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Integrity

Editorial *(Continued from page 90)*

Today, like our Savior who did not quite fit in, those of us who do not quite fit in with our society, or culture, or even our church, find our hope in this Savior who was born among us almost 2000 years ago. Because our hope is in him, we find our fears met, not like Herod's were met, but like the shepherds': fear turned to awe and praise.

Because we Christians do not neatly fit into this world, we become more sensitive to others who are society's misfits. As Craig Watts points out in his article in this issue: the rescuers of the Jews from the Nazis during WW II were typically those who thought of themselves as being out of step with the majority. The rescuers sensed that they themselves didn't quite "fit" in their world.

When Christ enters our life, we never quite fit in this world again. Our hopes and fears were answered in that little town of Bethlehem and when we received him as our own Savior.

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still
The dear Christ enters in.

J. Bruce Kilmer
Co-editor

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Reviewed by Raymond S. Stewart

Interceded Correspondence

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The Hopes and Fears of All the Years

The apostle John wrote: "He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him" (John 1:8). Jesus never quite fit in with those in power, with those who thought they had it all figured out. Those without power, those who were searching for answers, were drawn to him. He brought hope to those who had no power and who recognized their own needs. He brought fear to those whose power rested on the backs of others and who were blind to their own weaknesses. It was like that from his birth: the shepherds looked for him so that they might worship him; Herod looked for him so that he might kill him.

So it was as Philip Brooks wrote in the Christmas carol:

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.

Nowhere do we see the meeting of hopes and fears more vividly than in the shepherds and Herod. When Herod heard from the wise men that they were looking for the child born king of the Jews, he was frightened, and so was all of Jerusalem with him (Matthew 2:3). When he could not trick the wise men into bringing this child to him so that he could kill the child, Herod had every male child in and around Bethlehem killed who was two years old and under. No wonder Augustus said of him: "I would rather be Herod's dog than his son." Such an incarnation of evil as Herod would find his fears realized in the incarnation of the one who was, and is, goodness itself.

The shepherds were also frightened when they heard about the birth of this child (Luke 2:9). But their terror soon turned to praise, because in Bethlehem they found reason for hope, not fear: the good news of great joy of the birth of a Savior who was, and is, the Messiah (Luke 2:11, 20). As Joseph Jones states in his article in this issue: "How blessed is the benefit of incarnation!"

(Continued on page 104)

Incarnation: Mystery and Paradox

JOSEPH F. JONES

The New Testament is vibrant with the affirmation that the eternal God — the Word — became flesh and dwelt among men. The writer of the fourth Gospel boldly proclaims, "And the Word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:14). He was known as Jesus Christ, and in him was manifested the grace and truth of God the Father (John 1:17). The revelation of such divine reality is known in Scripture as "mystery" (*mysterion*), meaning that the truth of God being present in Jesus of Nazareth could not have been known, understood, or shared in without God himself taking the initiative to come to humankind.

So mystery is that which humans cannot know, perceive, or understand without divine intervention. The coming of God incarnate, in the flesh, and his subsequent life and death could not be comprehended by unaided human wisdom, writes the apostle Paul. Consequently, in affixing responsibility for the crucifixion of Christ upon "the rulers of this age," the apostle leans upon the prophet Isaiah to help explain the meaning of mystery. It is written, says Paul: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him." Then the apostle continues, "but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit" (I Cor. 2:9, 10). Here, then, is the meaning of mystery, even the mystery of incarnation, that this Jesus whom they crucified in the flesh was none other than God incarnate, and God has by his Spirit opened up this divine secret.

But if on one hand this revealed mystery of incarnation seems awesome and humbling when we contemplate it, majestic to the mind of humans, at the same time it becomes the supreme paradox in Christian theology. What do we mean by saying that God was incarnate in Jesus? In what sense was Jesus both God and

man? Or how could that one life be completely human and completely divine? And moving beyond the baffling nature of this supreme paradox in Christian revelation, what is its meaning and relevance for us today? What is its value for the contemporary church, the people of God in their daily walk?

The Meaning of Paradox

We need to sharpen our understanding of this supreme paradox in Christian faith, as D.M. Baillie characterizes it, in order better to grasp and appreciate the answers to some of these questions. This is especially important as we seek to relate the historic incarnation of God in Christ to our personal daily experience.

