

*Diversity and the Divine Mandate:
Making Unity Happen*

Editorial

Continuing to pave the path to unity

Curtis McClane

Editorial

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Spring 1998



May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
—Romans 15:5-6

Unity.

This idea has been the cornerstone of *Integrity* since its inception. We believe wholeheartedly that God want all his people to have one heart, one mind, one voice. We hope to foster this oneness each time we produce an issue of *Integrity*.

As we begin a new era, we decided to update our logo to emphasize our prayer for unity. There is no clearer expression of the concept of unity, or oneness, than the number 1—which in Roman numeral form (beautifully and conveniently for us) is also the letter “1,” the first initial of this journal.

We have chosen the Roman “1” as our logo for obvious philosophical reasons. The olive leaf is, we think, an appropriate Biblical symbol of the oneness and peace to which we all aspire. We hope you enjoy this first quarterly issue of your old friend.



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Troy, MI 48063

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Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ROYAL OAK, MI
PERMIT NO. 696



Spring 1998
Vol. 29, Number 1

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Integrity is a quarterly journal dedicated to stimulating personal and public thought, prayer, and discussion about living the Christian life. Its roots are in Restoration Movement Christianity, encompassing Churches of Christ, Churches of Christ/Christian Churches, and the Disciples of Christ, but Integrity strives for unity among all Christians. Published by a nonprofit corporation, Integrity 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 of the Board as a whole.

Many volunteers work together to bring you this journal. Please help us in this ministry by contacting the person who can best serve you:

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We welcome your letters, comments, and suggestions. We also welcome submissions of articles, narratives, poetry, artwork, meditations, and the like. For submissions, please send a hard copy, along with a diskette in text-only format, to Curtis McClane. You can also append your article text to an e-mail message to cmcclane@aol.com.

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We have over 25 years' worth of back issues on a wealth of topics. You can also access our web site, which has issues dating back to 1993.



EDITORIAL

Continuing to pave the path to unity

Nearly thirty years ago God set in motion the events and dynamics necessary for this journal to be born. The religious conditions of the day were responsible for its inception. And the gestation period, filled with prayer and planning, gave birth to a unique publication that God has used to accomplish His purposes.

The present board has asked me to take the editorial oversight of this ministry. My heart was torn between two opposing reactions. The first was a reaction of fear/trepidation. Can I adequately fill the shoes of those spiritual leaders who have gone before? Will my editorial decisions be consistent with the stated purpose of this journal? Can/will God use one as humanly frail as I to carry on such a demanding and crucial ministry?

My second response was a combination of joy and gratitude: gratitude for what *Integrity* has brought me over the years and now God has granted me an opportunity to return a measure of those blessings; joy because there is nothing sweeter to my ears and nothing more comforting to my soul than to see unity among all of God's people. As always seems to be the case, God provides me continual opportunities to seek His face and relinquish to Him in prayer the directions, concerns, and decisions of my

life. Before officially accepting this editorial role, I entered into conversation with God for half a day at a retreat center. His Spirit gave me comforting assurance that I was in the kingdom for just such a time as this.

In order to carry out the responsibilities of an editor in a responsible fashion, I ask you, our faithful readers, to keep me specifically in your prayers regarding the following concerns: that my relationship with God remain vibrant and joyful, that my walk with Jesus be a daily sacrificial journey, that my inward being be renewed by the Holy Spirit daily, that my appreciation for the orthodox church be grounded in a love and compassion for those who have been hurt by it, that my ability to discern what is good be guided by heavenly wisdom, that my humility in being used by God will outweigh my personal pride, and that sensitivity to all believers will convey a strong message of unity and union.

In preparation for writing this editorial I went back and read the first issue of *Integrity*, dated June 1969. Hoy Ledbetter entitled his first editorial, "Integrity." His opening sentence was, "This is the first issue of INTEGRITY, a monthly periodical which is dedicated to promoting unity, soundness, and

(continued on page 42)



Is this my *Integrity*? And where are the Kilmers?

Yes, this is still your old friend, *Integrity*. It's just had a little bit of a makeover. We hope you like it! But to answer the more burning question: fortunately for us, Diane and Bruce aren't going anywhere. They have passed the editing baton on to Curtis and me, but they will remain active members of the *Integrity* Board. A blessing to all of us. After almost a dozen years of editing this journal, they have decided to devote their considerable talents to other ministries. However, we hope you'll hear from one or both of them in an *Integrity* article soon.

So the look of the journal has changed, but our message and intent remain the same as they have always been: to foster unity through open discussion of issues which concern Christians. We hope to offer spiritual and practical nourishment for your walk with Jesus through the wisdom, poetry, history, discoveries, and ponderings of our contemporaries.

As we embark together on this next phase of *Integrity*, I wanted to introduce myself to you. I will be handling the design, layout, and copyediting of the journal. I squeeze this in between being a wife to my beloved husband, Bruce, and mothering my two children, David, 6, and Madeline, 4. (When you see typos, please realize it's

probably because one of the kids is crawling up in my lap as I sit at the keyboard.)

I'm a member of the Heritage Church of Christ in the Detroit area—a vibrant body of God's people with whom I am proud to be associated. I've been blessed by being on the *Integrity* board for about 3 years. Before having kids, I worked for about a decade as a writer in various facets of marketing and communications. I still do a little freelance work.

I am living proof that *Integrity* is not a journal for the highbrow, nor for insiders, nor for "super-Christians." I am a younger Christian than most of you, I bet (I didn't have much of a relationship with Jesus until my husband, Bruce, invited me to church about 13 years ago, while we were both in college). I wasn't even familiar with the Restoration Movement churches until I met him. (I was raised as a Catholic, but I never seemed to fit in with that style of worshipping God. I found my spiritual fit with the Churches of Christ. However, my parents and all six of my siblings remain devout Catholics whose faith I admire deeply.)

Clearly, I'm not the typical product of the Restoration Movement churches. For example, I can't sing in 4-part harmony—in fact, I can't sing

at all. I've never even *visited* Harding, or Abilene, or Lipscomb. And I don't have a southern accent!

I have a lot to learn about our fellowship, and the issues which concern *Integrity's* readers. I hope my relative ignorance of these issues will at least provide a fresh perspective on them. Besides, I do know the important things: I know I love Jesus and that he has saved me. I also know that God dearly desires that all his children be one.

► A good balance

Curtis and I will balance each other pretty well, don't you think? A Bible scholar, and somebody who doesn't even know the books of the Old Testament by heart yet (but I'm learning, with my son!). Somebody raised in "the Church," and somebody who just figured out who Barton Stone was. A Doctor of Divinity and a mom who writes advertising copy in between school activities. This is gonna be fun.

Between the two of us, we will work hard to keep *Integrity* a down-to-earth, but reflective and educational, journal. Anybody will be able to read it, but everybody will learn something from its writers. And if Curtis tries to slide the word "soteriological" into an article, you can count on me to say, "Hub?!"

Please pray for me and Curtis, and for *Integrity*. Did you know that we pray for you, dear readers, every time we meet as a Board? We hope God will use *Integrity* to bless you. Please let us know what you'd like to see in this journal. Please *especially* let us know when you disagree with something we have published. After all, we can't come to unity unless we communicate with each other. We're easy to reach—by e-mail or snail mail. And every Board member has the opportunity to read each letter sent to us.

► All about unity

Curtis has wisely chosen to devote this issue to unity. Among the fine writers featured in this issue are Kathy Blakely, who treats us to another of her warm, straight-shooting meditations, and Curtis McClane, who explores the high-impact images of the results of unity from Psalm 133. And we are so happy that the Higgses have consented to continue sharing their wisdom with us in their regular feature about raising kids, "Bending the Twig."

Thanks for hanging in there with us as we experience a few growing pains. Let us know what you think.

Noreen Bryant

Noreen Bryant

Do you know someone who might be interested in receiving *Integrity*? Please let interested friends know that they can receive their own subscription simply by requesting one via mail or e-mail. See the inside front cover for details.

Statement of Purpose

Integrity Board of Directors

This statement was first published by the original Integrity Board of Directors in 1969. We, the Board of 1998, concur with this Statment and pledge to follow it.

In order that our readers and writers may have a clear understanding of our objectives, and that we ourselves may maintain a clear perspective and a balanced journal which both reflects and inspires integrity, we issue the following statement.

We intend to provide a refined and respected literary medium for sharing the Good News of God in Christ to people of varying needs: to all who are searching for the abundant life; to believers who require reaffirmation of their faith and the reassurance of the Christian message; and to the corporate body of Christ whose mission is to witness his message to the world.

Since the Word of God is the ultimate criterion for determining the authenticity of everything the church is and does, our aim is to publish articles which are the result of keen exegetical study of the Scriptures and are at the same time interesting and understandable to our readers and related to their moral and spiritual needs.

In order that our efforts may be directed toward the mission of Christ,

... the Spirit of Truth is not confined to any enclave of believers.

and not our own, we will encourage intensive inquiry into the origins of the Christian community and our religious heritage. This goal implies a recognition that dogma is often formulated as a defense against what is

considered heresy, that the interpretation of Scripture is conditioned both historically and ideologically by the context in which it is articulated, and that multiple pressures are exerted on the conscience to remain loyal to the particular religious tradition one has embraced.

Since the Christian life essentially involves right relationships, we will make a concerted effort toward providing Biblical answers to questions of fellowship and unity.

We believe that all Christians must share the responsibility of determining the meaning of Jesus Christ in our lives and that the Spirit of Truth is not confined to any enclave of believers. Accordingly, we encourage response from all who recognize Jesus as Lord, irrespective of their convictions or affiliation.

We will continue to provide a forum in which sincere yet different points of view may be stated with Christian candor and competence. This policy necessarily entails publishing some conclusions at variance with our own, which will ordinarily be done without editorial judgment under the assumption that our readers are capable of evaluating diverse viewpoints for themselves.

We will provide an opportunity for the publication of at least limited amounts of reader response, negative as well as positive. This freedom of expression will be restricted only in

terms of irrelevance, undue repetition, blatant crudeness, personal attack, and shallow treatment of subject matter.

Our writers will speak with dignity, sincerity, and seriousness, honestly expressing the truth they have received from God, in words that are rational because they reflect his perspective and bear conviction to reasonable minds.

Since a valid teaching ministry requires continual awareness of and adaptation to the needs of a changing world, we expect to constantly adjust our emphasis so as to remain pertinent to the serious issues our readers face.

Finally, it is our unwavering aim to remain totally under God's guidance and dependent upon his grace.



UNITY SIGHTINGS

Historic statements of unity

In our fellowship, it is not often that bold and courageous steps are taken to provide a model for unity among believers. Even less frequently are believers given the opportunity to witness church leaders who are humble enough to confess their part in sectarian battles. This being the case, it is with pleasure that we reprint the following two statements made by Victor Knowles, editor of *One Body* magazine and a member of the Christian Church, and Rubel Shelly, minister of the Woodmont Hills Church of Christ in Nashville, TN.

This unusual but effective display of reconciliation came about when,

this past summer, Victor read Rubel's statement to his Christian Church audience at the North American Christian Convention in Kansas City, and Rubel read Victor's statement to a Church of Christ audience at the Nashville Jubilee.

Last fall I had the privilege of speaking with both Victor and Rubel. At that time, they gave us permission to share their statements with you.

Integrity is thankful to share this historic event with you. We praise God for the moral courage, spiritual leadership, and visionary step that Victor and Rubel have provided for us!

