

# LIGHT

Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention  
June 1983



The Christian Life Commission  
of the  
Southern Baptist Convention  
Presents to:

**BILLY GRAHAM  
THE DISTINGUISHED  
SERVICE AWARD**

for Leadership in Christian Social  
Ethics in recognition of unique and  
outstanding contributions in ap-  
plied Christianity as

... Faithful preacher of the whole  
Gospel of God in Christ

... Authentic advocate of personal  
morality

... Mighty voice for public  
righteousness

... Consistent proponent of  
Christian family life

... Prophetic spokesman for the  
Christian way in race relations

... Courageous crusader for peace  
with justice

... Sensitive world citizen and  
Christian statesman

... Powerful champion of total  
evangelism

**BILLY GRAHAM RECEIVES DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD**—Foy Valentine, right, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, presents evangelist Billy Graham with the Commission's Distinguished Service Award for outstanding contributions in applied Christianity. Valentine and members of the commission's executive committee presented the award to Graham just prior to a service of the Central Florida Billy Graham Crusade at the Tangerine Bowl in Orlando, Florida.

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# A Case for Involvement

If God had wanted to avoid involvement, I reckon he would have avoided the incarnation. But he didn't. Being characterized by self-giving love, he moved through space and time and history with all deliberate speed to Bethlehem, to Galilee, to Jerusalem, and to Calvary. The incarnation is consummate involvement.

The risks of involvement for Christians today are demonstrably great. Uninvolvement, however, represents a risk of immeasurably greater proportions, the risk of saving our lives only to lose them.

The most basic call of God to Christian discipleship is our Lord's rigorously demanding, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

To heed that call is to choose involvement. It is to choose relationships, work, politics, parties, causes, issues, and things as these affect people and all the rest of God's creation. Choosing such involvement is at the very heart of the Christian faith. The choice of involvement for a believer is not optional. It is mandatory.

Since involvement is at the central core of revealed religion, since it is an integral part of the vital force of authentic Christianity, it is incumbent on the people of God to choose with disciplined discernment the kinds of involvement that will best further the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Involvement in the real world of blood, sweat, and tears, of raging animosities, broken relationships, and never-ending power struggles is a particularly risky business



Foy Valentine and wife Mary Louise examine the Brooks Hays Christian Citizenship Award presented to Valentine by Second Baptist Church of Little Rock, Arkansas for his 30 years of leadership in applied Christianity and especially for his work in Christian citizenship development among Baptists.

because the lines between absolute good and absolute evil are hardly ever drawn with absolute clarity in these seething cauldrons.

Our choices, therefore, will never be perfect. Our fallenness is so profound that nothing we think or say or do is absolutely good. Christians are not just former sinners who have been saved: we are still sinners who are still being saved. God has begun a good work in us but he is not yet finished with us. Therefore the good that we do we do imperfectly; the peace that we pursue we pursue haltingly; the righteousness that we follow we follow afar off.

We cannot practice an absolute ethic in this sinful world. Christians are grace-grasping mark-missers who, when we fall down, get up again and keep going. I hope that there is never any shadow of doubt, however, about

the *direction* I am going.

This is to say that I am obligated to be everlastingly involved in trying to do the best I can. I am counting not myself to have apprehended. I am pressing toward the mark for the prize of God's high calling in Christ Jesus. I am refusing to park here. I am working out my salvation with fear and trembling. I am hungering and thirsting for righteousness—and for justice and peace and purity and truth and goodness. I am living daily with zest for achievement. I know I haven't yet got it made. I'm practicing my interim ethic in this sinful world.

I am reasonably sure that what I'm trying to do for the rest of the journey is to keep stumbling toward righteousness.

*Foy Valentine*

# The Bible and Women

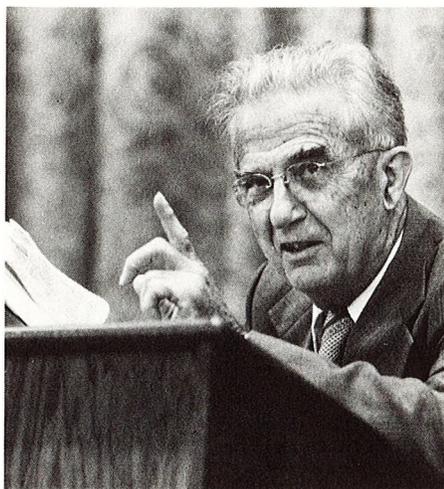
by T. B. Maston

It doesn't take a prophet or the son of a prophet to know that ours is a revolutionary age. And one of the latest and most vocal expressions of that revolution is by and about women. This expression is evident in society in general and in our churches to varying degrees. Some men and an increasing number of women have become conscious of the inequities suffered by women. For example, women usually outnumber the men in our churches, and yet they have relatively little voice in determining programs and policies. They seldom hold a place of significant leadership. When they are placed on committees it is usually a committee of minor importance or as a minority member of a major committee. Many believe that the work of our churches and our denomination is impoverished by our failure to utilize the distinctive contributions that women could make. Many phases of our work need the "woman's touch."

One writer recently went so far as to say that "the debate of women and religion is the single most important and radical question for our time and the foreseeable future."<sup>1</sup> The same author says that the subject of women affects more people than any other issue and refers to it as "a new, radical, and fundamental question."<sup>2</sup> How tragic it will be if our churches are the last to adjust to the contemporary challenge regarding women as was true of many churches concerning race.

## The Old Testament and Women

The Old Testament is predominantly a "man's book." This was more or less inevitable since the Old Testament world was largely a man's world. The woman, with rare but some striking exceptions, was sub-



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servient to the men in her life: her father, husband, brother, and even her husband's brother. As a wife she was treated better by the Jews than by other peoples of the time. Nevertheless, she was purchased from her father, could be divorced but had not the right of divorce herself, and was generally treated as inferior to her husband.

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**“Many believe that the work of our churches and our denomination is impoverished by our failure to utilize the distinctive contributions that women could make.”**

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Although the preceding was the general situation, there were some special provisions made for the protection of women. For example, a captive woman who was taken as a wife was to have a period of time for mourning before her captor could go in to her and be her husband. Furthermore, if he "had no delight in her" he could not sell her or treat her as a slave (Deut. 21:10-14). Also, a wife who was falsely accused of not being a virgin when taken as a wife could not be put away or divorced (Deut. 22:13-30).

There are also some provisions in

A complete picture of women in the Old Testament would require some attention to those who rose to positions of prominence in the life of Israel. Among these were some who were called "prophetesses." In some cases the reference may have been simply to the wife of a prophet (Isa. 8:3). But at other times the reference was clearly to women who fulfilled the prophetic role. This was certainly true of Miriam (Ex. 15:20-21), Deborah (Judg. 4:4-10), and Huldah (2 Kings 22:14-20). There were other women, such as Ruth and Esther, with major achievements. This is enough to underscore the fact that the picture concerning women in the Old Testament is not one-dimensional.

