

Integrity

4051 S. Lincoln Road
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 48858

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Ann Arbor, MI 48106
Permit No. 189

July/August 1992
Vol. 23, No. 4

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

INTEGRITY, a journal published bimonthly by an independent nonprofit corporation, is intended to be a ministry of reconciliation which utilizes the varied talents of a large community of believers. These believers, united in faith but divergent in opinions, seek to accurately reveal God to both the church and the world so that all may become one as He is one. Accordingly, it should not be assumed that the views expressed by individual authors necessarily represent the opinions of either the editors or the Board as a whole.

Grace and Glory

ELTON D. HIGGS

“A single day in your courts is worth more than a thousand elsewhere; merely to stand on the steps of God’s house is better than living with the wicked. For God is battlement and shield, conferring grace and glory; Yahweh withholds nothing good from those who walk without shame. Yahweh Sabaoth, happy the man who puts his trust in you!” (Psalm 84:10-12, Jerusalem Bible)

Dr. Elton D. Higgs grew up in Stone/Campbell movement churches and has dedicated time and skills as an *Integrity* board member for nearly 15 years. Elton works as a professor at University of Michigan, Dearborn, teaching Medieval literature.

Grace and glory,
Both from you, O God!
The story of our lives
Unfolds as twin poles
Of mercy and praise
Converge around the
Beauty of good things
Not withheld.
How could we wish
To leave the sphere
Defined by your good gifts?
You lift us
Past the loveless nets of lust
And give us what we long for,
Not merely our desire.
Grace the gift to heal our wounds,
Glory to set our hearts aflame—
God’s NAME
The source of both.
All this to show us
Delectations beyond our taste.

Integrity

Editorial: One Legitimate Qualifier

The Changeless Word in a Changing World

Doug Varnado

Some Thoughts on the Holy Spirit

Gregory Widener

The Future of Unity

J. Bruce Kilmer

C.S. Lewis & G.K. Chesterton

Jerry L. Daniel

Intercepted Correspondence

Readers’ Response

Grace and Glory

Elton D. Higgs

July/August 1992
Vol. 23, No. 4

Editors

Diane G.H. Kilmer
J. Bruce Kilmer

Layout Editor

Natalie Randall

Integrity Address

4051 S. Lincoln Road
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

Board of Directors

Sidney R. Bonvallet
Wayne A. Bonvallet
Brant Lee Doty
Elton D. Higgs
Laquita M. Higgs
Joseph F. Jones
Diane G.H. Kilmer
J. Bruce Kilmer
Curtis Lloyd
Curtis D. McClane
Foy Palmer
Henrietta C. Palmer
William Palmer
Amos Ponder
Karl W. Randall
Natalie Randall
Jan Van Horn
John Van Horn

Editorial Advisor

Hoy Ledbetter

Subscriptions

are by written request. There is no subscription charge, but we depend on your contributions, which are tax deductible.

Manuscripts

written exclusively for INTEGRITY are welcomed.

Back Issues

Available from
1269 Pickwick Place
Flint, MI 48507

One Legitimate Qualifier

During this past year a young man met with the elders of a Church of Christ to answer their questions in preparation for his appointment as deacon. Logic tells us that he wouldn't have been considered if there hadn't been something exemplary about his life. Yet when the young man was asked to define what it meant to be a Christian, his answer was unsatisfactory to the leadership of that church and they found him unqualified to be deacon. His definition was "a follower of Jesus." We can imagine numerous likely qualifiers that the elders were expecting the young man to tack onto his statement, but the young man had wanted to leave room in his answer for God's possibilities.

Somewhere between John 3:16 and Philippians 1:6 God has left himself an expanse of time and space for each of his children's growth, understanding, and maturity:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

". . . being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

If we could believe that we enter a saved condition when we accept Jesus as the Son of God as Paul taught in Romans 5:1-2, and if we could believe that the rest of our life was a journey of spiritual growth and obedience dependent upon the Holy Spirit's tutorage and our own response as students, what would be some of the results?

1) The pressure to be "right" enough to be saved or to earn our salvation would be off of us. We could relax in the knowledge that God himself is carefully customizing our individual growth in love and service to match our temperament and circumstances. I find it easier to see evidence of this when I look back at the complex interweaving of mentors and spiritual "eras" in my own life.

2) There would no longer be a need to proselytize members of denominations. Instead, our new point-of-view would be: here's another believer in Jesus as God's Son, as I am; God is overseer of this person's individual spiritual growth, as he

(Continued on page 64)

The Changeless Word in a Changing World

DOUGLAS VARNADO

It is a time of fear for some. Ignorance abounds. One hears the clamor that any change is equated with evil, apostasy and godlessness. Some certainly is. Others are natural . . . and necessary.

Harvie Conn, in his book entitled, *Eternal Word and Changing Worlds*, notes the complexity of this issue. That which is eternal remains intact. Yet evolving changes do and must occur or stagnation and death inevitably follow.

Some things never change. The eternal God does not. His laws are immutable and everlasting. The Word proclaims that God is "He who lives forever, whose name is holy" (Isaiah 57:15). It was A.W. Tozer who said, "God dwells in eternity but time dwells in God. He has already lived in all our tomorrows and He has lived our yesterdays."