-Curtis McClane

Victor Knowles' statement read at Nashville Jubilee

Greetings to the brethren assembled at the Jubilee in Nashville. My name is Victor Knowles and tonight I am speaking at the North American Christian Convention in Kansas City on the subject, 'God's Family: Growing together in Spirit.' I believe that you brethren gathered together in Nashville are a part of the family of God. Wherever God has sons and daughters there I have brothers and sisters.

"My religious heritage is that of the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ. Our two fellowships parted company some 91 years ago, mainly over the instrumental music question. I am sorry that the division occurred, and deeply regret the separation in fellowship in the subsequent years. Although I was not a part of the original problem, I want to be a part of the

healing process. Ninety-one years is too long not to make amends.

"I believe the Bible teaches us that we are to be kind to one another, accept one another as God for Christ's sake accepted us, forgive each other, love one another and work together in the kingdom of God. Therefore, please accept one brother's apology for the troubles and heartaches of the past. I am making no judgment as to who was right and who was wrong. I only say that a divisive spirit is wrong and a peaceable spirit is right. I cannot speak for anyone other than myself, but I do believe that I speak for the sentiments of many, in fact, the vast majority, in our fellowship.

"May God bless all of you in Nashville as together, brothers and sisters in God's Family, we grow together in spirit!"

Rubel Shelley's Statement Read at the North American Christian Convention

To all my sisters and brothers assembled in Kansas City for the North American Christian Convention, greetings in the precious name of Jesus! I am speaking to a group assembled in Nashville for Jubilee '97 on the same day that my friend Victor Knowles is addressing you in Kansas City. He is speaking on 'God's Family, Growing Together in Spirit' and I am speaking on 'Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound.'

"Victor and I are convinced that the unity of the family of God is created by divine grace and extended to all of us who have been born anew of water and the Spirit. All of us who are

children of God are, by virtue of that fact alone, brothers and sisters in his great spiritual family.

"We also share the belief that unity within God's family is maintained only as we learn to give grace to one another. People who are keenly aware of their forgiveness by grace through faith in Christ should not find it impossible to forgive one another, to love one another, to honor our elder brother's prayer for oneness among those who believe in him.

"Our two traditions within a shared American Restoration Movement heritage have done poorly with

the issue of grace—either in understanding the beauty of our own unmerited redemption or in extending pardon and love to one another. Our congregations often exist in the same towns with no fellowship of any sort. Shame on us. We are guilty before God of dishonoring the oneness of the body of Christ!

"I cannot speak for anyone in a cappella congregations but myself

Shame on us. We are guilty before God of dishonoring the oneness of the body of Christ!

and would not presume to do so. As one brother of yours, however, I hereby express my regret and sorrow over the divisions that have existed between us. I ask your forgiveness for my contributions to maintaining or reinforcing them. And I ask all of us to move beyond the rancor and

alienation of generations now dead.

We can maintain the distinctiveness of our two traditions without being enemies. Neither of us need compromise a conviction, yet neither of us should judge the other. The Lord Jesus Christ is judge of all.

"Please accept my heartfelt apology for the divisions of the past and present between our two traditions. And please, please join with me in extending unilateral forgiveness to people among us who have differing theological views on church worship, polity, and the like. We cannot predicate unity on those issues. We must affirm it in Christ—in Christ alone.

"May God bless you, dear sisters and brothers in Kansas City, as you receive fresh encouragement from God during this special week of activities at the North American Christian Convention."



REAL-LIFE APPLICATION

Unity in action—every Tuesday morning

Henrietta Palmer

Throughout the Christian world there is concern for the division and differences which hinder the unity of believers. In 1 Corinthians 1:10 the apostle Paul appeals to God's people to agree and be united so there will be no divisions among them. John reminds us that "no one has ever seen God; but if we love each other, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. If anyone acknowledges that

Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God" (1 John 4:12-15).

A spirit of love and unity binds together the Bible Break ministry which meets at the Troy, MI, church of Christ on Tuesday mornings (September-May).

Women from many religious backgrounds come together to glorify God and to receive his blessings as they study God's Word together.

A guest speaker recently asked the teachers of Bible Break, "How do you manage to bring together so many women from diverse backgrounds to study and discuss the scriptures?" The reply was unanimous, "We don't, but God does!"

In its twelfth year, Bible Break began as a dream shared by a small group of women—a dream of coming together and studying God's word with other women who also love the Lord. With the support of the elders of the Troy congregation, it was time to put the dream into action.

In the summer of 1986 flyers were mailed to neighboring Church of Christ congregations and to other denominations in the Troy area. Personal invitations were extended to women who lived in the neighborhood surrounding the church building.

Friends and relatives were also invited to become a part of Bible Break. Much planning and many prayers preceded the opening session in September 1986. Our faith assured us that God would provide, and provide He did! The first session opened with 58 women who came for a brunch, orientation, and fellowship. And they continued to come throughout the first year's study of Proverbs and James!

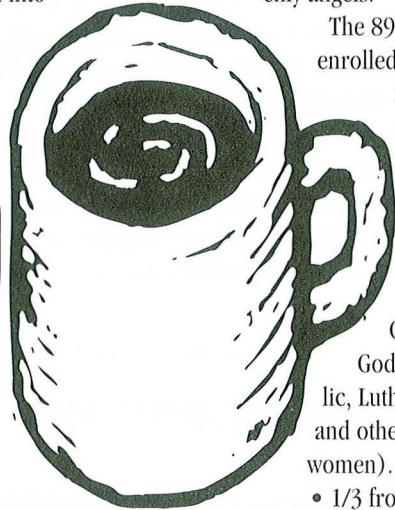
Through the years, God has woven

a tapestry of new faces and the number of women in Bible Break continues to grow. Study themes have focused on the Old Testament books and all of the books of the New Testament. The current study is the book of Hebrews supplemented with a NavPress Bible Study on Hebrews (ISBN: 08910-92722). This year's theme is from Hebrews 12:2, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith." When the women sing together, "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus," the room is filled with a sound like heavenly angels!

The 89 women who are enrolled in Bible Break this year come from the following religious groups:

- 1/3 from congregations of Assembly of God, Church of God, Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, and other churches (32 women).
- 1/3 from the Troy Church of Christ (29 women)
- 1/3 from eight other Church of Christ congregations (28 women)

With diverse backgrounds and ages (22 to 84 years), the women bring rich insights, comments, and questions to each of the three study groups offered each week after a short time of fellowship with the total group. With God's direction and guidance, discussions are always handled in a spirit of love and with sincere searching for God's truth for His people.



We continue to be strengthened and blessed by God's spirit moving among the women in Bible Break. Our prayer is that we will trust in the Lord with all of our hearts and lean not on our own understanding; that we will acknowledge him in all

our ways, and he will make our paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6). As we continue to yield to God's leading and grow in faith and Christ-likeness, we thank God for his love and we give him the glory!

Henrietta C. Palmer teaches Bible classes at the Troy Church of Christ in Troy, MI, where her husband, Bill, is an elder. They both serve on Integrity's Board. Henrietta is a retired elementary school principal and she has written many of the study guides used in Bible Break classes.



PERSPECTIVES

A unifying vision for our movement

Carson Reed



Who are we in the Stone-Campbell movement? What is our purpose for existing?

As a movement rooted in the optimism of nineteenth-century American expansion, what does our future hold as we rapidly approach a new century? We live in a post-denominational world. Christian people increasingly have less loyalty to denominational ties. A Gallup poll states that 23% of American believers have left the church of that family's tradition.¹ Robert Wuthnow, based on his research, proposes that 33% of Americans have switched religious affiliations.²

Not only is there great turmoil within Christendom, but American culture is shifting foundational values and assumptions. No longer holding to the modern world characterized by its optimism and high view of reason, a postmodern world is dawning.

A quick look around at culture suggests that the assured convictions about the supremacy of modern thinking is giving way to an openness to a resource that lies outside the human domain. For example, sales of Depak Chopra's books *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success* and *The Way of the Wizard* are setting records as people look for spiritual lessons for "creating the life you want." In fact, a plethora of titles, old and new, are finding their way into American's hands that speak to issues of spirituality and a search for answers that go against the grain of modernity's faith in objectivity and scientific knowledge: M. Scott Peck's *The Road Less Traveled*, Thomas Moore's *Care of the Soul*, Canfield and Hansen's *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, Helen Prejean's *Dead Man Walking* and the television series

Touched By An Angel all reveal a new interest in spirituality and faith.

What does this mean for us? In a world searching for spiritual significance I would assume that we have much to offer. In a world where people are quite willing to leave their own religious traditions, our rhetoric about “non-denominational Christianity” should be a natural message to offer. But what do people hear from us? What message do we offer?

► What makes us “us?”

What makes us “us?” Does it mean that we reject the five cardinal tenets of Calvinism, worship exclusively with a cappella music, observe the Lord’s Supper weekly (on Sunday only), do not call our ministers “pastor,” do not allow women to preach in our assemblies, hold to an amillennial eschatology, have simultaneous Sunday school classes for adults and children, and teach baptism by immersion for the remission of sins? And is our identity connected to the number of cups on the Lord’s table, or the location of the kitchen where those cups are washed?³ This list of identifying characteristics is sometimes summarized in a manner that states, or strongly implies, that unity will come when others come to see the truth exactly as we see it.

Two observations about our “identifying marks” come to mind. First, our identity often seeks to demonstrate that we are *not* like someone else. Our theology has become a reaction. We possess a fear of being like “the denominations,” but in fear, we formed a distinctiveness that sets us apart just like any other denomina-

tion. Second, not only have we identified ourselves by reacting against other peoples’ beliefs, but we have adopted as our ultimate goal the correct interpretation of Scripture. “Back to the Bible” has been our unwritten creed. Unfortunately, to have this as an identifying mark has been interpreted by many to mean that all must come to the same interpretation of scripture. Such a simplistic expectation has produced dissension and division in our heritage, rather than unity. What started as a movement to unite all Christians by our common fellowship in Jesus Christ by rejecting written creeds and turning to scripture, turned into a tradition that has held to a particular way of interpreting scripture.

Though we may say that we go back to the Bible for our authority, in practice that has meant that we use certain methods to understand the Bible. We have become enamored with the silence of scripture and a three-fold principle of command, example and necessary inference. With this pattern of interpreting Scripture, we have, at times, distorted the very message of Scripture—making obscure eschatological points or the sort of songs we sing equivalent to faith in Jesus.

In the rush to find the commonness of Christianity in Jesus Christ, we in Churches of Christ got lost in the forests of Bible interpretation. We became so involved with doing things the “right way” that we forgot who it was that we were seeking. As Paul charged the Gentile pagans with worshipping the creature rather than the

creator, have we in Churches of Christ worshiped our interpretation of Scripture rather than the one to whom the Scripture points?

This customary list of markers that

Our theology has become a reaction.

identified Churches of Christ came to be questioned by some people in the late 1960’s. And ever since that time there has been a growing uneasiness among many of us concerning our identity. Some preachers ceased preaching on certain themes. (When was the last time you heard a sermon on instrumental music?) Where are we today? Some simply clamor for the old identity. Others, with nostalgia, long for days when right and wrong were clearly identified by everyone—whether you were in or out of church. This *Leave it to Beaver* mentality seems sadly out of touch with computers, space travel, and Generation X.

Still others are seeking to be the market-driven church of the 1990s. People have needs, they say, and we have something to sell. Thus, some churches adapt to culture’s values to win culture, sometimes at the risk of losing any distinctive gospel identity. Finally, I believe, there are quite a few churches who are confused by the various postures taken and simply don’t know what to think. Paralyzed, they sit and hope that the merry-go-round will slow down enough to see what sort of seats are available.