The most important references in the Old Testament relating to women are the accounts of the creation in Genesis 1 and 2. Let me suggest some of the more significant aspects

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of the account of the creation in Genesis 1.

1. The word for "man" is "Adam." It is found, according to Dr. Boo Heflin, associate professor of Old Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, Texas, 562 times in the Old Testament. It is used predominantly in the generic sense, referring to humanity or humankind in general, including male and female.

2. "The image of God," found here and elsewhere in the Scriptures, has been variously interpreted. One suggestion is that God is a person and

restore that image marred but not totally destroyed by sin, is or should be the basis for our respect for personality regardless of sex, color, culture, or condition of life.

6. This means, among other things, that no person, male or female, should ever be manipulated or used as a mere means. Each person is an end of infinite value.

Let me now suggest a few things related to Genesis 2:18-24.

1. In Genesis 1:31 God looked over all his creation, including male and female, and considered it very good. In contrast, in Genesis 2:18

about man? It says, "The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground" (Gen. 2:7). Is man inferior to the dust?

5. Closely akin to the preceding is the contention of some that the fact that woman was created after man implies her inferiority. But one could just as justifiably suggest that the order of creation would prove woman's superiority. A woman writer, Nancy Tischler, says, "That which comes second may well be the better" and then she adds, "God may have been practicing with man so he could do his best work on woman!" Also, what about the order of the creation of animals—are they superior to woman? Also, what about the order in Genesis 1—is man inferior to the animals that were created before him?

6. When God brought the woman to man, the latter's immediate response was:

This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;

She shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of  
Man (Gen. 2:23).

The latter part of this statement could be interpreted to imply the inferiority of women. The first portion, however, clearly implies partnership. Henry van Dyke captured something of the beauty of this partnership in the lines quoted by John C. Howell in *Equality and Submission in Marriage* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979, p. 38):

With such a comrade,  
such a friend  
I fain would walk  
till journey's end.

### Jesus and Women

There is a marked contrast in the general attitude toward women in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. This is particularly true when we examine the life and ministry of Jesus. And the Old Testament

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**“The most important aspect of the creation . . . is the fact that male and female were both and equally created in the image of God.”**

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that men and women are created persons.

3. A person can think, feel, will. Also, he or she is conscious of self and of other selves or persons. Persons are not only capable of communication; communication with other persons is necessary. There is no person without other persons. It is no accident that our God who is one is also the triune God: Father, Son, and Spirit. Notice that it says, "God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'" (Gen. 1:26). God further said, "Let them have dominion . . ." Then it pointedly and beautifully says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27).

4. The most important aspect of the creation, from the perspective of our study, is the fact that male and female were both and equally created in the image of God.

5. The fact that all are created in the image of God, and the companion fact that Christ died for all to

God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" or "a partner for him" (NEB).

2. The word translated "rib" (v. 21) is usually translated "side." The word for "made" (v. 22) is so translated only three times but over 300 times "build" or "built." The latter suggests that God took some time and care in making or building woman. "Man" in verse 23 is *ish* rather than *adam*. Woman is *ishshah*. *Ish* comes into being only with the creation of *ishshah* and so far as we know man or *ish* here speaks for the first time—"ish comes alive in meeting *ishshah*."

3. Some who contend that woman is innately inferior and should be subservient to man defend their position on the basis that woman was created or "built" from the rib or side of man. The familiar statement of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 is frequently quoted.

4. If one argues that woman is inferior because she was taken or built from the side of man, what

should always be evaluated in the light of the fuller revelation recorded in the New Testament. The writer of Hebrews says that God in times past spoke "in many and various ways . . . by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). It was Jesus himself who said that the provision for a husband to divorce his wife (Deut. 24:1-4) was not in harmony with God's original purpose for marriage: "from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:8).

Now, let me sketch briefly the attitude of Jesus toward women and his relation to them. And we should remember that any teacher teaches as much if not more by his spirit and attitude than by anything he ever says. Jesus gave no specific teachings concerning women. This was and is in marked contrast to most religious teachers. Either Jesus ignored women in his teachings or he believed that his teachings were equally applicable to men and women. The latter was clearly the case.

There was also a marked contrast between the attitude of Jesus toward women and the attitude of the religious leaders of his day. No wonder the disciples marvelled when they found him talking with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:27). The Samaritan woman herself was surprised that he talked with her. She reminded him that the Jews had "no dealings with Samaritans" (John 4:9). But Jesus never permitted any barrier—race, sex, or moral condition—to keep him from reaching out to a person in need. And, after all, he treated everyone he met as a person. This was just as true of the beggar as the rich man, the Samaritan as the Jew, the sinner as the saint, and the woman as the

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**“ . . . the attitude of Jesus toward women and his relation to them were revolutionary for his day. ”**

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man. We can summarize by simply saying that the attitude of Jesus toward women and his relation to them were revolutionary for his day. Also, we may conclude that they would be rather revolutionary for our day.

And it might be mentioned in passing that Jesus, in the Beatitudes and elsewhere, magnified some virtues that had been and still are frequently considered feminine and an evidence of weakness. Among these were meekness, mercy, and peacemaking. There is a woman in the New Testament who demonstrated the attitude that all of us should have toward Jesus. Three times it is specifically said that Mary of Bethany was in the presence of Jesus. Each time she was at his feet: first, to listen to his matchless teachings (Luke 10:39), then to cry out her sorrow at the loss of her brother (John 11:32), and finally, she anointed his feet with a pound of pure nard and then wiped them with her hair (John 12:3).

One evidence of the attitude and relationship of Jesus to women is the balancing of the sexes in the gospel accounts of his life. The balancing began even before his birth. Luke records the Magnificat of Mary (Luke 1:46-56) but also the prophecy of Zechariah, father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:67-79). Luke also tells us that when Joseph and Mary presented the baby Jesus to the Lord in the Temple it was Simeon who took him in his arms and praised God

(Luke 2:22-32). But there was also present an aged prophetess, Anna, who "gave thanks to God" and spoke about him to others who were present (Luke 2:36-38).

The balancing of the concern of Jesus and his ministry to both men and women is evident, to varying degrees, in all four accounts of his life and teachings. For example, in the third chapter of John we find the remarkable conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus, the learned and respected rabbi. In the very next chapter of John's gospel there is recorded the equally remarkable conversation of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well.

