

Integrity

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Integrity

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.

eye of the public. Indeed, he has to have a strong ego to withstand the criticism and perverse resistance that we stir up in the congregation. The key is to make him rely on himself, rather than on the Enemy, to handle all this ego-threatening opposition. Once his chief object becomes self-preservation, we have him where we want him.

We have to keep ministers away from letting early idealism develop into a full-blown rejection of worldly common sense about the exercise of power and influence. We've lost them if they start truly serving instead of trying to control; speaking what the Enemy wants them to say, rather than what people want to hear; and losing face or dignity, if necessary, to make people aware of the "glory of God." Since these non-worldly methods seem on the face of them to be counter-productive to what most people consider success, it is usually

not too difficult to dissuade ministers from employing them.

With all these opportunities for diverting even the well-intentioned people who go into the ministry, is it any surprise that so many fall by the wayside, while still others continue in their path primarily to the benefit of our Infernal Father? Nevertheless, the Enemy enables far too many to survive and to aid His kingdom, even in the face of their inadequacies. The Heaven of it is (pardon my language) that the more they realize their weaknesses, the stronger He seems to make them. How can we prevail in the face of such perverse countermanding of justice and common sense? We must concentrate more on making people too proud to accept this humiliating mercy!

Yours in ruthless deceit,
Ichabod

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Editors

Diane G. H. Kilmer
J. Bruce Kilmer

Layout Editors

Karl W. Randall
Natalie Randall

Integrity Address

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Opening Our Spiritual Hearts

2 Corinthians 3:12-18

Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

There are many ways we harden our minds and hearts. We can harden our thinking to new insights when we are sure that our particular view of something is correct, as Hoy Ledbetter points out in his article in this issue about our mental image of Jesus. We can be programmed to listen to teaching over and over without ever questioning it ourselves, as Frankie Shanks points out in her article. The two devils in "Intercepted Correspondence" remind us of how our values can be warped when we harden our hearts because of sins which we refuse to give up. Many of the problems in the Restoration Movement are the result of a goal for unity hardening into a demand for conformity.

Just as our physical body can die from the hardening of our arteries, so can our spiritual body die from the hardening of the arteries of our spiritual heart. As we avoid cholesterol and turn to more healthy food to prevent heart disease, so we must turn from sin toward spiritual food that will keep our spiritual hearts healthy. What is that spiritual food that keeps our hearts open, vulnerable, and receptive to change?

Paul said that when the Jews read the Scriptures they could not see Jesus. Jesus is the spiritual food which will give us healthy spiritual hearts. But we must *turn* to him to prevent our hearts from hardening. When we turn to him, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ and the Spirit of the Lord bring liberty which allows

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Touching Up God's Picture

HOY LEDBETTER

The woman was not pleased with the artist's picture of Jesus. She insisted it did not look like her Savior at all. Of course, she had never seen Jesus. She was merely comparing the artist's portrait with the one she had, which was not on canvas but in her mind. And more in her mind than she realized, for her conclusion about what he looked like was the result of a series of mental exercises that were uniquely hers. The offending artist, with a different set of exercises, had a different vision.

Each of them was drawing conclusions from insufficient data, since we have no record anywhere of Jesus' physical appearance. Such people can get into trouble, but the ones who are in real danger are those who allow their presuppositions to contradict important theological facts. To some outstanding victims of that error Jesus once said, "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."

It is a disturbing truth, fraught with serious implications for us, that their careful examination of the scriptures apparently did not reveal to them what they had done. They had developed such a distorted picture of God that when he sent his Son to show them what he was

really like, they rejected the picture. They said, in effect, that it just did not look like God at all. God, they were quite sure, would not be that way.

It is easy for us to see God only the way we want him to be, loving what we love and hating what we hate. And we may hang on to that picture in the face of strong scriptural teaching to the contrary. This delusion may allow us to endorse some of the very worst sins and to neglect the most important duties. It is at least a partial explanation of how some contemporary Christians can take positions that are utterly appalling to others.

Those scripture-quoting folks who rejected Jesus are a living reminder that it is quite possible for any of us to fall into the sin of touching up God's picture of himself. We need to be very careful to pay attention to God when he speaks and to recognize our own voice when we hear it. Otherwise, we, too, may refuse the source of life.

Hoy Ledbetter, founding editor and Editor-in-Chief of *Integrity* for 15 years, has served as minister to several a cappella Churches of Christ during his years of ministry. He presently serves First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Albany, Georgia with his wife Jary.

EDITORIAL

(Continued from page 86)

our spiritual arteries to flow and opens us up to a life of growth and change.

We pray that these articles will help you once again turn to the Lord and find

that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

Bruce Kilmer, Co-Editor

Playing It Safe

(Reprint From *Integrity*, September/October 1978)

W. CARL KETCHERSIDE

The unity of all believers in Christ has been hindered and postponed by many things. It is time for all people of good will to examine their thinking. Regardless of the party into which they have been maneuvered by circumstances, they will never be able to contribute to the oneness of the saints until they rid themselves of some common fallacies that act as impediments to the answer of the prayer of our precious Lord.

One such fallacy is the "playing it safe" syndrome. Many keep aloof from others on this basis. Where scripture has not spoken and the mind of God has not been revealed, the argument is frequently made, "Would it not be safer to do thus and so?" Out of this is born the cults of conformity and the parties of perpetuation. Would it not be safer not to have Sunday schools? Would it not be safer to use one container in the Lord's Supper? Or unleavened bread? Or fermented wine? Would it not be safer to segregate ourselves from others who differ with us about the millennium? The things adopted today merely because they are safer become the dogmas of tomorrow. Sanctified by usage and familiarity, they are transferred into the pattern.

