed in English and American life in the Puritan and post-Puritan period. When the unity of the territorial

church broke down, then denominations, which in a way combine certain of the principles of a church and certain of the principles of a sect, came into being. There's a lot about the nature of the denomination in Sidney Mead's book, *The Lively Experiment*. In the long run it may prove that the denomination was a useful church form for a particular period, but one which we may and should be moving beyond. I think we should look toward a time when the people of God will be more and more gathered in a larger church in which there will be many movements, but in which the various movements do not have to think of themselves as discrete entities in which their members are somehow separated in watertight compartments from members of other churches. That is, I would see within the church a series of movements, some reminding us of things that we have forgotten, others bringing forward something that needs to be stressed for the good of all.

HUNTER: Many in the Churches of Christ are now interested in becoming more involved in a broader theological spectrum in order that we might have a voice in what is going on in theology in America today. We feel there is something of a void on the American theological scene, and that that void is waiting to be filled. What do you see as the important theological trends in America today, especially since the demise of neo-orthodoxy?

HANDY: I think at the moment there

are actually many, many exciting things going on in the American theological and religious scene. Theology is an attempt to understand, to conceptualize aspects of religious life. With the collapse of the rather impressive attempt at synthesis that neo-orthodoxy was, there is no over-arching option on the American scene like that was, yet we do have a number of interesting theological movements. I don't expect that any one of them is going to be able to put together a synthesis in the old sense and it may be good that this is the case. Attention to theologies of the Spirit, theologies of healing, theologies of wholeness, and theologies of the word are being rearticulated. Behind these theological movements is the fact that on the American scene now is a hunger for an essential, elemental religiousness. One sees it in the Jesus movement, and in the spiritual hunger of those who are turning to Eastern religions. That is, there is an upsurge of religiousness on the American scene—some of it quite undisciplined and some of it, from the point of view of someone schooled in Christian theology, dangerous in that it may lead to idolatries. Nevertheless, there are signs of the deep religious hungers of many, many American people. Now I suspect that we are going to be in a time when there will not be put together an overall synthesis as commanding as neo-orthodoxy was. But I see various theological positions emerging out of the resurgence of religiousness today and there could be a very healthy dialogue among the various ways of looking at Christian truth.

HUNTER: Thank you, Dr. Handy.



THE BIBLE AND THE CHURCH

J. D. THOMAS

IN THE JUNE, 1973 issue of *Mission* Wayne Willis presented his views on "The Plight of the Church of Christ Liberal." While I might argue that this involves a contradiction in terms and that there are numerous lesser points with which I could take issue, I here confine myself to commenting on major matters of his article.

Basically I believe that Tom Olbricht (who wrote in the same issue of *Mission*) put his finger on the reason that real "Church of Christ liberals" are in a plight, and that is "because they want to be" — certainly not because they have any valid logic or overwhelming reasons for "having to be" in a plight. It is sometimes hard for one to be objective about his own logical processes and "wishful thinking" often causes us to settle for less than sound judgment, even without our realizing that this has happened.

I personally feel called upon to comment upon Willis' article since he notes that he is a graduate of a "Church of Christ college," and he makes much of having been considered as "sufficiently sound in the doctrines to be awarded the

one graduate assistantship" at the end of his senior year. But he later admits that he began to doubt restoration theology his "second year in college," and that to him, well-known brotherhood writers were not able to make a good enough case for restorationism to really justify its claims. He does not say that he picked up his "unfaith" from teachings given him in college, but he indicates that it came "in spite of" what he was taught. Certainly those who appointed him to a graduate assistantship had no idea about his views or they would not have used him. We at least appreciate his making clear that what he believes now is not what he learned from Christian college teachers.

Willis' change was not a "running to something" but a "running from something." He does not feel that the Presbyterian church is the depository of truth in any unusual sense, but he left the Church of Christ because he was personally "fed up" with some attitudes that he understands us to hold. He apparently wanted a freedom to believe as he chooses, and the Presbyterians are agreeable to his doing that, whereas we

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in the Church of Christ have a definite and more structured faith.

Obviously I do not know how rigid and legalistic Willis' boyhood situation was, but when he expected a sort of "absolute proof" from Olbricht's and Ward's articles on the restoration principle and on the canon, I am sure that he was expecting a more certain knowledge than is actually available. To be sure the child of God is given *adequate* "reason for his hope," but never can we in this life have "proof" or absolute knowledge about the spiritual verities. Christianity is a *faith* religion, and will always be so. I insist that Willis still has adequate evidence to justify biblical faith, but it may be that he expected a demonstrable knowledge that would logically force his commitment.

the ideal church . . .