The Lord Jesus Christ is the "same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). All that God is he has always been, and all that he has been and is he will ever be. Concerning the scope of deity Jehovah God himself declares that, "I the Lord do not change" (Malachi 3:6).

"The Word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:6). Peter incorporates this text in his first epistle referring to the truth of God and its transforming effect upon our lives. It is a reference not so much to Scripture, but to the relationship embodied in Scripture, as it was borne through a host of individuals: from prophet to priest, from king to the King of Kings, from apostle to godly followers who have recorded that truth in a written Word.

The means and object of our salvation is unchanging. It is only through Jesus that salvation is bestowed as a gift by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-10). Anyone or anything else is counterfeit and useless for we will never receive salvation through our efforts or

achievements. There is nothing that we can or ever will do that could possibly merit the saving grace of God. God's "steadfast love and mercy" will never change. It is forever and "new every morning" (Lam. 3:22-23).

However, God's church must experience changes, many changes. Scripture does not lead us to the conclusion that the church is a monolithic, unchanging institution. God's body is always in a state of growth, maturity, transformation and change. And this is true because his Kingdom is eternal. It is the Kingdom, the rule or reign within the hearts and lives of his people that is constant and unchanging. But the church is recognizable as his Kingdom community only insofar as it demonstrates Jesus' reign over all its life and activity. Even though God does not change it does not mean that his church is unchanging.

The Changing Church

The church is God's unique signpost in this world. It is ever pointing people (different and complex people) to the fullness of Christ's coming reign within. Through God's Spirit it experiences renewal which calls for an ongoing reformation of faith on the principles of the biblical text. It seeks to recover. It proclaims old and newly found freedom. It is the conduit of communication of the good news of God's infinite and unchanging grace and love. And it does so by sharing a spiritual message that is ancient yet timeless — millennia old yet made fresh daily by God's Holy Spirit.

That message acknowledges the complexity of cultural barriers that must be crossed. Thousands of years are covered in a single breath as we read old, yet new messages. Through time and culture the message has changed, and will continue to do so, if it has any chance of being heard and made relevant

in the lives of humankind.

It should not surprise us that God's intention was never to allow the church to simply remain static through a world and history that is changing by the minute. If the church is a living organism, then the natural order of it and all other organisms is to be sensitive to and operative within the environment in which they live. The church must naturally change or it will die.

Therefore, from generation to generation the picture one sees of the church will be different. Consequently, our worship style and presentation will change. Our preaching and teaching will change. Songbooks, hymns, Bible literature, translations, structures and formats must change. Our communities are changing. Problems and issues that affect our lives change. Our world is changing and we must be willing to change as the Spirit leads us, even as the Gospel remains the same, unchanged from eternity past.

Christ's church must constantly seek renewal. Yet, with that renewal, increased fear and tension arises. Insecurity brings resistance. Resistance usually ushers in turmoil. Jesus was aware of the inevitable result of his message of renewal and change within the established religious systems. He said, "No one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will be wasted and the skins ruined. New, fresh skins for new wine! And no one after drinking old wine wants new; for he says, 'The old wine is good'" (Luke 5:37-39). It was deemed good because it was comfortable and well-known. No demands were made, no tension produced, no faith challenged and no change made. It was easy and predictable.

And yet Jesus knew realistically that old wineskins would not accommodate new wine, that old cloth could not hold a new patch. We must be very careful and sensitive to others whose identity and purpose is connected to a retention of the past. In addition, we must be warned that God, his Word, his purpose, Jesus Christ and his basis of salvation are eternal and never changing.

Yet the church that refuses to live in the "today" and look forward to the coming days, refuses to open its eyes to the needs of people and its ears to their pitiful cries, which refuses to study and apply the Word of God in light of our world's changing conditions, is not only in danger of being run over and left behind, but finds itself out of touch and irrelevant in meeting needs that are so glaring in our world today.

The transforming life in Christ is the life in change. We are being changed from one level of glory to the next (II Cor. 3:18). We are changed and transformed into his image (Rom. 12:1). We are being renewed daily into the likeness of Jesus (II Cor. 4:16). And that is what makes us different. The church, as Samuel Odunaiké has said, "should not be a museum for the collection and display of trophies that made history in past generations, but a theater of action where Jesus saves and demonstrates the translation of humankind from the kingdom of Satan to that of God's dear Son." When those people are not changing and when the church seeks to thwart those changes, the gospel has been sold out.

May God grant us such great love for him and for one another that we will uphold to the death his eternal Word and purpose in the midst of our changing world.

Harvie Conn, *Eternal World and Changing Worlds*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Co.) 1984.

A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*. (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row Co.) 1961.

Bruce J. Nicholls, ed. *The Church: God's Agent For Change*. Samuel Odunaiké, "A Personal Reflection" (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House), 1986.

Doug Varnado ministers to the South Harpeth Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee and also teaches at David Lipscomb College.

