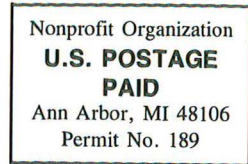


Integrity

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

some eleven new and not-so-new books, the first being the recent Lewis biography by A.N. Wilson. Wilson's work — filled with inaccuracies, innuendoes and generally sloppy research — has proved a bitter disappointment to virtually everyone who knows anything about Lewis. The reviewer, Owen Dudley Edwards of the University of Edinburgh, though trying (too hard in my view) to give the devil his due, leaves little to the imagination in his castigation of Wilson. His review contains such gems as "Mr. Wilson's quite phenomenol ignorance of Christian literature" (p. 449), and "the wretched Mr. Wilson's want of historical imagination" (p. 453). More of this is needed! It would be difficult to exaggerate the badness of Wilson's biography. Other reviews are also of interest, perhaps especially so Jim Como's discussion of *All My Road Before Me*, the newly published Lewis diaries spanning the years 1922-27 (of even more value because this period precedes Lewis's conversion to Christianity).

The volume closes with reprints of several obituaries published in various periodicals at the time of Lewis's death (Nov. 22, 1963, quite a fateful day since the deaths of John Kennedy

and Aldous Huxley coincided with Lewis's), and with excerpts from previous articles and essays on both authors. There is enough in the volume to whet the novice's appetite for more Chestertonia and Lewisiana, and at the same time enough new information to make it attractive to the scholar. For the person who, like myself, is enamoured of both authors, it is a must.

Note: The C.S. Lewis Special Issue costs \$25.00 if ordered alone, but comes free with a year's subscription to the *Review*, which is \$30.00. The address: *The Chesterton Review*, St. Thomas More College, 1437 College Drive, Saskatoon, SK, Canada S7N 0W6. Or, you may order from Jerry L. Daniel's supply at this address: Echo Lake Church of Christ, E. Broad St. at Springfield Ave., Westfield, NJ 07090.

Jerry, who holds a Ph.D. degree in history, serves as minister and elder to the Echo Lake Church of Christ in Westfield, New Jersey, where he and his family have lived for 20 years. A long time *Integrity* reader, Jerry is also editor of *CSL: The Bulletin of the New York C.S. Lewis Society*.

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**Book Review: C.S. Lewis Special Issue of
The Chesterton Review**
Reviewed by Jerry L. Daniel

May/June 1992
Vol. 23, No. 3

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Tell The Old, Old Story

One cool, dark evening while camping with friends, our two families circled closely around the warm, crackling fire and carefully listened while the storyteller among us told her tale. She drew us into a long, complex story that included our names, and we listened seriously with our hearts in our throats. The satisfying ending left room for more adventures to be added. Throughout the following year we retold parts of the story that scared us the most or made us laugh, and we eagerly looked forward to another camping trip that would include a new chapter to the story.

When the old hymn says to "Tell me the old, old story of Jesus and his love," it's asking us to remember a story that had our names in it before the world was made. Although our Restoration background has rightly encouraged deep, serious study of the Scriptures, if we spend most of our time focusing on small sections of the Word, we tend to lose perspective. As our camping experience taught us, retelling parts of the story later on in the year was only important because of their place in the context of the whole tale.

This *Integrity* issue focuses on storytelling and godly communication. The authors encourage us to communicate the story of God's love with creativity and intelligence. They also emphasize that communication with God and with people should reflect humility and goodness.

Just as our campfire storyteller used all her ability to enthrall us with her tale, we encourage you to tell the old story of Jesus and his love with the same wholeheartedness. Be sure to include the new chapter: *you!* Yes, your life is now part of the big story "from Christ. . .written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor. 3:3)!

Diane Kilmer

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

The Core Gospel

BILL LOVE

[The following is an excerpt from Love's new book *The Core Gospel — On Restoring The Crux Of The Matter*, printed by permission of Abilene Christian University Press.]

If we are to discover what the core gospel is we must apply ourselves to loving God, as Jesus said, with our "whole mind." Our devotion to the investigation must be as great as the nuclear physicists' dedication to the study of atomic power. That kind of dedication carries with it a willingness to change one's mind as the data comes in. Have you ever wondered what Paul did for three years of silence in Arabia? Perhaps he was sorting through the new data, reworking his own theology and faith after his encounter with the risen Jesus. He had to revise every concept of his faith: God, man, creation, covenant, law, kingdom, Messiah, salvation, hope. Our growing in the Lord is in essence like that. Painful as it is, the more we learn of him the more we are asked to adjust our thinking.