The whole attitude assumes that God thinks more of legalistic consistency and correctness of opinion than he does of unity within his family. Yet he has not spoken about these other matters but has repeatedly condemned schism. What we need is not people who "play it safe" but those who make themselves vulnerable. Jesus did this when he left heaven. If he had subscribed to our thinking he would never have come to earth.

We tend to confuse sameness with saneness. But the sane thinking recall that Jesus not only took the most

dangerous step possible, but commanded us to live dangerously. He plainly told us to take up our cross daily and follow him. He said the only way to find life is by losing it, and losing life is the opposite of playing it safe. We are on the cutting edge rather than on the dulled and blunted side of life. To promote unity among all believers is not a task for a cowardly and fainthearted person who weighs the results against his or her own safety and chooses the latter.

We need to get out of our feathered nests and go where the people are. We have quaintly imagined they would all come to us, beating a path to our door to associate with us. Not only have they not done so, but our losses are almost as much as our gains in some places. If a congregation really wants to affect the world for good, let it have the courage to go by twos and fours to attend other places -- Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Reformed, or whatever. Let them go, not to debate, but to see and understand how people propose to worship God, and why. Let them form friendships and encourage mutual study across lines, preferably in homes.

Are we afraid we will lose some of our members? Perhaps we deserve to lose them! If we must keep people locked up to keep them with us, we do not really have them at all. It is only free people who can freely associate without fear. We can never grow together while standing aloof from one another. It is only by exchange of thoughts and ideas that mutual respect for one another can ever be achieved. Playing it safe, as a philosophy of life, would never have allowed Jesus to leave heaven and will never allow us to enter it!

Although W. Carl Ketcherside left to be with the Father on May 24, 1989, his writings continue to exhort and encourage! In his younger years Carl was a "wing commander," as he put it, of

one of the most legalistic sects among Churches of Christ. Half way through his life he changed course and became, in his words, "a peacemaker and no longer a piecemaker."

Does "Baptize" Really Mean "To Immerse"?

CECIL HOOK

What? Another hassle about immersion? Perhaps you have studied about baptism enough and are not ready to change your fixed convictions about it. You already know that *baptize* means to *immerse*. So what's the problem? Let's take a look.

Words evolve. The current usage of a term may not convey the thought of the original word from which it developed. To ascertain the present-day sense of words, we go back to their root meanings, a sort of discovering their roots. We have done this in regard to baptism. But do we follow this procedure consistently with other words? Let us do a little exercise here to test our intellectual honesty.

Baptism and baptize come from the Greek root "bapto" which means "to dip." So, that real meaning is undeniable by anyone who respects the authority of the Lord expressed in the Scriptures. Or is it?

We are instructed to "Abhor that which is evil" (Rom. 12:9). Abhor is a translation of the Greek word "apostugeo" which means "to shudder." Then should it not have been translated "shudder" instead of "abhor"? Who dares to change the prescribed form of expressing detestation of evil? If we go back to the root meaning, shuddering becomes essential in obeying God. Yet, I have never shuddered at evil. Woe is me!

Our translators have rendered "oikodomeo" as "edify." But the root meaning is "to build a house." Disciples are taught to edify each other (1 Thes.

5:11; 1 Cor. 14:26). Efforts are made to obey this through teaching and encouraging, but who ever built a house by teaching and encouraging? Who has the authority to change the prescribed procedure?

We all must worship God. Agreed. In many passages the word "worship" is rendered from "proskuneo" whose root meaning is "to kiss toward." Thus the root word specifies the essential form of our approach to God as kissing toward God. Do you kiss toward God, or do you substitute some other method in your effort to worship him?

These three examples of root meanings are enough to make the point. You may check these words out in *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, by W. E. Vine.

If you are still with me, you are probably wishing to remind me that the current meanings of these words are *adapted* from the root words rather than being literal translations. Agreed! Except for one of the words!

The etymology of these words had already evolved by the time the New Testament Scriptures were written. We can agree readily that a strong detestation of evil is what God wants rather than a literal bodily shudder. And we can understand that building each other up by teaching and encouragement is a modification of the idea of building a literal structure. Also, the bowing and kissing toward a person or object would indicate

eneration and love. Veneration and love expressed to God is worship even though it takes other forms of action. So, the evolved meaning abandons the mode of kissing toward.

When it comes to baptism, however, we have clung to the original root connotation of dipping and have resisted modification of the meaning of the word. The literal form has been kept sacred so that the meaning must always be "to dip." On the other hand, we have accepted some adaptation. "To dip" more literally means "to put a vessel into a liquid in order to lift some out." We have accepted a modification to make it mean "to plunge, immerse, or submerge." But those are literal meanings. Does baptism have only a literal meaning of dipping, or could it be that time and usage had developed another more general connotation? Let us now consider evidence that both the form of the ritual and the meaning of it had already changed when John, Jesus, and the apostles came on the scene.

Expanded Use of "Bapto"

In describing the falling of the Holy Spirit on the apostles on Pentecost, three times that baptism is referred to as a pouring out of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:16-19, 33). In fact, it was "distributed and resting on each one of them" (2:3). Its falling in such a dispersed manner looks more like sprinkling or aspersion than immersion! In other references, the falling, pouring out, and receiving of the Holy Spirit are all related to the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-47; 11:15f; Titus 3:5f). The giving of the Spirit, which enabled disciples to know the truth, was called an anointing rather than a burial (1 John 2:20, 26; John 14:26).

The pouring out of the Spirit spoken of by Joel was identified by Peter as the outpouring, falling, or baptism (see Joel 2:28; Acts 10:44f; 11:15-17). Paul speaks of Israel's being under the cloud while passing through the parted waters of the sea as a baptism (1 Cor. 10:1f).

Again, Paul speaks of "the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:5f). Saul's baptism involved a washing (Acts 22:16). So are we not forced to conclude that biblical usage reveals prior evolution of the original meaning of "bapto"?

