

Integrity

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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.

Readers' Response

(Continued from page 39)

Thanks for the *Integritys* you've sent. I particularly need them here in Bahrain (a good supplement and stimulant to my daily Bible reading).

Don Tomerlin
Bahrain

I was baptized at 11 years of age. I will be 40 this year. I was not a faithful Christian most of this time and was divorced and remarried once during that time. The cause of the divorce was not "marital unfaithfulness." I have repented of this publicly, but some say I cannot repent and stay in this marriage. Others say I would sin again if I leave this one. I am really struggling with this. Please

send me some information about the divorce-remarriage issue. I don't have any peace about it.

Name Withheld

Editor's Note: We sent this reader some back issues of *Integrity* containing articles on this problem plus copies of some excellent tapes on this subject presented by Mike Armour at the Pepperdine Lectureships a few years ago. Armour concludes that there are "no grounds" for divorce in God's ideal, not even adultery; but under grace there is forgiveness, without one having to breakup a second marriage after a divorce. Some of you readers may have further suggestions on this topic.

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Readers' Response

An Ambassador Of The Message

March 4, 1995 was the last *Integrity* Board meeting for Dr. Joseph F. Jones to attend as President or as a member. His retirement from this ministry marks an era of 20 years of service during *Integrity's* 25-year history. Although Dr. Jones promises to continue writing for us from time to time, his wisdom and encouragement will be sorely missed at our bi-monthly Board meetings. We are thankful that along with Hoy Ledbetter, our founding editor, Dr. Jones will serve as an editorial advisor.

We members of the Board think many of you will agree that Dr. Jones has diligently modeled our commission to be Christian ambassadors, as Paul describes in II Corinthians 5:17-20:

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Dr. Jones has extended the message of reconciliation to thousands of people over the years through his preaching, teaching, writing, counseling, and leadership activities. We appreciate the fact that we readers of *Integrity* have benefitted from his commitment to this publication for 20 years.

This transition period in Board leadership includes some happier news. John Van Horn, a long-time member, has agreed to serve as President. We look forward to his humble, prayerful leadership. Curtis D. McClane joins Amos Ponder as one of two Vice Presidents. After 15 years of faithful service, Henrietta Palmer is conferring her role as Secretary onto dedicated Board member Keith Price. Jan Van Horn continues to serve as our very able Treasurer.

Also, three new members have been elected to the Board who will enrich the ministry immeasurably. Kathleen Blakely, a long-time member of the Church of Christ/Christian Church, works in the business sector as a Medical Claims Processor and also serves as a part-time

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Identity Markers And Alleged Antinomianism

ROB McRAY

In LaGard Smith's recent response to Jim Whitfield (*Integrity*, Nov./Dec., 1994), LaGard wrote:

My comments about antinomianism were prompted particularly by one speaker's observation that "our identity markers"--including such things as a cappella music, weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, and even baptism--are pharisaical legalism, which, by implication, must not be allowed to stand in the way of evangelism. Is baptism nothing more than one of our fellowship's "identity markers"? Is baptism the kind of "rule" that must not be allowed to stand in the way of evangelism?

I am the speaker to whom LaGard referred. LaGard has misunderstood and continues to misrepresent my remarks. Rather than respond in kind, I would like to offer here a more thorough discussion of the role of identity markers in first century Judaism and in our own movement. This discussion is offered, not merely to clear up the misunderstanding, but with the hope that it will help us better understand the New Testament and ourselves.

At the 1994 Pepperdine Lectures I was assigned the topic "The Tragedy of a Perverted Gospel, Galatians 1:6-9." In general, my presentation drew parallels between the Pharisees who became Christians (whom Paul confronted in Galatians) and Christians today who are very much like the Pharisees. The Pharisees were "good, Bible-believing, church-going, right-living folk." While they were motivated by a sincere desire to please God, the Pharisees understood faithfulness to God in terms of keeping laws, including all their traditional interpretations. Their very identity as God's people was characterized by law

keeping. Like the Pharisees, Churches of Christ have often identified themselves by their faithfulness to the "law of Christ."

