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# An A.S.K. Doctrinal Report

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## Conscience and Responsibility

by Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., 1977

Transcribed and edited by David Sielaff, March 2010



**Why is it that we humans often know what is right, yet we do not perform it? Regarding another matter, why are people prone to stay within the portals of various religious organizations even when they know the institutions are basically wrong, even when the organizations are in error with their principal philosophies? There are reasons why such weaknesses are dominant in the mental makeup of humans, and this article will explain why these things are so.**

This discussion does not single out any single group for censure, but it does put into proper perspective how one's conscience in knowing right, and how one's responsibility for doing right, can be reconciled in a profitable way. That is what this article is about: conscience and responsibility. This is a subject that each us should look on as being important.

We need refer to only one word and the meaning behind it to comprehend the subject thoroughly. The word is “honesty” and I will refer to it often. You cannot know what conscience is or the responsibility that is yours without a proper understanding and appreciation of this word. Honesty, or to be honest, is important in the Bible. Let us quote a part of 2 Corinthians chapter 13. Here is what the apostle Paul said:

**“Now I pray to God that you do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that you should do that which is honest [ideal, right], ...”**

**• 2 Corinthians 13:7**

Now notice:

**“... that you should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.”**

**• 2 Corinthians 13:7–8**

Paul is talking here about truth. He puts in the midst of the discussion of truth this word “honesty,” or to live in a way that is “honest.” He equates honesty and truth. How in the world can you be living truth, or be teaching truth, unless you are honest with yourself? This is a very important concept and we need to take this very seriously.

Honesty and truth are connected. Indeed, it can be said that being honest is a means of practicing truth. What kind of honesty must one have to practice truth, the kind of honesty that the apostle Paul is talking about? This question needs answering.

First, let me explain one thing. In this article I will not emphasize the kind of honesty that every one of us should be practicing in his everyday dealings with his fellow man. I am not referring to whether or not you pay the right amount of money for food you buy in a grocery store, or whether you work a full day for the pay you get, and things like that. Those are forms of honesty, of course. The Bible recommends strongly that you be honest in that regard in every way. Even common decency shows that is what we should do. These things I am taking for granted.

What I am talking about is something a little different, yet it impinges on the same thing. It is different in the sense that the honesty I am talking about is not so much honesty in your dealings with other men, but to be honest first of all with yourself. Secondly, be honest with God and also be honest, true enough, with your fellowman. Be honest in the sense that you are honest with yourself and God first before you are honest with your fellowman in what you believe, in what you teach, in what you preach. This is very important in our overall life we live here on earth.

Honesty is very, very important. The types of honesty I am talking about are in three categories:

- (1) being honest with yourself,
- (2) being honest with God, and
- (3) being honest with everybody that you come in contact with

... relative to what you believe, what you teach, what you preach and, yes, even how you act.

### *Being Honest with Yourself*

Let us look at the first subject, being honest with yourself. What we need to do, each of us, is to look in a mirror. When we look in an ordinary mirror we see our physical frame. We comb our hair. We dress ourselves. We do all types of things which the mirror can help us with. But what we see in a mirror is only the external.

The type of mirror I want to look at, and what Ernest Martin should look at, is the mirror that lets us see the inner man: how we think, what motivates us, our mind, the parts of us that make the exterior function. Christ said that goodness and blessing come from the inner mind, but also come hate, envy, vindictiveness, and all the evils. They come from the inside (Mark 7:20–22).<sup>1</sup> We all can take a shower and get pretty clean on the outside, but we all need to understand how to take a shower “inside” as well.

What we need to do is to look at ourselves with a mirror, a mirror that lets us see our mind, see our attitude, to see what makes up ourselves, what causes us to “tick.” It is a very unpleasant experience if we really are honest with ourselves in how we ourselves act on what we believe and what motivates us in most cases. Jeremiah says:

**“The heart is deceitful [crooked] above all things, and desperately wicked [incurable]: who can know it?**

• **Jeremiah 17:9**

No human being can truly know your heart down deep. The only one who can know your heart is God.