The dictionary defines paradox as "a statement that seems contradictory, unbelievable, or absurd but may be true in fact." Another eminent theologian, Sergius Bulgakov, suggests that paradox is an "antinomy (opposite laws) which simultaneously admits the truth of two contradictory, logically incompatible, but ontologically equally necessary assertions." (Now that's a mouthful, but don't give up!) For when we push a little further into the nature of incarnation, and realize that this is mystery beyond which human reason cannot penetrate, it is deeply gratifying that this divine reality can be actualized and lived out in the Christian's daily experience. In other words, incarnation is not some high-sounding theological doctrine which is totally unrelated to the believer's life, but rather a source of divine strength when we are weak in the flesh, a comfort when we are hurt and discouraged, healing and help when life closes in on us. How can this be? It is possible because Jesus was made flesh in our likeness, "being born in the likeness of men . . . found in human form" even as we are (Phil. 2:7, 8).

God the Eternal Became Mortal

In one of the most majestic affirmations in all Scripture, the apostle Paul speaks of "the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see (I. Tim. 6:15, 16a). Yet Jesus, the Man of Galilee, said of himself, "He that (who) has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). In some fashion of logic this God of immortality became mortal; this God "whom no man has ever seen or can see" became a man himself, made "in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin," so that he might deal with sin. For human sin was one of the imperatives demanding on God that he became flesh, and live among his fellow mortals, being subjected to all that human flesh is called upon to experience. Here is mystery revealed in the incarnation of Christ, and here is also supreme paradox for it affirms what to human minds seems so impossible and logically incompatible. Yet here is the perfect merging of the eternal with the temporal, the infinite with the finite, the fully divine with the fully human. One of the ancients beautifully expressed the necessity of these two assertions when writing that "the Son of God became a son of man, so that the sons of men might become sons of God."

Near the end of his life the apostle Paul felt so intensely the relevance of this mystery and paradox for the life of the church that he writes about it to Timothy:

And confessedly great is the mystery of godliness; who was manifested in the flesh, who was justified in Spirit, was seen by angels, was proclaimed among nations, was believed in the world, was taken up in glory" (I Tim. 3:16)

From his miraculous birth of the virgin Mary, through all his life of ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension into glory, the full message of incarnation has become the Truth which supports and upholds the church of God. It is also that to which the church gives its witness of this God who assumed humanity. And it was this incredible affirmation of the God who had become man which challenged the an-

cient world, a message that to many was either scandalous or foolish, but to others nothing less than the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation (I Cor. 1:18-25).

Christ's Real Humanity Affirmed

The impact of this truth is keenly felt as Christ identifies with the human race, for it asserts our Lord's full and real humanity. Historically, the church has struggled in its efforts to understand and teach the mystery and paradox of Jesus' incarnation. At times the Christological battle may have emphasized his divinity to the neglect of his humanity; then again Christ's humanness may have been stressed to the denial of his divinity. For Christians today there may be difficulties in appreciating and accepting his real flesh and blood humanity. We may not believe in the Gnostic dichotomy that spirit is good and flesh (matter) is evil and the consequent difficulty in believing that a good God who is spirit could be manifested in a body of evil flesh. Yet we do know very much about the nature of our bodies, their needs and drives, and we understand much about our psychic selves, those inner emotions, feelings, attitudes, and egos which make us behave as we do. We understand our humanity so well that it haunts us to think that the Son of God, the Christ/Man, could have experienced all this humanness as we have, and yet have it said of him, "He knew no sin!" Here is indeed, without controversy, the mystery of godliness, telling us that God knows and understands us in all our human nature. Here is one of our kind, made in our likeness, who is able "to sympathize with our weaknesses, and one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). How blessed is the benefit of incarnation!

Jesus' humanity, with all his feelings and bodily nature, enables him to be called our brother. "He was made in all things like unto his brethren." What a difference this makes for our prayer life, to know that there is my brother, My Older Brother, now at the Father's side, interceding for me. Here is one who knows precisely my troubles and trials, my inadequacies and failings, and can intercede for me with grace and mercy. Here is divine em-

pathy from the God who has been there, who knows, who cares, who understands, who forgives.

The Universal God/Man

While the gospel accounts testify to Jesus' life, nationality, religious culture and social background, in reality he transcended local and national limitations. The God who became man really belongs to the world. All people have their peculiar national and racial characteristics, even sub-cultural traits and behaviors. We have our languages, our traditions, our history, our own temperaments. There are the Gandhis, the Napoleons, the Churchills, the Cromwells, the Martin Luther Kings of all nations; and they are all parochial, not universal. But not so with Jesus Christ, the God/Man, the incarnate God. Here is the universal man, speaking the universal language of love; here is the God/Man with a perspective on human life and value which transcends all others. He saw all men and women as potential children of God, but whose lives had been damaged and defaced with sin, and who all needed a common grace. Whether Jew or Greek, bondman or freeman, male or female, educated or ignorant, wealthy or poor, this Christ of God would break all barriers, cleanse them from sin in his own blood, and fashion them into a new humanity, into one great family of God, the community of saints, the church (Eph. 2:1-22).