My brief comments regarding identity markers were made in the context of discussing the problem of the way the Pharisees viewed the law. My comments were not meant to minimize the importance of baptism or the Lord's Supper. As we will see, to recognize that something has become an identity marker does not mean it is nothing more than that. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are very important. But as important as these are, they still are not the core of the gospel and must be kept in proper perspective.

And I did not at all suggest that baptism was a barrier to evangelism. Later in the presentation, I did suggest that an emphasis on law keeping and rules can impede evangelism; but I did not say anything about baptism or the Lord's Supper in that context. In my comment about our identity markers, I was only trying to suggest that we are just as sensitive to disagreement over our identity markers as the Pharisees were to theirs--and I think LaGard's reaction very nearly proves my point.¹

Identity Markers and the Pharisees

Much work has been done in recent years to gain a better understanding of early Judaism and of Paul's interaction with it. Especially helpful, in my view, has been the work of James D. G. Dunn. In an excellent article on Paul's view of the law,² Dunn discusses the nature of identity markers and their role in the conflict between Paul and the Judaizers.

Anthropologists and sociologists have made us aware of the fact that any

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social grouping will inevitably have various features and characteristics which provide the group's self-definition (consciously or unconsciously) and mark it off from other groups. Members of the group will tend naturally to think of the group and of their membership of the group in terms of these features and characteristics, including any distinctive practices and beliefs. Two key words here are *identity* and *boundary*. In particular, ritual (a wide variety of ritual) plays an important part in providing group cohesion and maintaining identity. (p. 524)

Dunn points out that the law itself served as a boundary separating Israel from all other nations and reinforced Israel's sense of distinctiveness.³ By the time of Christ, the wall between Jews and Gentiles had been built high and wide. The law was the guardian of that separation. Three of Israel's rituals became especially important as identity or boundary markers because of their distinctive quality: circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws.⁴ Thus a true Jew, one who rightly belonged to the people of God, was especially known by his observance of these ritual practices. They were "test cases of covenant loyalty."⁵ This emphasis led to the growth of a large body of tradition around these laws reflecting a pre-occupation with the correct observance of the rituals in every detail.

These three laws were not necessarily more important than other laws. The food laws seem to be emphasized out of all proportion to their importance in the Pentateuch. On the other hand, identifying these as "identity markers" does not in any way diminish their significance. The Sabbath law is part of the Ten Commandments and clearly very important in the Law of Moses. Similarly, circumcision had great significance, and no one (including Paul) would argue that a Jew should ignore this law.

The role these practices came to play as identity markers of the true Jew led to

a misplaced emphasis on the form and observance rather than on the intended meaning of the rituals. Correctly observing the growing multitude of rules about the Sabbath received more attention than remembering the creating work of God. Circumcision of the flesh was emphasized over circumcision of the heart. And keeping regulations regarding food overshadowed the holiness these regulations were originally intended to represent. Pharisees sometimes failed to see the difference between their traditions and God's commands (cf. Matt. 15:1-9).

A further consequence of the boundary marking function of these practices was that Jews "would be particularly sensitive at the points where the boundary seemed to be threatened and consequently their own identity challenged."⁶ Disagreement over the traditions concerning these identity markers was not easily tolerated. Therefore, Jesus was in a constant conflict with the Pharisees over their Sabbath traditions. He was calling his people to a different way of reading the scriptures: "Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice'" (Matt. 9:13; 12:7).⁷ Jesus was angry at Pharisees concerned more with their rules regarding the Sabbath than about a man with a withered hand; their reaction was to plot to kill him (Mark 3:1-6).

Similarly, Paul's work among the Gentiles, especially his teaching on the law and circumcision, precipitated an identity crisis for his fellow Jewish Christians.⁸ As a result, he repeatedly faced controversy over the identity markers.⁹ Paul was presenting a different way to define God's people: for the Judaizers it was faithful observance of the law, for Paul it was the Spirit and faith. The issue was not whether the law is important, but which is dominant—faith or law.¹⁰

Our Identity Markers

Every religious group seems to develop such identity markers. Dunn

notes a parallel from the 20th century:

In classical Pentecostalism it would generally be agreed that speaking in tongues and the Pentecostal understanding of Spirit-baptism are not the most important elements of their faith. But in fact most apologetic writing and most discussion of Pentecostalism has given considerable prominence to these two Pentecostal teachings. The reason is also the reason for the prominence of circumcision and food laws in Gal 2: in both cases we are dealing with the distinctive features of the group—what marks them off from other even closely related groups. For anyone wishing to identify himself with classical Pentecostalism in the first half of the 20th century, the make or break issue was speaking in tongues.¹¹