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<sup>1</sup> Good and bad come from our mind, referred to in the Bible as the “heart,” Matthew 12:34–37 (Luke 6:45):

**“O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.”**

**“I YHWH search the heart [the same heart as in 17:9], I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.”**

• *Jeremiah 17:10*

As Jeremiah says in verse 9, we need to realize that our minds are desperately wicked. There is no question about that. That is what the Bible says, but there is also good with us as well, definitely good. The Bible also makes that plain. Human nature is a matter of good and evil, and I hope that the good predominates, but there will be evil that comes up from within us from time to time.

### *Examining Ourselves*

What we need to do is to examine ourselves. We are even told in the Scripture that we are to examine ourselves from time to time. The only way you can do that in a proper sense is to be honest with yourself.<sup>2</sup> I sometimes look in the mirror and find myself not being honest but trying to fool myself into believing a thing which is not true at all. I find myself doing that, and I suppose that all of us do the same from time to time. One thing I am very thankful for: God Himself understands that this is how we will appraise ourselves.

Let us consider how God Himself looks on us in our human frame. In Psalm 103 verses 8–14 we have a beautiful description here on how God looks at you and me. I am thankful that this is in the Scripture because it is so true. At the same time I think I can live with myself a little bit better knowing how God understands me. I suppose you could live better with yourself knowing how He understands you, because it universally applies to all of us who are humans.

**“YHWH is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever [olam, for the age]. He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.**

**For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west [a metaphor for infinity], so far has he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pities his children, so YHWH pities them that fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.**

• *Psalm 103:8–14 [also Psalm 139]*

That is God’s appraisal of you, me, and all of us. If we are honest with ourselves, we will have to admit that we are all basically weak by nature. We each have some strong points; that is true. Let us try to take those strong points which are good and develop them. Let us try to get rid of all the evil that is within us, in our weaknesses. That is all true.<sup>3</sup> But you will not be satisfied with yourself until you honestly appraise yourself correctly.

We come to the place of feeling that we ought to be so perfect. I know that Christ is perfect. I know that God even looks upon us legally as being perfect through Christ,<sup>4</sup> but we want to be so perfect that sometimes we feel so guilty about things that we do or things that we do not do (as in Romans 7:14–25). If there are things that really get into the way, things that hurt people, and hurt you, the Bible says they should be eliminated. We all know that.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:5

**“Examine [try, test] yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?”**

DWS

<sup>3</sup> This is the philosophy of motivational speakers, both religious and secular, as well as personal counselors. They key on and motivate the good and strong points and encourage ridding evil from one’s life. That is fine so far as that goes. DWS

<sup>4</sup> See Dr. Martin’s book *The Essentials of New Testament Doctrine* complete online at [www.askelm.com/essentials/index.asp](http://www.askelm.com/essentials/index.asp). See particularly chapters Chapter 6: “Our Sins Are Imputed to Christ,” Chapter 7: “Christ Was Punished for Us,” and Chapter 8: “The Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness to His People” (emphasis mine). These chapters deal with how God the Father views us legally, including the righteousness of Christ being imputed to us fully. DWS

Many of us treat ourselves badly. We treat ourselves like the proverbial worm, or as someone who has no reason for existing whatsoever. If that were the case, then God ought to completely wipe the human race from off the earth, because all of us have our problems.

The point is this, if we can understand ourselves as having basic weaknesses and basic strengths, then we ought to have a little bit of mercy and judgment when it comes to our fellow man, because they also have the same kind of composition, mentally and physically, as we do ourselves. We ought to learn to accept ourselves as we are, ask God to help us to be better, and then walk in the way that God directs us toward betterment.

The main thing is simply to be a man, be a good gentleman in every relationship, no matter what it is, no matter whom you come in contact with. For you who are women, be ladies. You have to interpret the terms properly, I know that, but most of us know how to be gentlemen and ladies, do we not? The basic principles of love, if they motivate our lives, then we can learn to live with ourselves in a far better way.