Looking at things in a different way is difficult. For example, one of the challenges to us in the Church of Christ is to discover again as adults what we learned as children: that *the Bible is a storybook*. For generations we have studied the Scriptures in pieces. The verses, paragraphs, chapters, and books offer so much rich meaning we may forget that all of it fits within the larger story of God and his dealings with mankind. Many of us have spent years learning how to study a text, digging into the original context, observing literary forms, examining words. We have learned to take each writing and study it on its own merits. The returns for that kind of study are enormous. From time to time we have been thrilled to tears because of golden insights discovered in the

text. Over the years of such study one consciously or unconsciously forms his or her own biblical theology: bits of data and thought cluster around key subjects and ideas assume some relation to one another: God, man, creation, sin, redemption, Christ, church. That kind of theologizing is not only legitimate, it is necessary. All of this is well and good; we should never give up gains we have made in learning how to study particular books and individual portions of the Scripture. We are privileged all of our lives to ponder the great themes of the faith and their interrelations.

However, if there is an overall unity to the Bible, if it is not simply a random collection of sixty-six books, one must ask about the meaning of the whole. The study of individual books is not enough. If there is an over-arching story we must discover what it is. In addition to our study of particular texts, in addition to our examination of biblical themes, in addition to our prayerful thought about these matters, we must know that grand story if we are to experience the core gospel in its full power.

Avenues of Understanding

A New Testament survey revealed that the cross determined the content of earliest Christianity. Those who evangelized unbelievers, defended the faith, and taught the church had a handle on this core gospel. We have seen that Paul spoke of the "word of the cross," by which he meant the message and implications of what happened on Golgotha. Other New Testament writers did the same, each in his own

way. We have attempted to see how scandalous the core gospel was.

In addition to the canonical writings a storehouse of rich insight into the cross comes down to us in the Christian literature of twenty centuries. We are privileged to enter that storehouse and carry away with us priceless treasures. But must we only receive these insights from others? Is it possible for us to develop a theology of the atonement for ourselves? The familiar old Chinese proverb says: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime." The richest insights of non-canonical Christian literature provide nourishment for the day. The best insights have come ultimately from the scriptures themselves. If we want nutrition for a lifetime we must learn to find the meaning of the cross in the Bible itself.

The question here is about method. Is the Bible concerned with this "how to" question? Not overtly, the Bible is not in the modern sense a "how to" book. Nevertheless, it provides us ways to get hold of the atonement. The New Testament teaching on the atonement is found in narrative, parable, epistle, argument, vision, etc. We are most comfortable with direct instruction, the "application to life" kind of material found in the epistles. However, if we want to learn to "fish for ourselves" we must explore all avenues to a better understanding. So far as the atonement is concerned two of these ways are of supreme importance but too seldom travelled. These are story and picture. Or we might say, narrative and metaphor.

Reading the Story

Our attempt to trace the biblical narrative reminds us that the core gospel may only be discovered when we recall God's story with mankind. The centerpiece of the larger narrative is the story of Jesus. Consequently, we must learn to read and appreciate story. Just here we may encounter some resistance within ourselves. It's easy to assume that story is a less sophisticated medium of communication than an epistle. "Stories are for children, aren't they?" Children do love stories. None of us has ever heard a small child say at bedtime: "Please

review that syllogism about the happy life." "Tell me again those three points you explained about human nature." "Can you recite that poem again?" "Tell me a story!" is the plea. But children are not the only ones, adults love stories, too. Novels, plays, and movies will never go out of style. Every speaker can testify to the almost magical effect of storytelling. From the youngest to the oldest we love stories. Perhaps most significant of all: whether in pride or despair we never tire of telling our own stories.

Sometimes we underestimate the power of story in our lives. We often imagine that we are living life only by logic, reasoning, and analysis. Admittedly, all of that is important. But we receive our real vision of life from story. Our grandparents and parents grew up hearing Parson Weems's story about George Washington and the cherry tree. It was a story to teach honesty. And there was *The Little Engine That Could* which taught perseverance. Horatio Alger fired the imagination and made generations work hard to claim a part of the American Dream. One can rise from "rags to riches."

The same power of story is with us today. Over the years I made it a hobby to notice what people are reading on airplanes. Several years ago, when I first noticed, they were reading *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. Later it was the life story of Lee Iacocca. When I first wrote this chapter I noted that people were reading Donald Trump. We can be sure that another hero of American business will soon replace this idolized success figure. The writings of such a person are appreciated not because he is a brilliant or a perceptive writer, but because the readers want to know his story and the secret of success for themselves. Stories grip us down deep, fire the imagination, define our ambitions, and send us on our way.

Michael Goldberg, a rabbi who studied in a Christian seminary, wrote a book he entitled: *Jews And Christians, Getting Our Stories Straight*. He observed that both Jews and Christians have a "master story." For the Jews it is the exodus, for Christians it is the cross. "These stories not only inform us, more im-

portantly they *form* us," observed Goldberg.¹

The first time I read Goldberg's observation it rang a bell. I was first drawn to God when my mother read to me *Hurlbut's Story of the Bible*. These many years later I still remember vividly the adventures of Joseph, David and Goliath, Daniel in the lion's den, the Prodigal Son, Jesus on the cross, and Paul's missionary journeys. In each case colorful pictures illustrated. I can still see Joseph's coat of many colors, Daniel and the lions, Jesus on the cross. The Bible is the original and best Bible story book. It's a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. As the story begins mankind loses its fellowship with God and it ends with God redeeming his children back to himself. These features are not there by chance. The Bible is a storybook, complete with pictures.