Following our hermeneutic of approved example, or any other hermeneutic, from the above considerations, are we not authorized to define baptism as pouring, sprinkling, washing, or anointing as well as dipping? We have tried to evade this point by explaining that the baptism of the Spirit was an overwhelming or submerging of the person by the Holy Spirit. But the Scriptures still say that the Spirit was poured out and fell on them in a distributed manner.

No Definitive Example

There is no definitive example of immersion in the Scriptures. In the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, the going into and coming out of water were not a part of the baptism. Whatever baptism is, it was performed between the going into and coming out of the water. Let us suppose that baptize meant "to wash one's wounds." It would then read that they both went into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he washed his wounds, and they came up out of the water. Would that exemplify immersion? Unless baptize meant immersion only, the baptism of the Ethiopian could not be an unquestioned example of dipping. Philip went into and came out of the water also, but he was neither baptized nor partially baptized. While I may assume that the Ethiopian was immersed, the text does not prove it.

When we were baptized into Christ and his death, "we were buried therefore with him by baptism into death" (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:11f). That passage does not picture burial in water. In baptism we are buried with Christ in his tomb rather than

Jesus being buried with us in water. Whatever baptism is, in it we are buried symbolically with Jesus in his tomb nineteen centuries ago. Again, I may assume that Paul refers to our immersion, but it is not proven. We are to be crucified, buried, and raised with Christ in obeying the gospel. It is *with* Christ symbolically, not *like* Christ literally in his water baptism. Why accept a figurative crucifixion and resurrection and demand a literal burial?

"Baptismos," denoting a ceremonial washing of articles, is given that meaning in Mark 7:4 and Hebrews 9:10. In Hebrews 6:2 it is variously translated "baptisms" (KJV); "baptisms, or washings" (ASV); "ablutions" (RSV); and "cleansing rites" (NEB). These uses and renderings definitely indicate a variation from the meaning of the root word "bapto." So much for the form; now let us consider the meaning.

The Jewish Viewpoint

When John came preaching baptism, he did not have to explain it as though it were a new thing. It was already practiced among the Jews. Throughout their history, circumcision was a mark of identification of a Jew. When a Gentile would convert to Judaism, the proselyte not only accepted that fleshly identifying mark, but in later times, he was also baptized as a public expression of initiation and commitment. Leroy Garrett wisely reasons that the Jews understood the meaning of baptism to be "initiation." Please read his convincing presentation in Chapter 37 of my edited book, *Our Heritage of Unity and Fellowship*.

John was calling for a change of life and a public expression of commitment to the approaching Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus demonstrated his allegiance also by submitting to that ceremony. The meaning of the ritual was understood as an initiation into the family of Israel and a commitment of citizenship. The concept was not so much that a person obeyed a

ritual of dipping as that one had submitted to a ceremony expressing allegiance, acceptance, and dedication.

Evidently, Nicodemus, as a circumcised and committed Jew, thought he would have ready acceptance in Christ's kingdom on those grounds. Jesus informed him in veiled language that he would have to be born into his kingdom. That would require a new circumcision symbolized by baptism (Col. 2:11f). And his commitment and initiation as a proselyte into this new kingdom would be expressed in a public ceremony called baptism. Assuming that the ritual involved immersion, the core meaning of it was not "to become dipped" but "to be initiated and express commitment."

When Jesus asked James and John if they would be able to be baptized with the baptism with which he was to be baptized, he was asking about their commitment to be crucified with him (see Lk. 12:50; Mk. 10:38f; Matt. 20:22f) rather than a willingness to undergo some ritual of immersion.

When the Pharisees rejected the purpose of God, having not been baptized of John, they were not rejecting the form of a ritual, but they were refusing acceptance of the kingdom John was proclaiming. The person who is sprinkled today considers his initiation important rather than the form of the rite by which he declared it. To make Ephesians 4:5 read "There is one immersion" would be to miss the meaning that Paul was expressing that there is only one initiation into Christ's community for all people.

Even if we admit that John, Jesus, and the apostles immersed believers, there is no clear example of their doing so. We cannot deny that the evolution of language allowed inspired writers to speak of the form of baptism as also including pouring, dispersing upon, washing, and anointing. The rite necessarily took a form, but without emphasis of the form, they looked upon baptism as a public initiation and commitment.

By this essay, I am not urging anyone

to be sprinkled. I was immersed and would advise all believers to follow that undeniably safe course. My aim is to encourage you to become less condemning of the majority of Christ's followers who accept a ritual of initiation without emphasis upon the form it takes. They feel as scripturally sound as you or I do.

With my background and strong conditioning, it has been very difficult for

Programmed!

FRANKIE MARIE SHANKS

Have you ever thought about being programmed, as in computer programmed? In a manner of speaking, we all are. We respond to certain stimuli when they are presented. When we drive a car, ride a bicycle, use a typewriter, use numbers, even the alphabet, we automatically respond to programs which have been put into our minds—programmed into our minds.

Are we in the Church of Christ "programmed" to respond to our religious views in a particular way when the right stimulus is presented? Are all religious people programmed to think in a certain way, depending upon the particular philosophy of each particular group? If that happens, is it good or bad, or is it irrelevant?

Probably many of you are saying, "We are not programmed. In the Church of Christ we go by the Bible alone." We say that other religious groups hold their particular views because they follow the philosophies and creeds of men, and not the Bible, so we probably believe they are programmed.

Our teachers say repeatedly, "If everyone would just go by the Bible alone, and not the creeds and opinions of men,

me to reach this conclusion. But I must accept other disciples and let God do the judging.

Until he retired 10 years ago, Cecil Hook was a career preacher in the non-instrumental Churches of Christ, serving throughout Louisiana, Texas and New Mexico. He and his wife Lea now manage a publishing ministry from their home in New Braunfels, Texas.

we would all be alike. We would think alike and would practice exactly the same things, doctrinally." That sounds right, but if you know anything about our religious heritage, you know that it just hasn't happened. There are numerous divisions between heirs of the American Restoration Movement.