The healing ministry of Jesus revealed a similar balancing. He healed both men and women, boys and girls. His parables likewise referred to men and women. He spoke of the unjust servant (Matt. 18:23-35), the sower who went forth to sow (Matt. 13:3-12), and the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). On the other hand, he referred to the woman who put leaven in her meal (Matt. 13:33), the importunity of a widow (Luke 18:1-8), the woman and her lost coin (Luke 15:8-10), and the maidens or virgins going forth to meet the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1-13).

Some such balancing continued throughout the life of Jesus. It was evident at the end. When Jesus was crucified, it was Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus who requested his body, prepared it for burial, and placed it in a new tomb. But it was to Mary Magdalene and some other women that Jesus first revealed himself after his resurrection.

Some of the great teachings of Jesus were to a single individual and not to a crowd. Some of these were in his conversation with the woman

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## . . . The Bible and Women

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at the well. He revealed to her that he was the living water. He told her that “whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst: the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14). He also revealed to her that great truth, so frequently quoted, that “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth” (v. 24). Christ’s first clearly recorded announcement of his messiahship was to the Samaritan woman (vs. 25-26).

And it was to Martha, after the death of her brother Lazarus, that Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). We should also be grateful for Martha’s great confession, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God” (v. 27), which is practically the same as Peter’s confession, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16).

When we remember how Jesus treated women, we do not wonder that many responded readily to him. Some of them travelled with him and his disciples and “provided for them out of their means” (Luke 8:1-3). Luke mentions three by name and then adds “and many others.” Matthew and Mark mention these women in connection with the crucifixion of Jesus (Matt. 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41). The suggestion has been made that possibly the seamless tunic of Jesus “woven from top to bottom” had been the gift of one of the affluent women who ministered to him and his disciples. Knowing Jesus as we do, we do not believe that the women were restricted to the provision for the material needs of his travelling company. They doubtlessly were present when he performed some of his marvelous miracles. They heard many of the challenging words that he spoke to his disciples and to people in general.

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**“The ministry of these women underscores the fact that Jesus not only ministered to women but he accepted the ministry of women.”**

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The ministry of these women underscores the fact that Jesus not only ministered to women but he accepted the ministry of women. That would have been beneath the dignity of a rabbi in that day. The fact that five of the women who travelled with him and his disciples are mentioned by name is rather striking. Other than the 12 apostles, no other men are so specifically mentioned. And, incidentally, we know little if anything about half of the 12 except their names.

As the trial, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Christ approached, the presence and ministry of women became more prominent. While the men tended to slip back, the women stepped forward. Previously, the ministry of Jesus had been primarily to and with the Twelve. They had been on center stage. But as he was led away for trial and ultimate crucifixion, the best his male disciples could do was to follow afar off. Judas betrayed him and even Peter denied that he knew him. In contrast, the women showed their compassion and courage. As Jesus was on the way to Golgotha the only word or token of concern was the lamentation of some of the women as he passed by (Luke 23:27-31).

As Jesus hung on the cross, the only one of the Twelve that evidently was nearby was John, the beloved disciple, who stood with the mother of Jesus and some other women (John 19:25-27). And some of the women were evidently the only ones who observed where Joseph and Nicodemus had laid the body of Jesus (Luke 23:55). And they were the first ones to whom the resur-

rected Jesus revealed himself. According to John’s gospel, it was Mary Magdalene who recognized him as the “Master” or “Teacher” when he spoke to her, calling her name: “Mary.” This recognition could have been because of the distinctive inflection of his voice or the way he pronounced “Mary.” Of course, it could have simply been the fact that he knew her name; the gardener would not have known.

Typical of biblical visions in general, Mary was instructed to do something about her vision. Similarly, Paul on the Damascus Road was told to go into Damascus and it would be revealed to him what he was to do. Mary, who has been called a female Paul, was told to go to the disciples whom Jesus called “my brethren” and deliver to them his message for them (John 20:17).

### Paul and Women

In seeking to interpret correctly and to evaluate fairly Paul’s teachings concerning women the following should be kept in mind:

1. Most of Paul’s epistles were written to particular churches, in a particular location, faced with some particular problems.
2. This means that some portions of Paul’s epistles are not directly relevant for our day. One example is the eating of meat offered to idols (Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8, 9, 10).
3. Even in such passages, however, if we look deeply enough we will discover some basic principles that are relevant for every age.
4. In regard to women and slavery, as in general, Paul was radical or revolutionary in the ideal he pro-

claimed. In contrast, he was quite conservative in the application of the ideal to the actual situation.

5. Paul's ideal concerning human relations is expressed clearly in Galatians 3:28 and elsewhere: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This verse has been called the "Magna Carta of Humanity."

6. A general principle of interpretation that can help us is the fact that the best interpreter of any particular scripture is the teachings of the Scriptures in general. This means that we should not judge Paul's attitude toward women by one or two isolated statements.

7. In addition to giving proper consideration to the totality of Paul's teachings, we should also consider his relation to women. After all, as suggested previously, one teaches as much if not more by his attitudes and relationships than by anything he says.

Luke refers frequently in Acts to Paul's relation to women. They filled an important place in his life and ministry. Also, in his epistles, Paul frequently referred to women. For example, in Philippians, he had a special word for two women who "had labored side by side" with him in the gospel (Phil. 4:2-3). He closed his letter to the Romans with greetings to 28 individuals. At least seven and possibly nine were women. There is little comment about any of those mentioned except Phoebe and Priscilla and Aquila. It has been suggested that possibly Phoebe delivered his letter to the Roman church and that Aquila and Priscilla were its immediate recipients. Paul's word to the Roman church was, "Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life" (Rom. 16:3). When had they risked their necks for Paul? Possibly during the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19). Note that Prisca's name is first. This is true in four of the six references to them in the New Tes-

tament. The preceding should prove that Paul was no woman hater.

In Paul's day women in Christ had more freedom than they had ever known before. It seems that Paul at times was fearful that recent converts, particularly slaves and women, would go too far too fast in exercising that freedom. This may help to explain some things Paul said concerning women in home and church.

I do not have time to attempt to interpret all the references in Paul's epistles to women. Rather, I will, in the main, summarize his central or basic concepts or ideals as found in three or four scriptures.

As an example, Paul admonished the Ephesians to "be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21). He then proceeded to apply this general principle of subjection or subordination to three specific areas of human relations: wives to husbands, children to parents, slaves or servants to masters. It should be remembered that the subjection was a particular application of a general principle and that in each case there was a two-way obligation.