Among the Churches of Christ, the dominant identity markers are baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, a cappella music in the worship service, and a plurality of elders governing an autonomous congregation. These are not necessarily the most important things we believe. Rather, they are the practices (three of which are ritual in nature) which most clearly distinguish us from other religious groups. Generally for Churches of Christ, these have provided the boundary separating those who are truly "New Testament Christians" from those who are not, those within "the Lord's church" from those on the outside.

As would be expected, many members of Churches of Christ are particularly sensitive about these subjects. What someone says about these matters attracts close scrutiny. Challenges to traditional understandings and practices associated with these subjects can elicit strong reactions. In part, the identity crisis in the Churches of Christ is the result of rethinking some of the traditions associated with these identity markers.

Recognizing that these practices serve as identity markers in our churches does

not in any way minimize their importance. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are rooted in the example and instruction of the Lord himself. They are themselves expressions of the gospel and are clearly very important. On the other hand, a cappella music seems to have been emphasized out of all proportion to its relative importance in New Testament Christianity. This is largely because it is our most distinctive feature. In some ways, to question this issue is to question our very justification to exist as a separate religious tradition. What is at stake is not merely an understanding of scripture or worship, but a significant boundary determining who is or is not a true Christian.

A consequence of the role these practices play as identity markers is often a misplaced emphasis on right observance rather than on the meaning of the practices. Teaching on baptism can focus on details of proper observance rather than on conversion. Churches of Christ have almost exclusively spoken of converting people as "baptizing them." Rarely have churches reported how many "have been converted to Christ," or how many "have become believers" or "disciples." This can lead to a neglect of the concepts on which the meaning of baptism rests. So it is possible to study with someone and focus on making sure the person knows all about proper baptism, but not talk very much about repentance or even about Jesus himself.

Churches have divided over how many cups to use in the Lord's Supper, which is supposed to be a meal expressing our unity and fellowship in Christ. A congregation can have lifeless worship, with little thought in the planning or conduct of the service, and still feel confident that the worship is pleasing to God because it was performed properly. Appointing elders can focus on the necessity of having a minimum of three elders, each with a minimum of two baptized children and a maximum of one wife, rather than on whether the men are spiritual shepherds and teachers.

Churches can become preoccupied with properly observing the practices in every detail, and de-emphasize or even miss the more important underlying meanings of the practices.

Another consequence of the emphasis on such identity markers is that it reinforces sectarianism. The focus on these markers has led many in our churches to abandon our earlier self-designation: "Christians only, not the only Christians." Since we are virtually the only religious group which baptizes according to our understanding and sings a cappella, then we must be the only Christians. The only true Christians are those marked off by the proper boundary rituals--those who observe the important rites which identify one as part of the true people of God.

Like the Pharisees, our movement has tended to view law keeping as the dominant characteristic of God's people. Therefore, one need not question the importance of baptism or the Lord's Supper or alter our practices in worship to provoke strong reactions. When the message begins to question the way we should identify ourselves, the message will provoke an identity crisis. When messengers suggest, like Paul did, that the people of God should primarily be identified by the Spirit and by faith rather than by law, the messengers will likely face the same reactions Paul faced.

ENDNOTES

1. Here is what I actually said about identity markers: "...And so a good Jew was one who kept all the law--a real Jew, a true Jew kept all the law, and especially, circumcision, and Sabbaths, and the food laws. Those had become the identity markers of their faith.

Most faiths have those identity markers--the little hooks that we hang our identity on. We say, "Yes, I've got my stuff hanging right here.

I know where I belong. This is my part of the closet." For them it was circumcision, Sabbath, and the food laws. For us, you can probably fill in the blanks--baptism, weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, a cappella music, plurality of elders in the local church--those are our identity markers. And if we stopped and thought about it, I don't think most of us would say that's the core of the gospel--those are the most important issues in the gospel. The gospel is about Jesus. But these things become our identity marks. And no one had better disagree with us on our identity marks."