Understanding the Atonement

An understanding of the atonement must begin with the Old Testament story and continue on with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Too often we skip the gospels as if we had mastered them as children in Sunday School. In the story line each gospel provides insight into the center of our faith. I say "story line" because they are stories to be read as stories. We should see how the story begins, proceeds, and ends, asking what the narrative tells us about God? Jesus came into contact with a full cast of other characters: disciples, the "crowds," his enemies, the Romans, and others. The gospels contain profound insight into human nature. We should read the narratives asking in each case what Jesus did and said that took him to the cross, what others did that had him crucified, why God delivered him up for us. The first level of study has to do with the history of Jesus, what he said and did.

On a second level, one should ask what each gospel writer was saying to his readers a generation or more later. All four gospels in their unique ways reveal Jesus as God's son. Guided by the Holy Spirit, each writer chose to relate certain incidents in the life of Jesus and not others. Each evangelist was guided to show those aspects of Jesus' life and death which spoke most directly to his readers' needs.

This understanding determines the way we must read the gospels. Each gospel must stand on its own feet and be studied that way. "Harmonizing" the gospels washes out the vivid and distinctive revelation in each. In reading each on its own terms we ask what the writer was saying. Why does he choose certain events and teachings and not others? Why does he emphasize this word and not that one? Why does he stress certain factors which led to Golgotha while another evangelist stresses another set of factors? Why does Mark build his story around Jesus' journeys, especially the journey to Jerusalem? Why does Matthew stress Jesus' relation to the Jewish law and religious leaders while Luke pictures Jesus as universal savior? Why does John show that "the word became flesh" while the others do not put it that way? Each story must be studied on its own. Each gospel is a gold mine of insight regarding the atonement.

For purposes of understanding the core gospel it would help to think of the Bible and the gospels the way we think of other stories. We think of a play, a movie, or a novel as a *whole*. What is the main plot? What are the subplots? Who are the main characters, what are they like, who is the hero and who the villain? What are the points of conflict and tension? How is the story resolved? What does the story mean to our lives? What will we remember most about the story and why? We are blessed in the Church of Christ today with more and better biblical scholars than ever before. We should seek their insights into the biblical narrative. Perhaps they, in turn, would be enriched by more conversation with our many fine scholars in literary criticism.

Observing the Pictures

"A picture is worth a thousand words" the saying goes. Another less well known observation says: "Give me the Gettysburg Address, the Twenty-Third Psalm, and the Beautitudes and you can have any picture ever painted." All three together contain less than a thousand words. But this is a false debate. One cannot use words without painting pictures. Words, even the most logical words, paint pictures.

Take, for example, the epistle to the Romans. Here is one of the most carefully reasoned writings in the Bible. One might expect logical discourse without visual imagery. But look at just a few of the many pictures in the first six chapters:

“Paul a *servant* of Jesus Christ. . .”

“For God is my *witness*. . .”

“I have intended to come to you that I may *reap* some *harvest*. . .”

“Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not *reckon* (accounting term) his sin. . .”

“Circumcision was a *seal* of righteousness . . .”

“We were *baptized* into his death. . .”

Listen Carefully

ELMER PROUT

Jesus Christ was the greatest storyteller the world has ever heard. His stories, parables as we call them, fill the Gospels: The Good Samaritan, The Prodigal Son, The Rich Fool, The Sower and the Seed, The Rich Man and Lazarus. . . “Heavenly stories with earthly meanings,” we call them. We hear the titles. We remember the content. We get the point immediately. Or do we? If getting the point of Jesus’ stories is so simple, why did the Lord keep saying, “If you have ears, hear”? Why did he warn “Consider carefully how you listen” (Luke 8:18)?

Consider how I listened to the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14). I was listening to a sermon which deplored the

“Our old self was *crucified*. . .”

“The *wages* of sin is death, but the *free gift* of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

As the New Testament evangelizers and writers of epistles conveyed the “word of the cross” they used a variety of pictures or metaphors. These visual images communicate understanding, stir the imagination, evoke feelings, and galvanize the will. If we would understand the cross from the New Testament point of view we must learn to appreciate metaphors.

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self-righteousness of the Pharisee. I agreed with the preacher’s emphasis. I said to myself, “Boy! Am I glad that I am not like that puffed up Pharisee!”

How was my hearing at that point? Was I listening to Jesus? Did I hear his warning against all self-righteousness, including my own? Or had I turned him off and turned on my self-congratulation tape? I knew the words of the parable. Unfortunately, I was using one of the characters (the Pharisee) as a foil for my pride.