A second point is that Willis seems to have a wrong view about the term "Church of Christ." He seems not to be aware of the ideal church as taught in the New Testament, which we should all strive to emulate. The church Willis "left" was an earthly, human group, which he considers to be only a sect, and made up of self-righteous, spiritual snobs. I do not admire this type of people either, but my dislike for people with certain characteristics is not going to cause me to forsake the body of Christ as the New Testament describes it. To all in any local congregation who are guilty of the sin of snobbery (or other sin) I recommend Christ's teachings. I am sure that Willis does not find sinless people among the Presbyterians, nor would he do so in any other group. The Lord's church is more of a hospital for sinners than a museum of saints. But it is still his church!

For point three I note Willis' personal *faith*, for which I would like to know the source. He says, "Obedience . . . is

summed up in . . . justice, love, faith, hope, joy and such like," but he seems to be arbitrary and without a valid exegetical method for this conclusion. He says, "all of God's requirements . . . can be capsuled in one word, agape." He doesn't say how he learns that no details at all are necessary in knowing God's will.

When he criticizes the Church of Christ for being exclusive, I ask, were the Jews as Gods' people in Old Testament days right in considering themselves exclusive? And was the church in New Testament days right in being exclusive — even to teaching that Jews as such were not included? (See Romans 9, 10).

For point four, we note that one of Willis' admitted "fundamental differences" with us is that he now does not consider the Bible to be God's *blueprint* for man today. His proof for this is that people cannot understand the Bible alike — "human nature and the nature of the biblical materials will not permit uniformity of interpretation." He thinks God *could have* given a clear revelation (but didn't) — thus a blueprint was not his intention. But, we ask, how does Willis get *his* certain knowledge and clear revelation of what God's will is? Willis' approach toward the Bible seems to be his real problem. He criticizes us for having numerous groups among us who disagree but there are more different doctrinal types among the Presbyterians than among the members of the Church of Christ.

A chief problem to Willis is distinguishing between "customs" and "once-for-all doctrine" and he insists that here we are arbitrary. Perhaps some of us are, but how to distinguish between the temporal and the eternal in scripture is the problem that every religious group wrestles with — even the Presbyterians. We in the Church of Christ usually have reasoning to undergird our interpretations — they are not merely arbitrary,

as he avers. To say that Jesus commanded footwashing for his followers as a religious ritual is not to have carefully read the account. *Everybody* in interpreting scripture allows for the use of figurative language (we use it all the time in our daily speech) and for Willis to insist that we in the Church of Christ should literalize everything looks like he is hunting for something to keep from admitting that he changed just "because he wanted to." When he says, "There is no consistent way" to distinguish the temporal from the abiding in scripture he is really saying that the Bible is a mistake, it is really no revelation. When I read it, however, I get an indication that it expects to be understood and followed.

biblical commands . . .

Point six is where Willis really denies definite commands and says that we need to give a "spontaneous response," that is "warm, loving" and "natural." We admit that such responses are to be desired but they are not contradictory to the use of commands, and we insist that commands are necessary before one can know what to do. After all, pagans can respond to their dieties in warm, loving and natural ways without even being Christian. God's revelation to us in Christianity has many specifics, and they can be assured only by definite required commandments. Willis, on the other hand, says that New Testament Christianity was "fluid, experimental, suited to the situation at hand," which means that he denies that there are today any definite Christian requirements. He insists that commands given in New Testament times were only "cultural expressions" which "were never intended to be perpetually binding," and I thus understand him to hold that even Christian baptism is only a cultural incidental.

Willis holds that people today should

"restore the essence" of Christianity "as they individually see it." For him personally the essence is "trust in God, acceptance of myself through the grace of Christ, and love for neighbor." Then he notes, "Others can identify the weightier matters of Christian faith elsewhere. That is every person's privilege and responsibility." Here we have then, no hard revelation, no specific requirements in Christianity — every man is to do as he pleases. It may be that Willis reads his Bible through existential spectacles — at least he is about as subjective as one can be. No wonder he opposes blueprints, patterns, commands and anything that smacks of concern for doctrinal correctness. Yet the New Testament insists on correctness in doctrine and warns against false teaching — Matthew 15: 9, "in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men;" Romans 16:17, "Mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling contrary to the doctrine which ye learned." (See also Galatians 1:6-8; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 2 John 9 and 1 Corinthians 4:6.)

