

Integrity

2919 Lafayette Ave.
Lansing, Michigan 48906

Nonprofit Organization
**U.S. POSTAGE
PAID**
Flint, Michigan 48501
Permit No. 239

INTEGRITY, a journal published by an independent nonprofit corporation, is intended to be a ministry of reconciliation which utilizes the varied talents of a large community of believers who seek accurately to reveal God to both the church and the world so that all may become one as He is one.

(continued from page 69)

things sacred instead of our lives indwelt by Christ. Our weapons are bombs instead of the sword of the Spirit. We rely on political power and manipulation when Christ told us to take up the cross and follow him.

The heart of the problem lies in Christians trying to make Christianity something it is not. The revelation of God is not a morality, though right and wrong are determined by God. It is not even a religion. It desacralizes nature, powers, gods, and religion. It is not a political system, though it should permeate every political system. When Christianity is subverted, the church is like the one cleaned of a demon who, remaining empty, became a home for seven demons.

This book may be a shock to many who claim to have returned to the "Old Paths" and "New Testament," or "first century" Christianity.

According to Ellul, many of us might not recognize true Christianity if we saw it. Even worse we might be scandalized by it. What we have today — even reduced from the excesses of Roman Catholicism by the Reformation, and reduced further by the Restoration Movement — is still a Christianity subverted by our culture and the cultures preceding us.

Ellul helps us see through the haze of "Christianity" to the revelation of God in the Incarnation. The cultural subversions of our Christianity need to be recognized, so that the pure and radical message can be heard. Only through the Holy Spirit can fallen humanity begin to understand and live the way of God. Ultimately, Ellul remains hopeful. For in spite of all that has been done to subvert the message of God, "Christianity" writes Ellul, "never carries the day decisively against Christ."

September/October 1987

Integrity

Editorial: You Can't Make Me

More Proverbs for Everyday Living
Henrietta C. Palmer

The Creator, Artistic Expression & You
Ronald Davis

Looking Out for Number Two
Hoy Ledbetter

In Terms of Finding Out (Part 2)
Stephen Green

Book Review: What Is Christianity?
J. Bruce Kilmer

Sept.-Oct. 1987
Vol. 17, No. 5

Editorial Advisor
Hoy Ledbetter

Board of Directors

Brant Lee Doty
Elton D. Higgs
Laquita M. Higgs
Joseph F. Jones
Diane G. H. Kilmer
J. Bruce Kilmer
Curtis Lloyd
Gary F. Mitchell
Foy Palmer
Henrietta C. Palmer
William Palmer
Amos Ponder
Karl W. Randall
Natalie Randall
Kenneth Slater
Jan Van Horn
John Van Horn

Subscriptions

are by written request. Although there is no subscription charge, contributions are necessary for our survival. Since we are approved by IRS, they are deductible.

Manuscripts

written exclusively for INTEGRITY are welcomed.

Please notify us

when you change your address, so you will not be dropped from our mailing list.

Back Issues

Available from
1269 Pickwick Place
Flint, Michigan 48507

Business Address

2919 Lafayette Ave.
Lansing, MI 48906

You Can't Make Me

A past co-worker of mine once told me that he had read the entire New Testament a few years back and "couldn't see what all the fuss was about." I was shocked that someone who had bothered to read the New Testament in its entirety found nothing particularly moving or significant to him or to his life. Since then I have heard others repeat similar responses and I have puzzled over how it could be that the Holy Spirit was unable to touch them. I have come up with several reasons, but the clearest one is this: Nothing can affect us unless we are willing to change.

To meet God is to change. He confronted us through His Son when Jesus, God-become-human, talked to the folks in Palestine. And when God confronts us — whether it be through meeting Jesus or reading the message of the Bible, or through prayer or by meeting a believer — something has to happen. We must respond in some way. If we are unwilling to change, we propel ourselves away from His face like two south ends of two magnets. But if we are willing to change, we are drawn to Him just as powerfully as nails to the same magnets.

With magnets, there is no such thing as half-magnetized. With Jesus, lukewarm is out of the question. If we are in hot pursuit of God and His Ways, He will be able to shape us into His mold. If we coldly and deliberately run away from confrontation with God, He can keep pursuing us with persistent love, ever hoping we will finally stop and say "I give up — to You." But when the Spirit has chased us to where we finally stop, listen to the message, and then say, "Hmm, interesting, but not for me" or "Maybe someday," then there is nothing left to be done. Not the clearest confrontation with God in this world can force us to change. We have got to be willing to change.

The articles in this issue challenge us to be willing to change at several levels of our life. Henrietta Palmer again encourages us to look to the Proverbs for guidance in every day choices. Ron Davis reminds us that a Christian's life can reflect relationship with the Creator by creativity in what we designate as "the arts." Hoy Ledbetter entreats us to change into less and less selfish people in both our private and public lives. Stephen

(continued on page 55)

More Proverbs For Everyday Living

HENRIETTA C. PALMER

The Book of Proverbs is a practical guidebook for problems we face in our everyday lives. The profound truths which God gave to Solomon and to other believers are relevant to our present day situations. A study of Proverbs demonstrates very clearly that God is interested in every aspect of our lives.