Jesus did not design his stories as tools for our use in cutting others down to improve our self-image. If we listen carefully we will hear Jesus’ judgment on everyone “who trusts in

themselves that they are righteous and regards others with contempt.” That applies to the Pharisee, of course. It also would apply to the tax collector if he forgot his humility. It certainly applies to Elmer Prout any time he thinks he is less self-righteous than the Pharisee.

Take the story of the Prodigal Son as another case in point. Tears glisten on our cheeks as we watch the father run to welcome his prodigal son. “He was lost and is found. He was dead and is alive. Let’s have a banquet to celebrate his return!”

That part of the story is dear to our hearts. We feel it pull us closer to the heart of God. “For God so loved the world that whosoever . . .” The Father, we remember excitedly, was so overjoyed that he did not even listen to the prodigal’s confession. We identify quickly and happily with the Son who loves sinners to that extent. “That,” we declare, “is the Savior’s good news!”

Certainly that part of the story is good news. The catch comes when we listen to the parable as if the return of the younger son, the prodigal, is the only point of the story. If we listen with that mind-set, we will miss at least half of Jesus’ point. We will see only that the Father ran (Luke 15:20). We will overlook his walk (Luke

15:28).

Admittedly, the older son is not a likable person. He comes off surly in his wounded self-righteousness. “Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. . . But when this son of yours who has squandered your property. . .” (Luke 15:29)

That is all I want to hear from the elder brother. I’ll write him off as a stay-at-home prig and get on with the party. That’s the thrust of the parable, isn’t it?

But that is precisely what Jesus did not say. The Lord’s story shows us the heart of the father yearning for *both* of his sons. The story is not so much about a son who went far away, nor about a son who stayed near. It is about the father who loved his sons wherever they were. Jesus tells us about the Father who wants all his family back together at his table.

Care in listening to the words of Jesus is not merely an intellectual exercise. It is an opportunity to enter more deeply into the heart of God the Father.

Elmer Prout, a minister and missionary in the Stone-Campbell movement for many years, presently ministers to the Church of Christ in Shaftner, California.

The Grapes of Wrath

DON A. STOWELL

One of the stained glass windows that I observed in a church building has a scene showing Adam and Eve looking up toward heaven as if in serene fellowship with God. Behind them is a small tree with fruit on it. The emphasis in the picture, it seems, is the bright red fruit which apparently depicts the forbidden fruit.

It took me awhile, but I noticed another fruit

near the small tree. *Grapes*.

Now, we have another possibility. Could the grapes have been the forbidden fruit in the Garden? Many like to think that the apple was the temptation. It really doesn’t matter, of course, which fruit it was that Adam and Eve ate (it was their disobedience that was the real issue), but consider for just a moment the connotation of the grapes.

Some of our problems with communication have been referred to as the "grapevine." This has been a source of contention since the Garden. The serpent started it. He approached Eve with the question "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the Garden?'" Eve responded, ". . . God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the Garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" Then the serpent said, "You will not surely die. For God knows . . ." (Genesis 3:1-5).

Do you see the breakdown of communication: expressing doubt over the truth (serpent — vs. 1); adding to the truth (Eve — vs. 3); calling God's Word a lie (serpent — vs. 4,5); believing a lie and acting on it (Eve and Adam — vs. 6); passing the buck (Adam and Eve — vs. 12, 13)?

It seems that our lack of communication, or distortion of it, has caused us to think and be deceitful. How proper it might have been that grapes would have been the forbidden fruit. Our grapevine today contains doubts of the truth, distortions, deceit, and disobedience.

If you have ever looked at a grapevine, you may have noticed several "strands" that intertwine to make up a particular plant. It would be difficult to trace the cluster of grapes back to its real source. Which "strand" is responsible for the grapes?

In the same way, we subject ourselves to false conclusions (grapes) based on several stories ("strands") from which there is usually an unknown source. Remember, Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. In reality, of course, each was responsible for his own sin.

Consider the many Scriptures about the grapevine of which we are personally responsible.

Proverbs 10:18 — "He who conceals his hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool."

Proverbs 11:13 — "A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret."

Proverbs 18:8 — "The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts."

Proverbs 20:19 — "A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much."

Proverbs 25:23 — "As a north wind brings rain, so a sly tongue brings angry looks."

Proverbs 26:20 — "Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down."

Psalms 34:13 — "Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies."

Psalms 101:5 — "Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence. . ."

James 1:26 — "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless."

Communication, the language of man, appears to lead some to disobedience and destruction. If the grapevine is burned, then communication can be a strength for blessings and not cursings (James 3:9, 10).

While it doesn't matter which fruit Adam and Eve ate, it was as forbidden as the lies and deceit from the grapevine!

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

The Pleasure Principle

HOY LEDBETTER

A while back I jabbed a large splinter deep into my finger, which caused a throbbing pain that sent me searching for a remedy. I could have just taken some sort of pain killer, but that would have provided only temporary relief. I knew that I had to extract the splinter, even though that was sure to cause additional pain. So I got my needle and tweezers and went to work. It was not an easy chore, but it was the only way I could get permanent relief.