Some Thoughts on the Holy Spirit

GREGORY WIDENER

Cane Ridge Revival

Many heirs of the Campbell/Stone movement (Churches of Christ, Christian Churches, Disciples of Christ,) are uncomfortable with the Cane Ridge event of 1801 near Paris, Kentucky. We are uncomfortable because at that eucharistic meeting (it was a monthly Presbyterian communion service) bizarre manifestations of the Holy Spirit were reported, such as the "barking, jerking and singing" exercises which have no current parallel. We are uncomfortable because we pride ourselves on our "reasonable" Christianity, an emphasis which comes from John Locke of England. We are uncomfortable, because anything of God which is beyond our control means that *we* cannot be *in control*, and as human beings, how we love to be in control!

Recently, in reading *The Autobiography of Elder John Rogers* (a follower of Barton Stone) I was astonished to read in his reports that the same manifestations as at Cane Ridge were still being experienced as late as 1817, perhaps even later. Significant numbers of people were still being converted at this later time through these frontier revivals, indicating how important they were to the numerical growth of Stone's "Christian Connection." Cane Ridge was obviously part of a several-year revival process which converted a significant number of people and added greatly to Stone's movement in the early 1800's.

Christian Church historians usually talk a lot about Walter Scott's "Five Finger Exercise" as the primary method of evangelistic growth among the Campbell/Stone reformation. I agree that Scott's preaching method was the primary method of church growth in the Campbell/Stone movement from 1830 on, but I want to suggest that charismatic revivals were the second most important way that God grew the church in our history. Rarely is this fact mentioned by the Campbell/Stone historians. Why?

Stone vs. Campbell

One of the sharpest areas of disagreement between Stone and Campbell was over the Holy Spirit. John Rogers makes it clear that the followers of Barton Stone were gravely concerned about Campbell's apparent lack of emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Perhaps such a criticism was slightly unfair to Alexander Campbell.

It is true that Campbell did not focus a lot on the Holy Spirit except to teach that "the Spirit operates through the Word." But it is doubtful that this teaching was intended to be a comprehensive view of the Holy Spirit — instead, it was a reactionary teaching to combat the Calvinism of Campbell's day, which insisted that humans were saved through "regeneration" and that salvation was known through divine "experiences." To combat this view, Campbell taught that the primary function of the Holy Spirit was to use Scripture to convict, persuade, and enlighten the seeking heart because "faith is the belief in divine testimony." Unfortunately, Alexander Campbell did not write a comprehensive view of the Holy Spirit, and so his reactionary viewpoint has tended to jaundice many of his own spiritual heirs.

Openness to the Spirit

No comprehensive view of the Holy Spirit can be offered in a few words, nor can a proper historical sketch of the actions of the Spirit in the Church be chronicled in a brief article. But what is possible is to plead for a particular *attitude* to be characteristic of the church today — particularly among the spiritual heirs of Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell. For too long our people have been characterized by spiritual pride, divisiveness, and the assumption that we alone possess the truth.

It is clear that God used the revivals of ages past in mighty ways, but would we be comfor-

table with them today? We pride ourselves in our "reasonable" Christianity only to discover that oftentimes God is unreasonable and God's actions confound us at every turn. The Christian life is full of surprises, mystery, enigmas and divine paradox. God cannot be put in a box, and that includes the history of the Campbell/Stone movement.

It is of primary importance to know what God has done in biblical times as well as through the ages of the church. But it is equally as important to be open to what God is doing, and what God shall do. Although God's nature and purpose never change throughout the ages, the *actions* of our Master do change according to what we choose to do. Simply put, God is free to act in new ways unknown to history. If God were to act in a new way among the Churches of Christ/Christian Churches, would we be aware of it?

Barton W. Stone was not entirely comfortable with the manifestations of the Spirit at Cane Ridge, but he was not negative about the experience because he saw numerous persons at Cane Ridge truly converted to Christ (see the 9th volume of the *Christian Messenger*). Stone, as well as Campbell, demonstrated the ability to learn new things and to change his mind according to what he had learned. They were part of a "movement," not an end result — so they were open to learning. They knew how to be faithful to their convictions without becoming set in absolutist dogma.

Any discussion of the Holy Spirit must go beyond church history, and the controversy

over spiritual gifts, to the very heart of what it means to be Christian. Paul commands us in Ephesians 5:8 to "walk as children in the light." As "walk" is one of the themes of the book of Ephesians, this book may be a helpful one to examine the role of the Spirit in the life of the Christian. "Spirit" is found in Ephesians in these references: 1:13; 2:18; 2:22; 3:4-5; 3:16; 4:3; 5:18-19, 6:17-18.

From Ephesians alone we see the following terms associated with the Holy Spirit: *access, might, unity, worship, sealing, revelation, and dwelling of God*. The Bible as a whole has a very high view of the Holy Spirit, placing great stress on this person of the Godhead.

Conclusion

The emphasis on the Holy Spirit in the history of the Campbell/Stone Movement has been less than biblical in its scope. It is time for us to become Spirit-oriented as well as Christocentrically oriented. We need to have sensitivity to what God is doing in our midst today and not merely rely upon what God has done in the past.

May the Lord give us the discernment to see the chariots of fire in Israel as Elisha saw, that we may be ready to move as God moves!

Gregory Widener has ministered to Disciples of Christ and "independent" Christian Churches/Churches of Christ in Oregon, Tennessee, and Kentucky. He is currently a Ph.D. student at the University of Kentucky.

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)

"Holy Spirit" (5 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.

