

Cleland, James T.  
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TEXT: PSALM 15:4  
"HE THAT SWEARETH TO HIS OWN HURT, AND CHANGETH NOT."

A number of years ago one of the grand old men of Amherst College, a graduate of the class of 1880, met me while crossing the Common and blurted out something that had been troubling him for many days: "This is an era that doesn't keep its word. There must be something in the Bible about that." I quoted to him part of the 4th verse of the 15th Psalm. "He that swearth to his own hurt, and changeth not." He replied quickly "Preach that." I am going to my room to read that Psalm." Until now I have never <sup>"</sup>preached ~~on~~ that ~~is~~ but in the face of a national election it is perhaps ~~the~~ time to look <sup>at</sup> ~~up~~ the question of <sup>morality</sup> ~~integrity~~ and the political life.

What is it that we wish in our representatives? Ability? Certainly that. It has been a common complaint that in the United States the ablest men go into the business world spurning politics for private gain. And yet as able a student of the American scene as D.W. Brogan has said that the average ability of the members is <sup>often</sup> higher in Congress than in Parliament.

Ability then is necessary but it is not enough. There must be added to that integrity, the moral quality of consistency, where a man's word is his bond and is honored as such. There is a telling line in that recent play "The State of the Union" where one of the characters says to the political boss, a gentle/man of shrewd cunning, "You have such a complete lack of faith in sincerity - and you're so sincere about it." The moral pattern of our political life is a thing of shreds and patches and the saddest thing about it is that good people accept it as such. But who would claim that greatness is to be found against such a background?

Integrity then must be added to ability but that is not enough. Because men may be sincere, honest and loyal at too low a level. Plato knew that when he talked of the need for honor among thieves if the gang would hold together. And our age has seen men in high places, men of ability and integrity <sup>strawingly</sup> ~~actually~~ loyal to the corrupt machines which placed them in power. ~~It~~ Something more must be added - spiritual vision, which sees beyond man to God and which sees man

in terms of God. His ultimate loyalty is to God and God alone, and because of that he cannot be swayed by the selfish machinations of man. As Henry Luce put it in a speech delivered here early this year: "This is to insist that absolute sovereignty should not, in fact does not, exist anywhere short of the throne of God. The claim of any earthly king or any earthly government of any form to absolute sovereignty is, in the last analysis, blasphemy."

*Only a man of high spiritual vision will grasp that.*

Granted a man of ability, integrity and spiritual vision, it is possible that once again the Psalmist's words would become flesh, "One that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not."

*Jimmie T. C. C. C.*