So in this dawning postmodern age where people are searching for spirituality and where many believers are leaving the churches and traditions of

their youth in search of meaning, what do we offer? Can the Stone-Campbell movement provide a meaningful place to experience hope and salvation? Will God use our tradition for kingdom work in the twenty-first century?

► Where do we begin?

The obvious place to look is at the Bible. But a common misunderstanding has arisen within the Stone-Campbell tradition. With so much emphasis on the Bible as our guide and authority, the Bible itself has become a focal point of our identity. We are people of the Book, we would say. And I must quickly affirm that being “people of the book” is incredibly important. But being people of the book was not what God called us to be. God called us to people shaped by His Son.

As important and essential as Scripture is, Scripture is not the source of salvation and life. To make that assumption puts us with some of Jesus’ adversaries who pressed him about His relationship with God. He responds, “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”⁴

Now, the fathers of our tradition understood this well. For example, in 1833, Barton Stone wrote about fellowship and in doing so spoke about the inadequacy of using the Bible as the touchstone for unity. He suggested that there existed four distinct kinds of union, with only one having divine power.⁵ After first

suggesting book union, by which he meant creeds, he then spoke of head union. By this he meant using our reason to understand and interpret the Bible alike. This too, was ineffectual. Regarding head union, Stone states:

They extol the Bible, and boast of it as being their only creed and discipline; that they will submit to no other. This is so far right. . . . They received the Bible alone—they all believed everything contained in the Bible. But they soon found that their opinions of many things contained in the Bible were very different. Each one believed his opinion of certain texts, to be the very spirit and meaning of the texts—and that this opinion was absolutely essential to salvation.⁶

Have we in Churches of Christ worshiped our interpretation of scripture rather than the one to whom the scripture points?

If the Bible is not the ultimate source of understanding our identity, how are we then, to understand it? I would suggest that the best way of understanding the Bible's role is as a witness to the truth of God's saving words and deeds.

The Bible tells us the truth about the One who has power and authority in our lives and in the world. What is Scripture? Scripture bears witness to the past revelation of God. That is its role. Karl Barth was fond of referring to a painting by Grünewald of the Crucifixion. John the Baptist stands to the

side with his long index finger pointing toward the Crucified One.⁷ That is the role of Scripture. The prophets and the apostles all attest to the work of God:

Standing in this service, the biblical witnesses point beyond themselves. If we understand them as witnesses, and only as such do we authentically understand them, i.e., as they understand themselves. . . . They do not speak and write for their own sakes, nor for the sake of their deepest inner possession or need; they speak and write, as ordered, about that other. . . . Why and in what respect does the biblical witness have authority? Because and in the fact that he claims no authority for himself, that his witness amounts to letting that other itself be its own authority. We thus do the Bible poor and unwelcome honour if we equate it with this other, with revelation itself.⁸

This posture helpfully directs us away from the ever present temptation of bibliolatry.⁹ By unequivocally affirming that authority is rooted in God's revelatory work and not in the Bible, we remind ourselves of where our own loyalty lies. By confessing that Scripture is witness to God's work, we confront the temptation to read the Bible as a compendium of propositional truth and open the possibility to hear the Word of God as did the primary, biblical witnesses.

Such a confession allows us to affirm that the Bible is indeed the Word of God—when we cease to procure for it some external authority and begin to listen. Perhaps many of the

All too often Christians have started down one path or another without waiting for the trail boss.

modern fundamentalist attempts to establish the authority of scripture fall short simply because they have failed to take the historic Scripture principle seriously enough. In order to validate Scripture, external proofs and propositions are manufactured. Remembering Calvin and affirming the work of the Holy Spirit, the more biblical claim is that the Bible is the Word of God because it attests to God's saving work in Christ.

So what do we do? How do we seek out who and what we should be? First of all, I suggest that we do nothing. All too often Christians have started down one path or another without waiting for the trail boss. Is it possible that God himself might have something to offer to us? Perhaps we need to stop and hear God speak.¹⁰ The witness of Scripture provides a marvelous testimony—God discloses himself. He lets us in on who He is and what He wants us to be. God reveals himself by words and deeds. It is these words and deeds, in the Word of God, that present us with a glimpse of the object of our attention and energy.

► Knowing God

The true object of our efforts, of our theology, is God. The Eternal One is that which we seek to know and un-

derstand. God does not passively linger in the pages of a black, leather-bound book awaiting our study and scrutiny. Rather, he speaks and addresses humanity. Throughout history he addresses us in distinctive ways. Thus, listening becomes a significant hermeneutical tool and our attempts to build Babels out of patternist theology or felt-need theology are bankrupt. Since God has spoken, the disciple elects to "hear ye him" rather than trust his own reasoning powers.

When we begin to hear God from times of old, we hear him speak of himself as faithful and as one who keeps covenant and steadfast love. Even his name, *Yahweh*, the *I am who I am*, reflects his ever-present and faithful character. The whole history of the Israelite people is God's way of revealing his faithful character. God constantly sought to return Israel to himself. He used the law, the covenant, and the prophets. Think of Hosea, for example, who married a prostitute to show the people their unfaithfulness and God's steadfast love. Or think of God's concern for ancient Nineveh. Even his prophet Jonah, whose hatred for outsiders would cause a fish to choke, could not deter God's faithfulness.

However, Israel failed to comprehend the character and the heart of the loving, covenant God. Israel oppressed the poor and the underprivileged, according to Amos and Habakkuk. They reduced religion to rote rituals—forgetting mercy, justice, and upright living. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah and the rest stand as indictments that God's people had missed the point. Instead

of love they practice ritual; instead of treating humanity with integrity, they practiced economic self-enhancement. They had lost the heart of Yahweh.

So what more can a gracious God do to show himself to humanity?

► **Knowing God Through Jesus**

“In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world (Hebrews 1:1-2).”

What more can a gracious God do to show himself to humanity? He could give himself, through Jesus of Nazareth.

In Jesus we see God most clearly.

The Word of God has been involved throughout history making God known through words and deeds. But now the Word of God “became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.”

In Jesus we see God most clearly. No longer do we hear of love; we see it. We witness compassion, acceptance, forgiveness, and in it all God reveals himself. We see him teaching, we see him healing and comforting, and we see him living out divine love. It was this Jesus that the earliest Christians believed in and proclaimed. This distinctive, incarnational revelation of God is clearly pivotal. In fact, taking a cue from Paul, one learns that some expressions about God’s work exist that he can get quite upset about—namely a distorted expression of the gospel.¹¹

Paul is especially helpful on this point. He was among the first persons to articulate the Christian faith. As he sought to make sense of the Old Testament and of the startling revelation in Jesus, he made evident what is pivotal and essential to him. Most notable is his statement in the Corinthian correspondence:

Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.¹²

For Paul, the gospel—the message of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection—was paramount to his ministry. For Paul, this message functioned as a key to understanding the Old Testament.¹³ This message was the key to his understanding of how faith was developed.¹⁴ This message was the key to his ethics.¹⁵ Throughout Paul’s ministry, the message of the gospel was central to his preaching.¹⁶ Finally, this message was central to how Paul lived.¹⁷

Paul was not alone on this matter: Peter and Jesus demonstrate an awareness of the difference between Scripture and the core truths that Scripture reveals.¹⁸ Whenever the proclamation is discussed in Scripture, it is the core facts regarding Jesus that is at the center. Of course, by saying this, I am not saying something new or original. To say that Christ is the center of our message and our identity is to repeat the biblical witnesses, the church fathers, the work of the Protestant Reformation, and the legacy of our own tradition.

For example, Campbell’s biographer Robert Richardson said in 1853:

They suppose doctrine and religious tenets to be the subject matter of our faith. We, on the contrary, conceive it not to be on some doctrine or set of beliefs, but on a person, the Lord Jesus Christ himself. While they, accordingly, require an elaborate confession from each convert, a confession mainly of a doctrinal and intellectual character, studiously elaborated into an extended formula, we demand only a simple confession of

Foundational to our identity is something that stands outside the limitations of both reason and tradition. That something is none other than the living Christ.

Christ; a heartfelt acknowledgment that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

The Christian faith, in our view, consists not of a theory or a system of doctrines, but of a sincere belief in the person and the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is personal in its subject as well as in its object in regard to that which is believed. It consists of simple facts, directly connected with the personal history and character of Jesus Christ as the Messiah and the promised Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. It is personal in its object, leading to personal regard and love for Christ, and a personal interest in his salvation.¹⁹

While it is clear from the aforementioned examples that such thinking is not new, the difficulty is that it is very seldom practiced.²⁰ Can you think of anything more potent or powerful than Jesus to offer to a seeking world?²¹ Those who rely solely on proper Biblical interpretations sink into the quagmire of multiple theories and opinions, losing any hope of unity and power. And those who rely on whatever piece of tradition they have received find themselves affirming human reason and thought and giving little honor to the ongoing call of Scripture. In both cases human reason determines our identity.

I am suggesting that foundational to our identity is something that stands outside the limitations of both reason and tradition. That something is none other than the living Christ. Perhaps we need to stop and listen, like Peter, James, and John. At the transfiguration Peter jumped into an energetic outline of how they should properly honor Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. Suddenly,

over the heavenly P.A. system, a booming voice bounced off the mountainside and reduced Peter to a quivering pile. "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

► Making it real

I suppose that the most difficult part of my remarks lies ahead. It is one thing to say with Paul, "to live is Christ," it is another thing to live as Christ. What might happen within the Stone-Campbell legacy if we recaptured this concept as our message and central identity? May I venture a possible path?

To do so, I want to begin again with some biblical thinking. If God became flesh to demonstrate his love and reclaim us; if Jesus, this human yet divine Messiah, came with a message and a mission to embrace all humanity—then what about *our* message and mission? Our present experience should reflect what God did through Jesus. That is to say, our message and ministry will be a mirror of God's message and ministry. Paul helps us here:

Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation,

The future for our heritage rests in taking the Jesus we place our trust in and allowing him to live in our individual and corporate lives.

the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God

was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.²²

As Paul says, is not the message and ministry of the church concerned with this word "reconciliation"? Does not this word characterize Jesus' ministry? Does not Paul speak of how Jesus, through his death, broke down the walls dividing humanity?²³ The whole idea of fellowship reflects the results of reconciliation: restored (and restoring) relationships. The brokenness experienced at Eden finds healing at Golgotha.

This message of reconciliation prompts God's people to be ministers of reconciliation. We are called to be the body of Christ to each other and to the world. Restoring relationships in the name of the Restorer becomes our guiding principle. Jesus was not whistling in the wind when, in Matthew 25, he spoke prophetically about the judgment and noted what criteria would be used to separate sheep from goats. Mercy and compassion toward the hungry, the stranger, the needy, the ill, and the oppressed are usually not on the traditional lists for heaven-bound folk. Yet if the churches of the Stone—Campbell movement seek to be true to God's call to be salt and light to the world, we will be ambassadors of the

message of acceptance and love to all of God's children.

This path has not typically been taken by many of us. How do you bring a tradition that has made much of its distinctive doctrine as its identity to see and embrace a biblical model centered on the gospel experience of reconciliation? I think the beginning point is simply to practice it. In some way or another, perhaps within your own congregation, practice being peacemakers and reconcilers—in the name and power of Jesus.

The future for our heritage rests in taking the Jesus we place our trust in and allowing him to live in our individual and corporate lives. We must become a "Jesus-shaped," or incarnational, church. What other message or ministry can be given to a world bruised and beaten by the evil one?

► The visible marks

What *should* our "identifying marks" be? Each of the marks that I am about to mention has a distinctive shape: each bears the mark of Jesus.