2. "Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3.10-14)," *New Testament Studies*, Vol. 31, 1985, 523-542.

3. Cf. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary (Word, 1988), lxix-lxxii; Jacob Neusner, *Judaism: The Evidence of the Mishnah* (Univ. of Chicago, 1981), 72-75; Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (Yale Univ., 1983), 97.

4. Dunn, *Romans*, lxxi; "Works," 525; cf. Meeks, 36-37, 97; E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Fortress, 1983), 102.

5. Dunn, *Romans*, lxxi.

6. Dunn, "Works," 538.

7. Cf. Gary Collier, *The Forgotten Treasure: Reading the Bible like Jesus* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Publ., 1993).

8. Dunn, "Works," 531; cf. 526.

9. Acts 15:1-5; 21:21; Rom. 14:1-6; Gal. 2:3, 11-14; 4:10; 5:1-12; Phil. 3:2-3; Col. 2:16

10. Dunn, "Works," 529, 535.

11. Dunn, "Works," 540, n. 30.

Rob McRay has served the Northtown Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin more than eight years as their minister. His education includes a Bachelor's from Abilene Christian University, an M.A. from Wheaton College, and further work in New Testament backgrounds at the University of Chicago.

Back To The Future

GARY PEARSON

These are exciting times for our Stone-Campbell restoration movement as we edge closer and closer to the next millennium. The words of I John 3:2 come to mind: "What we will be has not yet been revealed." The lines that once separated our segments like the Berlin Wall are now not nearly as high or dense as they once were. Gaps in the lines are appearing with increasing frequency as we reach across and embrace brothers and sisters whom we formerly did not even know existed. *Integrity* is one of the larger gaps in the lines of division.

Barriers To Unity

Exciting times like these breed high expectations. High expectations, in turn, however, often breed frustration. Our local situations rarely live up to the potential for unity which we can see glimmering through the gaps in our "Berlin Walls." Many of us have returned from a conference or lectureship where we clearly saw the vision of a unified movement, only to have our vision die a thousand deaths from petty prejudices and perspectives closer to home.

Here's an example. Soon after the beginning of the Restoration Forums in the '80's between a cappella and instrumental Churches of Christ and Christian Churches, I remember hearing of the reaction of an elder in a moderate congregation. He was no ultra-conseivative; however, he still saw such efforts as a waste because, after all, we scarcely have time and energy now to attend events and spend time with those of our own particular persuasion! So much for John 17. It probably never occurred to Jesus that, in the twentieth century, division between his disciples would be considered a way of accommodating the hecticness of life!

Finding Tomorrow's Unity In Our Past

How can we who have seen the vision of unity remain committed to it for the duration? One important way is by going back to the future. Our two centuries as a movement committed to the realization of Jesus' prayer in John 17 have provided a wealth of experiences that we can now draw upon as we continue our quest to be one with all of Jesus' disciples.

A fresh investigation of the history of the Stone-Campbell movement will not, as one might expect, tie us to the past; instead, it will propel us toward the future. Leonard Allen, in his book *Distant Voices*, has pointed us to a range of experiences in our movement that has long been minimized or ignored altogether. We would do well to identify some of our movement's contributions to the "cloud of witnesses" of Hebrews 12:1 who still beckon us to "run with perseverance the race that is set before us." The names of only a few of these proponents of unity are known to us today. Many of them are all but forgotten.

A Little Background

The year 1906 is usually given as the date of division between the a cappella and instrumental churches of our movement. It is a convenient and logical date, because 1906 was the first time the U.S. government took note of the division in its religious census. Dating the division from 1906, however, can be misleading because it implies that the break was a clean one and was over and done with after that year.

It is well known that the division began long before 1906, but it is not widely known that the division was not nearly completed in many areas by 1906. This

was especially true in Mississippi. Congregations divided over the use of instrumental music in Mississippi as late as World War I. The "sorting out" of congregations into one group or the other didn't end in Mississippi until the 1920's.

No One's Side But Christ's

Lee Jackson's life mirrors the long-drawn-out process of an a cappella/instrumental division in Mississippi. Jackson, a fairly obscure preacher who died in 1929, left a "paper trail" of articles and reports that appeared in several church journals from the 1880's to the 1920's. His paper trail, however, has some long gaps in it as well as some unexpected twists and turns. While parts of his life remain a mystery to me, one thing is clear: he was a man committed to unity, on no one's side but Christ's. His writings are an inspiration for those of us who desire unity today.