In the May/June 1987, issue of *Integrity*, proverbs and truths relating to the following topics were presented: Wisdom, Fear and Fear of the Lord, Living Joyfully, Advice and Counsel, Communicating with Others, Friends and Neighbors, Marriage and Parenting.

A study of the Book of Proverbs helps us to know the wisdom and the will of God, our Father in Heaven. As we study God's word, He grants us insight and wisdom to apply to all areas of our lives.

Using Time Wisely

"I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth." Psalm 34:1

How often do we stop in the midst of a busy

(continued from page 54)

Greene completes his two part series that challenges us within our churches to not fear confrontation of ideas and values and beliefs. With God's participation, these can be times of improvement and refinement. And Bruce's book review suggests that we may have let culture prevent us from making the radical changes taught and lived by Jesus.

day to praise God and to thank Him for all of the blessings he gives us so abundantly? How often do we stop and quietly listen to God's instruction? In Proverbs 5:1 God tells us to be attentive to His wisdom and incline our ear to His understanding.

Proverbs 2:20 teaches that we should use our time to walk in the way of good men and keep to the paths of righteousness. God is concerned about His children. He knows the importance of spending time with other believers and living each day according to His commands.

In Proverbs 3:27 we read that we should use our time to do good to those to whom it is due. There are so many ways we can brighten the lives of others if we will just take the time. We are often too involved in our own personal plans to stop by and visit the sick and the elderly. God has time to listen to us when we pray. We should plan for time to listen to the many lonely people around us who need to know that someone cares about them.

Proverbs 8:32-35 teaches that if we use our time to follow the Lord we will find happiness, wisdom and life. No occupation, recreation or

We hope these articles provide something challenging for everyone. But will we be willing to change?

In Him,

Diane Kilmer
Co-Chairperson
Integrity Editorial Board

human relationship can fulfill this promise!

Using time wisely also means that we should understand the importance of work. Proverbs 6:6-11 warns us about idleness. This passage describes how the little ant prepares food in summer and gathers her sustenance in harvest. It warns that poverty will come to those who fail to work. God expects the believer to work and to be diligent about caring for the family. God also expects us to look to Him for blessings and to use our time wisely. We need a proper balance of time in our daily lives. If our jobs require so many hours that we shortchange our time with our family, or we find that we lack the time for church services and for Bible study, then it is time to fervently pray for God's guidance in our lives.

In Proverbs chapter 31, the industrious woman is praised for using her time wisely. She worked outside the home, she provided food and clothing for her family, she cared for the poor, she spoke with wisdom and kindness, and she feared the Lord. She found the time to do all of the important things in her life and she was loved and honored.

In Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 the Lord tells us there is a time for everything in our lives:

“For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what
is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to cast away stones, and a time to
gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain
from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
a time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.

It is important that we use these seasons, these

times in our lives, in a wise way and according to God's will.

Wealth and Poverty — Giving of Ourselves

“He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his deed.” Proverbs 19:17

The parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) summarizes much of what the Bible says about money management. Everything we have — our money, our material possessions, our lives — belongs to God. God owns it all! We are His stewards and He has entrusted us with the responsibility of managing His property wisely.

God uses money and material possessions in each of our lives as a tool, a test and a testimony. From Matthew 25:21, 23 we find that the amount God has given us is unimportant, but how we handle what He has entrusted to us is very important!

The Book of Proverbs teaches many truths about wealth and poverty. In Proverbs 8:18, 21 we read that God blesses those who love Him with riches, honor, enduring wealth and prosperity, and He fills their treasuries. Proverbs 10:22 tells us that “The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.”

Proverbs 11:24-25 teaches that the man who shares his wealth is blessed by the Lord. This passage states, “One man gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. A liberal man will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.”

In Proverbs 14:21 we read, “He who despises his neighbor is a sinner, but happy is he who is kind to the poor.” In Proverbs 14:31 we learn that he who is kind to the needy also honors his Maker. God loves, and blesses, a cheerful giver.

Too often in today's world it appears that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. In Proverbs 22:16, 22-23 we learn that the person who increases his own wealth by oppressing the poor will come to want and will be punished by the Lord. God warns us in Proverbs 21:13, “He who closes his ear to the cry of the poor will

himself cry out and not be heard.” If God has blessed us with plenty, He expects us to share with those who are in need.

From the Book of Proverbs we learn that a poor man with integrity is better than a perverse rich man. (Proverbs 28:6) Riches can be quickly lost but righteousness and truth endure forever. Whatever state we are in, God will continue to supply our needs and bless us when we put Him first in our lives.

Honesty and Righteousness

“He who pursues righteousness and love finds prosperity and honor.” Proverbs 21:21

Throughout the Book of Proverbs, man is called to be honest, fair, right and good. He is admonished to live a righteous life in order to gain God's favor. Righteousness is contrasted with unrighteousness and honesty with deceit. The consequences and rewards for making the right choices are blessings, joy, health, acceptance, happiness and life. Following the path of unrighteousness and dishonesty will bring us trouble, destruction, pain, disaster and death. The contrast is clear. We may choose God's way and be blessed or we may live a life of sin and suffer the consequences.