Mark number one

The first trailmarker is the continued high value placed on Scripture. As a people who are seeking to be disciples of Jesus, we can do no less than honor the God-breathed revelation that Scripture brings. Scripture is honored and heard, not for its own sake, but because it bears witness to the heart and mind of God. We listen and obey Scripture because through it we hear the Lord. Our movement has always revered Scripture and this legacy must be upheld and nurtured.

The incarnational church will,

along with the inspired voice of Scripture, take seriously the other sources that are divinely given. The larger, historic church has long recognized 1) the foundational role of Scripture, 2) the stabilizing, root-giving role of history and tradition, 3) the gift of human reason, and 4) the experiential role of God's Spirit in the life of the believer and the church. Held in proper balance, these four gifts offer affirmation, direction and focus to the church. Since our own legacy has often allowed a dominant role for reason and a subservient role for the Spirit, I would call for reconsideration of how we use these sources as we move into the future. Beginning with a clear hearing of Scripture and aware of how believers in the past have walked before God, we must use our minds and be open to the leading of God's Spirit. After all, we are the disciples and He is the Lord.

Mark number two

Another trail marker will be congregations that are bearing the fruits of the Spirit. Whenever a person or a congregation centers life on Jesus, there will be obvious fruit.²⁴ This means that if a congregation is living out the message of reconciliation then acceptance, love, kindness, and hope will be seen.

In a postmodern world this point is particularly poignant. In another age, one could easily pick up a Bible and say, "Here is truth." Today, people seek truth by seeing it in action. Logical syllogisms do not assuage a broken heart; five proofs for the existence of God do not show me whether that God loves. The

incarnational church must boldly, radically live out the truth of the gospel. Such a church does not rely on market surveys or popular opinion; such a church captures the ministry of Jesus and makes it her ministry.

Mark number three

This incarnational path will be marked by the humble recognition that no universal hermeneutic, statement of belief, worship style, or doc-

“In faith, unity; in opinions, liberty; in all things, charity:” The phrase is good and worthy of our attention.

trinal system can exist. The earliest church recognized this and in fact ordered their existence on something called the *regula fide*, or the rule of faith. The core tenets of the gospel and of the nature of God were the beliefs that gave shape to the church of the early centuries. Beyond that, great diversity existed.²⁵

Tolerance and deference will characterize the spirit of believers as they relate to each other. Diversity will be an inevitable and desirable mark of the incarnational church. Does not the biblical metaphor of the body suggest the reality of different expressions of the one church—for the sake of the message and ministry of God? For the incarnational church, fellowship rests in the common faith in Jesus, not on agreement on common doctrine.

Thus, in the future, I envision many expressions of “doing church” within the Stone-Campbell tradition. There will be no one way of worship, body life, ministry, evangelism, and teaching. The beauty of our tradition is that autonomy gives rise to easily

embracing what God gives each congregation. And each congregation, with eyes focused on Jesus and feet rooted in the witness of Scripture, lives out the faith within the context of their particular community and place in the world.

Mark number four

Related to our recognition that no single set of doctrinal beliefs will mark the incarnational church is the growing ability to distinguish between what is “faith” and what is “opinion.” To help with this task I recommend that we learn not only from the legacy of the thinkers within our tradition but from the larger legacy of the church. “First order” truths regarding the Trinity, the work and ministry of Jesus, the nature of the church, creation, atonement, etc., have long been identified. We must learn to distinguish “first order” truths from “second-order” beliefs or practices. The Stone-Campbell movement has made much of the old saying, “In faith, unity; in opinions, liberty; in all things, charity.”²⁶ The phrase is good and worthy of our attention.

Mark number five

I envision a day when those things that are distinctive within the Stone-Campbell movement (I am presently thinking about baptism and the Lord’s Supper) will cease to be divisive and exclusive practices, but rather become part of the rationale for an inclusive Christianity. The incarnational church will refuse to drive away believers in Jesus, though I believe that the incarnational church will heed carefully the teachings of Scripture. So how do we deal with a topic like baptism?

The leading figures in the Stone-Campbell movement taught baptism, but they refused to make it a point of fellowship.²⁷ The remarkable thing is that rather than see baptism as an exclusive practice, making it a litmus test of a person’s relationship with God, they perceived it as a way to encourage unity. Campbell biographer Robert Richardson is clear on this point:

Apart from the intrinsic merits of the questions which respect baptism itself, it will be seen that in adopting the action of immersion, which all grant to be valid baptism, and in admitting the believer, who is allowed by all to be a proper subject, we offer no impediment whatever to Christian union. We introduce no litigated or doubtful questions; we adopt that in which all are already agreed; we require no one to act contrary to the dictates of an enlightened conscience; we demand nothing more than what the word of God clearly and unequivocally enjoins. In this point of view, then, the position which the Reformation has assumed upon this subject, is eminently anti-sectarian and conciliatory.²⁸

Such an approach more properly reflects the spirit of Jesus. Whenever a point of view cannot be demonstrated to have “fellowship value” or “unity value,” its intrinsic value as a distinctive posture should be scrutinized.

Mark number six

Yet another sign is the intentional effort to make visible the unity of believers. In spite of the reality of a divided church, I would affirm that there is only one church. And the unity of that one church is maintained by the power of the Spirit of God.²⁹ Yet this reality is often not acknowledged or desired. Those whose hearts are set on being shaped by Jesus will respond to the prayer of Jesus: “May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”³⁰

This prayer, revealing the heart of Jesus, offers a mandate. Those who have ears to hear will respond, participating with God to make what is real visible to the world. For the sake of a lost culture and a lost world can the incarnational church do less?

► Conclusion

Church history is replete with restoration movements. The Stone-Campbell movement is one of many. Its significance rests not merely in its focus on unity, its call to Scripture, and its attention to the person of Jesus; its significance to us is that it is *our* particular heritage. It is the ground on which we came to faith; it is the context of our faith and life. Its future rests squarely on what you and I will do with this wonderful legacy.

When a tree has some sort of disease, three courses of action can be taken. First, one can cut down the tree. Second, one can ignore the problem and hope it goes away. Third, one can cut out the bad and nurture the tree to health again, thus

preserving the value and worth of a magnificent oak or a productive peach tree.

When I consider the Stone-Campbell movement I envision a large tree—an oak. Its roots run deep into good soil. Through the years, winds have blown and broken a few limbs. Others have climbed into the branches and built treehouses and other small structures that have, over time, scarred the tree. An old 2 x 4 hangs by a rusty nail. Bagworms have wrapped several limbs with their webs. I see a few dead branches that stand lifeless within the huge bough.

Some might want to cut our tree down and deny our heritage. Others simply want to deny that any restoration is necessary. But I call for us to recapture the simple evangelical faith of the gospel and courageously repair and restore what we have been given. This, I believe, can be done with great confidence, for our tree, our legacy, is well-rooted and offers much to the larger kingdom of God. Such a tree, cared for and healthy, offers much to a culture seeking for some connection to God. May God use such a tree to make his grace and love known to our culture!

Footnotes

- 1 Robert Bezilla, ed., *Religion in America: 1992-1993* (Princeton: Princeton Religious Research Center, 1993), 38-40.
- 2 Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 88.
- 3 For a list of issues that have prompted division among us, see Cecil Hook, *Free in Christ* (self-published, 1984), 4-9. He notes one hundred such issues and suggests that there are yet others.
- 4 John 5:39-40
- 5 The four unions were book union, head union, water union, and fire union. Barton Stone, "The Retrospect," *Christian Messenger* 7 (October 1833), 14-16. Water union referred to baptism; but baptism was understood in too many ways to make it the point of union. Finally, he offers fire union which was his way of speaking of the Spirit. Stone says, "How vain are all human attempts to unite a bundle of twigs together, so as to make them grow together and bear fruit! They must first be united with the living stock, and receive its sap, and spirit, before they can ever be united with each other. So must we be first united with Christ, and receive his spirit, before we can ever be in spirit united with each other. The members of the body cannot live unless by union with the head—nor can the members of the church live united, unless first united with Christ, the living head. His spirit is the bond of union"
- 6 Stone, 315.
- 7 See the Frontispiece of Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); Barth's comments in *Church Dogmatics*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, vol. I, pt. I (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936-77), 12, hereafter cited as *CD*; also Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928), 65.
- 8 *CD*, 1.1.111-12.

- 9 John Barton, *People of the Book?: The Authority of the Bible in Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1988), 82.
- 10 The biblical account of the transfiguration of Jesus is instructive. See Matthew 17: 1-13.
- 11 Galatians 1:6-9.
- 12 1 Corinthians 15:1-8.
- 13 Christ is the *telos* of the law, as in Romans 10.4.
- 14 Romans 10:17. Unfortunately, many earlier English translations neglect the preferred rendering. For Paul it was the preaching of Christ (not some modern understanding of the Bible as the Word of God) that, when heard, created faith.
- 15 The structure of Paul's letters, especially Romans and Ephesians, confirms this idea.
- 16 "For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake," 2 Corinthians 4:5.
- 17 "And it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me," Galatians 2:20.
- 18 Peter demonstrates this distinction in the sermons recorded in Acts. Of special interest is the material in Acts 10 where he conveys to Cornelius' household the essentials of the faith. Jesus takes to task the poor interpretative work of the scribes in John 5:39-40, "You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life."
- 19 Robert Richardson, *The Principles and Objects of Religious Reformation, Urged by A. Campbell and Others, Briefly Stated and Explained* (Bethany: A. Campbell, 1853), 26-27.
- 20 Barton, 81-84.
- 21 Romans 1:16-17.
- 22 2 Corinthians 5:17-20.
- 23 Ephesians 2:11 ff.
- 24 John 15: 1-4.
- 25 For some indication of the theological diversity that existed in the early days of our tradition consider that the followers of Campbell and Stone united in 1832. I am indebted to Leroy Garrett's observations on this point in his work, *The Stone-Campbell Movement*, (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1980). For more recent discussion on the theological differences between Stone and Campbell see Richard Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996). Here is my list:
 1. **Names:** Those in the Stone movement used the name Christian, while those who followed Campbell preferred the term Disciple.
 2. **Worldview:** The Christians were "otherworldly", with little concern or care for contemporary, political or economic issues. The Disciples were quite optimistic about the progress of the world and what God could do in American history.

3. **Theology :**

a. Christology: Stone advocated an Arian point of view, while Campbell was trinitarian.

b. Holy Spirit: While Campbell was reluctant to speak about the Spirit, Stone and his followers perceived a wide role of the ministry and work of the Holy Spirit in conversion and in the believers life.

c. Atonement: Campbell had an objective, legal view; Stone, a subjective, moral view.

4. **Evangelism:** The Disciples were rational and logical and did not emphasize evangelism. The Christians were emotional, even using the mourners' bench.

5. **Baptism:** The Disciples taught immersion; likewise, the followers of Stone. However, the Christians did not make it a point of fellowship.

6. **Lord's Supper:** The Disciples served the Lord's supper every Sunday; the Christians were more irregular.

7. **Ministry and Church Order:** The Disciples did not emphasize clergy/laity distinctions. However, the Christians had a formally ordained ministry and insisted that only the ordained baptize and preside at the table.

8. **Unity:** For the Christians the focus was on the preaching of Jesus; for the Disciples the focus was on teaching the restoration of the New Testament order.

26 Though erroneously attributed to Augustine, the first known use of the phrase was by the Lutheran theologian and pastor Peter Meiderlin (alias Rupertus Meldenius) in the early 1600's. Its use in the Stone-Campbell movement is clearly evidenced by Isaac Errett in the 1870's. See Hans Rollman, "In Essentials Unity: The Pre-History of a Restoration Movement Slogan," *Restoration Quarterly* 39 (Third Quarter, 1997): 129-139.