Jackson first surfaces in print in the "progressive" *Christian-Evangelist* of May 8, 1884, lamenting the shortage of full-time preachers in the state. His writings appear occasionally in this church journal as late as January 1892.

Something happens in 1892, however, and Jackson's "Mississippi Column" mysteriously disappears from the progressive *Christian Evangelist* and reappears on September 1 in the conservative *Gospel Advocate*. He speaks out against a "boycotting" of T. B. Larimore in California, apparently by progressive churches. Jackson also for the first time as far as I can determine, strikes out against mission boards and the exclusivism of those who promoted them as the only proper way of evangelizing.

In the very next issue of the *Advocate*, Jackson again criticizes the "society" brethren but this time in a more restrained way. This time he combines his criticism with mild praise for Brother Stevens, the state evangelist and, more enthusiastically, for the *Christian-Evangelist* which he admits is a "society

advocate." Lee Jackson was not one to be easily pigeonholed!

Jackson: On The Fence?

Jackson's thrusts against the society continue in the *Advocate* as late as December 1, 1892. Yet he always stops short of condemning the missionary society or of declaring the "society brethren" as being no longer in fellowship. In his "Mississippi Column" of the October 20, 1892 *Advocate*, he sets forth a firm stand to take no stand on the society question:

In the last issue of our state paper, the *Messenger*, Brother Sam P. Benbrook says that he has been critically watching me to see whether I would fall over on the side of the society or on that of the "antis," but, judging from some of my recent utterances, he concludes that I am "still on the fence." I will say to Brother Benbrook that I have never been on the fence, as he expresses it. I am positively on the side of the Lord and his gospel, and my time for work along this line is so valuable that I have none to fool away on such themes as society and anti-society. This man Benbrook is a hard man for me to please, any way, it seems. Last spring he lectured me for wearing a long beard and preaching short sermons, and caused me to cut my beard off and lengthen my sermons, much to the displeasure of both my wife and my hearers--my wife admiring the long beard and my audiences the short sermons. Now, he wants me to express myself as either in favor of or against the society. He will get me into trouble yet, if he doesn't mind. The truth is, such men as Brother Benbrook are of such a peculiar makeup that they expect every man to run to extremes, either one way or the other, on every question which comes before them.

The Paper Trail Continues

Jackson's "Mississippi Column" disappears from the *Gospel Advocate* after 1892 as mysteriously as it had appeared. Except for a debate note that appears on October 17, 1895, his name is absent from the *Advocate* for the next three decades. A single report by him on Mississippi appears in the pro-society, pro-instrumental music *Christian Standard* on November 2, 1907. The *Christian-Evangelist* includes Jackson on October 1, 1908 as one of the preachers featured in "Some Work and Workers in the Southland." Then he drops out of view.

Jackson's Final Thoughts

Lee Jackson's paper trail does not pick up again until he reappears in the *Gospel Advocate* on November 6 and November 20, 1924 with his two-part article "Some of My Early Memories." His most memorable article, however, did not appear during his lifetime. He died on January 12, 1929 at his home in Oakland, Mississippi. On May 22, 1930, "Statement of Origin and History of the Congregation at Mt. Hope, In Webster County, Miss." by Lee Jackson, appeared in the *Gospel Advocate*. This is more than a congregational history. It is Lee Jackson's final thoughts on the restoration movement to which he had devoted his life, but which now seemed forever divided.

In this final article Jackson strongly objected to the use of "church of Christ" and "Christian church" as labels of division:

Both parties to the division appear to have become equally to blame for this unscriptural use and application of these designations as partisan names, and those who do so knowingly may be held accountable for it in the final judgment. In the one passage in the New Testament where the congregations are designated "churches of Christ," as in our English version, the word "church" is in the

plural form, showing that there was a plurality of churches of Christ in the apostolic age. Yet many of those who claim to be loyal to the Scriptures lump all the congregations in Mississippi together and call them "the one church of Christ in Mississippi." The others are unscripturally referred to as the "Christian Church in Mississippi." Our early gospel preachers were never guilty of this unscriptural usage. Those who do this appear to have fallen into it for the partisan purpose of making lines of division as distinct as possible. If it is necessary to do this, we had better adopt some other sort of names and not misuse the terms that inspiration has made sacred by giving them a different application.