Honesty is stressed in Proverbs 12:22, “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are His delight.” Proverbs 12:17 teaches, “He who speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters deceit.” Proverbs 11:1 also deals with honesty. “A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight.” God is pleased when we follow His teaching and when we are honest in every aspect of our lives.

Riches gained by dishonesty will only bring condemnation. “The integrity of the upright protects them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them. Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.” (Proverbs 11:3-4) God clearly teaches that righteousness is more valuable than wealth.

In Proverbs 10:7 and 22:1 we learn these truths about the righteous. “The memory of the righteous is a blessing, but the name of the

wicked will rot.” “A good name is to be chosen rather than riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.”

In Proverbs and other Old Testament scriptures, righteousness meant zealously following God's commandments. In the New Testament Jesus taught that we must go beyond the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. (Matthew 5:20) Paul describes this new kind of righteousness in Philippians 3:4-9. It is not the righteousness of man based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith. In Romans 3:21-26 Paul writes that we are no longer under the old law which required perfect conformity to God's law and moral standards. Since all men have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, God has shown His righteousness and now justifies and redeems all who have faith in Jesus.

Although the New Testament teaches that we are justified by the grace of God rather than by our own “goodness” and perfect obedience to the law, believers must still try to avoid the evil ways of the world by loving God and following His commandments. Today our righteousness is based on our faith and trust in Jesus the Christ. Jesus is our righteousness. If we love Jesus and follow His teachings, we are right with God.

Guarding Your Heart Against Temptation

“The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil.” Proverbs 8:13

God gave us the Book of Proverbs to convince us that His commandments are worth living by. The lessons we learn in Proverbs teach us how to carry out God's will in our lives so we can guard our hearts against temptation.

Temptation appears in many forms — as a serpent to Eve in the Garden of Eden and sometimes as “friends” who try to sway us away from God's teachings. Jesus was tempted by Satan and He knew about Satan's cunning perseverance.

We can be tempted to sin and follow evil

when we fail to heed God's instruction in any of the following areas:

VIOLENCE AND WALKING WITH SINNERS — Proverbs 1:8-19 warns against walking with sinners and engaging in violence. Those who get gain by violence will lose their lives.

NEGLECT OF WISDOM — The Lord punishes those who turn away from wisdom and knowledge by turning away from them. When they turn to the Lord in time of need, He will not answer their call for help. (Proverbs 1:20-33)

IMMORALITY — Proverbs 5:1-14 and 6:20-35 teach a bitter lesson about unchastity and adultery. Those involved in immoral actions will destroy themselves.

IDLENESS — Idleness and laziness can bring poverty and hunger. God teaches the importance of diligence in work. (Proverbs 6:6-11, 19:15, 24:30-34)

SOWING DISCORD — Proverbs 6:12-19 teaches that calamity will come upon the worthless person who sows discord, and that a man who sows discord among his brothers is an abomination to the Lord.

HATRED — Hatred stirs up wrath, and we are warned about those who speak with guile. (Proverbs 10:12, 26:24-26)

QUICK TEMPER AND ANGER — Proverbs 14:17 teaches that a man of quick temper acts foolishly. In Proverbs 14:29 we read, "He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly." Proverbs 29:22 also warns us about anger, "A man of wrath stirs up strife, and a man given to anger causes much transgression."

LYING AND FALSE SPEECH — Proverbs 14:5 tells us that a false witness breathes out

lies. We learn in Proverbs 19:9 that "A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who utters lies will perish."

GREED AND COVETOUSNESS — Proverbs 23:4-5 teaches that we should not toil to acquire wealth because it can fly away like an eagle. Proverbs 28:22 warns against greed. "A miserly man hastens after wealth, and does not know that what will come upon him." Instead of coveting material wealth, we should be seeking after heavenly treasure. (Luke 12:32-34)

DRUNKENNESS AND GLUTTONY — Proverbs 23:19-21 warns that poverty will come to the drunkard and the glutton. We read in Proverbs 23:29-33 that sorrow and strife come to those who tarry long over wine.

SLANDER — Proverbs 30:10 warns us to guard against slander so we won't be cursed and found guilty.

IGNORING REPROOF AND INSTRUCTION — In Proverbs 15:31-33 we read, "He whose ear heeds wholesome admonition will abide among the wise. He who ignores instruction despises himself, but he who heeds admonition gains understanding. The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility goes before honor." The temptation to ignore the instruction and wisdom of others is all around us. People want to do things their own way and often turn away from suggestions which could be helpful. In Proverbs 3:11-12 we learn that the Lord reproves him whom He loves. Please, Father, give us ears to listen!

Henrietta Palmer recently retired after thirty years in public education as a teacher and elementary school principal. She has been on the *Integrity* Board for the last eight years. Henrietta has taught Sunday School classes for the past thirty-two years and she is now involved in a new ladies' Bible class called "Bible Break." Her husband, Bill, is an elder at the Church of Christ in Troy, Michigan. They have two married children and four grandchildren.