27 I am in process on this point. However, I have clear evidence that Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone, Walter Scott, and Isaac Errett would agree with the above statement. Most famous on this point is Alexander Campbell's "Lunenburg Letter." In July 1837 Alexander Campbell, in the *Millennial Harbinger*, received a letter from a woman in Lunenburg County, VA, regarding baptism. She asked whether people in other fellowships were Christians or not and whether baptism was required before one could properly be called a Christian. Though his reply stirred up controversy among some in the now maturing movement, it does reflect the spirit of both Campbell and Stone, and most of the early restoration leaders:

"... Should I find a pedobaptist more intelligent in the Christian Scriptures, more spiritually minded and more devoted to the Lord than a Baptist, or one immersed on a profession of the ancient faith, I could not hesitate a moment in giving the preference of my heart to him that loveth most. Did I act otherwise, I would be a pure sectarian, a Pharisee among Christians. Still I will be asked, How do I know that any one loves my master but by his obedience to his commandments? I answer, In no other way. But mark, I do not substitute obedience to one commandment, for universal or even for general obedience. And should I see a sectarian Baptist or a Pedobaptist more spiritually-minded, more generally conformed to the requisitions of the Messiah, than one who precisely acquiesces with me in the theory or practice of immersion as I teach, doubtless the former rather than the latter, would have my cordial approbation and love as a Christian. So I judge, and so I feel. It is the image of Christ the Christian looks for and loves; and this

does not consist in being exact in a few items, but in general devotion to the whole truth as far as known . . ." *Millennial Harbinger* 8 (September 1837): 411ff.

For a excellent recent discussion of the of the Lunenburg Letter see Gary Holloway, "Not the Only Christians: Campbell on Exclusivism and Legalism," *Christian Studies* 15 (1995-96):46-54.

28 Richardson, *Religious Reformation*, 67—68.

29 Ephesians 4.

30 John 17:23.

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MEDITATION

Have you ever met my brother?

Kathy Blakely

Have you ever met my brother, Mike Blakely? He's quite a guy. He loves the Lord. He loves his family. He works hard and is committed to his local church.

We had the same mom and dad, of course, and grew up in the same household 10 years apart. We are a lot alike. We both played the oboe and took Latin in high school. Although we like travel, there is nothing better to either of us than just being able to have a quiet day at home with family. We hold very similar views on many religious, social and political issues.

Even so, there are many differences between us and things about which we do not agree. He thinks I am a little too bold and self involved. I think he is a little too shy and self effacing. Sometimes we have whole

discussions on several topics without ever agreeing. (And we can't even talk about home school vs. public school.)

But you know what? Our disagreements don't change the fact that he is my brother. I love him. We are committed forever to each other as members of the same family. The family would be incomplete without him. Thanksgiving dinner without Mike? No way! He feels the same about me.

Don't ever (ever) cut down my brother in front of me. (Remember, I'm the bold one, and you could get a tongue lashing.) I didn't choose him as my brother, but he is. I am proud that we share the name of Blakely, passed on from our father.

Have you every met my brother, John Van Horn? He's quite a guy. He loves the Lord. He loves his family. He

works hard and is committed to his local church.

We have the same heavenly Father, of course, and grew up in different congregations, where we learned different ways of doing some things. But we are a lot alike. We sing many of the same songs in worship, we both look forward to sharing the Lord's Supper every week, we both try to live first and foremost as followers of Jesus Christ in a world that needs to see Him. We hold very similar views on many religious, social, and political issues.

Don't ever (ever) talk about "us and them" in front of me.

I'll admit there are differences between us. He worships without the accompaniment of an instrument. I lead worship sitting at a Roland KR4700 Intelligent Piano with 88 digitally recorded instrument sounds. John often leads the *Integrity* board meeting down a different track than

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the one I would have chosen. (And we can't even talk about President Clinton.)

But you know what? Our differences don't change the fact that he is my brother. I love him. We are committed forever to each other as members of the same family. The family would be incomplete without him. The bridal feast without John? No way! He feels the same about me.

Don't ever (ever) talk about "us and them" in front of me. We did not choose Christ—he chose us. Christ has one church, one family. I am proud that we share the name of Christian, which we got from our brother:

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another."

"Jesus calls us to seek our unity in and through him. When we direct our inner attention not first of all to each other, but to God to whom we belong, then we will discover that in God we also belong to each other. The deepest friendship is a friendship mediated by God. . . ."

-Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Road to Daybreak*



PERSPECTIVES

"I have a dream . . ."

Keith Brumley



I have a dream . . ." These words rang out from Washington, D.C., as 200,000 civil rights advocates converged on the US capitol in August of 1963. They came from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. — a man with a dream. King dared to dream of a colorless society, one where the character of a man determined his future more so than the color of his skin. Because King dared to dream, and equally important, act on his dream, a year later the historic Civil Rights Act was signed into law. A dream was becoming reality!

Thomas Campbell was a dreamer. His was a dream of all believers in Christ Jesus being united in one Body. His dream was spurred on by those prayerful words of his Savior in John 17:21, "I pray . . . that all of them may be one, Father; just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

In 1809, Thomas Campbell, along with others sharing this dream, drafted an amazing document entitled *The Declaration & Address*. It was a statement of The Dream. It was a document of faith. It stated in clear terms that the division of Christ's Body into countless warring sects was disgusting and sinful. Campbell believed the binding of countless creedal formulations on one another regarding

opinions and theories was the chief cause of the horrid division of his day. His Declaration and Address was set forth not only as a charter for his fledgling "Christian Association of Washington," but also as a challenge to other church leaders to catch the dream of a united Church of Christ.

Without intending it, Thomas Campbell started an entirely new movement. It eventually merged, in 1832, with a like-minded group from Kentucky led by Barton Stone—a man who shared The Dream.

I believe in The Dream! I believe that as "joint heirs" of the Stone-Campbell Movement, there is a desperate need among us to recapture The Dream. Sadly, we have done a poor job of keeping The Dream alive, becoming guilty of the very thing that gave rise to our Movement: division of Christ's Church. In some cases we have cut fellowship ties with one another because one group didn't share a deeply-held conviction regarding difficult-to-interpret biblical passages. At other times, we've allowed personalities and methodologies to divide us.

The Dream was not about uniformity of convictions, methods or practices. The Dream was a oneness of conviction regarding a shared faith in Christ. Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott came up with a unique way of stating this. They said that all

who believe the One Fact, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have responded in faith as penitent believers to the One Act of immersion in water—these are united to Christ and one another in Christ's Church.

Brothers and sisters, we search in vain for any set of shared convictions or opinions to unite us. Only our shared faith in Christ, and our shared commitment to Him as Lord can unite us and keep us united!

I issue a challenge to myself and all heirs of our Movement. The challenge is to dare to dream The Dream.

I challenge each of us to read *The Declaration & Address*, as well as good books chronicling our Movement (such as Leroy Garrett's *The Stone-Campbell Movement*-rev. ed.). This will help us rekindle The Dream and challenge us to act on it.

"I have a dream . . ." Dr. King's dream is still in the process of realization. It takes many years for a dream to blossom into full bloom. We've been blossoming for nearly 200 years. Will this be the generation to see The Dream realized? I pray so.

Keith Brumley lives and ministers in Halifax, Nova Scotia with the Convoy Avenue Church of Christ. A graduate of Harding University, he edits Joint Heirs, a new quarterly publication designed to promote unity among the heirs of the Stone-Campbell tradition. He and his wife, Margaret, have three children. Please see page 46 for information on subscribing to Joint Heirs.



UNITY SIGHTINGS

United in Washington with Promise Keepers

Greg Smith

Editor's note: Greg Smith shares his thoughts about the impact that the Promise Keepers' Stand in the Gap Rally (Washington, DC, October 1997) had on his life. His impressions are inspirational to anyone striving for unity in God's kingdom.

We left on Friday afternoon, nine of us piled into a large Ford van. We headed East. We were a mixed crew: four baby boomers, three teenagers and two in-between. The van was filled with a sense of anticipation, like the half hour before the Super Bowl starts or the night before Christmas. We didn't know what it would be, but we had a sense that something important was going to happen.

As we got closer to Washington, DC, we could see more and more cars with Promise Keepers bumper stickers or hand-lettered signs. At one point our driver, Captain Mike, pulled into a fast-food rest stop. The place was jammed with guys in Promise Keepers hats and Christian T-shirts. And what a polite group they were! "You go first." "Oh no, I think you were ahead of me." "God bless you, brother, see you in DC!"

At one point someone asked the rest of us in the van why we had decided to come. There were several personal expressions, but it boiled down to this: God was about to make history. How could we not be there?

The next morning it was clear that the place was packed; the breakfast line snaked through the dining room and into the lobby. Guys, and an occasional female friend, were decked out in Christian apparel and good natures. The excitement was building. The streets were like a river at flood level as people filled every inch of asphalt.

I've been to sold-out football games and to Disneyland, but nothing prepared me for the sheer size of the crowd. From the steps of the Capitol Building, to the Washington Monument and beyond, were rows and rows of guys on blankets and lawn chairs. One group next to us came all the way from Seattle. In front of us sat some guys who looked like they had ridden their Harleys into town—big, burly guys with long hair and beards. Another group had slept on a bus all night, driving from Wisconsin. As we shared our stories, it seemed to me that perhaps the most important part of this event was that men of God would come, no matter what it took, when God called them.

About half an hour before starting time I stopped to watch a Jewish gentleman in skull cap walking slowly around the mall blowing a ram's horn. God's people were being called together as one, looking for the faith that brought us together, not the small things that kept us apart.

Preceding the gathering there had been much discussion in the media about political agendas or ulterior motives. There was an agenda all right, but it was God's agenda. During the first half of the day we were called to examine our lives against our calling as Christian men, to repent of our sins, soften our hearts and open up to God and each other. It wasn't enough to kneel, at times we were asked to prostrate ourselves on the ground. That's quite a sight: a million guys face down on the ground asking for God's forgiveness.

I prayed in a small group with the Harley guys (bikers cry, too). We confessed our sins, our intolerance, our need for God, and we prayed for each other. And I know the sound of a million men singing could be heard in every corner of Heaven.

We were also called to dedicate ourselves to our families, our churches, and our communities. Max Lucado led the section calling for Christian unity, an appeal to look for the things that we agree on, and to fight Satan, not each other. At the end of the day Coach McCartney shared a bold vision for the future of Promise Keepers. Next year stadium events will be free, as an encouragement for us to bring our non-Christian friends. A year later Promise Keepers plans to bring the message of revival to other parts of the world.

It was a fitting end. For the last three years that members of our church have attended Promise Keepers events, God has worked to open our eyes to his larger community, and

(continued on page 42)



Metaphors for Unity: Psalm 133

Curtis McClane

This article is dedicated to the memory of Brant Lee Doty.

Song of Degrees/ascents: Fifteen psalms bear this title, which probably means that these hymns were sung on the steps of the temple.

The psalmist uses two powerful metaphors in 133 to paint a picture for his original readers regarding how good and pleasant unity is. These two biblical metaphors have lost their force with a modern audience; consequently, we struggle to fathom the depth and richness of such a significant concept. Perhaps it would help us to decipher the original impact of such metaphors and then appropriate more modern ones that would communicate more fully.

The first metaphor utilized is the precious oil that was used to anoint the priests. The precious (perfumed) oil was poured on the priest's head and allowed to flow down his beard, his collar, robe, and sandals. According to Exodus 29 it was this process of anointing that made the priest and his garments holy. Standing purified and cleansed before God he could proceed with the sacrifice on behalf of the community. Watching this ritual, one would have been impressed with the message of God's cleansing, preparation, and purification of his chosen priest for the tasks to be mediated.