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**“... one should remember Paul's emphasis on the mutuality of the responsibility of husbands and wives to one another.”**

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The obligation on the husband, father, and master was of such a nature that it might properly be considered a type of subordination. For example, the husband was to love his wife "as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

In 1 Corinthians, Paul said, "The head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3). A whole theory of God-approved relations in the home has been built, to a considerable degree, on this scripture. For one properly to evaluate this verse and other statements by Paul concerning women, one should remember Paul's emphasis on the mutuality of the responsi-

bility of husbands and wives to one another. This emphasis is particularly prevalent in 1 Corinthians 7. For example, such mutuality is stressed regarding their sex relations. Notice in verse 3 he says, "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights and likewise the wife to the husband." Comparable mutuality of the relation of husbands and wives is evident regarding the separation of husband and wife, whether believers or where only one was a believer (vv. 11-16).

There is some evidence of this mutuality where Paul spoke of the relation of men and women in general (1 Cor. 11:3-16). After he had said that a woman who prophesied with her head unveiled "dishonors her head," and after he had said that man was the glory of God and woman the glory of man, he made the following statement, which is as significant as anything in the whole passage: "Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman, and all things are

from God" (vv. 11-12). This statement is too frequently neglected or overlooked, particularly by the defenders of woman's subordination and the advocates of the hierarchal view of family relations. The statement approximates Paul's radical or revolutionary ideal. It may imply that some other statements by Paul in his Corinthian correspondence and elsewhere represent an adjustment of the ideal to the actual situation at Corinth and in the society of that day.

In 1 Corinthians 14 (34-36), Paul said that women should keep silent in the churches. (A somewhat similar statement is found in 1 Timothy 2:11-12)

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## ... The Bible and Women

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15.) There seems on the surface to be a conflict between 1 Corinthians 11:2-6, where Paul gave instructions concerning the proper dress or attire for a woman who prayed or prophesied in public, and 1 Corinthians 14:34-36, where he says that the women "should keep silence in the churches." There are three or four possible explanations: (1) In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul was not dealing with the rightness or wrongness of women speaking in public. In contrast, in chapter 14, he spoke specifically concerning women speaking in public. (2) He referred to different types of church meetings: the first to more or less private meetings in the homes, while chapter 14 referred to public meetings of the entire congregation. (3) The idea that women should not speak in public meetings may have been adopted from the practice in the synagogues. Many of the early Christian groups met in synagogues. They should not violate the practices of their host. (4) It may be that 1 Corinthians 11 and 14 were both in response to specific questions contained in the letter from the Corinthian congregation to Paul. We do know that beginning with chapter 7 he sought to answer some of their questions.

### Applications

1. Because of the contemporary interest in the women's movement and in the light of the teachings of the Scriptures, many churches and church leaders need to reconsider the attitude of the churches toward women and the place they give to them in their programs and work.

2. Because of the considerable church load carried by women in many churches and because of their possible distinctive contributions to the work of the churches, women should be given more of a voice in the programs and structures of many of our churches.

3. Some churches, pastors and

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**“I am persuaded that in many, and possibly most, of our churches women are not treated as Jesus would treat them or as our heavenly Father would have them treated.”**

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other church leaders may be hesitant about doing anything about giving women more of a voice because of a fear that it will disturb the peace of the church and church family. In some cases this may be a reasonable concern.

4. Such hesitation may be justified, but it should not be defended as God's ultimate will concerning women in our churches. I am persuaded that in many, and possibly most, of our churches women are not treated as Jesus would treat them or as our heavenly Father would have them treated.

5. As a part of our effort to struggle through to some answer to the ordination of women as deacons or deaconesses and to the ministry, we need to restudy the whole matter of New Testament ordination. It is possible that Phoebe was a deacon or deaconess (Rom. 16:1, RSV) and that the reference in 1 Timothy 3:11 to "the women likewise . . ." was to women deacons. It is also possible that ordination in the New Testament was usually a relatively simple service of dedication by a church of an individual or individuals whom God had previously set apart to a particular task.

6. If this conception of ordination could be recovered then, it seems to me, our churches could wisely ordain anyone, male or female, who had a special call of God to perform some distinctive ministry for the church and who had an opportunity in and through a church or a church-related agency or institution to fulfill that ministry.

7. My personal opinion is that ordination should not be sought by a

man or a woman. The initiative should come from others unless ordination is necessary to perform some functions of the particular type of ministry.

8. In the case of ordination to the ministry, there may be some question about the advantages or the disadvantages of being ordained. As many of you know, I am not an ordained minister. I have found at least as many advantages as disadvantages to not being ordained.

9. Let me conclude with two brief statements. One is a quotation; the other is my personal word of conclusion:

(1) The quotation: "Both men and women should be helped to see that woman makes her greatest contribution, not by trying to compete with men as if she were a man, but rather on the basis of herself as an individual person."<sup>3</sup>

(2) My personal word: In this whole awakening of interest in women and their place in the home, the church, and society, it will be tragic if we ever belittle the traditional role of the woman as wife and mother.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Patricia M. Doyle, in *Religion and Sexism*, ed. by Rosemary Radford Reuther (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>Lois Gunden Clemens, *Woman Liberated* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1971), p. 39.

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# If American Christians Were Disciples of Jesus: Some Prayerful Reflections on Political Saltiness

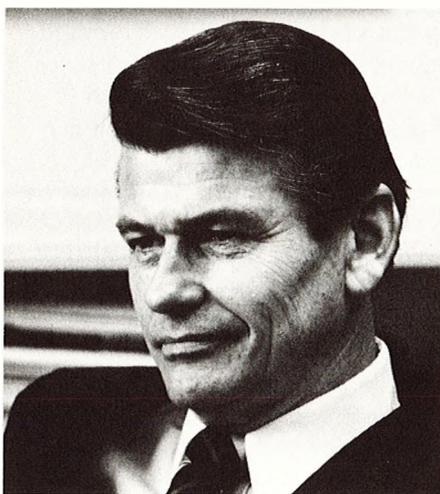
—by Donald Shriver—

In two places, at least, in the gospels Jesus teaches that the disciples should be “salty.” The suggestion is that true disciples will make a place different if there are two or three of them there. “You are the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13). “Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with one another” (Mark 9:50).

His parallel suggestion in both places is that the saltiness of salt can get washed out, dissipated, lost. I don’t know about the chemistry of that, and neither did Jesus, because he wasn’t a chemist. But he knew the humanity of that. He foresaw the humanity of his church. He experienced it. He knew that not everybody on earth who was to say “Lord, Lord” would be found doing and saying the will of God. You could carry around the name of “Christian” for a long time without being the salt of the earth.

Now, the part of the earth that appears to me most regularly out of some window is the earth of the United States. In this nation, which boasts of its high proportion of church membership and even church attendance, I am bound to ask what it would be if all those church attenders were the salt of the American earth? Since all told, 41 percent of the adult population claims to have been in church last Sunday, and 68 percent of adults in these United States claim membership in a church or a synagogue, you don’t have to doubt that this is a very religious nation by its own definition.