Being the God who became flesh, Christ is now timeless. As Jesus belongs not to one land or people, but to all lands and peoples, so does he not belong to one age, but to all ages. Christ's marvelous message is timeless, and though spoken in Aramaic, it now knows no time limitations. Knowledge in all fields of human learning, books in all the disciplines of human endeavor are soon outdated, or need updating and revision, may contain error in the light of new research and discovery, but the mighty message of God in Christ, the word of incarnation, is timeless. His message of love and forgiveness will always be relevant, and his

demands for repentance, the call for sinners to turn to God, will ever be necessary. The value he placed on the human being is God's view of human worth, and the divine image in every person is the basis for his respect and reverence for people of all races, whatever their social, economic, or cultural status may be. And God calls us to share this vision of our fellow human beings.

"I Believe, Help My Unbelief"

The father of a very sick child once brought his son to the disciples for healing. When the disciples were unable to bring healing and health to the youngster, the father turned to Jesus with the same plea. Jesus seems to have rebuked everyone there, both the disciples and the boy's father, whereupon the father cried out: "I believe; help my unbelief!" When I reflect on the biblical message of incarnation, with its awesome mystery revealed, and its baffling paradox haunting my human perception, I confess that I don't understand very much; human wisdom and reason don't seem to grasp the eternal too clearly. But I do believe this great secret revealed that God became very human. I don't really know how the infinite, eternal, immortal, invisible, and unapproachable God became a finite, temporal, mortal, visible, and very approachable human being — Jesus of Nazareth. But I can with feeble heart say even now, "Dear God, I believe; but help my unbelief." Whatever may be the season of the year we are experiencing, whether Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, we can confidently affirm the matchless benefits for the Christian believer, whose faith is rooted in the mystery and paradox of Christ's incarnation.

Dr. Joseph F. Jones has ministered to the Church of Christ in Troy, Michigan, for 25 years. He holds doctorates in the fields of higher education and pastoral counseling. Joseph has worked and written for *Integrity* magazine since its earliest days, and has served as president of the board for more than 12 years.

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

Heard From The Kitchen

Martha, Martha, Stop! Stop!

(Christmas presents
brought wrapped given. . .
every dish pot pan beneath heaven
used washed put away
used washed put away again)

O Martha Stop!

(. . .cumbered all about. . .
shoulders ribs legs feet
heavy as wet sand)

Martha Stop!

turn
walk to Me upon the Sea
of tissue paper
ribbon
nuts and candy scattered
glut of gifts forgotten

Martha, take my hand
I will not let you down.

— Kathy Wyler

Kathy Wyler is a retired AT&T employee who has been writing since she was 7. Born in Africa of American missionary parents and raised on Christian college campuses, Kathy calls herself a "Christian-at-large."

Including The Outsiders

CRAIG M. WATTS

[The following is an excerpt from Craig Watt's new book *Living the Paradox of Faith*, which is currently being prepared for publication.]

In his classic study *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville observed that in our budding nation there was the presence of an individualism "which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and to withdraw into a circle of family and friends."¹ Much has changed in the United States since Tocqueville penned those lines over 150 years ago. Many of the legally imposed social barriers of days past have tumbled down. Mass media has penetrated every cocoon we have attempted to spin around ourselves. Pluralism is an inescapable fact of life in contemporary America. Nevertheless, there is still a widespread tendency to retreat into enclaves of "our kind of people."

It is arguable that this self-imposed segregation is natural and largely benign. We choose our friends and associates from among people who are like us because we are most comfortable with those who have backgrounds, values and lifestyles similar to our own. We can relate to them and communicate with them with greater ease. Interacting with people who have ethnic backgrounds, national heritage, ideological viewpoints or an economic standing substantially different from our own can be quite a challenge. Our social assumptions and expectations will frequently be at odds with those who come from beyond our natural circle of association. There are abundant opportunities for awkwardness and misunderstanding. Hence, we are more likely to look for comradeship in the midst of commonality.