This is the first point I am making about being honest. You must be honest with yourself. Know that you are not perfect. That is true. Get rid of imperfections if we can, develop the good things within ourselves.

### *Being Honest with God*

Let us go to the next point. You must learn to be honest with God. If you want to have a good conscience, if you want to bear up to the responsibility of living, you must be honest with God. Many people say they are honest with God all the time. That is hardly a fact. Indeed, I would say that many of us are not honest with God at all for several days on end, or several hours, or minutes.

Do you love God? I hope that all of you do. I do love God. I think I can say it without any equivocation whatsoever. Do I love God all the time, with all my heart, the way I want to in my heart of hearts to love Him? The answer, I am afraid, is no. I wish that I could. I depend on Christ to give me a type of relationship with God which is perfect, but I cannot get it through myself. Sometimes I find myself slipping a little bit when it comes to this principle of trying to love God with all my heart.<sup>5</sup> I really do.

The reason why is because I have not seen God with my physical eyes. Spiritually, yes, I have seen Him; not actually but spiritually.<sup>6</sup> I have not come in contact with Him. I have not shaken His hand. I have not put my arms around Him like others that I know and love. Sometimes I feel on occasion maybe, my love is slipping a little bit. All I have to do is to read the Scriptures or reflect on all the good things that God has done and that He has promised. Then my love for God usually comes back and sometimes even higher than before. But I am a human being and I have my ups and downs, and so do you.

In being honest with God, do you know what you have to say? You have to admit to God that this is the case. You cannot go around fooling yourself in relationship to God. If you find that you have difficulties with God in believing in Him, believing in His Word, trusting in Him — admit it to Him! Be honest with yourself. Be open. Be free. That is the way you must be. God understands your frame, as we quoted here in Psalm 103. He knows the limitations and deficiencies that each one of us has, and so He is quite capable of comprehending our feelings. He made us that way, so be honest with Him.

The first point I made was to be honest with yourself. That is most important. Just be free, open, and honest with yourself. Accept yourself as you are, but at the same time try to be better with God's help. You also have to be honest with God. Do not try to fool him. Do not try to fool yourself, but just simply be honest with Him and admit when you have difficulties in believing in Him, or trusting in Him, or whatever issue you have with Him. The more honesty you show to yourself and to God, the more you get in practice of being perennially honest, more constantly honest, and wanting to be a gentleman or lady to everyone you

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<sup>5</sup> We are instructed to love God. See Deuteronomy 6:5, 10:12, 11:13, 13:3, 30:6, 30:10; Joshua 22:5; 2 Chronicles 15:12; and Jeremiah 29:13. This is reiterated and expanded by Christ in Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30, 33; and Luke 20:27. DWS

<sup>6</sup> Regarding "seeing God," read John 1:18, 6:46; 1 John 4:12, 20. Regarding God's presence in our lives, see Dr. Martin's 1978 presentation "Where Is God?" at <http://www.askelm.com/doctrine/d030201a.htm>. DWS

come into contact with, and also wanting to be a gentleman or a lady to God, your Creator. All of these things are important. It puts you into an environment or a framework of being honest.

### ***Being Honest with Those Around You***

The third point is this: be honest with those around you in your beliefs, your teachings, and your actions. You cannot be a gentleman or a lady around others unless you respect others, unless you respect yourself, and I would go on to say to respect God, and be honest with people around you. Do not put on a front around people. We all do from time to time, but it is not ideal. This is especially true when it comes to inner beliefs, inner motives, and inner philosophies that you have. Be honest. Be open. Of course, be circumspect.

But still, in your overall demeanor of life be honest with others around you. If you are not honest with yourself, if you are not honest with God, if you are not honest with others around you, you are being what in the Greek they call a hypocrite, an actor.<sup>7</sup> There are all types of people around, and we find each of us from time to time getting into that syndrome because we are not being honest with everyone around us.