"He who walks in integrity walks securely." Prov. 10:9

The Creator, Artistic Expression And You

RONALD DAVIS

The fine arts are those areas in our lives in which we participate in the best music, the most excellent poetry, drama, and literature, and the finest artwork and craftsmanship. Why are such endeavors important to our lives as children of God, the Creator? And, if our lives are void of contact or participation in the arts, how can we steer ourselves into the realm of artistic expression? In the paragraphs that follow, Biblical precedent and personal experience will help answer these two questions.

As a music educator in the public schools and as one of the coordinators for the fine arts in the district where I teach, I am privileged to be able to impart the joy and pleasure of the arts to literally hundreds of people on a day-to-day basis. I witness how artistic expression is able to give relief as well as balance to lives that border on a mundane, emotionless, humdrum existence. By participating in the arts, Christians and non-Christians alike are exposed to and put in touch with the God who is *the* Creator, par excellence. "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made." (Romans 1: 19-20)

The arts give us a wonderful opportunity to explore and discover the rich pleasures of life on all its various planes, i.e. spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual. The fine arts are another way for us to realize the Biblical truths found in the opening chapter of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth . . . Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . And God saw everything that he made, and behold, it was very good.'" (Genesis 1: 1, 26, 31)

The Art Teacher

God in His infinite wealth of artistic expression did not leave His people unschooled in the fine arts or allow mediocre or assembly line artwork in the construction of the Tabernacle in the wilderness and in the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. Examples from the Old Testament will illustrate this point. In Exodus 35, Moses tells of the calling of Bezalel from the tribe of Judah. God anointed Bezalel with *His Spirit*, with *ability*, with *intelligence*, with *knowledge*, and with *all craftsmanship* to devise artistic designs of all kinds from gold, silver, stone, wood, and from every skilled craft. God also *inspired* Bezalel to *teach* others to have the ability to do every sort of work done by a *craftsman* or by a *designer*, *embroiderer* or *weaver* or by any sort of workman or skilled designer. God made them *skillful* and *ingenious*. Then Moses chose only those men whose hearts were stirred to come and do the work, only those who were willing to work. Their responsibilities included working with gold, silver, linen, frame construction, embroidery, designing, blue, purple, and scarlet cloth, curtains, gold leaf, vestments, head pieces, vessels for the altar, and woodwork. (Exodus, chapters 35-39) As the Psalmist says, "The Mighty One, God the Lord speaks. . . He does not keep silence. . ." (Psalms 50: 1,3)

When God instructed Solomon on the construction of the Temple, He gave specific plans for the cedar lumber: it must be cut by the Sidonians who were the best lumber cutters in the world. Instructions go on and on regarding the stone cutters, the cypress wood, the carvings of gourds and flowers, the inlaid and overlaid gold portions of the inner sanctuary, the carvings of cherubim, palm trees and open flowers,

the vessels to be used (I Kings 5-6), and the choirs, instrumentalists, and the 120 trumpeters (2 Chronicles 5:12). Wow! Do we get the picture? Our God loves to be expressive artistically on a grand scale, and we as His creatures are compelled by our very nature to imitate our Maker (Genesis 1:26). When we “go and do likewise,” the benefits for us and those we influence are multiple.

Reflecting the Creator in Art

Participation in artistic endeavors brings about an increase in self-esteem which can enhance our emotional health. Ask the artist how the palette, a brush, and the finished painting satisfy a longing deep within to express life in ways that are not verbal. Life is expressed from a vantage point that can be best seen and touched rather than verbalized. Instead of asking an artist, pick up your own brush and create your own painting. The apostle John captures the ultimate joy and yearning to express life, the Word of Life, in ways other than the verbal expression when he writes,

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us — that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete.” (I John 1:1-4)

The arts help us to worship God in ways other than verbal means of communication. Artistic skills create new avenues of expression such as imagination, symbolism, and bodily postures, (e.g. liturgical dance). Richard Foster in his book *The Celebration of Discipline* states that the apostle Paul “tells us to set our minds on all the things in life that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and gracious. God has established a created order full of excellent and good things, and it follows naturally that if we

think on those things we will be happy. That is God’s appointed way to joy. If we think we will have joy only by praying and singing psalms we will be disillusioned. But if we fill our lives with simple good things and constantly thank God for them, we will know joy.” (p. 167)

An additional benefit that is reaped by those involved in the arts is that the pleasure of living is heightened by the increased sensitivity to the beauty of God’s creation. This pleasuring in God’s creation expresses itself in an excitement for living which can only bring good to those around us as we influence others to leave their negative, down-in-the-mouth existence for a happy, positive celebration of life in Jesus. Also sin, whatever brand we are buying into, can be smothered and weeded out of our lives by our thinking and participating in anything that is pure, lovely, gracious, excellent, and worthy of praise (Phil. 4:8).

Appreciation and involvement in the fine arts can counteract the fake, plastic materialism that is jading our society with its “state of the art” gadgetry. Modern gadgetry seems to nearly drown us in its technological advances that are obsolete almost as soon as the product is purchased. The arts, however, have the consistent reputation and heritage of being long-lived and worthy of being passed from generation to generation. The classics are those works of art that have been enjoyed by multiple generations.