You don’t need to go further than the New Testament, however, to understand the difference between religion and the discipleship that



Donald Shriver

Jesus expected in his followers. Nor do you have to be a trained theologian to know that there has to be a difference between “Christian ethics” and “the ethics of Christians.” To put it plainly: Not all church members have a lot of salt to offer the American earth; and anyone, like me, who wants to discuss with people, like you, the subtitle of “Christian Political Saltiness” must claim the right to phrase the title in the subjunctive: “If American Christians Were Disciples of Jesus.”

It was said by Alexis de Tocqueville that the pioneers of the American wilderness went out into those woods armed essentially with three instruments: an ax, a newspaper, and a Bible. If the ax represented their economics and their hope of survival, the newspaper represented their contact with a political community and the Bible their contact with a religious community going all the way back to Abraham. Bearing such three imple-

ments, said de Tocqueville, they were not mere rustics and uncivilized barbarians, no matter what their European friends thought. They could talk economics, politics, and religion like other educated men and women.

They tell me that in Baptist circles—I heard it in Gastonia—a favorite question is: “What does your Bible say?” Well, the individualism of that question has always worried me. You’d think there were as many Bibles as there were Baptists. Well, when they start off reading it, that may be so. But the longer they read it, and the more they read it, and the more honestly and completely they read it, and the more they try to practice a little of it, the more agreement there is going to be about certain central claims in that Scripture which cannot be avoided by any faithful reader. Now here are some of them. I view them as elementary, indeed. But when it comes to being a disciple of Jesus, baby steps before adult steps.

Every one of these acid tests of political saltiness is a sort of basic biblical thought. But let us look at what the basics might mean in their implications for modern Christian discipleship in the political realm.

## God Loves All of the World

First, the God to whom Christians pray loves the world, not just the United States of America. That is a simple, orthodox claim, but its implications have not much dawned on a large portion of the people who sit down in pews on Sunday morning. Indeed, the implications have not

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## ... Some Prayerful Reflections on Political Saltiness

(continued from page 9)

dawned much on a sizable proportion of the people who preach from pulpits on Sunday morning. Example: Mr. Ed McAteer, being interviewed on national television, shown sitting on his bed reading his Bible at night, and saying voice-over, as I am remembering his response, that it is some comfort to him as an American to know that if ever the Russians dare to send their missiles in our direction, before theirs fall on us, ours will be well on the way to falling on them.

Now such a profession of “comfort” may have something to do with some parts of the Bible as you read it superficially, especially parts that seem to condone revenge. Give me a little time, and I could demonstrate to you that from the story of Cain and Abel on down to the book of Revelation, the Hebrew-Christian Bible is very wary of letting human beings take over the controls of revenge. “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” But there is something more primitively biblical missing from this awful statement of Ed McAteer: There is no suggestion in that quote of a tear that he was about to shed for those Russians. He appears to be comforted by the prospect of their destruction.

In the spirit of Jesus, who cautioned us against putting too much confidence in the official religious teachers and too little in the saltiness that sometimes comes right out of the church, here is a more encouraging counterexample: A Lutheran minister in Charlotte, North Carolina tells of a sermon he preached not long ago on Jonah. He laid down the principle in that sermon that the aim of our national political philosophy should be to save Russian lives as well as American, because “with God there is no respect of persons” and the Ninevites are precious to him like the Israelites. Among the church members who heard him that morn-

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**“One of the good reasons, in a democracy, for organizing poor people and politicizing them, is so that they can get the attention of the politicians.”**

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ing was a retired army general. Walking out of the vestibule, this retired general lifted a perplexed and reflective face and said to the minister, “You know, I’ve never quite understood it that way before. God loves the Russians as much as he does the Americans.”

Yes, blessed be the name of the Lord! And blessed be those people who, including those in military uniforms, recognize the difference between the promise of the gospel and the promises of the most recent political campaign. Ronald Reagan got very few votes in 1980 for promising to protect Russian lives. I know that. He gets a few more votes, apparently, for rattling missiles at the Russians across the polar cap. But the reason some Americans might give for voting for those kinds of measures are hardly Christian reasons. This Christian movement is a world movement meant to offer good news to the world. We quote that twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew most of the time, don’t we, on that point? It has been a world movement from the start 2000 years ago and if it ever stops being that, if it ever gets identified with the glory of Western civilization or the glory of democracy, it will cease embodying the glory of God.

There’s a big problem lurking here for almost any elected politician. Precisely because they are not the people who elect you in this country, the Russians, the Cubans, the starving folk of Asia, and the homeless folk of West Africa are not likely to be the center of any American politician’s daily attention. But it is part of the business of the Christian contingent in the body politic to bring these folk

to the attention of politicians. Proverbs 31:8 in one translation says: “Speak up for people who cannot speak for themselves.”

### **God Favors the Causes of the Poor and Weak**

There is a kindred element in the political salt. It comes right out of the humanity-wide vision of biblical humanism. It’s a second test of the quality of the Christian flavor in politics in this society. And that is: The God who loved the world in the Exodus and in the ministry of Jesus favors the causes of the poor and the weak in all the earth.

Here again there is, from the start, a clash between ordinary politics and the extraordinary claims of the Christian view. From Pontius Pilate, who smiled at the unarmed and unsoldiered kingship of Jesus, down to Joseph Stalin, who asked scornfully about the number of legions belonging to the Pope, politicians have a hard time paying attention to weakness. One of the good reasons, in a democracy, for organizing poor people and politicizing them, is so they can get the attention of politicians.

Ask any knowledgeable person why the current mayor of New York City finds it so easy to overlook the needs of a neighborhood next to my own—Harlem. You will get the answer: “There are not enough people in Harlem voting in local elections.” That was one reason I was myself glad to see a long line in front of a Harlem Baptist church the other day on 125th Street. They were lining up there a block long for the distribution of government surplus

cheese. Alongside the cheese line were tables in a row for the voter registration line. That is exactly what the Antioch Baptist Church ought to be doing in west Harlem: distributing food to the people who are hungrier and less employed than they were this time last year, and at the same time getting them ready to vote.

These people, the economically lower 10 or 20 percent of the American people, will always be outvotable by a majority of other folk, so long as we remain in a middle-class nation. Some of us among these other folk, though, call ourselves Christians. In how we vote, what we write to Congress, who we organize to elect, how we talk about so-called welfare chiselers (a phrase that we should put in quotation marks and then begin to critique), we are obligated to focus our consciences on the needs of that lower 10 or 20 percent.