Willis further states on the above point,

Every individual Christian has to work out his own salvation. I take this biblical phrase to mean that no two persons ever find themselves in precisely the same circumstances or possessed with precisely the same emotional and intellectual propensities. Consequently no two persons need be expected to make identical choices, even in highly similar circumstances.

This statement means that there is no "public truth" and consequently no plan of salvation, to be preached to all the world.

Willis' concern with "the Lockean trap" refers to our strong dependence on reason in studying the Bible and in coming to know God's will — thus his

words "rationalistic trap" and "arguing doctrines" and "organizing one's brain cells correctly." When he does this however, it makes him argue for *irrationalism* (either existential or other) in determining God's will. Here I side with one of Kierkegaard's critics and say, "If reason alone cannot solve the central problems of existence, is there any assurance that passion alone can do so?"¹

While berating us for wanting to "give a reason for the hope that is in us" Willis

uses ten pages worth of reasoning and "arguing of doctrines" to try to show that we interpret the Bible wrongly and that his interpretation is superior to ours. Further, that he had no overwhelming logic that forced him to "run away" from the Church of Christ. He could have stayed, with good reasons. Surely he left "because he wanted to."

We in the Church of Christ do have a message, and "the wayfaring man need not err therein." ■

1. H. H. Titus, *Living Issues in Philosophy*, 4th ed. (New York: American Book Co.), p. 312.

Murder in the Vestibule

And they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers and announcements.

DOUG McBRIDE

OH, THAT GOLDEN segment of our worship! How I do look forward to it! Songs of praise have been sung so well. God's message has been proclaimed most effectively. We have communed so closely with Christ. We are gratified—uplifted—rededicated—refreshed—and prepared to live for Christ as never before, but first. . . .

"Brother Hiram Hornblower has a few announcements to make."

"If one of you good brethren will help me get my notes to the podium," Hiram announces, "we shall proceed." Considerable grunting and gnashing of teeth emit from the front of the auditorium as the good brother assists Hiram.

"Thank you, Brother Atlas," Hiram

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says, short of breath. "As you all know, Brother Atlas is director of physical (Hiram says, "fiscal") education at the high school. Keep up the good work, Brother Atlas! The Lord needs strong backs like yours."

"Amen for Brother Atlas," I mutter—a statement punctuated by the jarring of my wife's elbow against my rib cage.

Hiram assumes his best William Jennings Bryan pose and is obviously delighting in his favorite responsibility, while my body grows rigid in anticipation of what lies ahead.

"First of all," Hiram says, and immediately I know we're in deep trouble. Hiram intends to impress us with his organizational ability by offering verbal enumeration of each item—a practice which will lengthen the proceedings considerably.

"First of all," Hiram repeats, "we'd like to welcome our visitors."

"That's good, Hiram! Do that first—while they're still here!" Another jab to the ribs.

"We certainly want you to feel like one of us."

"Which one, Hiram?" Again, the elbow. Doubling over, I make the most of my position. "Pardon me," I whisper to a stranger seated in front of me. "Would you care to feel like me?"

The stranger stares at me blankly in disbelief, then at my wife who is successfully appearing as if she never knew me, then at his own wife who shrugs, as together they turn to face Hiram.

"Now," Hiram continues, "we'd like a record of your attendance. Forms have been provided—"

I brace myself for that magically melodious phrase that has inexplicably bothered me since early childhood, and which—I remain convinced—could prompt the greatest of country-western music:

"—in the rack,
on the back,

*of the pew,
in front of you,"* Hiram directs.

(Enter guitars and fiddles)

*"I found the note,
that was wrote
by Mary Purvis
in early service,
tellin' me she was gone, gone, gone."*

A rustling noise breaks my lyrics, and I look to see from whence came the covey of quail, only to discover that the visitors are finding the forms.

"Line one," Hiram instructs. "Your name. Please print." *Print* is stressed and followed by a lengthy explanation of why the visitor should not write, an action—Hiram reports—having resulted in Glad-to-Have-You/Come-Again cards being mailed to several Occupants.