How does one become involved in the fine arts if one is not already so inclined? The following are suggestions for tapping into the creative processes so inherent in the arts. These suggestions are only a guideline of ideas to point you in the right direction. Keep in mind that the pleasure is in *doing* and *participating* and not in talk and working out an elaborate plan of action. Start with the opportunities in your own home, neighborhood, and community. Turn on your local public radio station for an adventure in classical music. Some of the greatest music in the world can be heard on public radio. Attend local concerts, plays, and art exhibits that are held in your community. Join a community or church choir. Learn to play a musical instrument. It is never too late to start.

Get to know creative people. Have them help you get started in painting, drawing, or crafts that are personal creations. Be a sponge around such people. Soak up their ideas. Be teachable. Learn to write in calligraphy. Try writing poetry. Monitor your entertainment. Is it spent mostly with the T.V. or V.C.R. and never with live performances? Is your only entertainment a trip to a shopping mall? Go to a local museum, arboretum, or nature center, instead. In some way you, yourself, become a creator, a performer. When it comes to involvement, the arts are like worship. The spectator worshiper leads a life of routine inflexibility never touching Reality. The active worshiper who enters His courts with praise is more likely to have the pleasure of *His* company and that is when the fun begins. The artist is then able to proclaim with all creation in the words of

David:

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;

yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

Psalm 19: 1-4

A native of Alabama, Ron received his Master of Music degree in organ from the University of Alabama. He is a professional organist, a college teacher, and presently teaches vocal music for K through 5 in Corunna, Michigan. Ron, his wife Glenda and their three children reside in Owosso and worship there with the First Church of Christ.

Looking Out For Number Two

HOY LEDBETTER

While I was still much too young to put it into practice an elderly neighbor gave me a rule for a lasting marriage. He said, “I could stay married to any woman in the world. I would just be so good to her that she would have to love me and want to stay with me.” As I approached my own marriage years later, I resolved that I too would be so good to my wife that she would have to love me and stay with me.” She has stayed with me, but not because of my success in living up to that noble aspiration. The fact is that she has had to tolerate my chronic selfishness which often seems to be stronger than my good intentions to the contrary.

Selfishness is everywhere. It is not only a plague upon our society, but it has even invaded the kingdom of God. It attacks us in the sanc-

tuary and in the bedroom, at the dinner table and at the bank. It affects our very mission as the body of Christ, stunting our outreach and restraining us from making converts because we are too self-absorbed to care about saving others. Or it may be the basis of a vain appeal that merely attracts other selfish people who come to church for what they can get out of it, resulting in a congregation that is motivated by self-enrichment rather than service, and a constantly shifting membership always on the alert for a better offer.

But this disease is not without a remedy, and we are very fortunate that our problem was so well diagnosed and dealt with by Paul in his first letter to the church at Corinth. The Corinthians were very religious people, so “enriched in Him” that they were not lacking in any gift.

What they did lack was the right attitude, for their rich endowment was marred by a persistent selfishness which made even spiritual gifts subservient to carnal desires. Therefore it was necessary for Paul to remind them that love "does not seek its own" (1 Cor. 13:5), and much of 1 Corinthians is an amplification of that fact.

Selfish Worship at Corinth

Some of the most obvious manifestations of selfishness at Corinth occurred when the saints assembled for worship. In a manner reminiscent of the well-known Pharisee who stood and "prayed thus to himself," reducing prayer to egocentric soliloquy, some brethren at Corinth, each taking his *own* supper, ate with such self-absorption that their meal could not possibly be the *Lord's* supper that they no doubt claimed it to be.

Paul argued that their individualistic practice denied at least two essential points conveyed by Jesus in the words of institution. In the first place, Jesus said of the bread, "This is my body, which is for you." Instead of pursuing his own interests, which would have enabled him to evade the dreaded cross, Jesus placed his body at the complete disposal of those whom he came to save. The Lord's supper, therefore, did not just draw the celebrants' attention back to his body, but rather to his body *which is for you*. Since the Corinthians lacked this self-denying attitude, which would have forced them to place themselves at the disposal of even the least of their brethren, what they ate could in no way be a *Lord's* supper; it was merely their *own*.

In the second place, Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." One truth stands out in this statement, viz., that our standing within the body is due above all else to our Lord's willingness to pay the price of our admission, which was his own blood. In the presence of him who died for all so that all might be present, those who are willing to overlook any one of his purchased people cannot eat the Lord's supper. And in eating what is nothing but their own supper they bring judgment upon themselves for despising the church

and failing to discern the body.

But how, we wonder, could the Corinthians, the possessors of such outstanding gifts, develop an adequate rationale for their selfish individualism? Let us look again at ourselves. Are we not able to accept falling a little short of maintaining equal rights within the church and to proceed through the forms of worship with little remorse over our discrimination and indifference? Since possessing special gifts from God does not always guarantee humility, it may be that their rich endowments convinced some of the Corinthians that they deserved an elevated position in the church to which other members had no right. Their arrogance is well documented, and we would do well to recall that "whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction."