Some will retort that this is minority morality. This is looking out for a few rather than the many. Well, yes and no. Yes, in the U.S.A. it may look like minority morality, for we

consistent biblical message that God takes up the cause of the poor of the earth, delivers them from various Egypts, sets aside milk and honey for them, protects their farms from the Ahabs and Jezebels of this world, seeks judgment for them in every city gate, and as need be "puts down the mighty from their throne in order to exalt those of low degree."

There's a lot more political realism in this notion than may meet the eye. Walter Rauschenbusch, a Baptist, had it right when he said that in almost any society "the strong have enough power to protect their just interests and enough power left over to protect their unjust interests as well." The biblical realism about God as a politician is this: Who else is there to "rescue the perishing and care for the dying" if not sometimes the great God Almighty? Shall we talk about rescuing the perishing and caring for the dying only in their spirits? Shall we talk about rescuing them from hell-fire and not from gunfire? I mean like the gunfire which as we sit and stand here is being leveled at Indians in Guatemala.

forum: What are the effects of your policies, sir, madam, on the poorest of your constituents? When you buy bombers rather than cheese, what do you do to the poor of the land?

## God Rules the World, Christians Don't

Two elements of this salt would almost sound like enough—the universalistic, humane ethic and particular concern for the poor. There must be other ingredients in Christian political saltiness. We have a lot to discover about what they are in our own time. Even when we are talking to our own religious kind, we have arguments to carry on, disagreements to explore, vast differences on what the peculiarly Christian ingredient in anything is. And this in itself suggests to me a third ingredient that salty Christians will bring to any body politic, including the church. I grant to any of you the right to laugh or to express surprise that I should associate such a third ingredient with religion, or the Christian religion, or American Christian religion, in relation to politics. Religion does not have a very good or convincing press in regard to this ingredient. I refer to humility.

Behind that humility, as I would expose it, lies another simple theological proposition: God rules the world, not Christians. That is a simple, orthodox bit of Christian theology and ethics. We Christians do not reflect enough on the mundane political meaning of such orthodoxy. To hear some of us (and our politicians) boast of the motto on our coins—"In God We Trust"—an atheist might conclude that God was the ultimate weapon of the Department of Defense. God can be trusted, all right—with the world, not just America; to look out for the poor, not just the rich; to weigh all our national achievements in the balance, and to find them wanting. God can be trusted to do all that. Surely the Christians among us will season our use of that "trusting God" and that "under God" terminology by rehears-

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## “What are the effects of your policies, sir, madam, on the poorest of your constituents?”

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are indeed a much blessed nation, where a majority of us are well-fed and housed in spite of an economic recession. Certainly almost everybody in this audience is. Well, it behooves us, a rich nation, to be especially solicitous of the poor in our midst if we are Christian. If, happily, they become smaller and smaller in number, we shall have to be more and more solicitous, because it is of the nature of large majorities to neglect small minorities. Such neglect, visited on as many as one poor Lazarus in our midst, is an abomination to the God of Abraham, the Father of the Lord Jesus. This is not liberalism or socialism or any other "ism," except realism. It's the

The word "justice" in the Old Testament, says Norman Snaith, is always "toppling over into a concern for the weak and helpless people" of society. "Evenhanded" justice is a fine abstract ideal. It belongs to everybody. But justice in every society on earth begins very unevenly. The search for justice is a perpetual struggle, for the strong are always clambering to get back their advantages over the weak, or simply to maintain them. No wonder that the hope of all the earth in the Bible is that the poor folk will at last sit down to a banquet. In view of that hope, the Christians, the salty ones, in any country have to pose the prior question in many a political

## . . . Some Prayerful Reflections on Political Saltiness

(continued from page 11)

ing the note of repentance that should accompany every public utterance of the very word “God” in the political realm.

I know politicians who are very wary of using the word at all in their political speeches. I side with their wariness. I listen to speeches like the one given by Ronald Reagan to the National Association of Evangelicals on March 8 in Orlando and I tremble at what can be done to pour the name of God like ketchup over political policy. That’s Gore Vidal’s phrase from the play *The Best Man*. At the risk of my seeming to offend against the very virtue of humility that I here wish to commend, let me state my opinion boldly: The March 8 speech of President Reagan was a very dangerous, very unpresidential, and very irreligious speech. It was dangerous because it sought to ally the powers of the Great God of Abraham, Isaiah and Jesus to the power of the United States and its current foreign policies. It was unpresidential, because it failed utterly to suggest to that one audience that an American president has many other constituencies to represent besides those who call themselves evangelical Christians. And it was irreligious because not once did it suggest that the universally human ethic of the Hebrew and Christian traditions has in it criticisms of all human projects, the American democratic as well as the Soviet socialist.

Imagine. The President tells us to “beware of the temptation of pride, the temptation blithely to declare yourselves above it all and to label both sides (in the international struggle) as equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire . . . to remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong, good and evil.” He’s talking about the struggle

between the USA and the USSR! We are the angels; they are the devils!

Well, Mr. President, there are facts and facts from history. What about the fact of who invented Multiple Warhead Independently Targeted Reentry Vehicles—MIRV, for short, and short, too, for the largest amount of destructive power ever located anywhere in any weapon? Who invented the MIRVs? The USA, that’s who! And who has imitated that invention now? The USSR, that’s who! Does it even enter our President’s mind that Communist, Marxist rhetoric about the locatability of evil in the world exactly resembles his rhetoric in Orlando? To some of them, we are the “evil empire,” and we are the “focus of evil in the modern world.”

I dare to suggest that Mr. Reagan study the works of the man who was the founder of his political party: Abraham Lincoln. People with the Southern accent that I have find it a little hard to make that recommendation to people like most of you who have the same accent. No less a theologian than Reinhold Niebuhr once called Lincoln “the greatest American theologian.” Imagine. Lincoln was not even a church member. Without doubt Lincoln has to be counted as that politician in American history who could use the name “God” in political speeches with the least ketchup, with the clearest implications of the difference between God’s kingdom and our kingdoms.

Check, for example, the Second Inaugural Address delivered by Lincoln, at the end of a wearying, debilitating civil war. From its beginning, said Lincoln, people on both sides of this war have been addressing their opposing prayers equally. And in fact, none of the prayers has been

answered fully. Something right, Lincoln suggested, has triumphed in this war, but along with much evil done on both sides. Let us now “bind up the nation’s wounds,” let us work again at the arts of reconciliation, “with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right.” Note the humble note on that. God may not choose to give us full knowledge of the right and we may not see it with absolute clarity. No, we never will.