The second metaphor is the dew that descends on Hermon. This highest mountain range was renowned for heavy dews. It would

bring refreshment to whomever happened to be on the mountain that day. This would be a tremendous contrast to the parched wilderness not far away in the heat of the day. Such heavy dews could provide a quenching of thirst and a reminder of God's ability to furnish refreshment to both "high and low."

A common thread in both of these metaphors is that there is no limit to the goodness and pleasantness of the experience of unity. Once the oil is poured on Aaron's head, one cannot control the extent of its flow nor the spread of its aroma. And whoever happened to be on the mountain that day would be the beneficiary of such a demonstration of divine refreshment and care. The indiscriminate pouring forth of blessings would indicate divine approval and presence.

► What metaphors work today?

Think of the joy of bathing a newborn with a precious perfumed bath oil. The wonder and beauty of God's creation and the pure enjoyment of fulfilling parental duties is capped with the ecstasy of a job well done. Think of how precious the bond and how exhilarating the experience to see your clean, newborn infant smelling so sweet and pure!

Think of hiking in the mountains of Colorado and coming upon a reservoir of water formed from heavy dews. The trek had been long and the journey difficult. But now the parched tongue and the searing heat can be dispelled because of this refreshment from God. Your appreciation and participation in the process of quenching your thirst had never been more real.

Do these modern metaphors do the idea of unity justice? I don't know. Perhaps this explains why we have lost the quest for unity—we have never seen it as being good and pleasant.

The time is now for God's people to rise up and claim unity as a pleasant and good thing! For it is in the claiming that we will begin to seriously pursue such a goal. What that may mean for all of us God may yet have to reveal.

I ask all of us to pursue a viable metaphor that will motivate us to seek

the fellowship and encouragement of fellow believers. The original setting of the Psalm 133 text was often viewed in terms of a family. It had to do with social relationships inside the home. Those we live closest to know us the best. Sometimes a lack of unity can be traced back to how despicable and ornery we have been with our closest associates.

If indeed this psalm was written to be sung on the steps of the temple as one approached the sacrificial services, could it be that God is calling us to a more wholesome unity among other believers, so that our worship may be acceptable in His sight? Achieving the refreshing nature of unity is up to each one of us. The validity of our Christian witness rests on it. May we truly give God the glory as we seek new and exciting ways to practice the unity that testifies to His will and presence among us.

Curtis McClane is the Editor-in-Chief of Integrity.



REAL-LIFE APPLICATION

Bending the twig

Laquita and Elton Higgs

What view of the world are we passing on to our children and grandchildren? Of course, we want it to be the Christian worldview, but it is obvious that many of our young people have adopted other views. How, then, do we pass on the

Christian worldview? That question grabbed my attention as I was scanning a book by Russell Chandler, *Racing toward 2001* (Zondervan, 1992, pp. 202-03, 207-08).

Chandler explained that there are three basic worldviews:

1. Naturalistic humanism, naturalism, and scientism;
2. Mysticism, pantheism, and other "New Age" philosophies; and
3. Theism/supernaturalism, under which is the biblical, Judeo-Christian worldview.

Chandler quoted from Stan Gaede, a Gordon College sociologist:

The real question . . . is, 'Are we giving our [children] an alternative worldview to the one they are getting in the modern age? Are they learning to think biblically about all of life? Is the Creator at the center of their understanding of creation? Is God's glory the primary purpose behind their thinking and doing?' If the answers to those questions is 'yes,' then regardless of what our [children] come to think of the particulars within the evangelical tradition, they will be in a position to carry on the task of the Reformation, even in the modern world. . . . What concerns me, however, is that most Christian [parents] are not in a position to foster such a worldview—because they have never developed one themselves. One reason for this is that evangelicalism has been as much a reaction to something as an affirmation of something.'

That is quite an indictment—and a challenge. We parents need to consider, first of all, what we believe and

why we believe it. Then we must determine to articulate our faith to our children—to talk about God as a part of our everyday lives, while at the same time being good examples.

► Instilling the "Mind of Christ"

In our home we try in various ways to speak of our faith to our four-year-old Rachel. When we see a beautiful sunset or a lovely flower, we talk about the goodness, beauty, and variety of God's creation. We tell her that she, and we, are special because we are made by God and in His image. As she gets older, we want to emphasize that her talents and blessings are given by God and are to be used for His glory. When she is frightened, we remind her that Jesus promised that he would never leave or forsake his children; we want her to learn to trust God and his promises in the big and small things of life. When she is worried about a lost toy, we help her pray about it, and we pray about our concerns in front of her. We remind her to give thanks to God, both by telling Him "thank you" and by serving Him. We stress obedience, both to us and to God. In such small ways, we hope to instill the "mind of Christ" in her.

► Suggestions

Kelly Sprague of Troy, Michigan, whose sons are in elementary school, recommends the video series, "McGee and Me!" (Focus on the Family and Tyndale). McGee is the animated character who is the best friend of eleven-year-old Nicholas. The fast-paced adventures teach biblical values; for example, "Beauty in the Least" explains what it means to

love your neighbor; and "Twister and Shout" teaches that one can trust God in all situations. Each video, approximately 40 minutes long, is listed at \$14.99, though some two-video sets are available for \$18.99.

In our home recently were English visitors Nigel and Irene Spoor, and they reported that their eight-year-old son loves the animated video series, "The Storykeepers" (Zondervan and Focus on the Family; each listed at \$14.99 and approximately 30 minutes long; for ages 6 through 12). The action is set in A.D. 64, when fierce persecution has driven the church underground. At secret meetings, "tellers" like Ben the baker keep the story of Jesus alive. In the first of the series, "Breakout!," Ben, his wife, and family of young orphans

rescue a young street juggler from the Roman arena. The hair-raising adventures teach lessons that Jesus taught—and keep young Jonathan Spoor glued to his seat.

Much concern has been voiced about the possibility of older children being exposed to pornography on the internet. The Spoores report that many English Christians are placing their computers in the main living area of the home, thus enabling the parents to keep an unobtrusive eye on the screen.

We'll be keeping an eye on our screen ("Ehiggs@umich.edu") and mailbox (9 Adams Lane; Dearborn, Michigan 48120) for your suggestions and ideas as to how we can help our children develop the "mind of Christ."

Laquita and Elton Higgs, both graduates of Abilene Christian University, have generously offered time, talent, and spiritual direction to the Integrity ministry for more than 17 years. Both are occupied as professors at the University of Michigan, and as parents to four-year-old Rachel. Says Laquita, "Alexander Pope, the 18th century English poet, said, 'Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined.' Accordingly, we call this regular feature of parenting advice 'Bending the Twig.'" All of us as Christian parents should be committed to a great deal of unashamed 'twig bending' for the Lord, and we need each other's help to do it."



GUEST EDITORIAL

Looking back

Hoy Ledbetter

1969. Chappaquiddick, Woodstock, Hurricane Camille, and the Manson murders. The average wholesale price of a new car in the U.S. was \$2280. The Mets won the Series, Ho Chi Minh died, Golda Meir became Premier of Israel, Neil

Armstrong took his "one small step," and Sesame Street debuted. *The Saturday Evening Post* ceased publication, and *Integrity* began.

Integrity arose from the irresistible conviction that we had largely "forgotten the revolution," that the

pioneers we praised would find no welcome in the prevailing party spirit of our generation.

And a good many of our preachers were not at all themselves on Sunday morning. That is to say, they would not proclaim in the pulpit the convictions they expressed privately, because, so they said, they did not want to upset "the brethren" who were not ready for the whole truth. A stronger incentive to silence, it seemed, was whatever passed for burning at the stake in the local culture.

Believing such silence was not golden, but merely yellow, we proposed an honest search of the Bible and of our tradition for a cure for the prevailing sectarianism and its concomitant evils. That inquiry would be carried on in an atmosphere of mutual respect and courtesy. We never rejected an article because we disagreed with its argument, but we would not allow a writer to destroy his or her persuasiveness with a mean spirit.

Looking back, I am convinced that a major key to the magazine's success has been its congenial attitude toward all sides. Around a friendly table some writers, seeking to answer others' arguments, answered their own and moved toward a meeting of the minds.

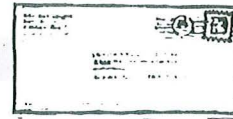
The initial response to *Integrity* was surprising. Letters of encouragement and gratitude came from people all around the world. Of course, there was much criticism, and some whom we had never met

announced that they were withdrawing fellowship from us. But many of the critics kept reading and had a change of heart. Over the years some of our most militant opponents became supporters.

Has *Integrity* justified its existence? According to our meager means of measurement, yes. One historian once called it the most influential journal, in terms of effecting real change, in the Restoration Movement. Personal testimonies have abounded, and even at this late hour, I continue to meet people who speak fondly of how *Integrity* sustained them in their spiritual odyssey.

Integrity has published excellent articles on a broad range of subjects (such as fellowship, worship, the nature and mission of the church, the role of women, restoration ideas, elders, the Holy Spirit, and the Biblical view of power), which have reflected considerable writing skill and careful scholarship. Some of this material the readers could find nowhere else. Being relevant and reasonably presented, it was bound to bear fruit in reasonable minds.

Much has changed for the better since 1969. Desirable accents seldom heard back then have become commonplace now. The sectarian excesses of the past have hardly died out, but they are less vigorous. Nevertheless, we must ever bear in mind that the battle for freedom must be won in every generation. And new occasions will, no doubt, teach us new duties.



READERS' RESPONSE

Regarding the faith of Jesus Mount Pleasant, Michigan

In my "good-bye editorial" "The Power of Grace and Love" in the last issue of *Integrity* (Issue #5, 1997), the meaning of the most important sentence in my editorial was changed by proofreaders who did not understand what I was trying to say. Since it was not clear to them, perhaps this is a good opportunity to explain what I meant.

In discussing my doubts about my own baptism and salvation, I wrote:

"After struggling for years regarding my understanding of my own baptism and intellectually realizing that neither my understanding of baptism nor my surrender or commitment at the moment of my baptism could ever be perfect, I realized that *only Jesus and his faith could save me.*"

What got printed was:

"After struggling for years regarding my understanding of my own baptism and intellectually realizing that neither my understanding of baptism nor my surrender or commitment at the moment of my baptism could ever be perfect, I realized that *only Jesus and my faith in him could save me.*"

This completely changed the meaning of what I was trying to say. I do not believe that my faith can save me. Faith in my faith is like faith in my works, it cannot save. Only Jesus and his faith can save me. In a two part article entitled "The 'Faith of Jesus' and Our Salvation" by Dr. Walt

Zorn, published in the November/December 1986 and January/February 1987 issues of *Integrity*, Dr. Zorn makes an excellent exegesis of Romans 3 (and other passages) showing that the faith referred to in Romans 3:22, 25, 26 is the faith of Jesus, not our faith.

Dr. Zorn explains that many passages translated "faith in Jesus" would more accurately be translated "faith of Jesus" or "Jesus Christ's faith." Neither the preposition "of" or "in" is in the Greek. So Romans 3:22 instead of being translated:

"The righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

There is no difference."

should be translated:

"Indeed God's righteousness through Jesus Christ's faith (fulness) unto all who believe, for there is no distinction."

The first translation creates a redundancy. Why would Paul say "faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe"? If they have faith, then they believe.