But there is more to it than that. The outside embodies the unknown and so evokes our wariness. We have no trouble warmly greeting the neighbor that we encounter while walking down the street. But if we are strolling in a park

as night approaches and we see someone, perhaps of a different color or dressed shabbily, moving in our direction, we may find our pulse quicken and our body become tense. We eye the person with suspicion, if not fear, viewing the stranger as a potential adversary rather than as a prospective friend. Physically and emotionally we are poised to repulse rather than receive this unknown other.

We might wish it were otherwise. Perhaps we even feel a bit guilty about our reaction, but then we hear the news reports that confirm our suspicion of strangers. Even as I write this chapter I recall an incident that occurred not long ago in our city. A young woman was abducted, abused and killed after she stopped to help a man who appeared to be having difficulty with his car. Such an event is far from unique. Understandably, we erect barriers and lock doors, both literally and figuratively.

In contrast to our caution, Jesus called his followers to break down the barriers and throw open the doors that keep outsiders out. He offered no sanction to those who wanted to preserve a self-satisfied, supposedly wholesome social homogeneity. "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers and sisters or your kin or rich neighbors lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you" (Luke 14:12-14).

With these words Jesus sought to lead his followers beyond the mutually beneficial social arrangements that we normally choose to maintain. When we open our lives, homes and churches only to those who are likely to have the capacity and inclination to respond in kind,

we continue to live by *quid pro quo*. Our apparent kindness is frequently self-service in masquerade. Knowing this, Jesus called his disciples to live by gratuitous love, embracing the strangers and the downtrodden people, thus contradicting the prevailing social practice and our own “natural” inclination.

Evidently, Jesus believed that there are times when we paradoxically need to exclude those who are “insiders” — friends, family, well-to-do associates — in order to make room for the outsiders — the impoverished, those with special needs, minorities or foreigners. In doing this we trade the familiar for the unfamiliar, the safe for the unsettling, the predictable for the incalculable. Encountering any stranger can leave us ill at ease and uncertain how to respond. Normally we don’t have much difficulty trusting our friends and neighbors. However, there is a greater element of risk involved in our dealings with strangers, and consequently, a greater need for faith.

True Hospitality

The fact is that for those who intend to live by faith, receiving outsiders is anything but unnecessary. Within Scripture it is made clear that the reception of strangers is a spiritual act, a matter that touches on the sacred. As one passage admonishes, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb. 13:2). Openness to God and the willingness to welcome unknown others are intimately related. However, in practice this is frequently ignored and the meaning of hospitality diminished. Hospitality has too often been reduced to mere civility and personal graciousness that has no special relation to outsiders. But, within the biblical tradition, hospitality is first and foremost a matter of openly and freely welcoming those who are unfamiliar. It has to do with creating a space filled with good will for those who have been displaced.

True hospitality is never a means of manipulating another, a tool to reprove the stranger of her strangeness. It is a matter of compassionate receptivity. When we are hospitable we make room for differences. As

Henri Nouwen has observed, “The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create an emptiness, not a fearful emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free also to leave and follow their own vocations. Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the lifestyle of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own.”² We are not to receive outsiders and strangers just so we might make them “acceptable,” i.e. into people who are in our own image. Rather than try to erase their heritage and history that gives them their separate identity, we are to address their needs without imposing a price. This means that we receive the outsider with the openness with which Christ received us, and not according to the dictates of our culture. There is no real hospitality if we demand that strangers dissolve their distinctiveness in a melting-pot of our own creation. Racial, cultural, class and, yes, religious superiority must be set aside or else every attempt at hospitality will become an occasion for manipulation, exploitation, and oppression.

Remember God’s Acceptance

We as individual Christians and collectively as the church are to accept outsiders in light of the fact that we ourselves are outsiders whom God has accepted. As John Koenig has written, “Fundamental to the building of partnerships with strangers is a community that experiences itself as the guests of God.”³ An impulse to include will permeate the life of the church only as we gratefully acknowledge ourselves to be a community of the unworthy who have been divinely included. The acceptance of God is ours, not by right but by grace, not by merit but by mercy. When this truth is forgotten, an ugly arrogance is likely to well up within us, inducing us to believe that we have the right and the competence to pass judgment on the worthiness of others. Thus we foster the alienation and isolation which is already prevalent in our society. We will be more prone to have a prejudice in favor of inclusion if we

remember who we are and who we were before God.