Send your order and money to Amos Ponder, 1269 Pickwick Place, Flint, MI 48507.

The Future of Unity

J. BRUCE KILMER

The uniting of Alexander Campbell's and Barton W. Stone's two groups in the early 1830s was one of the exemplar moments of a movement that today seems to have forgotten its heritage of pleas for unity among the Christian denominations. Along the way the principles which were to be used to realize unity have fossilized, forming a sect which has closed itself off from the people it sought to unify. The pleas for "no creed but Christ," "speak where the Bible speaks," and "New Testament Christianity" have been used to create unwritten creeds which exclude all who fail to join our particular brand of the Church of Christ. Instead of uniting on the basic message of the Scriptures, we have divided over differences in how to implement the message in a church setting. In lesson after lesson and article after article, we have looked upon the sacred Scriptures as a blueprint, road map, or rule book, though nowhere in Scripture do we find this claim.

As I read the articles from various Church of Christ publications, I am amazed at how we have tied ourselves in knots with this view of Scripture. The rationalizing has become mind boggling. The plea for unity has been forgotten. However, even if we were to remember it, the goal of unity would be impossible for today's Church of Christ.

Blueprint Doctrines

The goal of unity will remain out of reach for the Church of Christ until we give up our view of the Bible as a "blueprint" in general; and in particular, until we give up two of our blueprint doctrines. These two doctrines are: (1) the "how to be saved" or "plan of salvation" doctrine, and (2) the "not allowed in church" doctrine.

The "how to be saved" doctrine centers on baptism rather than on Christ. Consequently, all who have not been baptized are excluded from those with whom unity is possible. This means not only those who have never been baptized, but those who have not been baptized in the exact mode as our blueprint doctrine specifies: immersion, with the correct verbal formula (for the remission of sins).

The testing of the validity of a person's baptism has become both an academic and superstitious process. Of the many scriptural meanings associated with baptism, we have emphasized "remission of sins" as the essential one. Furthermore, we have imposed an unalterable order to a series of steps (hear, believe, repent, confess, be baptized) that are taken from various contexts throughout the New Testament. In addition to the requirement that one understand the blueprint reason for baptism and follow the blueprint steps, we have made almost a magical formula out of Matthew 28:19: "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." I am afraid that in some of our congregations baptizing a person by using the "formulas" "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38, 10:48) or "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5) would bring the validity of that person's baptism into question.

This mechanical view of baptism and salvation in general has not only robbed us of fellowship with others who do not subscribe to this approach, but has hindered our response to the good news of Jesus Christ. With the emphasis on formula and order, we lose sight of God's grace and the power and love demonstrated in the life of his son, Jesus Christ.

The "not allowed in church" doctrine is derived from the view that the New Testament has a set of rules and regulations for activities

that are conducted "in the church." This varies from church to church and includes everything from no eating in the church building to no women speaking during the official worship time. The most characteristic evidence of this doctrine (in one segment of the Restoration Movement) is the banning of instrumental music during the official worship time. When this doctrine is applied not only in our churches, but to any contacts with other Christians, our opportunities for meeting with other Christians are severely limited, and thus, our pleas for unity, if uttered at all, are heard only by ourselves.

Somewhere in our earnestness to be right and to have everyone conform to our idea of what was right, we decided that to be present when blueprint doctrinal error was being practiced was a sin in and of itself. Thus, the result was our many splits, as we tried to find the lowest common denominator of agreement that would supposedly keep our brother or sister from stumbling. However, it was more likely that we were preventing only grumbling, rather than stumbling. This doctrine, that we cannot fellowship or even be present in a service with those with whom we disagree, is one of the greatest obstacles to our ever realizing unity. This doctrine has not only prevented our realizing Campbell's and Stone's plea for unity with other denominations, it has prevented unity among those who agree on the most basic things.

The Church of Christ (non-instrumental) has not only split from the Christian Church, but has splintered into many smaller groups. Each group has stood firm for some practice which prevented its members from fellowshiping with the others. The reasoning has always been that a person should not be present when multiple communion cups, Sunday school classes, eating in church buildings, reading from a non-King James translation, and other such "heretical practices" are taking place. But where do we read in the New Testament of a congregation where everyone had to agree on every minor point before they could continue as a congregation of the Lord's church? Where are we taught that our presence in a service with those with whom we disagree is sin?

Unity and Diversity

What can we do to keep these doctrines from separating us from other Christians and from destroying our hope of ever being unified with anyone except those who accept our particular understanding of baptism and of what can and cannot be done in church?

First of all, we can teach that immersion in water in the name of Christ is a response of faith which was a normative response in the New Testament to the preaching of Christ. However, our belief, understanding, and teaching about baptism does not have to separate us from accepting other believers in Christ who have not been baptized in exactly the same way or who do not have exactly the same understanding as we teach. For we can never teach, we can never understand, and we can never participate in a perfect baptism. What if one foot comes up and is not immersed with the rest of our body? What if we do not understand that we are to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit at our baptism? What if we are baptized "in the name of Jesus" rather than "Jesus Christ" or rather than in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? What if when we are baptized, we accept Christ as Savior, but do not understand the implications of accepting him as Lord? What if we repent *after* we are baptized? What if we are not trusting in Christ as our Savior when we are baptized, but instead we are trusting in our understanding of the "plan of salvation?" What if, what if. . .