But it was not only in his public rhetoric, but in the style of his politics that Lincoln often displayed his consciousness that politics, especially in a democracy, requires great distance between policy and any absolute whatsoever. Lincoln would never have made a brave statement like President Reagan’s on March 8: “[The Soviets] must be made to understand we will never compromise our principles and standards. We will never give away our freedom. We will never abandon our belief in God.” “God . . . freedom . . . our principles.” Are you going to put all those three on the same shelf in the index of your mind? They don’t belong there, as any theological education will teach you. Not only must we make a decent distinction between God’s will and “our principles,” but in the give and take of democratic politics, we must make a decent distinction between opposing principles, held firmly by opposing groups of people and requiring precisely some compromise at the level of governmental policy.

Before we pull nuclear triggers on each other, it may behoove both American and Soviet politicians to ask if peace between us is not a more valuable, uncompromisable good than our national interests in what the Soviets call justice and the Americans call liberty. They really think we go overboard in our cries for “liberty,” you know. And we

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## “Politics . . . is ‘a way of life . . . where the central concern of all citizens is to talk with each other.’ ”

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really think the same of them in regard to “justice.” The Marxist and Capitalist debate on that is not likely to die down soon around this globe. Shall we risk killing the debate by killing most of the debaters? How shall we make the world safe for differences? That’s a good democratic question. That’s the question politicians in Washington and Moscow should be asking more fervently.

You will destroy the United States if you pretend that only evangelical Christians have a right to put the labels “right” and “wrong” on public policy. They were a minority among the people we call the Fathers of the Constitution, a document that some evangelicals seem so ready to accord the value of the Bible. And even if, as a practicing Christian, I myself lay claim to the name evangelical, which I do, I have no right to use the gospel as a club against my political enemies anywhere in the world; and I have every reason to expect the gospel to move me frequently to repentance and to the recognition that on some political issues my enemies may turn out to be nearer the right than am I. And even when I remain convinced that they are truly wrong, I owe them the respect and

loyalty that the gospel commands of all Christians in relation precisely to their enemies.

The basic stance of forgiveness and will-to-community is a hard Christian discipline; but it is a basis for democratic politics that Christians should peculiarly be equipped to contribute. Politics, said Hannah Arendt, is “a way of life . . . where the central concern of all citizens [is] to talk with each other.” Politics, in this definition, has nothing to do with shoving people around at the point of a gun or at the sharp point of an absolute principle. Quite otherwise, says Arendt, following the Greek understanding: “To be political . . . meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence.”

### Have Salt and Be at Peace

Now the task of the politician is precisely to serve the interests of a human society in such a way that the society endures and its levels of liberty and justice improve. To do this requires a sort of juggling act, keeping many valuable things in the political air at one and the same time. Religion enters into the act

directly, perhaps, when we make decisions about “something invaluable” that must not, under any circumstances, be allowed to fall to the floor.

In the Mark version of the teaching about salt, Jesus says: “Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.” Perhaps he added the bit about peace, because he knew that salty Christians can easily fall into rubbing against each other’s grains. Inside the church, we know enough about politics to know that if each of us could organize the church in just our way, we would have to have as many churches as there are members. But even you individualistic Baptists manage those compromises.

Perhaps, in all sobriety, we Christians have at least this little to contribute to the flavor of world politics: We have some reasons for trying to get along with folks with whom we disagree, whom we don’t even like. Our best reason, when we think about it, is that God has found a way to get along with us all in his own initiative to do justice and to love mercy and to enable us to walk humbly with our God. Walking humbly with God means walking with one’s cantankerous neighbors, even while we are arguing over which of us, in fact, is really the cantankerous one.

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**Donald Shriver is president of Union Theological Seminary in New York City.**

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# An Interview with Mark Hatfield

Reprinted with permission from *The Wittenburg Door*, No. 68 (Aug.-Sept. '82), pp. 10-14.  
Mailing Address: 1224 Greenfield Dr., El Cajon, CA 92021.

**INTERVIEWER:** Why have some people been so hesitant to support a nuclear freeze?

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**HATFIELD:** Our government has had a long standing myopic anti-Soviet perspective. It seems that everything our government does is a reaction to the Soviet Union—a demonstration of our strength, our macho and our anti-Communism. We seem to have this need to be assertive, but there is also the factor of fear. People are uncertain of the future. The economic problems people are facing today cause them to turn to authoritarian answers or simplistic notions that are offered by government. These “answers” seem to provide people with a security blanket in the time of storm.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Isn't much of the opposition to the nuclear freeze based on some basic illusions people have today? For example, the illusion of control—that there is someone in control; the illusion of rationality—that whoever has control of nuclear weapons will act in a rational way; and the illusion of survival—that if nuclear weapons were ever used, they could be controlled and the world could survive.

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**HATFIELD:** Let's take a look at the illusions you mentioned first, then I want to add another one. First, the illusion of survival—the idea that you can begin a war with nuclear weapons and keep it limited. If the conditions are so serious that the two superpowers are confronting each other in battle, what is the restraining force if one side feels they are losing? There is no built-in restraint. There is no check and balance.

There is no evidence that once we start the use of nuclear weapons we could somehow halt before we crossed the threshold into global suicide.

Another illusion you mentioned was the illusion of rationality—that those in control of nuclear weapons will act in a rational way. We already have leaders like Khomeini and Qaddafi, and in 18 years over 60 countries will have the capability of creating and manufacturing a nuclear weapon. Many of these countries are very primitive, have no checks and balances, and are subject to the whims of whatever irrational leaders are in power. Furthermore, the illusion of rationality really breaks down when you realize the potential of accidental launch. Within a 20 month period our sophisticated advance warning system had over 4000 errors, 147 of which were serious enough to warn us of an impending Soviet attack. Fortunately, we have about a half hour to confirm or deny reports like that and they were found to be false. The newer preemptive weapons that both the United States and Russia are developing will only allow us six minutes to determine if the attack is for real.

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**INTERVIEWER:** That's not very long.

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**HATFIELD:** We also have to recognize that the potential for accidental launch is far greater from the Soviet side because their advance warning system is not as sophisticated as ours. If ours is sending wrong signals that frequently, what in the world is happening on the screens in the command centers of the Soviet Union?

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**INTERVIEWER:** That thought is very encouraging. You mentioned an additional illusion.

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**HATFIELD:** Yes. It's the illusion that nuclear weapons are just

another weapon in our arsenal. The fact is most of us have little grasp of the magnitude of the weapon we're talking about. The nuclear weapon is totally distinctive from any other weapon because it can trigger the annihilation of all life on the planet. All of these illusions very strongly contribute to the Rip Van Winkle mentality that is so prevalent today, both inside and outside the church. This mentality believes that somehow, someday, all of this will just work out and good will prevail. Somehow the good will of the Americans and the Soviets will rise up and prevent this potential mass global suicide. Well, it is *already* beyond control. It is already beyond the control of people of goodwill because, quite frankly, our technology has outstripped our morality.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Let's go back to the illusion of rationality. If we cannot be assured that rational minds will prevail, then wouldn't the simple reality that we have more weapons than they do at least keep them in check?