My heart is pounding in my ears, and my blood pressure is making medical history. With arms outstretched, I grip the back of the pew in restraint of physical attack. "Thou shalt not kill! Thou shalt not kill!"

"Line 14. Social Security Account Number."

"God, please forgive him, for he knoweth not what he doeth, as is so evident."

Thou shalt not kill . . . anyone? Thou shalt not kill anyone save Hiram Hornblower if needs be?

"Alllllll right," Hiram says, as if addressing a Romper Room seminar on the finer points of breathing, "I can see alllllll those question marks on your little ol' faces. But just try your best."

Furiously, I grab a blank form and see that Hiram is referring to Line 55.

"No! No! Please God, help them all to remember their five previous employers, so we can get out of here!"

Vetoing the idea of stuffing Hiram in the bapistry, I consider rushing the pulpit, presenting him with strangulation death, and escaping through the side door.

"Sixteenthly," Hiram says, in keeping

with his accounting method, "We must never forget our sick." Hiram pauses to allow the full impact to sink in. "In room 101 of the local hospital is Mrs. Maybelle McCauley. Now some of you know Mrs. Maybelle personally, and if you don't, you're missing something in life. Brother Jackson knows her." Hiram looks around for Brother Jackson who nods his solemn agreement. "Paul Wheeler knows her. Sister Elta Bassford knows Mrs. Maybelle real well . . ."

As Hiram continues his listing of those who know Mrs. Maybelle McCauley personally, I recall the story of David and Goliath.

"In room 102 . . ."

Seeing that Hiram has no intention of omitting a single one of the 350 rooms in the local hospital, I rip the tongue out of my shoe and am about to borrow my wife's hair ribbons, when I am hit by the remoteness of finding five smooth stones in the carpet.

"We're happy to report that, at present, there is no one in room 404, a fact for which we should be most thankful."

"Thank you, Lord, for there being no one in room 404."

Finally, Hiram dispenses with the local hospital and is now halfway through the first floor roster of the Eternal Bliss Divine Comfort Last Will and Testament Home for the Aged.

I have elected to jump him from behind as he enters the foyer. Lurking behind the opened door, I will spring forth in violent attack, using the cloth cords yanked from nearby hymnals, as a weapon.

Totally oblivious to my plans for hijacking his larynx in the lobby, Hiram is now making a careful review of his notes, "... to make sure I ain't overlooked nothin'," as I test the strength of the knotted markers against my knee.

"This concludes the announcements," Hiram reports, to the unisoned sigh of the audience. "But, since I'm up here,

I'd like to say this."

Immediately, I go into a trembling rage which leaves me exhausted physically, mentally and spiritually. I know exactly what Hiram means by *this*. Under a strange sense of obligation, Hiram will commence to offer something deep and profound, his subject chosen from among several categories:

- a) A complete history of his own conversion and subsequent development in the Christian faith; or
- b) An expression of gratitude for the congregation being what it is today, usually beginning with, "When I think of all the fine people . . ."; or
- c) A statement reaffirming the congregation's compulsory attendance rule, during which the announcer leads the audience in memorizing the schedule of services; or
- d) A personal re-hashing of, "... a fine, fine sermon which we all appreciated,"—in which the announcer will completely misinterpret every point the minister has made; or
- e) The stressing of how important a particular work is, which usually begins with, "I'd like to add this to what Brother So-and-So has said concerning . . .", and results in the repetition of Brother So-and-So's words *verbatim*.

My plan is foiled, for I am too weak to move as I sit listening to Hiram, who has chosen category f)—all of the above.

"Would that I were a stronger man!" Someday a stronger brother will appear, and Hiram Hornblower's announcement-making career will come to a tragic end. There will indeed be a murder in the vestibule. I am convinced of this, and it is Hiram's own final words that strengthen this conviction.

"I might remind you that all of these announcements will appear in your weekly bulletin." III

REVIEWS

Edited by
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AGAINST A STONE WALL: HOPE

LEWIS RAMBO

Hope in Time of Abandonment by Jacques Ellul (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973) 306 pages. \$8.95.

RARELY DOES ONE READ a book which simultaneously enrages, captivates, and illuminates. Ellul's latest is such a book! As in a spate of previous works, Ellul's stance often appears to be abrasive and arrogant, but perhaps the reasons he apparently embodies these qualities are that he ruthlessly demolishes our most cherished illusions and his style and content are so idiosyncratic as to defy facile categorization. Unlike the authors who either confirm our own perspective or offer us nothing but intellectual pabulum, Ellul is not easily disposed of or ignored. Although fully aware of the current interest in the theology of hope, Ellul has written an unusually powerful book which was forged out of a fierce loyalty to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and his own experience and reflection on the plight of contemporary man and society.

absence of God . . .