### ***Organizational Honesty***

Look for a moment at organizations in this world, and why people are prone to stay within various religious organizations even when they know the institutions are basically wrong, even in their principal philosophies. Let us look at some organizations. I will not talk about religious organizations yet, but about organizations in general, because what I am going to say will apply equally to all types of organizations.

Suppose you were an employee of a racetrack, where they race horses. In most cases you will find that gambling was involved in racetracks. Some of you might say, I would never work for a racetrack, but suppose your next door neighbor lets you know in conversation that he is an employee of a racetrack. You know him and he has let you know about his job. He is honest and you will have to accept him on this basis because he informed you, "I work for a racetrack." You either approve or you do not approve.

By saying that, your neighbor is being honest, whether you approve of his job or not. Your approval is not the point in this case because that man is honest and he can lift his head up high. You might not like his employment, and he might even wonder about it, but he is open and honest with everyone around him because he says he works for the racetrack. He has to be commended for his honesty.

Suppose you are, or your next door neighbor is an employee of a supermarket. This has nothing to do with a church, but would we expect a person who is an employee of a supermarket to be honest with the cash, to be honest with the products, to be honest with you when you are at the check stand? Yes, we would expect honesty. Most people do not find it difficult to say "I am an employee of a supermarket." If you say that, all of the environmental information that most of your neighbors associate with being a supermarket employee should apply to you. So, if you are honest with people, if you say you are an employee of a supermarket, you will fit into the category of being a good supermarket employee and do everything that such an employee should be doing. Why? Because you are honest.

### ***Being a Member of a Church***

There are all types of Christian churches in this world. There are liberal churches, conservative churches, and there are very fundamentalist churches. Some churches claim to be the only true church of God in earth. In fact, how many of "only true churches" of God on earth are there? I can think of at least a score of them that make that claim. They all have different teachings, different headquarters, different hierarchies, and different demeanors in life. They all claim to be the true Christian church of God on earth. I can think of many

<sup>7</sup> The English word "hypocrite" comes directly from the Greek. My computer *American Heritage Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. defines it:

**"hyp-o-crite (hĭp'ə-krit') n. A person given to hypocrisy. [Middle English *ipocrite*, from Old French, from Late Latin *hypocrita*, from Greek *hupocritēs*, actor, from *hupokrinesthai*, to play a part, pretend.]"**

of them. I am not denigrating any of them. That is not my point. If there is only one true church, why are there so many representatives of it here on earth which proclaim such diverse teachings and have beliefs and manners of life which are so different?

If a person says he is an “only true church” member, a certain responsibility comes upon him that is not with others who do not make the claim of being the “only true church.” I will get to that in a moment.

There are liberal Christian churches. These churches do not give any restrictions whatsoever, or virtually none, on membership. You can believe what you want to in a liberal church. They do not tell you what to do in most cases. You do not have to tell the minister what to do. If you do not like his actions and you are a member of his church, you might vote him out. In many of the liberal churches it is not a matter of a public or a private teaching that you must conform to regarding every little thing that is done.

If your neighbor is a member of one of these so-called liberal churches, and he is honest with himself, you would not expect as much from him in being real strict in holiness in his public or in his private life as you would if he were a member of a conservative church. If a man or woman says I am a member of this conservative church and we are closer to the biblical revelation than others (though he or she does not claim to be the true church), then as they claim to be closer to the biblical revelation, more responsibility comes to them. The ministers begin then to interfere with the lives of the members saying, **“This is the way, walk you in it”** (alluding to Isaiah 30:21).

If you are a member of a fundamentalist church everybody is expected to more or less toe the line and do everything both publicly and privately that all members of the church are expected to do. If you are a member of that church, publicly state that you are, and you are being honest, then you should do exactly (as best you can) what the members of that church are taught to do publicly and privately, and you should do it.

But if you are a member of what they call a “true church” of God on earth then a tremendous responsibility is upon your shoulders because you are saying all others are wrong, all others as to organization, as to commission, as to teaching. They may have a little truth, but they are all basically and in fact absolutely wrong, and I am right.