The gifts of tongues-speaking caused the most trouble at Corinth, and Paul dealt with abuses of that phenomenon in great detail in chapters 12-14. Because "one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself," and nobody else, Paul specifically required that, unless there was an interpreter, tongues were not to be used in the assembly (his proscription even rules out the use of tongues in small group meetings in the absence of an interpreter). In the presence of others, it is not enough that men speak to God, give thanks, pray or sing in the spirit, or, to put it another way, that they feel the Spirit moving. However valuable that might otherwise be, it is nullified by the fact that "the other man is not edified" (1 Cor. 14:17) because he does not understand what is being said.

Paul's prolonged argument on this issue suggests strong disagreement by some of the Corinthians. He declared that he would rather speak in church five words capable of instructing others than ten thousand words in a tongue (or to put it in temporal terms, one second of intelligible speech is worth more than thirty-three minutes of tongues!), many of the Corinthians (and, indeed, many of their successors) worked with a different value system.

But while the self-centered tongue-speakers were a big problem in the Corinthian meetings, they were not the only ones. Apparently a good many, both men and women, wanted to get in-

to the act, and their practice in the assembly (a practice which Paul did not necessarily approve) of each one having a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, an interpretation (1 Cor. 14:26) afforded strong temptation to selfish display. So in this connection the apostle warned once again: "Let all things be done for edification."

In all of this Paul was not insisting that spiritual gifts be repudiated, but rather that the church practice the true love that "does not seek its own advantage." Those who use gifts for their own self-enrichment, rather than being entirely controlled by what builds others up, bear a strong resemblance to certain perverse brethren mentioned elsewhere who "shepherd themselves." Such shepherds are a long way from the Chief Shepherd.

Selfishness in Sexual Relationships

Another aspect of Corinthian selfishness was reflected in their sexual relationships. On the one hand, there was fornication. If to the Thessalonians Paul emphasized (in 1 Thess. 4) that the practice of fornication was a fraudulent disregard for the rights of others (which in itself is certainly a strong reason for abstention), to the Corinthians he argued (in 1 Cor. 6) that sexual immorality is really a denial of Jesus as Lord, since, because our bodies are members of Christ, it is a selfish appropriation of that which belongs to him alone. "Do you not know," he asked, "that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price."

We are not our own, but are bought with a price! Has the church lost its fervor in proclaiming this truth? When sexual promiscuity is rampant and assertion of the individual's authority over his/her body is heard practically everywhere, we would be well advised to pay special attention to the apostle's teaching on this subject. It will keep us from usurping rights that do not belong to us.

The Corinthians needed to learn that abstinence from sex may also in some cases be a sign of selfishness. The notion had arisen among them that one could be closer to God

by abstaining from marital intimacy. Paul countered this error with the declaration that, religious convictions notwithstanding, "the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does" (1 Cor. 7:4). Faithfulness to the marriage contract means that the needs of the other party must outweigh one's own private spiritual pursuits. The commitment required in viable marriage is to be so strong that it will rule out every individualistic claim. Wives and husbands no longer have the final word about their bodies; that prerogative belongs to the opposite sex. This, it seems to me, is a truth of special usefulness to our generation with its extreme reluctance to believe that marriage can or should be permanent, or that the parties to such a union should fully surrender themselves to each other "till death do us part."

Selfishness in Ownership

Another perverse view of ownership showed up at Corinth in the form of lawsuits initiated by some members against others. Their warped view of property rights somehow allowed them to "wrong and defraud" their own brethren in pagan courts, and they must have been shocked by Paul's stunning proposal: "Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?" In this alternative to Corinthian selfishness Paul challenges us to restructure our thinking in regard to property. There are some things more important than property. But to reach that conclusion requires such a complete reversal of our attitudes that it would be easier for some of us to go through the eye of a needle. Selfish acquisitiveness usually has an excuse, and excuses always prevent conversion.

Liberty and Selfishness

Among the saints at Corinth were certain brethren, claiming to have "knowledge" and ignoring the requirements of love, who asserted their liberty to eat food sacrificed to idols, even when by so doing they encouraged weaker brethren to eat in violation of their conscience and therefore to sin. Among other things, Paul reminded them of how far this practice departed

from the proper Christian attitude, since the brother they ruined by their knowledge was the very one for whom Christ died. If Christ died for the weak brother in a unique display of selflessness, then surely the rest of us could show some respect for his scruples. When one fails to do so, he sins against his brother and therefore against Christ.

Paul's solution for this arrogant abuse of liberty was simple: "If eating meat causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble." As an inveterate meat eater, I shudder at the force of this rule. It applies not only to the more expensive cuts, which I may have already given up for budgetary reasons, but also to the essential ingredient of hamburgers, tacos, chili, and a number of other items which I tend to regard as essential. But these are not essential. Unselfish regard for my brother is.