That is exactly the way we must deal with the omnipresent problem of fussing and fighting. We must go behind the symptoms and get rid of the root cause, as I had to get rid of the cause of pain in my finger. And what is the cause? The Bible has a very clear answer. Notice the way James starts his fourth chapter: "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasure that wage war in your members?"

So there we have it: the source of quarrels and conflicts among us is the pleasures that battle in our members. This is an extraordinarily comprehensive statement. All quarrels and conflicts, all fusses and fights, all bickering and brawling, whether in the home, the church, the community, or among nations, issue from pleasures that wage war in our members. If we want to get rid of the battles and wars, we must get rid of the pleasures which give rise to them.

But what, exactly, does this mean for us? And what does James have against pleasure? Well, to begin with, the word "pleasure" is never used of something good in the New Testament; it always refers to something bad. But let me hasten to add that that does not mean that Christians do not have a good time. However, the word that applies to them is not pleasure, but joy.

The difference between the two is stressed by two statements, one in James and the other in 2 Peter, which show two different ways of

counting things. James, writing to his brothers and sisters in Christ, told them to "count it all joy" when they encountered various trials; whereas Peter, speaking of certain bogus believers who had infiltrated the church, said that they "count it a pleasure" to revel in the daytime. The focus of one is on joy, the other on pleasure. Christian joy can thrive among the severe trials of life, and even the persecuted saints can have joy inexpressible. But pleasure cannot stand trials, and will do anything on earth to escape them. In fact, the Biblical view is that people given to pleasure are essentially a joyless lot.

The genuine Christian has had it with pleasure. It is a part of her past, when she was once, as Paul put it, "enslaved to various lusts and pleasures" (Titus 3:3) It is worth noting that Paul calls that life slavery, and not liberation as libertines may imagine it. It is bondage in the dog-eat-dog pits of self-centered humanity where the apostle says that people are hated and hate one another. Although Paul's reference here is to the foolishness of the pre-Christian past, we must regretfully recognize that there have always been some who did not leave that behind when they entered the church.

So Peter spoke of those spurious disciples who "count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime," who somehow could justify twisting their Christian freedom into behavior that even pagans would be ashamed of. They had no respect for either saint or sanctuary. They perverted the Christian love feast into a time of carousing, of boisterous, drunken merrymaking. They had, as Peter put it, "eyes full of an adulteress," which means that every woman they saw was viewed as an adulteress, someone for them to go to bed with. Their lust was as insatiable as it was lawless, for their eyes could "never rest from sin." Never being able to get enough, and always on the prowl for new

adventures in wrongdoing, they lived in a vicious circle of pathetic restlessness. Their pleasure-plagued life was not only futile, but it was also weighted down with suffering. They proved in themselves once again the old proverb: the way of the transgressor is hard.

Hedonists in Christian Garb

Paul, too, found hedonists gadding about in Christian garb. In 2 Timothy 3 he starts a long list of their characteristic sins by calling them “self-lovers” and “money-lovers.” And he ends that list by saying that they are “pleasure-lovers rather than God-lovers.” Since the crown of life is reserved for those who love God, being a God-lover is surely more important than anything else. But these designations in terms of what humans love show how self-centeredness, materialism, and pleasure can replace God in our affections and cause ultimate disaster.

Perhaps it is no accident that Paul puts in the very center of this bleak picture of apostasy one sin which rivets our attention to the fact that humans always lose their sense of duty to others when self becomes the center of their life. While all of these sins spell tragedy, none is more pathetic than the one he places right in the middle. It is “irreconcilable.” Irreconcilable! Such is the disintegrating power of pleasure, that nothing can bridge the alienation it creates between brothers and sisters, for no peacemaker can get a toehold with people so wrapped up in themselves.

The way that such people resolve the tension created by a lifestyle that is so inconsistent with the will of God is that they “hold to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power.” Or as the New English Bible puts it, they “preserve the outward form of religion, but are a standing denial of its reality.” So if you find one of them sitting beside you in church next Sunday, do not be surprised. Just remember that for them it is an empty ritual, with no real effect on their lives. But do not be embarrassed by them, for their presence in the church is no more a reflection on the real Christians than a crook’s purchase of the house across the street from you would require the

neighbors’ pictures to be displayed in the post office. The Lord knows those who are his, and the world has a pretty good idea.

Brothers and Sisters Who Quarrel

During the forty years that I have been preaching, I have walked along many battle lines of warring brothers and sisters. I have watched them assault one another, and even listened to them brag about their kill ratio. I have seen the church multiply by dividing, and watched new congregations arise in an atmosphere of warm love that promises to cover a multitude of sins and last through eternity, only to suddenly start quarreling and choosing sides and tearing themselves apart. But such conflicts only mean that some people have put pleasure in the place of God. They do not really represent the church or the gospel. Nor will they destroy the church, which has managed to survive that sort of thing throughout history. All they do is accent its strength, which is greater than the gates of hell.