We've learned to say that we follow "book, chapter and verse; we have no creed but Christ; and we do not follow the opinions of men." As sincerely as we attempt to do that, it is obvious that the opinions of men do enter into the picture.

How Do We Learn?

In order for us to understand this inspired book—the Bible—it **has** to be interpreted. We insist that we do **not** interpret this book. "We only let it speak to us without interpretation," we say. But we don't, and we can't. In language once thought to be "preacher talk" only, we have come to hear the word "hermeneutics" a lot. Hermeneutics is the science of interpreting, or finding the meaning of an author's words and phrases and explaining it to others. Uninspired human minds determine what

the inspired Scriptures mean to us—they interpret. Uninspired human minds may be programming us as they teach us.

We learn in two basic ways, according to the author of "Two Ways of Learning—Two Ways of Teaching," an article I read in *Christian Bible Teacher* a few years ago by Edwin S. Jones (August 1987 issue, Abilene, TX). One way we learn is by rote, or memorization or stimulus-response learning. We learn the alphabet, the books of the Bible and any other collection of facts we want to retain by rote or memorization. When the proper stimulus is presented, we repeat the information without thinking. It is like being programmed. When a computer is programmed with certain data, a stimulus or code is keyed in and the information automatically appears on the screen.

The other basic way of learning is by configuration or discovery. When we discover how to relate the stored program data with new, additional information in such a way that a new thought is born, it is called discovery learning.

Ideally, this is what happens. A Bible class teacher presents certain facts which the students memorize, by storing them in their memory. The facts are programmed into the students' computer minds, as it were. The teacher then presents other data which is intended to interrelate already known facts in such a way that a student may reach a conclusion that he or she had not previously known or understood. Then this additional information is also stored in the students' memories—or programmed into their computer-like minds—new data with which to configure or relate in order to make even more discoveries.

What I have observed over the years in our Churches of Christ is that after the basic Bible facts are presented for memorizing, the student is then very carefully given additional information to interrelate. The student is, however, almost always given the "answer" before he or she has worked the problem, or interrelated the new information. The

student has been presented information in such a manner that he or she will always come out with the right answer, or "discovered truth," that the teacher holds and expertly leads the student to hold also.

This is how we in our various religious bodies believe as we do. Because our "programming" is usually done through rote learning, our thinking becomes rigid and results in divisions. If you don't believe this is true, try thinking a new thought about the present-day issues—women's role in the church, divorce and remarriage, grace, the indwelling Holy Spirit, etc. Then try to express your divergent thoughts in a Church of Christ meeting, even when the topic of study is on one of these subjects. It will soon become evident whether or not our church leaders intend to program their followers and to keep them programmed.

What's Wrong Here?

What is wrong with being programmed? Haven't we been taught the gospel correctly, and how to live a godly Christian life? To a great extent we have been properly taught, I believe.

However, to be programmed, instead of being allowed to experience discovery learning, causes us to be complacent pew-sitters. Although we are taught repeatedly that we must "study," usually meaning an intellectual pursuit, why should we? Being programmed causes us to conclude that we have learned all there is to learn. We believe we have the only complete, accurate truth there is. If anyone else has any portion of truth, we have been programmed to believe it has been contaminated by some error. Any error mixed with truth will cause a person to be lost in eternity, we have always been taught. Such thinking makes us as legalistic as any Pharisee, and just as judgmental, when we consign to eternal destruction a believer in Christ who disagrees with us—even a brother or sister in our Church of Christ.

Surely we haven't forgotten the Jim Jones tragedy! Many of us are aware of how Kip McKean is now the undisputed leader of the Boston Discipling Movement and describes himself as "'functioning in the role of the Apostle Paul' (and the so-called apostle) of the entire organization." (See *Christian Chronicle*, November/December, 1991 by Rick Bauer, an ex-Boston leader). Recently we watched the Waco, Texas cult led by David Koresh.

Who can be programmed? Anyone who allows themselves to be programmed (sometimes termed "brain-washed"), say the experts in this field. "It couldn't happen in my church," I hear you say. Think again. Power corrupts even those

to whom we have always been taught to "look up to." Learn to think like an inventor or a scientist. Learn to ask questions. Look outside the parameters of the "group" for answers. Even the Scriptures say that two are better than one.

Beware of being programmed by anyone—even your best friend.

Frankie Marie Shanks has been part of the non-instrumental Churches of Christ for over fifty years. She continues to study and teach the Bible and enjoys sending out a newsletter periodically to share what she has learned from her studies. Frankie and her husband live in Poplar Bluff, Missouri, and are co-owners and managers of a self-storage business.

Scripture. His promises, his love, and the gospel never change—but we must as we accommodate more and more to what he calls us to be. He may accept temporary plateaus of growth, but an "arrived," no-growth policy is at variance with the Bible picture. A member of the body will be effective in exact ratio to its number of living, growing, dynamic members. Dead members do not effectively dispense or illustrate the manifold wisdom of God to a dying world.

It is so easy to get caught in a trap of sameness. It must be one of the devil's best tools. Only open hearts searching the Scriptures daily, constant communion with God through prayer, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit can keep us alive and growing and excited in our walk with the Master. And only then will others want to walk with us. So long as life shall last, let us choose to grow and live according to his will. Death comes soon enough.

Aline Edson, who has completed full careers in both teaching and civil service and raised four children, lives in Kerrville, Texas, with her

husband. They are members of the Sydney Baker Church of Christ.

The New Testament: Constitution, Blueprint, or Law Book?

GORDON C. BRUNER II

I was sitting in Sunday school class a few weeks ago studying the Restoration Movement when the discussion led to someone stating that the New Testament (NT) was a constitution for the governance of the church. Others described the NT as a law book or a blueprint for the church to follow. Those characterizations bothered me, yet I realized that they were not new. For example, Thomas Campbell said in his famous *Declaration And Address* that "...the New Testament books contain the immediate constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the corporate Church..." As much as I respect Thomas Campbell, I am uncomfortable with the view.