Hope in Time of Abandonment is divided into four parts: Part 1 is Ellul's personal meditation on the condition of the modern world and man's part in it. From Ellul's point of view, the current situation is rife with tragic ironies. For instance, in spite of man's enormous technological abilities to open the secrets of the world, and indeed, the universe, man feels himself enslaved and impotent. Ellul also finds it ironic that modern man endlessly discusses the ideology of rationality and scientific planning whereas he in fact yields himself to a variety of

irrationalities, such as astrology, sexual exploitation, destructive political nostrums, etc. The cruelist of all ironies, however, is what Ellul calls the "imposture" which, he says, "involves the transmutation of the original intention into its opposite" (p. 20). No longer is there merely a disparity between dreams and reality, but modern man strives to achieve one goal and its polar opposite is the result. For example, the watchword of much behavior today is "freedom," but the result is, according to Ellul, the worst possible slavery. The age is also characterized by scorn and deep suspicion. Ellul points to Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud as the architects of a mood and method that results in the complete disenchantment of values, motives, laws, institutions, and man himself. Modern man seems to relish self negation. Ellul's overall impression of the condition of man in the modern world is that of total and abject hopelessness and despair. There is no exit.

In Part 1 Ellul articulates the mood and ambience which he discerns in his own experience of the modern world, but the remainder of the book is more explicitly theological. In Part 2 Ellul depicts the present age as an age of abandonment in which God has chosen to leave the earth to its own devices, at least for now. In other words, God is silent. Ellul rejects the theologians who claim that man has come of age and that secularity frees man to experience self-realization and the perfection of his powers because such theological talk is merely the ideology needed to sustain and delude a society so totally gone awry. Not only are the theologians severely criticized by Ellul, but the churches are also scorned for their mediocrity

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and their willingness to compromise with the fashions of the age.

rugged hope . . .

The third portion of the book is devoted to an explication of Ellul's concept of hope. According to Ellul, hope is no mere wishful thinking or easy optimism that all will work out in the end, but hope is the result, somewhat paradoxically, of the gift of God and the decision of man. Ellul offers no "proofs" for hope, but proposes that hope is the only possible avenue available for the Christian in a time of anguish and spiritual bondage. Hope is an audacious demand that God return to man and speak a liberating word of revelation. Hope is a fierce combat with God. Hope is the central religious issue of our time in history. Most theologians and philosophers of religion claim that faith is the core problem of today; not so Ellul. Hope is the only force able to nurture and sustain man in this age of the silence of God because hope is the refusal to acquiesce to the decision of God to remain silent. Hope is the only possibility in man's extreme condition. Ellul avers: ". . . hope is the passion for the impossible. It makes no sense, has no place, no reason for existence, except in the situation in which nothing else is actually possible. What is called for is not a person's last resort, nor some second breath, but a decision from without which can transform everything. It exists when it is up against a stone wall, faced with the ultimate absurdity, the incurable misery" (p. 197). Ellul's hope is no pious feeling, but an almost savage persistence and anticipation of the ultimate revelation of God.

The style of life urged by Ellul in Part 4 is best summarized by his formula: "pessimism in hope." Mere optimism and pessimism are rejected as options for the Christian because they are merely human moods; rather, the phrase "pessimism in hope" is a typical Ellulian paradox. The Christian, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is able to frontally perceive the reality of contemporary man and society, to face the terror and the void. Pessimism is the only possible response to a correct diagnosis of the plight of man. Others are blinded by propaganda and illusions (the belief in progress, the "common sense" view that "surely things are not that bad," etc.). Nevertheless, it is only in these desperate times that hope emerges as

an aggressive affirmation in a situation which makes hope totally unwarranted from an objective point of view. The Christian continues to "live in the world, but not of it" by "the relativizing of all things *and* a total seriousness applied to the relative" (p. 242). The Christian is not seduced by false hopes and ideologies which distort his perception of the nature of things, but he still participates in ordinary life. Furthermore, the Christian way of life "calls for radical and relentless relativizing, leaving nothing illusory to survive" (p. 247). Christian hope challenges, opens a breach, in an otherwise comprehensive system of life and thought that perverts man and his relationship to God. Christian hope, based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, offers the only alternative available for the transformation of man and a true revolution of society. Ellul is very critical of those Christians who divert their energy to political reform. He states rather baldly that "Christians must understand that the one thing useful to the world, and indispensable, is to recover the fighting and burning expectation. It is not the pursuit of justice, nor the defense of the poor, nor political activity, nor the third world, nor hunger, nor the renewal of the Church, nor hermeneutics. Those things are simply diversionary traps to turn us aside from exclusive, central, stubborn and enthusiastic waiting" (p. 263).

waiting, prayer and realism . . .