Dr. Zorn points out several other passages that would make more sense if they were translated as referring to Jesus' faith rather than our faith: Romans 3:25, 26; Galatians 2:16, 2:20, 3:22; Philippians 3:9; and Ephesians 3:11, 12. If each of the above texts are interpreted using the "subjective genitive," (meaning

Christ is the subject of the action of the noun (“faith”); i.e., “Jesus Christ’s faith” as opposed to the object; i.e., “faith in Christ”) then a person is justified by Christ’s faith and faithfulness (Galatians 2:16). Christ’s faith is what the believer lives by (Galatians 2:20). The promise of God’s Spirit to believers comes by way of Christ’s faith (Galatians 3:22). God’s righteousness is manifested by Christ’s faithfulness and this is for all who believe (Romans 3:22b; Philippians 3:9). All Christians can have boldness and assurance of salvation because of Christ’s faithfulness (Ephesians 3:12).

Zorn shows how Galatians 3:26 which is translated in the NIV: “For all are sons of God through the faith in Jesus Christ,” should be understood as “the faith” which Christ had uniquely brought to earth. This is consistent with the way Paul speaks of faith in Galatians: “Before faith

Regarding women in the church Lubbock, TX

I’m afraid I can’t share your readers’ unbridled enthusiasm (as indicated in Readers’ Response letters) for your May/June issue on women and their plight. Your articles represented many of us as patriarchalists with no compassion or sympathy for modern women, men who want to preserve their hegemony at all costs. There may be men in the church with such impure motives, but most that I know sincerely want to follow the Apostles’ teaching, even though sometimes it is awkward in today’s world. The great

came,” (Galatians 3:23a) “until faith should be revealed” (Galatians 3:23c), “now that faith has come” (Galatians 3:25a). And it is parallel with Galatians 3:19b: “until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.” To speak of Jesus, the Seed, having come, is to say that faith has come because Jesus demonstrated perfect faith in his life and ministry on earth.

This way of looking at faith then allows us to better understand many other passages. Dr. Zorn discusses Ephesians 3:14, Colossians 2:12, II Timothy 3:15, Mark 11:22, Revelation 2:13, and Hebrews 12:2.

Not only do I not trust my baptism to save me, I do not trust my faith to save me. Only Jesus and his faith can save me. It is Jesus’ faith in God, as he lived on this earth as a human being, that saves me. My faith can never be perfect enough to save me.

Bruce Kilmer

task of the modern church seems to be to show that Paul didn’t really mean what he says, or if he meant it then, he doesn’t mean it now.

I recognize the scandalous nature of many instructions in the New Testament and the difficulty of convincing an indulgent world that these sayings are valid. But it seems to me that our task is to find the deeper relevance of these passages rather than denying them or explaining them away. Many other things that Jesus and his apostles taught are harsh and jarring

to today’s enlightened society, but the real disciple recognizes that the New Testament is not a popular endorsement of the status quo but a counter-cultural document. Homosexual activity, immersion into Christ, eating and drinking the body and blood (Emerson gave up his church over this cannibalistic ritual)—all appear as issues on which cultural relativism want to revise the meaning of scripture because of the “scandalous” nature of New Testament instruction. Will we soon accept the explaining away of uncomfortable passages on these subjects as we do those restrictions on women in the church?

I don’t mean to be cantankerous or quarrelsome, and I don’t think I am generally known as an inflexible reactionary. I appreciate many of the good things I have read in *Integrity*

Regarding women in the church Murfreesboro, TN

Several weeks ago, I finally read the May/June, 1997, issue of *Integrity*. I realize that this reaction is quite late, but I have been too busy to respond until this week. I suspect that I am overreacting, but I am disturbed by the one-sidedness of the discussion. Also, the tone seems confrontational and unnecessarily judgmental (similar to this letter?) particularly in what you say about the motivation of mainstream congregational leaders refusing to depart from the traditional roles assigned to women. In the editorial, Bruce says, “We know that it doesn’t make sense that a woman can lead and teach anywhere but in the

over the years. But I despair over the direction and emphasis the journal has taken and would just as soon not continue to receive it. It is not that I don’t read many things with which I disagree; it’s just that I receive less and less satisfaction from *Integrity* in its revisionist phase. I don’t want my silence in the face of such compliments you print in your last issue to imply universal readership approval. I am dismayed by your characterization of New Testament teaching that you disagree with and of those “male chauvinists” that disagree with you.

Regretfully, after being so long a reader, I ask to be removed from your list. My time is precious and I must be more selective.

Thomas A. Langford

church.” Surely Bruce understands that it does “make sense” to most in the noninstrumental Churches of Christ, and a statement such as the one made is an attack on the integrity of these people. Further, in several of the articles, although I consider Bryant’s to be the most specific, I inferred (perhaps reflecting an overreaction on my part) the message that those who defend the traditional view do so, not because of an honest conviction that the Bible teaches it, but only because of tradition, ignorance, and/or even sexism.

Now I share much of your frustration. I care about women, currently

having a mother, sister, wife, daughter, and granddaughter, all important to me. I have ached with sympathy as my 30-year-old professional, graduate-degreed daughter wept out her frustrations at her perception of second-class status in our fellowship. It was with sadness that I watched her; after 6 years of study at one of "our" colleges and a lifetime of involvement in "our" congregations, leave for a fellowship where she feels women are more respected. My judgment is that women have been unnecessarily restricted in many congregations; but I certainly don't accuse the leaders of those congregations of being insensitive or oblivious to the teachings of scripture. In fact, it is the reverse. In our society, it takes considerable courage to maintain a position which the society finds to be politically incorrect. These leaders do so because they are committed to being led by their understanding of scripture, not by what society or certain individuals want. Back in the 1970's, I led and taught a midweek class in which we regularly had what we called a "season" of prayer. During this time, women in the class shared in the vocalization of thoughts. When our elders learned of this, they were concerned and, after visiting and observing, asked us to reexamine our position on the role of women. We spent four weeks studying what we thought were the pertinent scriptures as honestly as we could and concluded that our practice was scriptural. The elders, while not pleased with our conclusion, nevertheless made no

further objections; and we continued the practice. All they asked of us was that we do what we honestly believed to be scriptural, whether or not they agreed with us. What more can one ask?

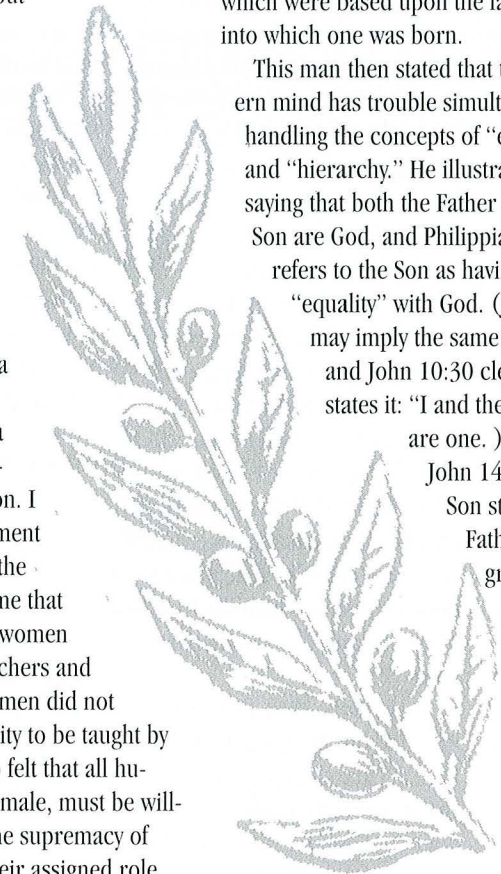
I know that when one has a strongly-held position and one has trouble getting others to agree with it, it becomes easy to question their intelligence or their sincerity or their motivation. But, for many there are legitimate reasons for the traditional role of women. When Paul says "everywhere" (NIV) or "every place" (RSV) in 1 Timothy 2:8, is that paragraph discussing "temporary limitations" as Diane stated in her article? Perhaps, but I can easily see why some would question that. That interpretation does not come from any statement in the paragraph, but because it seems to Diane to contradict with some other passages. (Diane refers to the giving of scriptural gifts to women, implying, if I understand her correctly, that this is incompatible with denying women the use of these gifts in the public assemblies.) Similarly what does it mean in 1 Corinthians 14:33-34 when Paul instructs women to "keep silence" (RSV) or "remain silent" (NIV) as in "all the churches (congregations) of the saints?" While Diane may understand that to be a temporary instruction, many others do not see any suggestion of that. My point is not that Diane is wrong, but that it is not obvious that she is correct. Therefore one should be slow to judge those who disagree

with her (or Bruce or whomever).

Several months ago, I was teaching a class in which 1 Timothy 2 was going to be discussed. Prior to the class meeting, I went to a woman who is about 60, experienced Bible teacher, occasional speaker at women's retreats, invited speaker several times to mixed audiences in excess of 1000 people, holder of a graduate degree, and employed as a manager in a well-known organization. I asked her to comment on the last half of the chapter. She told me that she felt that many women were excellent teachers and she regretted that men did not have the opportunity to be taught by them. But she also felt that all humans, male and female, must be willing to recognize the supremacy of God and accept their assigned role. She recognized that men didn't always get to do what they wanted either. She mentioned the Levitical priesthood and stated that God gave gifts of spiritual leadership to men in other tribes. But, regardless of how talented they were or how much they wanted to be priests or how silly it seemed to others that they couldn't be, they couldn't. Later, when talking about this to a Messianic Jew who had at

one time studied to be a Rabbi, he agreed with this woman and added that even among the men of the tribe of Levi, there were "arbitrary" distinctions made as to what one could do which were based upon the family into which one was born.

This man then stated that the Western mind has trouble simultaneously handling the concepts of "equality" and "hierarchy." He illustrated by saying that both the Father and the Son are God, and Philippians 2:6 refers to the Son as having "equality" with God. (John 1:1 may imply the same thing, and John 10:30 clearly states it: "I and the Father are one.) Yet, in John 14:28, the Son states, the Father is greater than I." A teacher and her/pupil are both equal in value as humans and as eternal souls, but one has authority over the other in the limited sense of the classroom relationship. Similarly, there is neither male nor female in the Lord (Galatians 3:28), but there is a hierarchy of God, Son, man (husband), woman (wife) given in 1 Corinthians 11:3. Well, I don't expect you to agree with this man's views; but that is not the purpose in my writing.



What I hope to do is to encourage you to pause and recognize that there are many intelligent, honest, and caring people (both female and male) who sincerely believe that the traditional distinctions between female and male roles are scriptural and come from God, not Paul or some male chauvinist. It is not appropriate to insult such people even if you are convinced that they are wrong. (You may disagree that you insulted them. Perhaps you didn't, but it seemed to me as if you did, although, knowing you, I can't believe that it was intentional.) Diane's article was a moving account of her long struggle with seeking to find a way to be a maximally effective disciple while still respecting the guidance of the scriptures. We need to acknowledge that other women, equally sincere, have come to a different understanding of those scriptures which she feels have been misapplied to our modern times.

In the November, 1997 issue of *First Things*, Mary Ann Glendon, a Roman Catholic representative to the Beijing women's conference argues that "the Church" historically "has been one of the very few international actors to insist both on respect for women's roles in the family, and on support for women's aspirations for full participation in economic and social life." She points out that the Christian churches have led in defending the sacredness of the marital vows as opposed to the common practice in nonchristian societies of men putting aside their wives at their whim. Christian nations have pio-

neered in offering education and legal rights to women. Yet, she says, "the gender police think they have a slam-dunk response: the Church is sexist because it refuses to ordain women." Well, none of us would argue that we should settle for partial justice or partial citizenship in God's community. But is equality the ultimate goal? How about submission to God's will? Or is it righteousness? Or liberty? Or charity? The issues are complex, and we should be slow to judge harshly, especially when we cannot see into the heart.