We are to reflect our experience of hospitality of God in the way we respond to strangers. The power of the gospel story by which we have been embraced empowers us and obliges us to embrace unfamiliar others. The church was created by the hospitality of God and continues to exist in order to extend hospitality in a world entrenched in animosity. Through its life and through the lives of its members, the church continues telling the gospel story in the very way it reaches out to strangers. “Welcome one another. . . as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God” wrote Paul (Rom. 15:7). Too frequently we find people asserting that they have no obligation to do anything for others “who never did anything for me.” Those who assail the welfare state contend that the needs of the disadvantaged and impoverished should not be defined in terms of rights. What has not been earned should not be expected. Fine. But as a people who live in the awareness of the grace of God, we know that in the most important matters no one merits the goodness he or she receives. The church can live only as a gifted people. The gracious outreaching of God was not contingent upon our worthiness. God responded to our needs without regard to merit. And so in turn we respond to the needs of strangers and outsiders, not just to the basic physical needs of food and shelter, but to the needs for care, belonging, dignity and respect.

Outsiders As Rescuers

The earliest Christians were particularly conscious of this identity as strangers to the covenant of promise. They also knew themselves to be a people of dubious status in the world. For the most part, the first disciples were beyond the pale of the privileged and respectable class. Many were socially unacceptable. Some New Testament scholars hold that the early church was persecuted, not only because of their troubling belief that a crucified man was the Messiah, but also because of the very composition of the earliest church.

Christians in our society have lost this sense of being outsiders and aliens. Yet a con-

sciousness of being socially alienated ourselves can have a positive influence on our receptivity toward marginalized and oppressed people. In her sensitive and insightful study of the Christian rescue of the Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland, Necama Tec made some significant discoveries about the characteristics of the men and women who risked their lives for the sake of people who were often utter strangers, people who had been socially and politically anathematized. In her research she sought to determine what it was about the rescuers that set them apart from the average persons who would do nothing to aid the victims of the systematic violence of the Nazis. One of the things she found was that rescuers typically thought of themselves as being out of step with the majority. Rescuers sensed that they themselves didn’t quite “fit” in their world.

This made it easier for them to identify with the outcast and persecuted Jews. Their own sense of being “strangers in the strange land” prepared them to reach out to oppressed strangers. After studying the records regarding rescuers in a number of nations in World War II Europe, Tec found, “Without exception and regardless of the country they came from, helpers insisted that for them saving Jews was a natural duty.”⁴ In view of this, we can again see the importance of maintaining a lively sense that we are resident aliens.

Jesus As An Outsider

But we are to offer hospitality to outsiders, not only because we were outsiders who have been received by God, but also because God came in Christ as an outsider and stranger. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ while seeking to live insulated, well-protected lives that keep outsiders out, have failed to acknowledge Jesus for the stranger that he is. He came as one neither recognized nor welcomed. “He was in the world. . . yet the world knew him not” (John 1:10). Throughout his ministry, Jesus identified himself with the disenfranchised and marginalized people. He taught his followers that the compassion and service offered to the weak and victimized of the world was in fact hospitality extended to the Lord

himself. To refuse to embrace and aid the outsider is in effect to reject Christ (Matt. 25:31-45).

Many have failed to recognize the connection between Jesus Christ and the stranger in need. Novelist Flannery O'Connor graphically illustrated this connection in a short story about an incident that took place on a small farm owned and operated by a strong-willed and insensitive woman, Mrs. McIntyre. A priest convinced Mrs. McIntyre to allow a family of Polish refugees, the Guizacs, to live on her land and to work for her. The man of the family was exceptionally diligent, out-performing any worker she had ever hired. Initially Mrs. McIntyre was impressed by the man, this displaced person, this "D.P." as she referred to him. However, because of the cultural difference between her and the immigrant family, eventually there occurred some misunderstandings and tension. Finally, she decided to fire the "D.P." and evict his family from the farm.

The priest who introduced her to the family returned in order to persuade her to change her mind about firing the man. "He has no where to go," pleaded the priest. Mrs. McIntyre's face reddened and her features hardened as she retorted, "It is not my responsibility that Mr. Guizac has no place to go. I don't find myself responsible for all the extra people in the world . . . Mr. Guizac didn't have to come here in the first place." The priest stood in silence. She repeated her last statement, emphasizing each word: "He didn't have to come here in the first place." The priest saw in these words another meaning than Mrs. McIntyre intended. He pensively replied, "He came to redeem us." Seeing that the priest was alluding to Jesus Christ, she protested against the insertion of such "irrelevance." Glaring at the priest, she snapped, "As far as I'm concerned Christ was just another D.P."⁵

Indeed, Jesus was a "D.P., a displaced person, an outsider. But he was not just another D.P." For it was through his displacement that we are given a place among the redeemed. The fact that Jesus willingly identified himself with strangers, victims and those at the margins of respectable society should help us to open our

eyes to the importance of making ourselves available to those who are so often neglected or rejected.