The foremost challenge of the gospel is to

shift the center of man's life from himself to God. One measure of its success is whether or not he has a love that "does not seek its own." A selfish society is a great tragedy, but an even greater one is a selfish church, for the church tends to sanctify the practices of its members and to make their behavior the norm for all. An egocentric church is dangerous, for it tells a lie about God and perpetuates its own sinfulness. That Paul devoted so much energy and love to a church like that in the long ago is an encouragement to us both to listen and to speak according to the Good News which can save us from ourselves.

Hoy Ledbetter was the founding editor of *Integrity* and served as its Editor-in-Chief for 15 years until 1984. The editorial board continues to seek his advice and his excellent writings. Hoy, his wife Jary and daughter Priscilla now live in Albany, Georgia and minister to the First Christian Church.

In Terms of Finding Out (Part 2)

STEPHEN GREENE

A poet has said,

Break the bonds of superstitious precepts
that have shackled your minds for so long.
Cast aside the chains of dumb tradition;
learn with earnest the words of finding out.

The attitude that motivates the nondenominational stance that should exist in churches of Christ needs to be reaffirmed in our minds. We ask people to be open-minded and to study issues thoroughly in order to make unbiased and informed decisions. For more than fifteen decades members of the Church of Christ have tried to persuade others to be open-minded, to

study all sides of an issue, to be willing to lay down wrong beliefs and take up correct ones. They are asked to view their beliefs and doctrines as hypotheses in need of testing.

This stance is most exemplary. Any and all ideas *should* be subject to testing. One cannot truly claim to be honest and open-minded unless he or she is willing to question and test his or her own ideas, especially those considered to be fundamental.

Are we to accept beliefs without examination or even without the means by which to properly evaluate them? Is unquestioning acceptance

better or more important than honest inquiry? Are we fairly applying to ourselves what we demand of others?

If we hold to some belief because it is considered "traditional," "conservative," or "safe" then we need to reexamine the basis we have for such a belief. We should never accept an idea on the grounds that it is considered to be traditional, conservative, or safe. Conversely, we should never reject an idea because it is considered to be "new," "liberal," or "dangerous." We should always base our attitudes, beliefs, and actions on the results of truth-seeking, honesty, love, and expediency. We must not allow ourselves to be self-indulgent to the extent of becoming apprehensive of what is new or unorthodox, or of ideas that people claim are the beguiling, seductive words of the liberal-minded.

Do We Fear Change?

It seems that many are inherently against change—even when the result of change leads to progressive development. They allow their "fear of the unknown" (and their fear of those who consider themselves to be more "conservative" and "devout") take priority over love for and sincerity about truth-seeking. We need to exercise our spiritual courage and let our love prevent such fear from inflicting its destructive influence on us and on others in our lives. Nothing should be dismissed because "we've never done it that way before" or because "that's not believed in our church."

Is it true? Is it honest? Is it considerate? Is it helpful?

There are many who insist that this path is too dangerous to travel on. But if truth-seeking is dangerous, then so be it. We don't have the right to ask "Do I want to believe this idea?", "Is this idea consistent with what my church teaches?", or "Is this a dangerous belief?" What we should instead be asking is "*How accurate is this idea?*", and "*What is the evidence for it?*"

The intellectually honest person pays more than lip service to the fullest possible use of reason. The intellectually honest person wonders about and questions commonly ac-

cepted beliefs and ideas in order to determine the reasons for their popularity and to test whether or not his or her own beliefs are reasonable and correct. The intellectually honest person is willing to lay these beliefs on the line by questioning them, checking them out, and is willing to discard them if she or he finds that they have an insufficient basis. The intellectually honest person simply will not accept a belief if he or she is aware of an abundance of evidence that controverts the belief. The intellectually honest person will always try to be critically honest in her or his search for truth. The intellectually honest person is free to decide for herself or himself that any particular belief is fallacious or nescient, and if indeed such is the case, free to reject such a belief, and free from having to be constantly concerned about censure, reproach, and ostracism when she or he does so. Only through intellectual honesty can a person achieve a genuine spirituality and moral responsibility.

Are We Open to Evidence?

There is the story of a graduate student in biology who, after having spent many years in locating and classifying all of the insects within a given geographic area for her dissertation research, was about ready to hand in her report and complete her degree. Suddenly and unexpectedly she came upon a new kind of insect which she had previously missed. What did she do? She stepped on it! In contrast with this, we must be true to the evidence as we find it. The person who is intellectually honest simply will not allow himself or herself to "step on the bug."

Another story concerns "two men, a Protestant and a Catholic, who happen to notice a priest entering a brothel. The Protestant clucks his tongue and smiles smugly as he reflects on the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church. The Catholic beams proudly as he reflects on the fact that, when a member of *his* church is dying, even in a brothel, he is entitled to the Holy Sacrament, and a priest will enter the brothel to administer it" (Aronson, p. 199).

Individuals usually derive interpretations and explanations that conform to their beliefs and

prejudices. What can we do to deal with our human tendency of self-justification when it impairs our faith in truth-seeking? How can we effectively manage our biases?