Clearly the scriptures teach that women can teach and perform many ministries. Obviously, however, there is a dispute as to when and where they should do these things. There also is a dispute as to whether there are some ministries, such as leadership, in which they are to be denied participation. Jesus numbered women among his most dedicated disciples. Yet he chose none of them as apostles. To suggest, as some have done, that Jesus was afraid of public opinion seems unconvincing as the reason. Paul praised many women for their effective service and teaching (for example, Romans 16) and referred approvingly to their activities in praying and prophesying (as long as their heads were covered), yet he was the human author of the passages most used to limit women's public activities.

Personally, I still am struggling to figure this issue out. I wish I had the answers. But I don't even know with certainty whether I Corinthians 11 and 14 refer to women in general or

only to wives, to early society or all societies, to all settings or only public ones. I still puzzle as to what kind of head covering, if any, a woman (or is it wife?) should have and a man (husband?) not have. At this point in time, I could not endorse a woman as elder or preaching minister but neither do I condemn those who could. Some disputes seem silly to me. I have no objection to women passing the trays, which actually is rather trivial, or various other service (deaconess) roles. (I know of one woman commenting on serving the Lord's supper who observed that in the house churches of the first century, women probably had to do it because the men, if they were like her husband, wouldn't have known where to find it.) Actually, while the correctness of one's position is important, it is even more important

Regarding women in the church via e-mail

I just finished reading Issue 4, 1997. As usual, I want to congratulate the writers for having again summoned each reader to re-examine his or her assumptions about appropriate church/religious practices in the light of scripture.

Our congregation has just identified and installed its ministry leaders for 1998. As I read through Issue 4, I found it contained many challenges we should consider as we carry out this year's Christian endeavors. I would like to provide each of our elders, deacons, ministry leaders, and

to sincerely seek to do the will of God. Further, I believe that most of us do that even if that means that not all get to do what they want or feel "called" to do. Therefore, I urge that we maintain civility and not imply that those who are not as "enlightened" as others are less righteous. And, I repeat, whether or not you implied it, that is what I inferred from the issue.

I confess that I fear that I may be doing in this letter what I am criticizing you for doing. Perhaps the fault is in me and I am being unnecessarily defensive or sensitive. If so, then I have wasted some time in arguing against something which doesn't exist. But that is a small price in comparison to the need to speak out if my perceptions are accurate.

Bill Vermillion

staff members with a copy of this issue . . .

Also, I gave our senior minister my copy of the May/June 1997 issue for use in a study that he was doing on women's roles in the church. I would like my four daughters to have the opportunity to read Diane's story; for even though they might feel more restrained about telling their stories, I know each of them can relate to several episodes in lives that parallel those which she chronicled.

Jerry Colglazier

United in Washington

from page 28

to firm up our own faith. There is a danger that these events can become motivational sessions, feeding the same flock. We do need to be challenged to take Christ's message to the world outside.

Much of our talk during the van ride home centered on this need to reach beyond our friends in our church, and to connect with God's greater plan. I do believe that God is calling his people to revival. Not just

to more regular church attendance, or to larger contributions, but to deep personal faith and a desire to carry his word to a community that desperately needs it.

I'm grateful to Promise Keepers for issuing the call. But a million men, one at a time, made personal decisions to come. A million Christian men in one place at one time. God's army is not small and it's not silent.

Greg Smith is a member of the Troy, MI, Church of Christ, and the Service Director for Audi of North America. He has two children.



Editorial

(continued from page 3)

honesty in the body of Christ. "That original dedication has not wavered for nearly 30 years. More than ever the church needs to substantiate its witness by its practice of unity. More than ever the church needs spiritual health flowing from the heart of God. More than ever the church needs "intellectual honesty" among its leaders. More than ever the church needs the "spirit of inquiry" and the "joy of discovery" to provide the necessary impetus to stay true to her theological and historical heritage.

The divided state of Christendom today is a modern monument to the effectiveness of Satan's strategies against the divine mandate that all believers be one in Christ. I came from a religious background that majored in

division, and as a result, I carry to this day the ugly scars of spiritual wounds caused by religious pride heaped on a young and naive heart. Unless one has experienced such painful church divisions, it is almost impossible to convey the depth of pain and disillusionment to those who have not been thrown into such a boiling cauldron of demonic brew. It is out of this pain and woundedness that I bring a passion for unity to this editorship. In preparation for writing this editorial I also reread the *Declaration and Address* by Thomas Campbell and the *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* by Barton W. Stone (and others). The former was written in 1809 and the latter in 1804. These two documents

launched a religious movement which saw its only justification as being one of unity among believers. Being one of the witnesses to the *Last Will and Testament*, Stone affixed his name to the following conviction: "Therefore, from a principle of love to Christians of every name, the precious cause of Jesus, and dying sinners who are kept from the Lord by the existence of sects and parties in the church, they have cheerfully consented to retire from the din and fury of conflicting parties—sink out of the view of fleshly minds, and die the death." Out of this principle of love it is easy to see that the first step toward unity is the one proposed by Thomas Campbell in his *Declaration and Address*. He maintained that "until you associate, consult, and advise together, and in a friendly and Christian manner explore the subject, nothing can be done. We would therefore, with all due deference and submission, call the attention of our brethren to the

... my desire is that this journal will continue to be a safe haven where controversial issues can be lovingly discussed in an irenic spirit.

obvious and important duty of association. Unite with us in the common cause of simple evangelical Christianity; in this glorious cause we are ready to unite with you. United we shall prevail." Love is the principle; due deference and submission is the attitude. As editor of this journal I will operate on the principle of love

and proceed with the attitude of due deference and submission. It is a humbling thing to recognize how much one does not know as the years go by. On many issues that plague our churches I simply am not wise enough to know the right answers. That is why my desire is that this journal will continue to be a safe haven where controversial issues can be lovingly discussed in an irenic spirit. Our goal in this process is twofold: to get to know God and his will more clearly, and to understand each other more compassionately. Convictions and compassion are not diametrically opposed. The most convicted individuals the world has ever seen have also been the most compassionate. Jesus is the best case in point.

Is unity passé? I don't think so. Look at the churches continuing to split over various issues. Look at the religious bodies that have no communication with one another. Look at the public apathy toward a varied landscape of religiosity in America. Look at the powerful reconciliation services at Promise Keepers. As long as *Integrity* keeps true to its purpose of pursuing the biblical model of unity among believers, Satan will declare spiritual warfare and the task will remain ever before us. It is a live issue and God continues to call us to be in the forefront of the battle. As Campbell asserted, "United we shall prevail." With God's help and the leading of his Holy Spirit we want to remain open to the powerful and mysterious ways in which he can effect union among his followers. Unity

is a powerful tool for witness. And that witness when taken seriously will attest to the living, sovereign, transcendent God.

We will make it our godly goal to “associate, consult, and advise together, and in a friendly Christian manner explore the subject” so that the path to unity can be paved with compassionate understanding. This path, we are confident, will be marked clearly by God. However, we

all must be willing to go where

He is willing to lead. It may

call for us to rethink

some of our tradi-

tional understand-

ings. It may call

for us to actu-

ally fellow-

ship with

some-

with

o n e

different

religious

convictions.

It may actually

call for us to ad-

mit our own short-

comings, sins and

contributions to the

state of division that we

have been unwilling to re-

pent of.

► In this issue

God has brought together in this new issue of *Integrity* an assemblage of writers who have a passionate pen about the theme of unity. We recognize that unity is a divine command with a purpose: that the world may know that God is real.

Featured articles include reprints of the historic statements by **Victor Knowles** of the Christian Church and **Rubel Shelly** of the Church of Christ. These provide for us a confessional model for the first real steps to unity. **Keith Brumley** shares his excitement about reviving the original dream of Thomas Campbell to all heirs of the Stone-Campbell movement.

Henrietta Palmer chronicles the work of the Tuesday morning Bible Break ministry which brings women from diverse Christian backgrounds into an experience of unity. **Carson Reed** points to the living Christ as the foundation of our identity and the hope of a relevant ministry. **Greg Smith** tells us about his personal experiences going to Washington, D.C., for the Promise Keepers’ Stand in the Gap conference, and how God used a million men in one place at one time to make a statement for unity and reconciliation. **Hoy Ledbetter** looks back to the beginning of *Integrity*, and provides an historical perspective on how God moved among some Christians to begin this journey of faith in publishing and promoting the idea of unity.

We send this new issue out with prayer and humility. We are confident that God will use it to touch the hearts and minds of Christians who are struggling and striving to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Please send us your comments, reactions, suggestions, and thoughts. This journal is your journal, and its effectiveness will only be proportionate to your involvement and feedback. May God use this feeble offering to feed your hungry soul as you strive to witness to a lost and dying world which needs desperately to see Jesus by the unity we hold to be pre-

ciuous!

In Christian love,



Curtis D. McClane



HOT TOPIC

In this space, we’ll occasionally print a question about a subject of current interest in the Stone-Campbell movement churches, or in Christendom at large. The “Hot Topic” question is designed to generate dialogue from those holding pertinent opinions on any facet of the subject. We will print responses to the previous “Hot Topic” in next quarter’s issue. This quarter’s Hot Topic:

Has God raised up Promise Keepers to accomplish what the Restoration Movement failed to do?

To respond to this quarter’s Hot Topic, you can write to us:
Curtis McClane
c/o Troy Church of Christ
800 Trombley
Troy, MI 48083

or e-mail us:
cmmclane@aol.com
or
integrit@mich.com



KINDRED SPIRITS

We know you like to read as much as we do, and, since you read *Integrity*, you probably especially enjoy reading about issues concerning Christianity. Accordingly, we'd like to use this space to enrich your reading list. (Although, if it's like ours, your stack of "must-reads" is so high that it threatens to topple over, unread. And if you're like us, even this looming stack isn't enough: there's always more that we "must" read.) Watch this space for lists of recommended books about certain subjects, reviews of new literature, or reports of new reading material we think you might like.

This quarter, we'd like to let you know about a couple of new Restoration heritage publications. Please let us know if you know of any others.

Joint Heirs

Keith Brumley, editor

This Canadian newsletter is "produced jointly by concerned Christians seeking the unity of all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ." The name refers to our being joint heirs in Christ (Romans 8:17) and in the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement.

Subscriptions:

no charge, but donations welcomed
attn: Keith Brumley, editor
48 Convooy Ave.
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3N2P8
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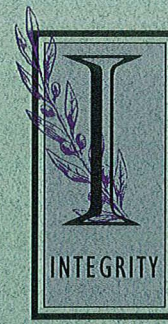
Stone-Campbell Journal

William R. Baker, editor

This journal provides a "scholarly platform for biblical interpretation, history, theology, philosophy, apologetics, and cultural criticism for those who value the perspective of the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement and who endeavor to advance its distinctive principles today."

Subscriptions:

2x/year, April and Oct. \$15 per year.
Phone: 800-289-3300
Address:
College Press Publishing Company
PO Box 1132
Joplin, MO 64802-1132
www.collegepress.com
email: books@collegepress.com



Coming up in *Integrity*

If you would like to submit materials for any of these upcoming issues, please do so! You will find submission guidelines on the inside front cover.

Summer 1998

Imaginative faith:

The creative expression of spirituality

Fall 1998

No Creeds but Christ:

Challenging the creeds of our "non-creedal" movement

Winter 1998

Clash of consciences:

How do the "strong" and the "weak" worship together?

Start typing!
We're looking forward
to hearing from you.