None of us were baptized perfectly or had a perfect understanding when we were baptized. It is not our understanding that saves us, it is Christ! As Carl Ketcherside once wrote to me as I wrestled with these "what ifs": "Forgiveness is a judicial act in the mind of God."

When we accept this, we will be able to accept others with whom we differ. As we accept them, we will be able to meet with them, even if we do not agree with everything that is said or done while we are meeting. New avenues of fellowship will open which will encourage and inspire us as we learn more about God's infinite wisdom from these who are also followers of Christ.

Association and Condonation

I will never forget the blessings I received when I served on a board of directors of a Christian Conciliation Service in our community several years ago. This organization's purpose was to provide mediation services to Christians who had legal disputes with one another, so that Paul's admonition that Christians not sue one another (I Corinthians 6:1-8) could be kept. This board was made up of Christian attorneys, ministers, and other professionals from various denominations, including Baptists, Catholics, Episcopalians, Mennonites, and others. Praying, mediating, and working with these Christians allowed me to see their relationship with God and their fruits of the Spirit up close. There was no denying the influence of Christ in their lives. I learned to accept them in spite of their differences from me. Often I did not change my view concerning the things about which we differed, but I understood better why they believed the way they did. Sometimes our differing views brought each of us toward the other's view in a moderating way. I believe this type of diversity is helpful for all Christians as we continue in the life-long growth of our faith.

We need to learn to worship, study, and fellowship with people who have different views than our own. We have been so conditioned to "convert" the denominations to the correct way that it is difficult for us to really listen to other Christians, except as a ruse to convert them.

When we learn to relax and listen, we will begin to learn from them as well as teach them. When we begin to pray and work with other Christians outside the Church of Christ, we will grow to love them and appreciate their insights into Scripture. These insights will enrich our own understanding of Christianity and our spirituality.

Bible: God's Eternal Purpose

The Bible is a compilation of 66 books written by numerous writers over many centuries. Nowhere in the Bible itself does it claim to be a blueprint. No writer sets out to prescribe the

rules for Sunday morning worship at 11:00 a.m. In fact, it is not clear from the New Testament that Sunday is a special time for the worship of the church. The example in Acts 20:7 is merely describing events that took place. Our practice of Sunday worship comes more from church history than the Bible. There is nothing wrong with taking this from history. However, we should acknowledge that many of our practices come from history or tradition rather than the Bible (viz.: church buildings, located preachers, Wednesday evening meetings, etc.)

The Bible is a record and a narrative of God's presence with and among his people, and it is a revelation of the working out of his eternal purpose. It does not claim to be and was never meant to be a blueprint for the church or for the church's worship. When we try to make it a blueprint, we actually distort its meaning and purpose.

Sect or Movement

Long ago we lost sight of the contribution the Stone-Campbell Movement could make to unity among Christians. We lapsed into legalistic sects, isolating ourselves from other Christians. This isolation has been the cause of stagnation, because we have failed to learn from the moderating influences of different perspectives. Furthermore, this isolation has cut us off from fulfilling our mission of unity.

Until we can again accept others with whom we differ as Christians, and until we can meet and work with them, we will never be able to carry out the original plea of our heritage as a unity movement. What can you do to promote unity among the Christians in your community?

Bruce Kilmer is co-editor of *Integrity* with his wife Diane. He grew up in the Church of Christ (a cappella), graduated from Abilene Christian University, and has served as an elder in the Church of Christ/Christian Church (instrumental). Currently he resides in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan where he works for the Michigan Supreme Court as a Regional State Court Administrator.

C. S. Lewis and G. K. Chesterton

JERRY L. DANIEL

C. S. Lewis has earned wide respect among conservative American Christians (British, too, although his reputation seems even higher in the States). His contributions, though admittedly on the popular level, have been so profound as to lead many to forget, or to ignore, the fact that he was not a fundamentalist, did not believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, and did believe in biological evolution. We seem capable of doing with Lewis what we have had difficulty doing with those in our own fellowship—gleaning the good while agreeing to disagree in various areas of doctrine and philosophy.

I think G. K. Chesterton is equally helpful and should be afforded the same treatment. My hunch, however, is that our fellowship hasn't quite "discovered" Chesterton, or at least not so fully as we have Lewis. This is based on experience: I have for years recommended both authors to Christians (and others) of my acquaintance, but have noticed that far more "took to" Lewis than to Chesterton, perhaps because of the latter's flamboyant writing style, or perhaps because his late-life conversion to Roman Catholicism made him less attractive to Protestants. Whatever the reasons, if my hunch is correct, we are missing a great deal, so I propose a few brief articles designed to encourage *Integrity* readers who haven't already discovered these two authors to read them, and to encourage those who have read Lewis, but not Chesterton, to give the latter a good healthy chance.

For this reason I plan to say more about Chesterton in these articles—not that he is in any way superior to Lewis; he simply needs more exposure to our readers. The emphasis will also be on areas of similarity between the two, though excellent articles can be (and often have been) written on their manifold differences.