The task of the contemporary Christian and the expression of his hope is threefold: waiting, prayer, and realism. As seen in the quote above, waiting is not passive piety, but a persistent and determined insistence on the action of God in history. Prayer is not only dialogue with God, but it is the junction of the future, present, and eternity; moreover, the person engaged in prayer is filled with a sense of urgency and even ceaseless demand of God. Realism is the willingness and ability to confront honestly and directly man's desperate condition. Christians, both individually and collectively, must, according to Ellul, affirm and embody hope and thereby be a "presence" in the world.

Few will agree with Ellul's bleak diagnosis about the current situation and some will receive slight consolation in Ellul's concept of hope, but Ellul's work is not limited to theological descriptions and predictions of the

demise of man in the modern world. Ellul is also a prolific writer in the field of sociology and Professor of the History and Sociology of Institutions in the Faculty of Law and Economic Sciences of the University of Bordeaux, France. He is best known in the United States for his massive book, *The Technological Society* (Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 449 pages), which was translated into English and published in 1964. Since that time his work on technology has been the focus of conferences at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions on two different occasions. Originally published in 1954, *The Technological Society* is a comprehensive and thorough study of the implacable expansion and penetration of "technique." Ellul is not concerned merely with machines, but with the atmosphere of modernity which is the unrelenting quest for efficiency and the supremacy of means over ends. Technique demands and receives the total allegiance of modern man and thus makes man its slave. Technique, in the modern world, is now autonomous and beyond the control of mere mortals, invading every facet of modern life, including education, religion and politics.

Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes (Knopf, 1965, 320 pages), is a sequel to *The Technological Society*. Modern man lives in a total environment of myths and illusions that perpetuate the growth and development of technique so that the inhabitant of the modern world feels happy and strives to adjust himself to the requirements of the technological society. Ellul's incisive dissection of the illusions generated and fostered by propaganda are systematically exposed in his book, *A Critique of the New Commonplaces* (Knopf, 1968, 303 pages). Ellul's lacerating critique of our comfortable platitudes has something to offend everyone, for he has little use for the illusions of the liberal or the conservative—political or religious.

The Political Illusion (Knopf, 1968, 258 pages) is a sustained disembowelment of the fashionable notion that politics is everything. Ellul detests what he calls the "politization" of all of life; that is to say, the current trend in modern societies is to rely more and more on the state for the solution of all problems. Of course there is a strange irony in the belief that politics (especially in democratic societies) is so crucially important in that only a tiny minority actually control the state and the remainder of

the population are the "happy" objects of manipulation. Ellul's *Autopsy of Revolution* (Knopf, 1972, 300 pages) is a successful attack on those who utilize the rhetoric of revolution to justify their shoddy efforts. Ellul claims that "revolution" has been debased and trivialized by the Marxists and others who have domesticated revolution and made it one of the inevitabilities of history. For Ellul, the only true and necessary revolution is the revolution that is eruptive, a profound renovation of the individual who is trapped in the web of modernity and technique. Such a revolution, however, is impossible for the individual human being.

composition in counterpoint . . .