Jackson also strongly objects to churches attempting to judge the validity of anyone's baptism. He boldly states that, despite "the misunderstandings of Baptists," baptism has always been for the remission of sins "and did not need to be restored." "It matters not what may be the false notions of the preacher who baptized the penitent believer in Christ, he cannot avoid baptizing that believer into remission of sins; for this is God's design in baptism, and the false ideas of ignorant preachers cannot change it."

Perhaps Jackson's strongest point in "Statement of Origin and History" is implicit but no less strong. Writing in an a cappella journal and apparently by the '20's preaching only among a cappella churches, Jackson still looked back over the course of the restoration movement in Mississippi and saw one brotherhood and not two. He celebrates the memory of one preacher after another who through the years had labored in Mississippi. Many of them at the end of their lives were ministering among the instrumental churches as Jackson himself had done for many years. Jackson makes no distinction between a cappella and instrumental. He lauds them all.

Why Remember Jackson?

So what? What benefit is there in remembering Lee Jackson? He saw the movement he loved so much slowly fragment over the years until, in his last years, there was no visible hope for reconciliation. He died a decade too early for the Murch-Witty unity meetings of the '30's which, themselves, were unsuccessful. After a lifetime of laboring as a preacher, he was only an obscure preacher living in an obscure rural community in Mississippi.

Yet across the years I see a nobility in Lee Jackson's soul. He was on no one's side but Christ's. He refused to allow himself to be classified in the 1906 division. I was unable to find a single word he ever wrote on the subject of instrumental music in worship. He rejected even the terminology of division which was current then as now. No

matter what everyone else did, Lee Jackson apparently lived out his life "making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

What if, like Lee Jackson, a host of obscure Christians of our restoration movement, in obscure communities across our nation, resolved to view our instrumental and a cappella churches as one brotherhood? The result would be that by the dawn of the next century, the 1906 division would be only an unfortunate parenthesis in the history of our grand movement.

Gary Pearson has served as an evangelist for 12 years for the Westminster Church of Christ in Westminster, New Jersey, where he resides with his wife Becki and their five children. Gary holds a B.A. from David Lipscomb University and a J.D. from Vanderbilt University School of Law. He and Becki are also therapeutic foster parents for the Kennedy-Kreiger Institute.

EDITORIAL

(Continued from page 22)

staff member for the South Redford Church of Christ as Worship Leader/Planner and Children's Choir Director.

Noreen Bryant, an active member of the Church of Christ (a cappella), brings us broad experience in marketing, publishing, and writing for both business and church. Kay Kendall's religious background is rich in both instrumental and a cappella Church of Christ experience. She works as a full-time nurse and maintains great interest in missionaries and world evangelism. And all three are writers...so you can imagine

our excitement over their joining us!

You, too, have been called, of course, to be ambassadors of God's message of reconciliation. This issue's articles are submitted as exercises toward fine-tuning our ambassadorial skills. Our prayers are with you as you carry out this mission of reconciliation over backyard fences, during cafeteria conversations, "on line," at your job, within family walls--wherever you're given opportunity. May God be glorified!

Bruce and Diane Kilmer
Co-editors

The Walls Between

ALINE EDSON

Walls constructed by human hands and walls constructed by human hearts foster hate and keep it alive by separating human beings from one another. It is harder to hate when you can see--really see--other human beings, and it is impossible to really love others unless you can see and be close to them.

Both kinds of walls are of mere temporary human construction. They weren't there at birth, and they won't be there at death. In God's eyes, walls are never present. People are his creation, and he sent his Son to reconcile us *all* back to him. But when we hate and snarl behind walls that we build between ourselves, we block our own way back home to the Father whose very nature is love.

Relationships with other human beings is all there is of significance in this life, because souls are all that will survive this world. People alone are all that count, and how they help or hurt each other is the determinant of their happiness here and hereafter. If we build a wall because of fear, we need to hear Jesus say, "Be not afraid, for I have overcome the world." He has promised never to leave us. That ought to allay our fears.