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**HATFIELD:** That's like standing in a room waist-high in gasoline arguing over how many matches you and I have. The only defense is to make a beginning to the total abolition of nuclear weapons. As long as any country has nuclear weapons, superpower or minor power, as long as there are any nuclear weapons in the world, we are going to be threatened. Humanity is going to be threatened. The only ultimate answer is abolition. But, because that is not going to happen immediately, we are suggesting the freeze. Between the two superpowers today, we could influence the whole world, if we had but the insight, the vision, and the courage to do so. But first we have to demonstrate to the rest of the world that we are about that business ourselves. The superpowers have the ability, if they took seriously

the reality that the world is on the brink of extinction, to pressure anyone who got out of line, like Libya or Israel, to reduce their arsenals as well. But, as long as we are escalating, we are, in a sense, inviting all of the other countries of the world to imitate. Conversely, if we begin to show some rational judgment to meet this threat of human extinction, then maybe we can cause the other countries to imitate that as well.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Ah, but some conservative Christians would say that your hope that the world would voluntarily dispose of its nuclear weapons is a wonderful ideal, but given human sinfulness, given human depravity, you must prepare for the worst.

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**HATFIELD:** I find nothing in Scripture that says Christ died only for Americans. I don't find anything in Scripture which tells me that God's grace is limited. On the contrary, it's limitless. I find nothing in the Scripture which suggests that Christ's power of redemption is in any way circumscribed to certain cultures or certain groups. One of the unique factors of the Christian faith is that Christ died for all humankind. Christ came to redeem all humankind, and God's grace is sufficient to cover all human sin. Now, having that belief in no way blinds me to the reality of the world in which we live, in a world which there is obvious sin and obvious depravity, but I am not about to put parameters on the power of spiritual renewal and spiritual rebirth, nor am I going to fall for that Constantinian doctrine. . .

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**INTERVIEWER:** Constantinian doctrine?

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**HATFIELD:** I do not believe in the Constantinian doctrine which holds that to influence Caesar, we have to imitate Caesar. Nor do I believe that once we Christians get our hands on the power levers of Caesar that somehow we're going to

turn the world around. Some of the most heinous crimes in the history of humankind have been committed by those who thought that if they got a hold of Caesar's power, they could regenerate the world. Instead we ended up with things like the Dark Ages . . . the Crusades. All I'm saying is this: In this really tough world we live in, if we do not have unlimited confidence, trust, and commitment to the power of redemption and God's grace, what hope is there? Why don't we blow our brains out now and forget about it? If I didn't trust in the power of redemption and God's grace, do you think I would stay in the Senate 10 minutes longer? I have been a part of the American political system for a long time now. I know its inadequacies; I know its limitations pretty well; and if my faith were in the American political system, or any political system for that matter, my faith would be on nothing but shifting sand. Listen, our hope is not in our armaments, nor in our economic system, nor in our technology. Our hope is in the unchangeable, eternal verity of Christ being the Alpha and the Omega of all things. Why can't we believe in the possibility that maybe the power of the gospel can be the greatest weapon of all against the prince of this world, no matter where he resides?

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**INTERVIEWER:** When it comes to nuclear weapons, what is the issue as you see it?

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**HATFIELD:** Life or death. That's what the nuclear issue implies and that's the only question that all humanity faces: Life or death. It is the common denominator, the fundamental, the bottom line.

Now to me, if we choose the road which leads to ultimate extinction, that is the ultimate blasphemy. That is the highest form of obscenity humankind could express. To continue this nuclear madness is to shake our fist in the face of God and say, "We, a nation, have the right to destroy your creation!" We are challenging the Creator. It is rebellion

against God. The issue is not defending ourselves against the Soviet Union; we are rebelling against God; we are destroying God's creation. Spiritually speaking, that is blasphemous and obscene.

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**INTERVIEWER:** So, realistically, what can one person do?

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**HATFIELD:** Identify with the people's movement—which is simply a grass roots reaction against politicians and governments who have lost their ability to recognize what they have created. This could be that moment in history when, as Dwight Eisenhower said, "The politicians have to step aside and let the people have peace."

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**INTERVIEWER:** In other words, support the nuclear freeze?

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**HATFIELD:** Yes. And the freeze has been so misrepresented by critics as a demonstration of weakness, or as evidence of a lack of concern for the defense of America. Supporters of the freeze have been described as black spirits and do-gooders who are being manipulated by Soviet forces. All of those charges represent to me the desperate position that the pro-nuclear development people really find themselves because they simply cannot rationally and intelligently justify their position. So people need to inform themselves—there's lots of data available—and support referendums and initiatives, and create the kind of public leverage that gets the attention of those in power. Honestly, my hope is not in the government doing something significant on this issue; my hope and trust is in the people. And if the people really want to get involved in the support of human life, then this is really their great opportunity to put their actions where their words are.

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**Mark O. Hatfield, Senator (R) from Oregon, is a committed Christian, a deacon, and an active Baptist churchman.**

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Memphis, TN: The Brotherhood Commission, 1983

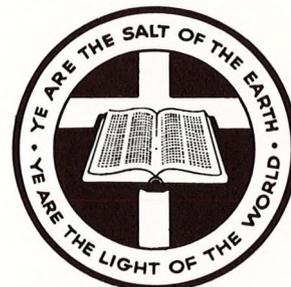
Glen Stassen believes in conversion. Specifically, he believes in old-style, life-changing, Southern Baptist repentance, conversion and transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ. That he links this most basic experience of our faith with becoming a peacemaker is both the surprise and the strength of *The Journey Into Peacemaking*. For Stassen, conversion into Christ is conversion away from the idolatry of arms which characterizes American (and Soviet) life. "Our problem," he insists, "is that we are idolatrous; we place unrealistic, compulsive trust in horses and chariots, soldiers and tanks, missiles and bombers." The conversion he describes is thus a twofold process. It involves inward transformation and outward action.

*The Journey Into Peacemaking* suggests working through small groups formed in conjunction with the church's Christian Life Committee. Stassen draws upon his experience in a peacemaker group at Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. He describes what worked for his group and suggests resources and procedures for use by newly forming groups. Using a format which includes Bible study based in Romans, shared experience, prayer, and action, Stassen combines theological depth with directness and simplicity to produce an effective, engaging work. Particularly useful is Stassen's ability to take a biblical passage and characterize its message in a few short summary statements.

One possible problem for beginners is that Stassen assumes a kind of openness to the peace issue which may itself be absent. One must at least accept the proposition that commitment to Jesus requires a serious commitment to peacemaking in order for the journey into peacemaking to be considered a trip worth taking.

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