Brothers and sisters who switch the center of their devotion from God to themselves have two problems. One is that they do not properly listen when God speaks, and the other is that they do not properly speak when God listens. In other words, they blunder in relation to the word of God and prayer. Let’s take a look at what the Bible has to say about this.

When Jesus gave his explanation of the parable of the sower in Luke 8, he said that the seed which fell among thorns “are those who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.” There are three forces here which nullify the productive influence of the word of God, which, to put it another way, keep people from giving God their undivided attention.

First, there is worry. Hesitating to take God at his word, these hearers begin to give priority to matters which are not related to the reign of God.

Second, there are riches. More and more they think in materialistic terms and are occupied with making money.

And third, there are pleasures. We need not think of these pleasures as something that would be considered immoral either in church or society, nor of the people who are caught up in them as being consciously hostile to the word. But even when our intentions are good, such pleasures keep us from listening when God speaks.

Replacing God with Pleasure

The other problem, of not speaking when God is ready to listen to us, is brought out in the fourth chapter of James. After asserting that our fights and quarrels come from the pleasures that battle within us, James goes on to point out that serious frustrations and crimes are the consequences of pleasure replacing God as the primary concern of life. He does this in four pregnant statements.

First, he says, “You lust and do not have; so you commit murder.” To suggest that Christians might commit murder is such a stunning statement that many scholars have trouble accepting it and are tempted to correct the text. But I think it graphically emphasizes the extent to which pleasures can disrupt human relationships, and it is a warning about how close we may at times come to destroying people.

Those who live by the pleasure principle will not hesitate to violate any other law which stands between them and the pleasure sought so long as they can escape a penalty which would preclude the pleasure. Often they can stand up against a strong body of opinion in opposition. That is why people who go to church regularly can set out to totally ruin one another, and even physically assault one another. Have we forgotten how Ahab got Naboth’s vineyard, and what Cain did to his brother Abel? Or how unsatisfied lust disguised as devotion to the purity of the church has burned people at the stake? Of course, in societies where murderers go to jail, or worse, killing does not usually promise pleasure, so satisfaction may be sought in something else, something just beyond the reach of the law, such as gossip and slander.

Second, James says, “You strive with envious greed and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel.” If lust in his first statement points to

my desire to have, envious in his second statement may highlight my desire that the other person not have, because envy may be defined as dissatisfaction with the prosperity of another. So it is said that the greatest harm you can do to the envious is to do well. Since the envious person’s desire is to surpass rather than to possess, he will view the people around him as competitors whom he must allow to succeed. Every person who has a leadership position, or has special gifts, or prospers in any way will be a target for his evil devices. He will usually be as secretive as possible, yet he may expose himself to considerable risk of humiliation to bring about his opponent’s downfall. He must be top dog, even if that means no dog will rise very high.

Third, James says, “You do not have because you do not ask.” This seems to suggest that a hedonist’s main problem is that she relies on her own efforts without seeking God’s help. Like the incompetent physician who tries to cure her own disease, she may suffer much at her own hands. Of course, since she is controlled by a magnitude which stands in opposition to God, we should not expect her to be very interested in prayer as a means of maintaining communion with God, although she does pray for other reasons. That fact, however, does not contradict James’ declaration that she does not have because she does not ask, for, as we shall soon see, her petition is so unacceptable to God that it cannot really be called a prayer at all.

Vain Petitions

Finally, James says, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.” Why should one who is a lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God expect the Lord to bestow gifts upon him so that he can devote them to pleasure? Since his prayer is nothing more than an instrument of his earthly desires, it is really no prayer at all. When he knocks, nobody will open, for he says nothing that God can listen to, and even his prayer is an act of revolt against God.

One of the disturbing things about this passage in James is that a great deal of the

ugliness which it addresses may not be obvious to other people. Of course, we will notice when folks fuss and fight, but we might not otherwise be aware of their underlying passions. Unfortunately, in some of our associates there may be less virtue than meets the eye.

It is also disconcerting to think that the very fact James refers to this vain prayer shows that extremely selfish people, whose disordered spiritual personalities may compel them to disparage and hurt other Christians, can be very punctual in prayer. There is no telling how many purely selfish prayers may ascend heavenward on any given Sunday. Evidently vigorous prayer is not a very reliable indication of true communion with God.

James follows these statements with a challenging question which suggests an answer

to the pleasure principle and the conflicts and quarrels it produces: "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?" We may say, in keeping with the implications of this question, that what we need is to renew our commitment to God, and to him alone, which will enable us to maintain communion with him, being always ready to listen when he speaks and to speak when he listens. And so we can live happily ever after, with a life characterized by joy rather than pleasure.