If you say you are right and yours is the only “true church” of God on earth, and it is Jesus Christ you are trying to exalt, you have a tremendous personal responsibility because you are accountable for exemplifying Christ day in and day out, 24 hours of the day. If you are a member of that church and it teaches this, or that, or whatever, both publicly and privately, if you will be honest with God, and if you will be honest with fellow members of that church, and honest with the public that you meet, you had better be living the teachings and doctrines of that church 24 hours a day, both in public and in private, or else you are not honest with yourself. If you are not honest with yourself, your conscience will be troubled. The responsibility you think you have is being marred.

### *Conscience and Responsibility*

Conscience and responsibility — yes, you have it. The more you claim to be in conformity with the true teachings of God, and claim you are the official representative of Jesus Christ on this earth, you are expected to be what the Bible says you ought to be, the divine repositories of truth that leads to the perfection that you find in Christ. You had better be practicing it in public and in private. If you do not do that, if you are not honest about the matter, you are then a hypocrite. That is exactly what the Scripture says.

I am familiar with a number of people in various denominations claiming to be the true churches of God. These people as a group are in the most precarious situation you can imagine. They are either exemplifying what the group teaches or they are not. If the “true church” of God is the only one, and it represents Christ on earth, oh my, look at the responsibility they have 24 hours a day, publicly and privately.

I know people who live and get their living from being in a body of people calling themselves the “true church” of God. Unless one believes privately and publicly what that church proclaims in every way, he or she is a hypocrite if that person stays in the body of that church. If I would talk to the hierarchy of that church, the ones who run it, almost all of them would say, if some of our laymen or some of the underlings

will not abide by the general teachings and philosophies of this church, they are hypocrites if they do not get out, or if they do not change their minds. Where is conscience and responsibility in these things? If you stay within the portals of any organization, I do not care if it is a social club, a PTA, a government, a supermarket, a racetrack, or a church, if you will be identified with it, you better be showing it externally and internally. Be honest with yourself in it with everybody, or you would be a hypocrite.

Many people want to stay in these organizations, but they claim: I don't believe half of what they teach anymore. In fact, I don't believe most of what is being taught there anymore. I then ask, why are you still in the body of that church, or that denomination, or that organization? Well, I want to help people. This is very interesting. They want to help people when they know that half or most of the teachings are wrong? Or they say they know much is wrong in this subject or that subject. What I want to do is to preach Christ. Is that interesting?

Every time someone who is an authority in any organization, I do not care what it is, if he or she does not believe the general theme of what the organization teaches privately and publicly yet he says, well, I will avoid all those issues and just preach Christ, do you know what he is actually doing? He is not preaching Christ at all because he is being dishonest with the members listening to him. Worse than that (if there is anything worse), he is being dishonest with himself, and certainly with God.<sup>8</sup>

When an individual gets in front of a crowd, a congregation, and all he does is talk about the love of God, the love of Christ, and says he wants to preach Christ, all the members out there think that he is a representative of the "true church" of God and that he accepts all of the fundamental teachings of that organization, and looks at the authority in that organization as sacrosanct, coming from the Father through Christ down in a pyramidal way to himself and the laymen. They think that he is not only preaching Christ, but he is supporting the organization from the top to the bottom, and the bottom to the top.

This is wrong. The only way to be honest so that conscience and responsibility are compatible is for such a person, if he wishes to stay within the body of this "true church" of God, or whatever it is, is to publicly state where he disagrees with them. If he comes out and publicly states this is the "true church" of God, but he does not believe this and does not believe that, all right. Once he has made a public disclosure, whether it be on doctrine, on administration, on social matters, or whatever, where he disagrees with them, but he says I love all you people, and I love the organization, and I would like to stay in it if people want me to, but I just believe these principles here, his conscience is clear and his responsibility is done. I hope we can all grow so we can begin to get rid of these things and get on the straight and narrow.