Table of Hospitality

Regular participation in the Eucharist imprints Isaiah's vision upon our hearts of a future heavenly banquet hosted by the Lord for all his people:

On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine, the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. (Isaiah 25:6-8a)

Because we see by faith the grand and future table at which all peoples will sit and all enjoy the compassionate rule of God, we can no longer thoughtlessly accept tables that are reserved only for "our kind of people." The worldwide community that confesses Jesus as Lord represents the whole spectrum of humankind. The bread and cup of the Lord's Supper represents all the created world. To keep outsiders out is contrary to our God-given identity.

Notes

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1969), p. 506.
2. Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1975), p. 51.
3. John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership With Strangers as Promise and Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), p. 132.
4. Necama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi Occupied Poland*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 153.
5. Flannery O'Connor, *A Good Man Is Hard to Find and Other Stories* (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books), p. 226.

Craig M. Watts is minister to the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Louisville, Kentucky.

The Nashville Jubilee

CURTIS D. McCLANE

My family and I had the wonderful privilege of attending the Fourth Annual Nashville Jubilee. This four day extravaganza was coordinated by the Madison Church of Christ with Dr. Steve Flatt, Madison Pulpit Minister, serving as the daily M.C. The "mainstream" a cappella Churches of Christ funded and sponsored this event. There were classes and activities for everyone: pre-school, kindergarten, elementary, middle school, junior high, high school, singles, mothers, fathers, couples, etc. The main events were held in the Convention Center and the Stouffer Hotel. Probably close to 8,000 people registered during the week.

The atmosphere of this entire event did justice to the word "jubilee." The mood seemed to be characterized by three things: a spirit of freedom, joy/celebration, and reunion. I have never attended anything quite as festal in nature among the a cappella Churches of Christ.

This year's theme was "In the Name of Jesus." The focus was neither pentecostal nor authoritarian (as the terms tend to be used in opposite camps). Instead, there seemed to be an honest and earnest attempt to focus on various aspects and dimensions of Jesus Christ and his ministry. In doing so, I was struck with the unusual and wonderful blending of the traditional and the new. The entire week began with a soul-stirring message and challenge from Wayne Kilpatrick of the Homewood Church of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama. In fact, his presentation received front page billing in the Nashville Tennessean newspaper. He challenged the Churches of Christ to be more like Christ and to be known for our compassion.

Themes and Impressions

After reflecting upon the ideas and impressions that are still lingering with me, I want to mention five main themes that seemed to sur-

face. First of all, the need and dynamics of change in our churches were addressed by Dr. Rubel Shelley of Nashville. If our Restoration heritage has anything of value to offer our kids and their kids of the next generation, then the needs of the boomer and buster generations must be addressed.

Secondly, Dr. Jack Reese of Abilene Christian University presented lessons on the historical, theological, and practical dimensions of worship. One statement he made I will never forget. He said that it is imperative before a church decides to make any changes in its corporate worship that the body of believers know why it worships God in the first place. Worship is not primarily aesthetically or horizontally focused. Rather, its main purpose is to offer adoration and praise to God and draw the worshipper into the Divine Presence.

Thirdly, Chris Bullard from Overland Park Church of Christ in Kansas City, Kansas, shared with us the dynamics and differences between spiritual information and spiritual formation. During the past five years I have been exposed to the classics of Christian Devotion. This great body of literature is a testimony to spiritual formation. Chris contended that the wilderness experience of biblical characters provided an appropriate model for our own spiritual formation.

Fourthly, there seemed to be more explicit references and actual lessons on the power of God than I ever recall hearing before. Joe Beam presented a lesson on the angels and demons. All of us live in a society that is so secular and rationalistic in its outlook and mind-set that we tend to forget the "principalities and powers" that are at war in high places.

And last of all, relational needs were addressed. I attended a session on the role of fathers and storytelling in the spiritual maturation.

tion process of our children. Our own stories and the story of Jesus hold tremendous potential for communicating the ultimate values and priorities of life that we want to pass on to our children.

Everyday during lunch we would go to the food court in the Convention Center Mall, where throughout the week, twenty different singing groups took their place on the makeshift stage and sang their hearts out. It was intriguing watching shoppers in the mall stop to listen to contemporary gospel music. The singing groups also performed in many of the class sessions in the morning and afternoon.

Book Review

Is Christ Divided? A Study of Sectarianism, Monroe Hawley (West Monroe, La: Howard Publishing Co.) 1992.