There are "heavy" areas aplenty which deserve discussion regarding Lewis and Chesterton, but let's begin with a light touch and progress in later articles (if such materialize) to the weightier matters. The first thing to attract me to Chesterton's works was his sense of gusto, his view that life, even what we usually call "ordinary" life, is, if properly seen, preeminently exciting. His very earliest published work, *Greybeards at Play*, contains the lines: "I love to see the little stars/All dancing to one tune; I think quite highly of the Sun,/And kindly of the Moon." This ditty says playfully what is said in all his moods and in all his books: the dance of life, the earth, the sky, the church, man, woman, the animal world, goodness and virtue, work and play—all join in a dance, not wanton, but controlled and filled with meaning born of a sense of wonder.

A sense of wonder is, in fact, one of the keys to an understanding of both Chesterton and Lewis. The former concludes his poem, "The Mystery," with the lines:

Witness, O Sun that blinds our eyes,
Unthinkable and unthankable King,
That though all other wonder dies
I wonder at not wondering.

And in *the Coloured Lands*, he comments:

The power of seeing plain things and landscapes in a kind of sunlight of surprise; the power of jumping at the sight of a bird as if at a winged bullet; the power of being brought to a standstill by a tree as by the gesture of a gigantic hand; . . . is a part of my own human nature.

Then in his splendid introduction to the Book of Job, Chesterton summarizes God's appeal to Job in the closing chapters:

He unrolls before Job a long panorama of created things, the horse, the eagle, the raven, the wild ass, the peacock, the ostrich, the crocodile. He so describes each of them that it sounds like a monster walking in the sun. The whole is a sort of psalm or rhapsody of the sense of wonder. The maker of all things is astonished at the things he has himself made.

Lewis agrees that life is a mystery which should evoke a sense of wonder, and he bewails the fact that modern humanity has to an extent lost that capacity. He says in *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, "Man with his new powers became rich like Midas but all that he touched had gone dead and cold" (p.4).

"I had always believed," Chesterton tells us in chapter 4 of *Orthodoxy*, "that the world involved magic: now I thought that perhaps it involved a magician." He adds that this thought produced a strong emotion in that it showed the world to have some purpose, then concludes: "I had always felt life first as a story: and if there is a story there is a story-teller." For both men the gusto stems from the belief that there is purpose and plan, and if a plan, than a planner. Lewis tells us in *Letters to Malcolm* (chap. 14) that "all ground is holy and every bush (could we but perceive it) a Burning Bush." It is a major purpose of both writers to open our eyes; to help us see the Burning Bush, which we normally miss—"glimpses of Heaven in the earthly landscape."

Especially of Chesterton, it can be said that one of his primary goals is to make us see the startling quality of things, even of commonplace things. His attitude is best understood via a letter to his wife, not intended for publication: "the startling wetness of water excites me; the fieriness of fire, the steeliness of steel, the unutterable muddiness of mud. . . ." The theme pervades his writing, but is never forced or mannered. And it is grounded in the certain faith that the mystery and wonder of this world reflect the fact that there is something more than this world. If there is a plan, there must be a planner; or as has been more recently said, "If there was a Big Bang, there must have been a Big Banger."

It may seem an unworthy matter to emphasize the gusto of Lewis and Chesterton, rather than their subtle and highly nuanced apologetic argumentation. But this joy, stemming at least in part from a sense of wonder, is too crucial to their thinking and writing to ignore; too big to be missed. I think it is one of the magnets which attracts so many readers. At least it attracted me—at first almost unconsciously. It kept me reading them long enough to discover some of their more important contributions. On second thought, can anything be more important than the sense of wonder? And such is especially needed in our postmodern age in which much literature is nihilistic and almost morbidly introspective.

I am not presenting these two authors as Pollyannas who see good in everything. They are both well aware of evil and its consequences. Nor am I implying that their gusto and sense of wonder is their primary contribution to Christian literature. They have a great deal more to offer, some of which will hopefully be explored in subsequent articles. But they can't be properly read and appreciated without adequate attention to this as well. It is pervasive in their writings, and of considerably more importance than their commentators and critics have usually allowed. It can stimulate decisive change in those who read their books.

Wordsworth speaks of the loss of youth when man perceives the vision "fade into the light of common day." Chesterton and Lewis show us that the common day is not at all common. The world is a marvel. Nothing is quite ordinary. A sense of wonder leads to happiness: Chesterton merrily hits the right note when he suggests that we ought to learn to sing at our work, noting that simple people tend to sing at their labors while the more sophisticated do not (*Tremendous Trifles*, pp. 140-41). "If reapers sing while reaping, why should not auditors sing while auditing and bankers while banking?" He even suggests an appropriate song for bank clerks—a "thundering chorus in praise of Simple Addition":

Up my lads, and lift the ledgers,
Sleep and ease are o'er.

Hear the Stars of Morning shouting:
'Two and Two are Four.'

Though the creeds and realms are reeling,
Though the sophists roar,
Though we weep and pawn our watches,
Two and Two are Four.

He concludes this buffoonery with characteristic insight, that "bank clerks are without songs not because they are poor, but because they are sad." C. S. Lewis and G. K. Chesterton have

more profound things to offer, but it is worthwhile to stress that they, through their sense of wonder and its attendant joy, offer a thoroughly Christian antidote to unhappiness.