Call me blind, but I don't see a blueprint in the New Testament for a "corporate church." Call me a heretic but I haven't come across anything in the New Testament that discusses the powers and duties of church government. Label me as a renegade but I can't find a list of laws in the New Testament anything like what is provided in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

For those who still advocate that the New Testament is a constitution, then you must surely admit that it is a very poorly written one. If it is a blueprint then it lacks clarity and precision. As a book of laws it allows too much freedom of interpretation. Since you probably believe that the Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the New Testament, then you are left with the

conclusion that the Holy Spirit led to the development of a very poor legal document. That conclusion is not very palatable, so one of the premises must be incorrect. Let me suggest that the New Testament is *not* a book of laws!

Admittedly, one of the key features of Judaism was that it was based on the detailed laws provided in the Old Testament. In fact, scribes distinguished between some 613 commands. There may be modern day equivalents of scribes and Pharisees who are attempting to make the New Testament into a constitution, blueprint, or law book. But, except where there is a clear command from the Lord, they are forced to make assumptions and draw conclusions. That by itself is not wrong but, as Thomas Campbell himself pointed out, the conclusions drawn by men should not be imposed on others nor used as tests of fellowship.

So, maybe the New Testament isn't a blueprint for constructing some organization nor is it a constitution for guiding the government of that organization. Maybe it is more accurate to view it as a collection of 26 documents. Four of them describe the life and teachings of Jesus. One of them describes the early beginnings and growth of Christianity as it moved from Jewish Jerusalem to Gentile Asia. Most of the documents are letters to individuals or groups of Christians dealing with specific problems. One book is prophetic and

Grow or Die

ALINE EDSON

There is neither nobility nor merit nor security in keeping things just as they are. More often than not, it is just overpowering evidence of lazy minds and an obscene desire not to be made uncomfortable. The nature of life is change. Growing can never mean staying the same. Living without growing and changing is dying by degrees. In death there is sameness until disintegration. We see this eloquently illustrated in nature and every human relationship. Nothing stays the same unless it is dead or dying.

This principle is also true and without exception in the church of our Lord. Her Chief Cornerstone and the faith once-delivered remain unchanged and unchanging, but as her living stones allow those powerful truths to have their way more and more in their lives, the building grows and changes. It is not a mere suggestion that we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is as surely a command as any other in

related to events that may or may not have occurred yet.

I am sure that if Jesus wanted a constitution created, he could have composed a wonderful one himself or instructed the apostles to prepare one. However, in his infinite wisdom he must have felt that such a legal document was not necessary for the new covenant between God and mankind. Evidently, the books and letters we are provided with, along with the guidance of the Holy Spirit,

are adequate to "write on hearts" the new law and thereby bring us to the proper knowledge, faith, and service of God (Romans 2:15; Galatians 5:1,14; Hebrews 8:10, 10:16). We should resist attempts, therefore, to make the New Testament into something that its author(s) did not intend for it to be.

Dr. Gordon C. Bruner II works as an associate professor at Southern Illinois University. Gordon considers himself a "Christian at large."

Spiritual Truths for My "Sacred Journey": Practicing the Presence of God

CURTIS D. McCLANE

Cynthia was ninety-seven years old when she died. I remember sitting by her bedside late that Wednesday evening following mid-week Bible Study. This room that she was now dying in had been her home for almost two years. There were the beautiful cards on the wall, each containing a different verse trying to comfort one who knew no physical comfort. Every week that I would visit, I immediately experienced the unique smells of a nursing home when I walked through the front doors. After several visits I grew accustomed to the sounds that at first were unnerving: grown adults fussing like children, some crying out in intense agony, others angrily complaining that no one was paying attention to them, and the saddest of all—some crying and wailing for some one to take them home.

On this particular evening, around 11:30 p.m., it was unusually quiet in the halls. I could hear an occasional cart being whisked down the hall. The squeak of an orderly's shoes on the freshly waxed floor sent an eerie echo into the room. The clock on the wall sent forth the sound of rhythmic ticking like the pacing of a silent sentinel on the walls of a prison

tower just waiting for the moment of release.

Cynthia's breathing became more labored. I reached over and gingerly placed her cold, bony hands into mine. The family had gone down the hall to the lounge for some coffee. I was now alone with a saint who was breathing her last. Those breaths were now coming in short, labored spurts. Her will to live and fight on was being spent. Sometimes the body will not give up when the human spirit has already prepared for its journey home.

As I sat beside the bed I had an overwhelming feeling of the presence of God. I felt unworthy to be present at this extraordinary moment. The separation of the soul and body—not often do we get the privilege to witness such a unique phenomenon. I felt a physical shuddering in myself in response to the awesome transcendence of the moment. I knew God was present. Death did not have that terrible black cape with its scepter and scythe. I could almost witness the actual moment of transportation when God gathered this spent body of a saintly sister into his arms for eternity.

As a minister of the Word I have been

called on numerous occasions to be present with a family at the threshold of death. For many it is their first time witnessing the door of Hades being opened. Fear often grips the living. They are too frightened to even ask what is beyond. There are the furtive glances. The shifting feet. The lowered voices. The shameful tear. The sweaty palms.

Practicing the presence of God is not too difficult. God is everywhere. But if my awareness and experience of the Divine presence is dulled and in a state of denial I will miss the greatest moments of my life. Perhaps for you it may seem stretching it a bit to say that the presence of God can be experienced in the context of death. But Cynthia's life and death taught me to be ready like an empty glass to be filled at any given moment with the powerful transcendence to the Divine Presence.