Hoy Ledbetter, founding editor of *Integrity*, has served churches in the Stone-Campbell movement during all his years of ministry. He presently serves First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Albany, Georgia.

Intercepted Correspondence

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

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

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

paranomasiacs, in an unrelenting search for more and more sophisticated puns, will stop at almost nothing — even vulgarities and/or near-blasphemous utterances if the product is deemed to be clever enough! It's a fine way for such individuals to permit wit to erode conviction.

My dear Pun-purveyor,

Any respectable junior demon should be capable of an infinite number of suitable alibis for appropriate punning among our cooperatives in Broad Way. Your own list is, I must say, a truly noble start. Such word-play can break down barriers where all else fails. True

We have, in some certain instances, been able to prompt "men of the cloth," as they sometimes dub their preachers, to utter impious and even blasphemous thoughts, all under the guise of punning humor. We view such instances as aberrations beneficial to our cause. By such light, flippant treatment, truly serious issues are brushed aside rather than confronted. Keep it up. . . I love it!

My thoughts would apply as well to those who cleverly side-step what they should consider important issues. Certainly we were all overjoyed when the people's hero, 'Magic' Johnson, first commenting upon his own state (infected with the HIV virus) advocated what he and others have dubbed "safe sex." (This is a term we forged right here in our own Supreme Demonic Council, applying to sex among consenting individuals, but with various steps taken in attempts to prevent pregnancy). Then, curses on him and those who got to him. He actually began talking *abstinence!*

By the way, I trust you have not overlooked the prominent role our little friend, Scooter Barton, can play in this AIDS attack. He should have a field day, if you can get him infected, (and that should be one of your easier tasks). It is most unlikely that he would have anything at all to do with "safe sex;" certainly not with continence. Wed his conduct to the tongue of Sister Snugrug, and you've the potential of Olympic-quality demonic accomplishments!

Throw yourself firmly into the company of those who feel no compassion for the innocent victims of AIDS. The "like father, like son" line is appropriate; but even better is simply to do nothing. A "leave it to those who cause problems to solve their problems" line should work well most of the time. And you might remind everyone involved, positively or negatively, that the funds being spent on AIDS-related causes has skyrocketed out of all proportion to those devoted to curbing hear disease, cancer, and other problems which imply no stigma of conduct. . .

But enough of that.

I must comment on your reference to excuses. They are totally unacceptable in our work. We can only classify them along with the most

flagrant failures, and *reward* offenders accordingly. I laugh at the simplistic torture levels of Dante's *Inferno*. His punishments are primarily of the flesh. We actually concentrate on the mental, the social, and the psychological in a kind of non-physical, ongoing Inquisition type. If you need inspiration to do your work well, I shall be happy to guide you on a tour of our own facilities which house the really great "sinners" of all time.

Press your advantage in the obviously dull, insipid worship services; apparently the "Stick-in-the-Muds" are winning. My own observation indicates that where such a condition exists, very little true worship is occurring. Thoughts wander, physical weariness induces physical and spiritual relaxation, and the Enemy receives a minimum of praise and worship. Even Brother Whitesoul can expect, at best, a few heads to nod in assent — fewer than those which nod in slumber.

Keep up the bad work!

Your malevolent mentor,

Uncle Apollyon

Dear "Puncle" Apollyon,

I do appreciate your continued help and encouragement in my attempts to corrupt my victims through language. The advantage of getting people into the habit of using crude, blasphemous, or injurious language is obvious, but I enjoy the more subtle perversions of the tongue as well. The "holy-talkers" believe they will be saved by their TC ("theological correctness"). If you don't refer to a "born-again experience" in your life, your maturity as a Christian is suspect; if you don't use the latest pop-praise phrases enough, you're not really spiritual; if you refer to the "choir" instead of the "singing group," you have used the language of Ashdod; and Heaven forbid (excuse my language) that anyone should refer to the Lord's Supper with such papist terms as "Holy Communion" or "Eucharist." There are, of course, different schools ("high" and

“low”) of “holy-talkers,” each with its own set of prescribed and forbidden terms; but none of them, I have observed, has any qualms about speaking harmfully of those who disagree with them.

The subtlest language perversion to me, however, is to persuade people not to speak when they really should. A withheld word of encouragement or commendation can be almost as damaging as an insult in some circumstances, and a failure to speak up in the face of a great wrong being done to someone else or to the honor of God is tantamount to participating in the wrong oneself. Sometimes a brother’s or sister’s holding back from a word of “tough love” is a crucial factor in somebody else’s falling away. It makes no difference to me whether people actively misuse their tongues as garbage-pushers, whips, and prim self-glorifiers, on the one hand, or alternatively bury the edifying potential of words fitly spoken underneath cowardice or unconcern. I just don’t want to see the Enemy get hold of those tongues and use them for His purposes.