Jerry L. Daniel serves as minister and elder to the Echo Lake Church of Christ in Westfield, New Jersey where he and his family have lived for 20 years. Jerry holds a Ph.D. degree in history and has been an *Integrity* reader for more than 18 years. He is editor of *CSL: The Bulletin of the New York C. S. Lewis Society*.

Editorial

(Continued from page 54)

is of mine. Therefore, our studies or discussions could become open searches for truth to gain a deeper knowledge of Jesus. More energy could be spent cultivating evangelistic opportunities among non-believers.

3) We would be free to rejoice and praise God for the good things he works out in other people's lives who are not from our own church tradition — without hesitation, completely trusting that God is "carrying on to completion" the good work he began in them when they believed in his Son. We could refer to these people as "brothers and sisters."

4) The boundaries of Christian fellowship would expand to include all believers in Christ who are trying to follow Jesus' way. We would get to recognize, as part of our Christian family, contemporary believers such as Amy Grant, Jimmy Carter and Mother Theresa. We could be encouraged by the great cloud of witnesses who are cheering us on which includes Peter and Catherine Marshall, J. Oswald Chambers, Charles and John Wesley, Martin Luther, Teresa of Avila and others — fallible believers who were drawn to Jesus, the Son of God.

5) We would be at liberty to work as partners with all believers to the glory of God against the corruption of this world.

Does this freedom of fellowship with other followers of Jesus described above require that we throw out those beliefs that have distinguished us from others in the past? Three

verses spell out the ideal, ruling attitude that can help us face this question:

The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve" (Romans 14:22).

Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand" (Romans 14:4).

Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Romans 15:7).

When we gain some spiritual understanding, we should obey and practice that knowledge conscientiously. But we must always keep our minds open to the possibility that spiritual understanding of a given truth could be broader and deeper than we know at present. God leads each individual at her or his own pace toward maturity. There's room to grow, to make mistakes and to learn from them. We live and move within a state called Grace, having qualified for citizenship when we began to follow its governor, Jesus Christ.

Diane G.H. Kilmer
Co-Editor

Intercepted Correspondence

The following "Intercepted Correspondence" is a continuing feature begun in the January/February 1988 issue of *Integrity*. These letters are *Integrity's* version of C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters* and Os Guinness' *Gravedigger Files* and are written by two different *Integrity* board members.

To refresh your memory and inform new readers, our imaginary setting has Bruce

attending Word Perfect computer classes, where he accidentally begins intercepting subversive communication between two devils on his computer screen. The *Integrity* board decides that we must inform Christians everywhere of the destructively evil plots of the nefarious teacher Apollyon and his young student Ichabod by publishing the letters for as long as they can be intercepted.

My Dear Morbid Mouthpiece:

I find it a bit of a paradox to read into your last letter more than a tinge of morbidity and frustration, while at the same time you seem to have no little acquaintance with, and mastery of, one of our most consistently effective devices used in confounding certain of the Enemy's gullible followers. I refer to the matter of their inappropriate, and even abusive or profane use of that little member, the tongue. One of their own people has compared such use potentially to a destructive conflagration, spewing our deadly poison. And, acknowledging our consistent reliance upon the common fact, he has appropriately written that such tongues are ". . . set on fire by hell!"

As troublesome as it may be to our Enemy to have adherents who fall into profane or offensive speech traps, however, I concur in your observation that their failure to speak out when conscience and circumstances demand it may be an even greater asset to our cause. Silence of the Enemy's "advocates," as failure to oppose evil, can accomplish victories obtainable in no other way. As a rather enthusiastic, crusading preacher I heard once said, "Silence may be golden, but sometimes it's just plain yellow!"

However that may be, we can never diminish our efforts in encouraging profanity, vulgarisms, gossip, slander, deceitfulness, divisiveness, hypocrisies, and the myriads of

other "tried-and-true" devices which inevitably advance our cause.

And I cannot overlook your astute observation regarding the potentially discouraging—even traumatic—silence when words of appropriate commendation, consolation or encouragement are not spoken. That, my dear nephew, is sheer genius. Seize every opportunity to convince any of the Enemy's "encouragers" that they mustn't goof by saying the wrong thing, or that words of commendation could cultivate pride, or simply that a silent presence is adequate for the suffering.

If I commend you in your efforts to commandeer men's tongues in our behalf, I must sound a strong word about your emphasis upon the sense of "horrible physical torments," and the "utter futility and hopelessness" of our residents, as they are caricatured in the *Inferno*. Do you fail to feel the demoniacal glee in observing the pains and punishments of others? We really can't advertise our residence as a summer resort, can we? I would recommend that you become thoroughly familiar with the various pitfalls into which our inhabitants have fallen, and set such traps wherever and whenever you are able; and that you learn to chortle over your successes with demoniacal glee!

Yours in subtle subterfuge of speech,
Uncle Apollyon

Dear Dark-Browed Uncle,

Your brooding encouragement always darkens any light which I may be tempted to let in. Thank you for pushing me on to greater depths of linguistic perversion. I shall try to make sure that the pitfalls of prattle and the sloughs of slander are continual traps for those in my congregation.