At this juncture, the theological dimension re-enters Ellul's work. In an autobiographical article published in *The Christian Century* (February 18, 1970), he called his entire literature a "composition in counterpoint." Ellul explains his position as a matter of principle: "The only thing that will be of any use is not synthesis or adaptation, but confrontation; that is, bringing face to face two factors that are contradictory and irreconcilable and at the same time inseparable" (p. 201). *The Meaning of the City* (Eerdmans, 1970, 209 pages) is an example of Ellul's biblical interpretation. He is concerned with the dominant and basic theme of the Bible which in this case is that the city is the embodiment of man's arrogance and unwillingness to yield himself to God; the city is the rebellious creation of man seeking to escape God. It should be noted that the confrontation involved in Ellul's "composition in counterpoint" is not between his sociological analysis and his theology, for they are largely complementary, but between Ellul's view and the ordinary worldview of man in modern times. In other words, Ellul's sociology is an empirical study of the world as it is and his theology is his interpretation of the revelation of the Bible. For Ellul, these two perspectives coincide. The only difference is that from a sociological perspective there is no hope, but in Jesus Christ there is a possibility of escape. *The Meaning of the City* is a direct challenge to the theological thinking of people like Harvey Cox, the author of *The Secular City*—a celebration of the joys of urban emancipation. (See Cox's reply in *Commonweal*, July 9, 1971, pp.

351-357.) Another challenge to the conventional wisdom of much of contemporary theology is Ellul's *Violence* (Seabury, 1969, 179 pages). There he questions the theologians who desire to "Christianize" revolutionary violence without recognizing the complexity of political reality or human passions, not to mention human sinfulness.

Prayer and Modern Man (Seabury, 1970, 178 pages) has been described as "one of the most astringent analyses of our spiritual predicament to appear in a long time" (*Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Winter, 1972, p. 103). In it, Ellul recognizes that in a convulsive and secular world, the ordinary and traditional reasons for praying are no longer valid. The *only* reason a Christian must pray is the command of God. But in prayer "God is forever vulnerable to us." Prayer is not "useful" to man in the sense of being a solution to the pernicious problems man has created for himself. Rather, prayer is a manifestation and a cultivation of the one thing necessary: man's relationship to God.

Hope in Time of Abandonment is in many respects a summation and a challenge of his previous works. In his sociological works, Ellul has ruthlessly exposed the structures of the modern world that conspire to dispose of man and relegate him to the status of a cipher. In human terms there is nothing remaining for man but a vortex of despair and catastrophic destruction. Ellul's theological appraisal of man offers essentially the same judgment, but in religious terms. Man is in rebellion and all his enterprises and devices are doomed to further enslave him. The new note sounded in *Hope in Time of Abandonment* is that of a fierce and persistent hope, a hope born of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and of the decision of Christians to embody a power with the capacity to transform and renew man and his cosmos.

Marxism and Christianity . . .

Evaluation of Jacques Ellul presents enormous difficulties. Obviously, this review has only slightly touched on the vast corpus of Ellul's literature (which consists of more than two dozen books and 100 articles). Few readers can endure his inexorable and penetrating criticisms of modern life and spirituality—perhaps most of

us need "myths" to enable us to endure our mundane lives. Some have noted that Ellul does not pay sufficient attention to the grace of God. Others feel that he has drawn too sharp a distinction between the religious and the secular, or between God and man. The tone of some of his writing tends, at times, to be harsh and bereft of common human sympathy. (For an excellent summary and critique of Ellul's work, see Russel Heddendorf's "The Christian World of Jacques Ellul," *Christian Scholar's Review*, Volume II, 4, 1973.) Nevertheless, I would argue that Ellul is one of the few truly original writers on the current scene. His originality lies in two interrelated areas. First Ellul combines Marxism and Christianity. Let him speak for himself:

I was not brought up in an especially Christian family, and had only a very remote knowledge of Christianity in my childhood . . . When I was nineteen, I read, by chance, Marx's *Capital*. I was enthusiastic about it. It answered almost all the questions that I had been asking myself. I became a 'Marxist' and devoted a great deal of my time to a study of his writings. But I was disappointed with the Communists, who seemed to me to be very far from Marx, and I never entered the Party. Around twenty-two years of age, I was also reading the Bible, and it happened that I was converted—with a certain 'brutality'!

From that time on, the great problem for me was to know if I could be Marxist and Christian. On the philosophical plane, I realized very quickly that I could not, and so chose decisively for faith in Jesus Christ. But what Marx had brought to me was a certain way of 'seeing' the political, economic and social problems—a method of interpretation, a sociology. (From James Y. Holloway, ed., *Introducing Jacques Ellul*, Eerdmans, 1970, page 5.)

Second, Ellul self-consciously sets himself to the task of challenging all orthodoxies, even his own. While this stance sometimes causes him to exaggerate, in my opinion, the proportions of various problems, he nonetheless relentlessly chisels out positions worthy of concentrated study. ■

FORUM

MISSION *Forum* is devoted to comments from those whose insights on various matters differ. Letters submitted for publication must bear the full name and address of the writer. Letters under 300 words will be given preference. All letters are subject to condensation. Address your letters to The Editor, MISSION, Suite 624, Twin Towers South, 8585 N. Stemmons Expressway, Dallas, Texas 75247.