Reviewed by RAYMOND S. STEWART

The title of this book is taken from I Corinthians 1:13 and is the latest by the author in his examination of what has historically united and divided the Churches of Christ throughout America. I strongly recommend Hawley's earlier publications to the interested reader.^{1,2,3}

In the introduction, the author contends that the greatest threat to the cause of Christ is sectarianism. He further believes that "a movement dedicated by its pioneers to the destruction of sectarianism has fallen prey to the malady it has opposed." Whereas the fathers of the Restoration Movement called for people to unite based on the word of God, "their spiritual descendants have too often misused the Scriptures to fragment the body of Christ." Hawley states that the purpose of this book is to identify elements of sectarianism and to clarify and enlarge our understanding of factors that contribute to this "disease" so that we may better be able to treat it.

Plan now to attend the Fifth Annual Nashville Jubilee (June 30-July 3, 1993) at Nashville's Convention Center). Approximately a dozen people from the Holmes Road Church of Christ in Lansing attended the last one and we hope to double that number next year! It is thrilling to me to see so many Christians celebrating their faith in Jesus. Praise be to God!

Curtis D. McClane has been a pulpit minister in the churches of Christ (non-instrumental) for 15 years and currently serves the Holmes Road Church of Christ in Lansing, Michigan.

Hawley liberally uses footnotes for each chapter to list primary sources. For me, they are fascinating in their breadth and scope. To illustrate, footnotes in chapter two range from *The War of the Jews* by Josephus to a 1986 citation from *The Gospel Advocate*.

In chapter one Hawley discusses "haireisis" and "ecclesia" as used by early Christians and points out their incompatibility. Why are they incompatible? Sectarianism is division whereas the church must have organic and spiritual unity.

Chapter two deals with Pharisees as a sect that practiced sectarianism and "how their misguided piety is mirrored in our own attitudes." Hawley wisely advises us to study the Pharisees so that we may profit from the mistakes they made in viewing sin largely in terms of external actions.

Chapter three examines sectarian attitudes among Jesus' closest followers and in the first

century church. Corinth and Galatia are cited as examples of the danger of placing confidence in religious leaders without seeing Jesus as our true leader.

In chapter four, Hawley discusses the process whereby the post-apostolic church underwent secularization. He also makes the important observation that the danger of secularization faces every generation. Although Hawley's citations are excellent through the book, I suggest J. Thompson's study of I Peter⁴ as an excellent follow-up to this chapter.

Hawley draws on his deep insights into the American Restoration Movement in chapter five. Although Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott have been venerated by some in churches of Christ, Hawley points out that Campbell and Scott incorrectly perceived sectarianism only in terms of heresy or doctrinal error.

He [Campbell] did not come to grips with the crucial question of whether one can be biblically correct and still be sectarian because he had the party spirit.

Chapters six through nine form a core of appeal to reasoning that is a keystone of Hawley's message to his readers. The interested reader is directed to Amos 3:3 and its discussion by Hawley as only one of many examples. I recommend that every person who is truly interested in making Christian unity a reality read these chapters prayerfully and carefully with Bible in hand. The chapter dealing with "The Borders of the Kingdom" is both provocative and challenging (especially so, if one realizes that the author is both preacher and elder!)

In chapter ten, Hawley deals with "Symptoms of Sectarianism" and the individual responsibility that every Christian has to identify such

spiritual problems, if they exist in his (her) life, and to correct them.

Hawley's exposition of grace in chapter eleven is the summation of his more than fifty years of preaching, teaching, and personal Bible study on this matter. He says, "because we have been saved by grace through faith, rather than by doctrinal accuracy, we may be assured that we stand in the proper relationship with our Father."

In chapter twelve, Hawley uses the Brethren Movement as an example of a particular body in its struggle with sectarianism. The interested reader will want to soberly review these sad events for the lessons they teach us today.

In chapter thirteen, Hawley wraps up his plea by reminding us to focus on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, to help us remove our sectarian blinders and press on to true Christian maturity.

Notes

1. Monroe Hawley, *Reddiging the Wells*. (Abilene, TX: Quality Publications) 1976.

2. Monroe Hawley, *Searching for a Better Way*. (Abilene, TX: Quality Publications) 1981.

3. Monroe Hawley, *The Focus of Our Faith*. (Nashville, TN: 20th Century Christian Foundation) 1985.

4. James Thompson, *The Church In Exile*. (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press) 1990.

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Intercepted Correspondence

The following "Intercepted Correspondence" is a continuing feature begin 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 benighting Nephew,

Ah, what a glorious tool is human language! Separating the Enemy's supreme creation (that is, creatures in his own image) from the lesser animated beings by endowing them with language! And how simple it is to turn this great blessing into one of our most useful tools! I am overjoyed to see that you are learning to utilize this technique for the good of our infernal kingdom.