If he makes a public disclosure, and in his private life also, when he talks privately with people he does not hold anything back, but he is open and honest, I suppose a person doing that could get up and preach Christ. He could do that because he has let everybody know that "I am preaching Christ and I will not go along with everything the organization does." But if he gets up and preaches Christ, no matter how beautiful and wonderful it might be, yet he stays within the portals of the organization without a public disclosure, he is not being honest with the people, honest with the public, honest with God, nor is he honest with himself. He would be a hypocrite.

Acquiescence is agreement. That is a fact. Acquiescence to something is agreement.

Now, what about the [Associates for Scriptural Knowledge]?<sup>9</sup> ASK is an institution, an organization, but we do not claim to be a "true church" of God. We are made up of individuals who love Christ and the general teaching of the Scripture. A person can believe this on prophecy, he can believe that on doctrine, and still be in fellowship with ASK. We are a research organization. If we will get so narrow minded that we would

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<sup>8</sup> Such a person is a hypocrite just as were the Pharisees and others mentioned in the New Testament. Hypocrisy and those who practice it are discussed in Matthew 6:2, 5, 16, 7:5, 15:7, 22:18, 23:13, 15, 25, 27-29, 24:51; Mark 7:6, 12:15; Luke 6:42, 11:44, 12:1, 56, 13:15; Galatians 2:13; 1 Timothy 4:2; and 1 Peter 2:1. *DWS*

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Martin was the Director of the Foundation for Biblical Research when he gave this presentation in 1977. I substituted the name Associates for Scriptural Knowledge (ASK), an organization that Dr. Martin began in January 1985. *DWS*

accept only people who agree with what we say, then we have become an exclusive group of some kind. We do not want to be in that type of situation. We do not want to tell anybody what they should do publicly or privately in any way. We want people to read the Bible for themselves, stand on their own two feet, and make their own judgments with God's Holy Spirit directing them. Such people do not need men telling what to do 24 hours a day. We teach. We instruct. We show you what the Scripture says as best we understand it.

We at ASK want to emphasize your personal relationship with the Creator through Christ. We want your relationship to be vertically with God, the way it ought to be, rather than horizontally through man. What do we find in the epistle of First Timothy when Paul was at the end of his ministry and when he understood the complete revelation of Christ by that time? He said: **“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”** (1 Timothy 2:5). Christ Jesus is the only mediator between yourself and God the Father, so you do not need Ernest Martin, you do not need anybody else to stand in your way from a religious point of view, to tell you what to do publicly or privately.

Let's be honest, we are weak by nature. When we go horizontally through others, then other men become involved all the time. That is why when you come to a religious relationship with God, do it through one source and one source only — through Jesus Christ. Direct your attention vertically, not horizontally to some place in Europe, America, or some other place on earth.

### **One Mediator Only**

Anyone who says you have to go through men or an organization to obtain salvation is disagreeing with the fundamental teachings of Christianity. We at ASK insist for ourselves that we do not tell people what they ought to do publicly or privately. We simply exalt the basic teachings of the Scripture. We want to show you what the Bible says. We do not want to interfere with your lives in any way.

If a person does not agree personally with what we do or what we say, that is everyone's privilege. It is wonderful that it can be that way. Whether you agree with me personally, or disagree, the matter is not an institutional one at all as far as ASK is concerned. We have adopted the philosophy of allowing everyone to be free in Christ to research the Scripture without the censure of man, without man coming between you and God. That is our philosophy.

Some people disagree with that philosophy. They feel a ministry of men is absolutely essential. Some have said, Ernest, this must be perpetuated. Well, if they want to perpetuate it, fine, but I will not be part of it. It is against the basic philosophy of ASK which I feel is absolutely essential for personal Christianity to develop within individuals, to allow every person to stand on his own two feet in the proper way. People who claim that one must come through the portals of a “true church” or some organization that you can see with the eyes here on this earth, if they have a group endeavor, they should be living and teaching absolutely what the group teaches to the public, or else they are not being honest with themselves.