The Mundane Transformed

When Henri J. M. Nouwen spent some time at the Genesee Abbey near Rochester, New York, he heard John Eudas speak about the Trinity. Eudas emphasized that everyday living was to be done to the glory of God. In his diary Nouwen remembered this observation by Eudas, "Even the price of our products and the use of our money should be determined by the praise of God's mysterious presence in our lives." It is God's presence in the little tasks of daily existence that transforms them into eternal moments. The mundane becomes the magnificent. The mundane embraces the mysterious. And the mundane becomes meaningful.

I first became aware of the "practice of the presence of God" when I picked up the devotional classic by that name written by Brother Lawrence. This classic, nearly 300 years old now, has seen numerous reprints. There is just something simple yet powerful that each generation seems to crave. This little

paperback is only 94 pages, but I have never been more deeply challenged, more intellectually broadened, more relationally sensitized, nor more spiritually enriched by any other one work than this one!

Brother Lawrence worked as a cook in the kitchen of the monastery where he lived. At first he detested that kind of work, but over the fifteen years that he worked there he discovered the joy of turning the loathsome task into luxurious time in the presence of God. The reason that his life held intrigue for me is that I see him wrestling with a pesky problem we all have: how can I find God and see the divine hand moving in my day to day affairs?

Can God be present while I load the dishwasher? Can God be present while I am sorting through my coupons in aisle number 4 beside the peanut butter? Can God be present with me when I get into my car to start it to go to the office and the battery is dead? (It has taken me extra time to write this article because that is exactly what happened to me!) Can God be present while I am weaving in and out of traffic during rush hour on my way home?

Brother Lawrence defines the "presence of God" as "the concentration of the soul's attention on God, remembering that He is always present." It occurred to me the first time that I read this that the universal problem is with the word "concentration." How can we concentrate on God when we can't see him? How can we pay attention to God when thousands of voices are screaming for our attention every day? How can we remember that God is always present when we never invited him into our hearts daily in the first place?

In the spirituality of the Desert Fathers this concentration is called *nepsis*. "Nepsis" refers to mental toughness, in which one's spiritual attention is directed to God; it is "watchfulness in keeping the bad thoughts away, and creating free space for prayer" (Nouwen, *The Genesee Diary*, page 31).

Practicing God's Presence

But how do we keep our soul's focus on God? Even when we are on the computer trying to meet a deadline, is it possible that God is near? How can I effect the presence of God in helter-skelter life? Brother Lawrence suggests the following five means of acquiring the presence of God:

1) "The first is a new life, received by salvation through the blood of Christ. We may think that this first requirement is redundant, or that this is just a given with every person who is a Christian. But we must remember that salvation is not something we earn. It came to us by the personal pain and sacrifice of Jesus our Lord.

2) "The second is faithfully practicing God's presence. This must always be done gently, humbly, and lovingly without giving way to anxiety or problems." On the Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught his disciples not to worry about the things that most people worry about.

3) "The soul's eyes must be kept on God, particularly when something is being done in the outside world." What Lawrence is proposing is a different way to live in this world. Instead of standing on the outside and occasionally looking inward, as Christians we focus on the inside and occasionally look outward when necessary. This may really sound foreign to the way that most of us are used to seeing our world. But think of the possibilities and blessings that would follow if we chose to see people and the world from an interior perspective!

4) "In the beginning of this practice, it would not be wrong to offer short phrases that are inspired by love, such as "Lord, I am all yours," "God of love, I love you with all my heart," or "Lord, use me according to Your will." But remember to keep the mind from wandering or returning to the world. Hold your attention on God alone by exercising your will to remain in God's presence." The thing I like about this suggestion is that I have a choice of

whether or not to remain in God's presence.

5) "Although this exercise may be difficult at first to maintain, it has marvelous effects on the soul when it is faithfully practiced. It draws the graces of the Lord down in abundance and shows the soul how to see God's presence everywhere with a pure and loving vision, which is the holiest, firmest, easiest, and the most effective attitude for prayer." This is just like anything else in life, you just have to hang in there long enough to really see the results."

Lest you feel that I have gone out on a limb with something bizarre in the Christian life, I hasten to remind you of the song written and composed many centuries ago by a man named David.

Listen to him:

O Lord, you have searched me and you know me.

You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.

You discern my going out and my lying down;

you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue
you know it completely, O Lord.

...How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!

How vast is the sum of them!
Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand.

When I awake, I am still with you.
...Search me, O God, and know my heart;

test me and know my anxious thoughts.

See if there is any offensive way in me,

and lead me in the way everlasting.

[Psalm 139:1-4,17,18,23,24]

I was surprised how many hymns in our hymnal build on this theme of practicing the presence of God. Scripture, tradition, and hymns all remind us of how

important it is to remain close to the heart of God. Our daily lives must be a plea for him to abide with us. Perhaps the clearest call of all is the hymn "Be With Me, Lord":

Be with me, Lord—I cannot live without Thee. I dare not try to take one step alone. I cannot bear the loads of life unaided. I need Thy strength to lean myself upon."

Thank you, Brother Lawrence, for choosing 300 years ago to share your spiritual wisdom and depth of insight in "practicing the presence of God." Whether we are at the nursing home holding the hands of a dying sister, or at home folding the laundry, or writing

checks and paying bills, or studying for tomorrow's exam, or doing someone a last-minute favor—we can practice the presence of God.

Dr. Curtis D. McClane holds a D. Min. from Drew University, an M. Div. from Harding University Graduate School of Religion, a B.A. in Bible from Freed-Hardeman University, and graduate credits from Christian Theological Seminary and Cincinnati Christian Seminary. For more than 15 years Curtis has been a pulpit minister in the Churches of Christ (non-instrumental) and currently serves the Holmes Road Church of Christ in Lansing, Michigan and on the *Integrity* Board.