Use language for our deviant purposes in any circumstance where people may be confused, irritated, embarrassed, or simply brought to laugh at another's foible in derision. One of my favorite language techniques to use against the enemy is obscurantism. Obscurantism works wonders in pitting your "high-powered intellectual preacher" against those "zealous young men" intent on unmasking "unsound" preaching. Neither truly understands the others, either in vocabulary or motivation; they will almost inevitably build to a final showdown which can cause a glorious explosion. And you'll have little more to do than to incite both camps, escalate their irritations, implant seeds of righteous contempt, and step back to avoid being slain in the slaughter. We can't have you actually identified with either side, as you must know. And I can't really believe the preacher, however he may commit himself to "cross cultural boundaries to reach the unchurched,"

etc., will do anything of true devastating nature to our cause. But watch him!

I eagerly await devastating news from your labors in returning to Broad Way.

Yours in effectual obfuscations,
Uncle Apollyon

Dear Uncle Apollyon,

I'm glad you approve of my efforts in linguistic perversity, and I welcome the examples of your own contributions to that realm of endeavor. In regard to the little congregation I spoke about in my last letter (pitting the young zealots against the new preacher), I'm afraid the entirely bad results I was hoping for have been modified: the "Prayer Warriors" have been at it again. Neither the preacher nor the zealots were listening much to me when I left, because they had all begun to develop two qualities that make it very difficult for "us" to get through to them: humility and remorse. One of them mentioned to me that he had read in his devotional, some biblical claptrap about "counting others better than yourself." The whole thing was threatening to degenerate into a huggy-wuggy reconciliation, but Asphalt will have to worry about that. (I just hope he gives

me credit for sowing seeds of dissent while he was gone.) I had to get back to Broad Way to encourage some twisted thinking that has developed there.

It seems that we have another clash of good intentions in the congregation again. This time it has to do with how much of the mess humans often make of their lives is to be dealt with as "sickness," over which they have little or no control, and how much as willful acts of sin, for which they are to be held fully responsible and even punished. Once again, I see the opportunity to drive people into mutually exclusive camps. The "sickness" group, who pride themselves on compassion, will easily be persuaded to set aside any imperative to deal with sin when it "comes with the territory," so to speak; and the "sin" bunch will settle in comfortably behind the impregnable defense of their theology, looking only at the activities that are problems for others but not for themselves. Addicted smokers and eaters can thus point to factors that make it impossible for them to change their behavior; those engaged in sexual misconduct will say that they are merely "doing what comes naturally;" and all sorts of crimes will be justified by social conditions which dull or eliminate individual initiative and responsibility.

There is enough truth in these excuses (given the corruption of creation brought about by our Infernal Father) for one to insist that, in all fairness, people ought to be let off the hook for their peccadillos. But, on the other hand, the judgment-hounds have plenty of scripture to back up their contention that every person must answer for his or her own deeds, whatever the circumstances. I hope the debate gets so hot that nobody remembers such mysteries as the love, grace, and sovereignty of God; for to introduce

these qualities of the Divinity would undermine an assumption which is absolutely necessary to our program of deceit: that purely human standards and understanding of fairness constitute the final court of appeal for interpreting evil in the world. If I were as weak, messed up, and vulnerable as humans are, I would be concentrating on seizing whatever deliverance from my condition the Great Thunderer was offering, rather than quibbling over whether I should be regarded as needy or not. But, fortunately for us, they seem mostly determined to ignore how bad off they are, so intent are they on preserving what they quaintly call their "self-respect."

Did you notice all the shallow and foolish rhetoric flying about in the media during the election? Everything and everybody must "move forward" — which always means a particular candidate's or party's agenda for perfecting the world, of course. How salutary for our cause that politicians hardly ever get into office by merely using common sense to define their objectives; that has no imagination to it, and it usually requires people to give up some of those things which they consider to be their rights or legitimate comforts. How prosaic merely to match up income and expenditures, when there are so many pork barrels clamoring to be filled. And isn't an entertaining soundbite to be preferred over boring discussions about what we have to give up to preserve the integrity of both our social and our natural environment? Ah, yes, election years are the Devil's workshop.

Yours in obfuscation of the truth,
Ichabod

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.