Please do not assume that I am insensitive to the differences between physical and spiritual

torments. One of the students in our congregation was telling me the other day about reading Dante’s *Inferno* for one of her classes (little suspecting how relevant to me was the subject matter!), commenting on the horrible physical torments depicted there. I did not disabuse her of her tendency to dismiss any relevance the work might have to her theology, since it was written by a medieval Catholic who had his own bones to pick with a number of the people he placed in Hell; but neither did I point out to her what I all too terribly discern running through Dante’s depiction of damned souls: the utter futility and hopelessness of their plight. However horribly the pains of Hell may be depicted in physical metaphor, they cannot match the incipient vision we carry within us of being forever cast away from light and life. This is an agonizing understanding which must be hidden, at all costs, from those we seek to deceive.

Morbidly yours,

Ichabod

Book Review

Book Review: C.S. Lewis Special Issue of *The Chesterton Review*, XVII (August-November 1991). 570 pp.

Reviewed by JERRY L. DANIEL

Readers familiar with either C.S. Lewis or G.K. Chesterton will find this volume helpful and pleasurable. Readers familiar with both will find it one of the best new items on the market. And readers who have been nurtured and blessed by both will find it absolutely indispensable.

The *Chesterton Review* is a quarterly published at St. Thomas More College, Saska-

toon, Saskatchewan, Canada, and edited by Ian Boyd, a recognized Chesterton scholar who also teaches at St. Thomas More College. Since Chesterton is a rather flamboyant author who is clearly not for all markets, the *Review* itself may not have the wide popularity it deserves. A few more special issues of this type will go far toward rectifying that problem.

There is no direct connection between Lewis and Chesterton. Though their careers overlapped they did not know each other, and Chesterton never refers to Lewis in his writings. Lewis, on the other hand, was deeply influenced by Chesterton — an influence which continues to be too little noted in the literature, perhaps because of the differences between them. While Lewis was a careful, though not pedantic, literary historian, critic, novelist, and popular apologist, Chesterton was a journalist whose genius was erratic as it was brilliant. Despite the differences, however, their community of interest and sympathy of spirit were profound.

This special issue is a healthy balance, with essays on each author and on each in relation to the other. Following Ian Boyd’s introduction, the volume opens with a series of reprints of Chesterton essays (chosen to stress areas of thought the two authors had in common) along with a reprint of a Lewis essay in which he defends Chesterton against charges made by James Stephens. The second section features a series of superb essays stressing the parallels between the two. The first such is by Ian Boyd who quickly asserts that “perhaps the most important thing that Chesterton and C.S. Lewis have in common is a sacramental mysticism,” an element which Boyd correctly traces to the influence of George MacDonald. One of the better essays in this section is by Gisbert Kranz, a West German scholar, whose article, “Affinities in Lewis and Chesterton” serves as a marvelous preface to the work of each author. As a matter of fact the entire volume serves that function — though designed as a comparison of the two men, it is such a treasure trove of compact information that a person with little or no prior knowledge of either, will find him/herself surprisingly conversant with their works.

Iaian T. Benson has made a fascinating two-part contribution to this work: 1) a list of Chesterton’s books in Lewis’s library, with a complete transcription of all of Lewis’s handwritten marginalia; and 2) a compilation of all references to Chesterton in Lewis’s published works. I presume that more readers of *Integrity* are familiar with Lewis than with Chester-

ton: if so, this section alone will provide ample incentive to create hordes of new Chesterton readers.

The collection of “Memoirs of C.S. Lewis” is for two reasons a special treat for the real Lewis fan: because some of the pieces are written by persons in a privileged position to know him (e.g., his stepson, Douglas Gresham), and because several hitherto unpublished Lewis letters appear in these memoirs. Altogether the volume contains ten new letters, addressed to four different persons. Some are of real interest, particularly relating to his views of twentieth century literature in general and of Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene in particular.

Since a fair portion of Lewis’s current fame rests on the *Chronicles of Narnia*, it is understandable that a section of this volume is devoted to them. Several brief analytical essays (not all laudatory) are included, but perhaps of even more interest are selections in which parents describe their experiences in reading the *Chronicles* to their own children. These items confirm what many of us have discovered for ourselves — the immense power of Narnia to communicate even to very young readers. It is perhaps gratuitous but irresistible to recommend again the Narnia stories as among the better Christian literature of our century — and not just for children.

It is not at all gratuitous to recommend Lewis’s poetry, a part of his writing which has usually received bad press. He is admittedly not among the great poets of the English language, but his output in this area should not be ignored. W.W. Robson’s brief but superb essay on Lewis’s poetry closes with an assertion which is as true of Chesterton as of Lewis: “But the great difference between Lewis and all the ‘Moderns’ is his use of a full-blooded, un-ironic style of strong rhetorical power, with its soaring praise of God.” Nothing could be further from the postmodern poetry of complaint — the navel-gazing, inconoclastic, nihilistic output of most contemporary poets — than is the lively celebration of earth and heaven that, despite all its weaknesses, marks the poetry of these two authors.

The book review section offers critiques of