Book Review

Distant Voices: Discovering a Forgotten Past for a Changing Church

C. Leonard Allen (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1993) 199 pp.

Reviewed by JOSEPH F. JONES

Some time ago I was privileged to receive from Dr. Leonard Allen a copy of his latest book, appropriately titled *Distant Voices: Discovering a Forgotten Past for a Changing Church*. It is difficult to review and assess any one of Professor Allen's books as the most significant of his writings, for they all focus on different historical and theological aspects of our Restoration heritage. But what they do all have in common is a readability and clarity of style that makes it difficult to lay them aside once one has begun reading them. This is definitely true of *Distant Voices*.

The author accepts the reality of change in society, and consequently the reality of a changing church. He likewise assumes that biblical truth must not be forfeited in the church's efforts to shake loose from cultural and traditional

accretions. Unless reasonably well acquainted with our Restoration literature, the reader may experience some shock with the diversity that prevailed among our pioneering fathers. Members of the contemporary church, so often steeped in a pattern theology of beliefs and practices, will experience new awareness of the healthy diversity that existed among these early Restoration leaders. Past church historians and pulpiteers have been slow to admit such diversity in the heart of a unity movement, for conformity is often equated with unity.

Allen's book will challenge many of the unquestioned and unexamined theological assumptions that have prevailed in Churches of Christ for the past several decades, and challenging these cherished assumptions will understandably bring controversy. Hopefully, the controversial

response/reaction to this work will be healthy, and produce a wider and more biblical perspective of the nature, life, and worship of the church of Jesus Christ.

Some of the chapters that will be most thought-provoking, perhaps disturbing, to some readers are those that focus on the role of women in the church. Chapter four, for instance, focuses on the ministry of female teachers, preachers, or evangelists, and the chapter is fittingly titled, "Your Daughters Shall Prophesy." With the turn of the century certain gifted and zealous women, such as Nancy Cram (1776-1815) and her convert, Abigail Roberts (1791-1841), launched a twelve year preaching ministry in 1816, that resulted in hundreds of believers in out-of-the-way places being baptized and the establishment of "at least four congregations." Allen accurately notes that such female preachers, even converting many to the Lord, were met with bitter opposition at times.

Among the women leaders in the early 1800's was Nancy Towle, a young schoolteacher from New Hampshire, who was converted under the preaching of another woman, Clarissa Danforth, and baptized by Elder Moses Howe. After severe struggle with a burning desire to share the Gospel with the lost, and the oppressiveness of male dominance, Towle accepted the call on April 20, 1821 to preach Christ regardless of societal or church opposition. Her ministry covered an estimated 10,000 miles in a decade of preaching, no small task in that day of travel, and converted countless persons to the Lord. In 1833 Towle wrote in part that "the excluding of female gifts from the church of God is not only an occasion of great provocation, but one principal means of immense loss to the church of the Lord Jesus..."

Chapter 17 on "The New Woman" focuses primarily on the ministry of Silena Holman (1850-1915), and her conflicts with the recognized leader of the movement in Tennessee, David Lipscomb. Rejecting what historians of the time

characterized as the "cult of true womanhood" or the "cult of domesticity," Holman continued her writing and preaching in the face of opposition.

Other chapters in Allen's work focus on other contemporary issues facing the church today in the light of "distant voices." The basic questions of who is a Christian and the measure of fellowship are given new clarification from the voices of the past (chaps. 6,8). The nature and work of the Holy Spirit will be more fully appreciated as the reader listens to distant and sometimes differing voices (chap. 9), granting the right to differences in understanding while "maintaining the unity of the Spirit." And the challenge to our contemporary assumption of the corporate mark of elderships by one of Lipscomb's stature will awaken new and healthy understanding of our own views on leadership, and the authority of the elders concept so frequently imposed on churches and individuals in efforts to control thinking students of the Word (chap. 14).

Since I was privileged to know K. C. Moser personally, and was deeply challenged by his writings long before meeting him, I found chapter 21 on "What is the Gospel?" most stimulating. Contemporary preachers need to reexamine the question with intellectual integrity and with sincere questioning to know and experience and proclaim the apostolic *kerygma* (I Cor. 1:21). Men such as Moser and G.C. Brewer dared to do such. (The earlier work of Dr. Allen on *The Cruciform Church* gives an urgent challenge to the contemporary pulpit, especially the chapter on "The Church Under the Cross.")

Allen concludes his book with a genuine effort to relate these distant voices and views to our present challenges. No claim is made for the perfection of these past pioneers and their understandings; but the fact that such voices were present in the past by men and women who loved God and the Word, who respected the authority of the Sacred

Scriptures, should help to quiet the accusations of those who would characterize anyone who advocates realistic change as theologically liberal and drifting from the faith. Allen has also included a "Group Discussion Guide" at the end of the work which should encourage use of this book in Sunday classes or other class settings.

Allen has done the church another vital service, honestly and bravely asking us to reassess our present understandings of the Christian faith, and the nature and mission of God's church in the light of these ancient voices. No, the pioneers were not perfect nor infallible; but they

Words About a Friend

Jerry L. Daniel left us to be with Jesus on June 29, 1993. We've missed him ever since. *Integrity* readers may remember the numerous articles Jerry contributed over the last few years. His writing style mixed scholarly, persuasive logic with good humor and imaginative syntax. His "Thoughts From the Hospital," published in the March/April '93 issue, drew us into Jerry's battle with cancer and the spiritual wrestling that came with it.

Those of us on the Board especially miss his encouraging notes and letters. Jerry believed that *Integrity's* mission to promote unity among believers and provide an open forum for discussion was important. He loved our "Intercepted Correspondence" feature which is modeled after C.S. Lewis' "Screw-tape Letters"--but you'd expect that from a man who was a member of the C.S. Lewis Society of New York City and the editor of its national journal!