Being biased is not always the terrible thing people usually have in mind. A bias is no more than a preference that a person has developed for something. Obviously, our beliefs affect our interpretations and judgments of ideas and events. In matters of importance, a bias can become a hindrance and may even become a tragedy. A bias, in this case, is a preference or inclination that inhibits impartial judgment. The difference, though, between the open-minded individual and the closed-minded one is this: If the open-minded person is unjustly discriminating against other individuals or ideas, she or he is always open to correction and is always willing to change. The closed-minded individual is not.

To deal with our biases we must: (1) make ourselves aware of the bias, (2) learn why we have the bias and determine its causes, and (3) *consciously* attempt to overcome the bias so as to fulfill the intent to render impartial judgment. Since bias can cause our minds to automatically disallow any acceptance of ideas that are different from what we have been taught from youth or have simply taken to heart, to try to be impartial and intellectually honest we must ascertain our relevant biases and try to approach these ideas with an open mind.

As someone once said, the mind is like a parachute — it functions properly only when it is open. The goal is an ambitious, difficult one, *but it is worth it* — we are pursuing truth.

Divergence

Into further bondage I cannot go
as one who confidently claims to know—
meandering, lost, but afraid to tell,
asking not, to keep my unknowing well;
never questioning, never wondering,
always as growing in faith never shown.

Grappling with ideas that cannot
be known,
not in rebellion — honesty grown;
ornate as faith is, I want what is true—
striking out on a path traversed by few,
touching ideas as never touched before,
ignoring all bounds on what I explore.

Calling for truth, I cry out for reason.

References

Elliot Aronson. 1980. *The Social Animal*, 3rd ed. San Francisco: W. H. Freeman & Co.

Stephen is presently a college mathematics major in California. In the past he has served in Churches of Christ in various capacities; and is presently active in political and scholastic pursuits in Campbell, California.

Audio tapes of the seminar, "Biblical Interpretation and the Restoration Plea for Unity," held in Fenton, Michigan, in October 1986 are available. They feature Dr. Leroy Garrett, Dr. Walter Zorn and Dr. J. Harold Thomas. The cost for the six, 90-minute tapes is \$20 and includes a storage case and shipping charges for the set. Send your order and money to Amos Ponder, 1269 Pickwick Place, Flint, MI 48507.

Integrity offers bound volumes of series of issues that focus on one theme. These volumes are \$2.00 each, or \$1.50 each in lots of ten or more.

"Unity and Christian Fellowship" (2 issue volume)

"Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage" (3 issue volume)

Also available:

"Woman's Place in Church Activity" by Norman L. Parks, \$2.00 each, \$1.50 each in lots of ten or more.

Book Review:

The Subversion of Christianity by Jacques Ellul, Eerdmans 1986.

What Is Christianity?

J. BRUCE KILMER

Two books which I have read recently — *The End of Christendom* by Malcom Muggeridge and *The Subversion of Christianity* by Jacques Ellul — have kept me pondering over the question "What is Christianity?" When we were living in Japan, it seemed so easy to see how culture had influenced the Japanese church. Yet even now it is not easy for me to see the Americanisms in my own belief. And it is even more difficult for me to recognize the influence of Western civilization on the Christian message I have heard and tried to practice. Both Muggeridge and Ellul point out that the cultural influences on Christianity have been so great that the message of the present church hardly resembles the revelation of God in His Word.

These cultural influences are so much a part of our lives and what we have been taught that we fail to recognize the contradictions between the message of Jesus and the messages and practices we attribute to Him.

Our lifestyles, political beliefs, treatment of money and property, our decision-making, marriages, relationships, our treatment of women, attitude toward racial differences, our dress, our morals, our habits, what and how we eat — all our values are often influenced more by 20th century American culture than by the revelation of God.

You may be thinking that all cultural influences are not bad and that the message of Christ must be applied in its cultural context. This is true. But when the revelation of God is applied to our lives in America in the year 1987, the result should be as scandalous to the cultural values as when God Himself appeared in history almost 2,000 years ago.

We don't like scandal. We like to be accepted, to have security. How will we learn that our security is not in our bank accounts, or our houses, or our governments' weapons, or even in our families — but that our security is in Him and Him alone?

In his provocative book entitled *The Subversion of Christianity*, Jacques Ellul asserts that what we today call Christianity is actually far removed from the revelation of God. The author then points out many contradictions between the Bible and the practices of the church.

Throughout the centuries, including this one, generations have tried to accommodate Christianity to the society around them. Christians have tried to make the message of Christ acceptable and easy, avoiding the fact that Christianity is a scandal. The church has perverted the message by not rejecting the pagan beliefs around it. From the emperor worship of Rome, to the Islam of warring Arab tribes, to the materialism of today, many ideologies have been incorporated into Christianity. And the result is the subversion of Christianity. Ellul shows how sacralization, moralism, Islam, and politics have all been incorporated into the message of Christ. What is left is a fabricated Christianity based not on the revelation of God but the thinking of fallen humanity.

Today, we see Christians equating Christianity with a do's and don'ts morality, with capitalism, and with political revolution. Some church structures still resemble the organization of the Roman government while others could be mistaken for the board of directors of General Motors. We have made places and

(continued on page 68)