Forced to read . . .

If you continue to carry material of the quality of Tabor's review of books on the occult and of the July issue on abortion in MISSION, people are going to have to read the magazine whether they like it or not. And you may quote me on that.

EVERETT FERGUSON

Abilene, Texas

Abortion . . .

Your July issue on abortion was timely. For the church to take a position on the rightness or wrongness of abortion, she must base her arguments in scripture. Dr. John Scott has made a good start in this direction. His comparison, however, of Adam before having life breathed into his body and the fetus before birth is, as Dr. Willingham pointed out, stretching the analogy a little too far. For one thing, the fetus is alive, while Adam was not. Scripture speaks of a fetus experiencing joy (Luke 1:44), being capable of dying (Job 10:18), and of being capable of being killed (Jeremiah 20:17). I would suppose that something cannot die or be killed that is not alive. And to maintain that something can be alive without having a soul is on shaky ground biblically since both the Hebrew word *nephesh* and the Greek word *pseuche* are translated (and translatable) "life" as well as "soul." Incidentally, Dr. Scott is

wrong in saying "Animals are alive, but they do not possess a soul." Genesis 1:21, 24 and 2:19, among other scriptures, all speak of animals having (or rather being) a "soul" (*nephesh*—usually translated "creature" in these scriptures). Also, I recently noted that Genesis 9:4 speaks of the blood as being the "life" or "soul" (*nephesh*) of the flesh. Hopefully these comments shed more biblical light on the subject.

BRUCE TERRY

Austin, Texas

Searching for answers . . .

I am a young and impressionable person who has just returned to the States and have decided to enroll as a student in Abilene Christian College. To date, I have had many moments of doubt as to the wisdom in this decision.

I was brought up on a steady diet of Gospel Advocate journals, distasteful bickerings within the church and, for dessert, I attended a Christian college in Tennessee for two years. You might say I have the very makings of a right wing, militant conservative, except for one enormous flaw in my character—I laugh a lot.

I am diligently seeking people minus bias who are searching for real answers concerning truth; people willing to abandon traditions in exchange for what is written in the inspired word. Even more than that, I seek those souls honest enough to admit that not all the questions can be answered. Doesn't the Bible say that these fellows with all the answers will be tripped up and shown for what they really are?

Before any questions are answered and a person enlightens anyone else to the realities of truth, they need to carefully examine themselves and the available resources and discover for themselves what this controversial little word is about. Saddled alongside this, a love for one's fellowman must be cultivated and differences discussed in a spirit of love. It is most important that our middle wall of partition be condemned and our search for truth be pointed

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(FORUM Continued)

in the same direction. Earnestly contending for the faith is one thing, but all-out massacres are quite another matter.

Where old paths are concerned, I strongly believe there are important traditions and many that must not be changed. However, security and tradition are often mistakenly considered as one and the same. When we must choose between sacrificing or compromising truth and accepting facts, it is best to forsake our security blankets.

Up to now I have been hesitant to openly admit having doubts concerning the many hand-me-downs dressed up to be the truth by some overwrought pulpiteer who cloaked himself in hard-line sermonology expecting the listener to accept his version of the story. If there were any insinuation that the topic for "consideration" might be researched by one other than himself he would prevail upon the researcher incensed.

I can remain stalemate no longer. It may mean losing a few friends who will find questioning a threat to their security. But I cannot see stifling myself to appease another. I am somewhat fearful of submitting this letter

because the Ku Klux Klan is alive and well in this area and they burn people who ask too many questions or subscribe to MISSION magazine. But I must submit it as a response to your editorial in the August, 1973 issue of MISSION. You have stated something that we must come to terms with if there are to be any answers. I do not subscribe to all the views presented in MISSION. I have yet to find a periodical that adequately represented my feelings on Christ and the church, but your article is certainly a beginning.

SUSAN HUDSON

Huntsville, Alabama

CORRECTION

In the August, 1973 issue of MISSION there is a typographical error on page 62. The figure for the Ohio Valley College campaign should have read \$50,000. This campaign was a result of a controversy generated because Ohio Valley was holding daily chapel services in a building partially built by federal funds.