I'm going to take a break from Broad Way in this letter and tell you about some work I've been doing in a neighboring congregation that has a new, rather high-powered, intellectual preacher. He's eager to put all of the newest techniques of church growth into effect, but he's viewed with some suspicion by a group of zealous young men who are rather self-consciously "drunk with the Spirit" and are on the lookout for "unsound" preaching. I just couldn't resist getting in and meddling with a situation where well-intentioned and committed people are at odds with each other, especially since that congregation has been given only part-time attention by our agent, Asphalt, who is occupied elsewhere right now. I've been talking with one of the young turks and encouraging him not to give an inch in demanding that the "pure gospel" be preached—which means, of course, only that part of the gospel which he has already understood and mastered and with which he feels comfortable. If I get a chance to talk to the preacher, I will urge him to be self-righteous and unyielding on his side, as well; that ought to set up a very satisfying confrontation between them where both are standing on principle and neither can afford to retreat.

Naturally, I don't give a hoot about which of them is correct, so long as both sides are convinced that holding to their perception of truth is more important than working things out between them. Nevertheless, it appears to me that

the preacher, for his part, is correct in concluding that the congregation, as a whole, has no desire to be any different from what they are—that is, 95% comfortable, middle-class, and white-Anglo-Saxon. Since most of the truly needy people in our society (the ones most desperate to hear some "good news") don't fall into those classifications, the prospect of reaching out to "bring in the sheaves" is decidedly less attractive to the congregation than tending to their own walled garden. Now the young spiritual inebriates don't fall exactly into that class, but I think with a little coaching they can be made as walled-in and protective as the others. In their case, it would be protecting spiritual "good feeling," rather than material and social comfort, and in the process failing to understand that the avenue by which they came to that "good feeling" may not be open to people who have no religious background at all. The preacher should be prodded to view them as narrow unsophisticates who create spiritual elitism out of ignorance and immaturity. The young turks, upon seeing this attitude, could then easily be persuaded to dismiss him as an over-educated snob who thinks more of social theory than he does the Bible. The really scary possibility is that the preacher, with his desire to cross cultural boundaries and develop a different idiom of communication to reach the unchurched, and the "Spirit-filled" bunch, with their zeal and recklessness, might sit down together in a mutual desire to serve God and discover the power of combining their respective strengths. That must be prevented at all costs!

I'll get back to Broad Way in my next letter. It ought not to take long to break this little congregation wide open.

Yours in false light,

Ichabod

The *Integrity* Board offers a big thanks to all of you who help the *Integrity* ministry financially! Many readers make an annual contribution during our fall fundraiser, but others make a donation at other times of the year. We welcome all of your help and use it conscientiously!

Readers' Response

. . . God has such wonderful ways of leading and enlightening us! Three years ago our daughter and her family invited Ray and me to attend the Tulsa Soul Winning Workshop with them. . . I say without a particle of doubt, that God led me there. . . I met Cecil Hook!

After I read his book *Free In Christ*, I wrote to him. . . He sent me a list of publications that he thought I might find interesting, and I met you *Integrity* folks, and others. I have shared yours and his materials with many of my friends here. . . Grace and peace.

Frankie Marie Shanks
Poplar Bluff, MO

Note from editors: For the first time we, too, got to meet Cecil and Lea Hook at the ACU Lectureship—they were incredibly kind and encouraging to us. You can order a copy of Cecil's book *Free In Christ* by writing: Cecil and Lea Hook, 1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, Texas 78130.

Thank you for your personal integrity and the entire staff there. Your expressions of love for openness of the Spirit warm my heart of hearts. . . "Intercepted Correspondence" keeps my spiritual "skin" stimulated and scratches where it itches!

Kathy Wyler
Kerrville, Texas

This is just a note to tell you how much we appreciate your *Integrity* magazine. It has been especially helpful these past few months. . . It is very wonderful to know that our trust is in Christ, not the church of Christ. . . Your calls for unity are so very precious. . . Thanks for your magazine. We were thankful to hear that you were able to exhibit at Abilene.

David and Ann Ihms
Russiaville, IN

In the Sept./Oct. 1991, issue of *Integrity* Wanda Hatcher reviewed a little book titled *Afraid God Works, Afraid He Doesn't*. The title intrigues me, but I can't find it in any of the local bookstores and they can't find the publisher, Howard Publishing Co., listed in their files. Will you please let me know from where I can order it?

Ruth Willburn
San Marcos, TX

Note from editors: You can locate Terry Rush's book and many other challenging titles by writing: Howard Publishing, 3117 North 7th Street, West Monroe, LA 71291.

I like Diane Kilmer's editorial in the March/April *Integrity*. I like Bruce Kilmer's comments on the Abilene Lectureship. . . My suggestion to you is that only persons who avidly steam open private correspondence to read whatever may be hidden behind the seal are apt to have much continuing interest in *Intercepted Correspondence*. I read it in two issues, and have not bothered to read it since. Its cuteness palls.

I do like *Integrity* and the dreams it has nourished for many in the years it has been published. . . Through the years you have stood faithfully for unity based on truth. I hope you may be able long to continue this ministry.

Ray Downen
Joplin, MO

Note from editors: Ray Downen publishes a "teaching and commentary"-style personal newsletter that you may be interested in ordering from Ray at: Box 1065, Joplin, MO 64802-1065.