We at ASK operate with clear consciences. It does not mean we do everything perfect, by no means. We are not asking for you to look upon ASK as a paragon of righteousness; that is found only in Christ. We are trying to work within the basic philosophy of being free and happy and joyful, standing on our own two feet, reaching out in brotherly love to encourage one another. We work within the basic philosophy that we have made public through our literature and our lectures, and we have said in private to people.

You have a good feeling when you know that is being accomplished. I believe we are trying to be honest with ourselves (I hope you are being honest with yourself), and not only with ourselves, but honest with God and others in contact with you and with the whole world. It is beautiful when you can get into a relationship like that. Does that mean that everything we say or write is absolutely true? Of course not, because we know that as a research institution we must **“grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”** (2 Peter 3:18). The Bible says that. So we tell everybody not to believe everything that we say, but you know, when we say that, we mean it! There is no question about it because our entire philosophy fits right in with the idea of research, of investigation.

You may have something that I do not have. You can give it to me. I may have something of a biblical nature that you do not have and I can give it to you, and we do not start fighting with each other because we at ASK are not out to tell people privately or publicly what they are to do. We work within this framework with a fine conscience, at the same time bearing up to the responsibility that we have to ourselves primarily, and to others in the sense of brotherly love.

But if you come along and say you are part of an exclusive group ordained of God, commissioned by God to carry out the message of Jesus Christ to the world, and you are the only one, and your followers must have certain actions of life both public and private, I tell you, not only should the top men be doing it exactly, but the intermediate leaders should be doing those things exactly, and every layman should be doing those things exactly also. This is especially so for those on the payroll of the organization.

### *Acquiescence Means Agreement*

Again, acquiescence means agreement. If you or anybody else feels that something is basically wrong when a close-knit organization that claims to give out the whole truth of God publicly and privately as best they understand it, with a definite commission and responsibility, anyone associated with that organization, from the top to the lowest layman (if you are going to be honest) should do what they are told precisely. If you do, then your conscience should be fine, and your responsibility will be met. You are being honest with yourself.

As I mentioned before, many people have told me, well, we can work within the organization and still not believe its teachings. Some have said look at professors that teach who are ministers of denominations; the denominations say one thing and the professors at the universities preach another. That could be used as an example that it is all right for me to do so too. That is fine if a person can live with that.

I tell you this, anyone who does not publicly state what he believes, truly, he is being dishonest with himself, and he is a hypocrite. Most professors that I know in various universities, if they are ministers of particular denominations, they make quite clear to their students or to anybody that they meet their own personal feelings in the matter of the Bible, and they really are being honest with themselves. What anyone wants to do is his own business, but if you want to be honest, and you want to stay in “true churches,” and if you want to stay to help people, then be honest with the people that you are helping.

Some have said, I cannot leave and I will not leave simply because so many people are weak in the organization and they need my help. What kind of help do they need from you? Suppose that you are in the organization, and you do not like 75% of what is being taught. You are standing in the mire up to your armpits or up to your neck, and you are staying there for what reason, to help others? To help others disagree with the organization as you do? No. It helps them continue to stand in the mire just like you.

What is the best way to help people? The best way is to get out of the mire yourself. Take a shower, put on new clothes, and then go see people standing in the mire. Then you can tell them effectively how they also can be clean. How can you do that when you are not practicing the principles of honesty and goodness and having the conscience and responsibility that should be there in the first place?

If individuals feel they must stay within organizations, then make sure that public disclosures of some kind are made so that everybody knows absolutely where you stand. As far as we at ASK are concerned, we do not tell anybody what to do in doctrine, in social matters, or in anything from that point of view. We are not a “true church” of God. ASK is a research organization and we work within the bounds of conscience and responsibility, trying to be honest with everybody.

The decision that everyone has to make is a traumatic one. It is not a decision that can be done instantaneously, but begin to let honesty prevail in your life. That is what I want to do. You should have all the encouragement in the world to let honesty prevail. Do you know what will happen in the end? Honesty will allow conscience and responsibility to be compatible.