Jerry's wife Lois sent us a copy of the obituary and we've learned a lot more about him than he had ever given us for our biographical sketches. He was a minister for 38 years and served at the Echo Lake Church of Christ in Westfield,

were diligent students of the Word. Hopefully, this work will help the present day churches of Christ to define their identity, nature, mission, and direction more clearly in the light of Scripture and the encouragement and enlightenment of these "Distant Voices."

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

New Jersey, since 1971. He graduated from Harding University, earned a Master's in Bible from Harding Graduate School, a Master's in speech from the University of Wyoming, and both a Master's and Doctor's degree from Rutgers University. Jerry taught archeology and mythology in the Westfield Adult School and Junior High, lectured on archeology throughout the U.S., and led trips to the Holy Land. He died at age 54, leaving his wife and four grown children.

A few weeks before he died, Jerry called our home for the first and only time. He spoke some very encouraging words to Bruce and me regarding our roles as editors and as parents of teenagers. He told us he was feeling better and had enjoyed some recent visits with his children. Jerry also spoke highly of the strong support and love his congregation had provided him and Lois.

Jerry had always extended an open invitation to us to visit him if we were ever on the East Coast. We won't get to see him now until we join him. Until then...we really miss him.

---Diane G. H. Kilmer

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

My Dear Negatory Nephew,

You have seldom waxed so frustratingly philosophical as in your latest communication; but I fully understand the problem, since I share in the foil of failure in relation to the Sovereign Source of all Being. Since that point at which I chose to defy Him and launched an effort to bring about His displacement, I have lived with but one purpose: to find my deepest joy in any successes, however small and temporary, in obfuscating His plan and program for the human race. I think only of the present, never the future, and capitalize on the gullibility, sensuality, curiosity, and pride of these creatures as means of perpetrating my plan. It is my major mode of retaliation, and I strongly recommend such a practice in your own life and work.

You must be overjoyed with the feuding among the Troublesome Triumvirate of Lockstep, Inscape and Outreach. Here are three individuals, bound in disputation which, as you suggest, might be settled amicably in a few moments of rational, unselfish discussion. For your part, keep up the agitation and intensify the infighting.

Just to mention the name of Chuck Colson makes me grind my gums. He was one of ours for several years, and accomplished much for our cause. But he slipped through the cracks when one of

our Old Foe's men got hold of him during his imprisonment, and he did a complete about-face. He is doing irreparable harm to our cause. His message emphasizing the impact made by persecuted Christians on unbelievers is being received without question by some of his hearers, especially among those who have lived under oppression in the former "Iron Curtain" countries. Many of them saw firsthand the staunch resistance and difficult life of those who would not abandon their faith under incredible stress. It's awfully hard to fight this kind of witness—one who combines experience with integrity and resolution.

Interesting that you should suggest our enlisting the services of some voices of the pulpit in our cause. Now, as always, there are certain "voices" which fall with remarkable ease into our camp. We bait our hooks with a variety of lures: some bite when offered the opportunity to proclaim a message of "political correctness:" some simply succumb to the influence and subtle pressure of prestigious (and usually wealthy) company; some cannot resist the publicity which just being different brings; and not a few pride themselves on a "liberalized enlightenment" which leaps over prescribed bounds of faith and/or conduct. Enlisting such ones is a "given" in our

program. And, I may note, the first seed in development of the "voice" has often been sown in the classroom by prestigious college professors we have won to our side!

Just for your information, Brother Whitesoul encountered such a professor in his studies at Central Christian University; but his consistent reaction to the religious liberalism of that prestigious teacher was strong rejection; and he has persisted in his stand, even becoming more firmly convinced that his was the proper course, to our great chagrin. Whitesoul has stood strong and consistent through all of our efforts at subversion, and he is so totally under the Enemy's tent that we have been unable to harm him in body or soul. If all products of religious institutions of higher education were equally successful, our outlook would be dark and gloomy indeed! However, other students have not been so staunch in their convictions as Whitesoul, and numerous pulpits today are our captives. They sometimes make our work inceptibly easy, once they come upon what some have called the "slippery slope" of liberalized theology.

You may think of much of your work in terms of greasing that "slippery slope."

Yours for more "slippery slopes,"

Uncle Apollyon

My Dear Master In Error,

I have taken to heart (to use a sentimental human phrase) your advice on maintaining acrimony in myself and in others, and thereby driving out any thoughts of eventually having to face the Tyrannical Judge. Your observations on seducing the supposed leaders of the other side, moreover, has prompted me to meditate once more on the myriad hazards of pursuing "the ministry," or indeed of participating consistently in any way in the public life of the church.

The first hazard lies at the outset when we encourage young people to consider whether God has called them to a life of working for and being supported by the church. Adolescents and young adults in a religious setting are usually by inclination idealistic and prone to rash and romantic decisions. That means that they can also be very easily disillusioned when they take the plunge into "full time service;" or else they can fall into delicious self-righteousness because of the sacrifices they are making. For our purposes, I encourage the church leaders to have as many emotional appeals as possible to recruit full-time Christian workers, since that makes the congregation sound fervent and committed and often draws attention away from dealing with the tough road of everyday discipleship, which is the backbone of the Church Militant.

If a young person survives entry into "the ministry," that very success can easily be turned to our advantage. The structure of most churches catapults a young minister into having to assume a sagacity that he or she has not yet had time to acquire. At this point we have another chance at disillusionment, when the young servant perceives that it is easier to maintain appearances in the church than to deal with the awkward realities of sinful inclinations and personal insecurities. Thus, unless there are available mature and tactful Christians to advise and nurture the young minister, and unless the minister has the insight and the humility to make himself vulnerable enough to be taught, you have a marvelously complex dance of hypocrisies that will lead to spiritual damage for all concerned.

The further the minister advances into his or her "profession," the better the chances of exploiting the pitfalls of ego-satisfaction. After all, he is expected to be a source of wisdom and strong leadership, and he is continually in the

(Continued on the back cover)