If the wall is built of envy, jealousy, or

greed, we need to remember that it all belongs to God anyway--material, temporary things are not worth hating and dying for, because they will all be left behind when we go. Having sufficiency, let us therewith be content.

If the wall is built because we look different, we need to listen to God, who says, "Every person out of every nation who does my will is accepted of me." That ought to be good enough for us. Our standards ought not to be different from God's. If the wall is built of arrogance and pride, consider the obvious: we have a common origin: birth; and a common destination: death. We take our next breath by the grace of God. We are far more alike than we are different. What do we have that wasn't given us? A dose of humility will increase our potential for happiness, and acceptance of one another on common ground is common sense.

Walls make for cold and lonely hearts. Whatever their origin, they need to come down.

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.

Show yourself in all respects a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech, that cannot be censured; then any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us. -- Titus 2:7-8

More Questions About Worship

CECIL HOOK

Many profitable studies about worship have been made lately. That is good, for we have lacked definition in our understanding of its nature. Perhaps, if I had read all those researches, I would have all the answers. But I am still asking impertinent questions and pestering you with them.

Does God desire praise? A foolish question! Well, why does he delight in praise? In answering this, let us not think of God as being like ourselves with pride, self-image problems, feelings of insecurity, emotional inadequacy, or depression. Do you suppose that his seeing masses of people in awe feeds his pride? Is it possible that he has an egotistical craving that is satisfied by hearing our songs of adoration? Is his status more secure when the multitudes bow in prayer to him? Do our cheerful songs lift him from depression? Does our performing of prescribed rituals reinforce his sense of majesty and power? What is your concept of the God we worship?

What Exactly Is Worship?

Lessons concerning worship tend to involve more ancient and awesome concepts of God than the New Covenant depictions of a caring Father. Is Jesus presented to us as a deity demanding abjection? Jesus accepted gestures of reverence, homage, and worship, but he did not demand them of any who approached him. He did not require his disciples to prostrate themselves and sing praise to him in a devotional each morning. Worship is a voluntary expression of reverence and thanksgiving. If it is compelled, is it really praise?

The Almighty wants us to worship him "for such the Father seeks to worship him" (John 4:23). Does that mean that he is seeking us out, demanding, "Sing to me! Pray adoringly to me, and shout Praise

the Lord!" to me at appropriate times!" The context of the reference above indicates that both Jews and Samaritans were already worshipping him; now he desires that it be modified so that it is in spirit and in truth. He wants a different kind of worship. Why?

It is not that he wishes to be "kissed toward" (*proskuneo*) to give him a divine delight, but because he is concerned over the people who are alienated from him. He looks for the appropriate response to him of respect and recognition as our Creator. He wants people to show devotion to him without reference to localities and typical Mosaic offerings, but, instead, showing devotion that realizes their relationship with divinity--in spirit and in truth. In this manner humans are brought into a reconciled relationship. Isn't that why God wants worshippers?

Worship or Service--Or Both?

Is the object of our adoration and homage more concerned with our *proskuneo* or our *latreuo*? Another foolish question? Those are two Greek words for "worship." *Proskuneo*, to make obeisance or do reverence to, is the word most frequently rendered "worship" (Vine). *Latreuo*, to serve, to render religious service or homage, is translated variously as "to worship" and "to serve."

God's concern is the saving of humans, and he enlists our help in saving one another. Through lives dedicated to worship and service, or, more accurately, worship/service, we do this. It involves two facets of worship: (1) communication with God (*proskuneo*) and, (2) serving one another, by which we serve (*latreuo*) him. Putting it in another perspective, it means demonstrably loving both God and people.

These two elements cannot be totally independent of each other. For his holy ones, there is no dichotomy of the moral

and the spiritual, the secular and religious, service and worship, or the good deeds to our fellow human beings and offerings to God. If we try to divide these areas of our lives, we are frustrated. Our sacrifice (offering) to God is self, not certain portions of self in a segmented life given at certain times and places. All that we are and have is holy, devoted to the Lord, given to him as a living sacrifice/service/worship (Romans 12: 1ff). Acting as both a priest and a sacrifice, we lay ourselves on the altar in our conversion, and continually thereafter. Our *latreuo* is in serving human needs, both ours and those of others. This is a logical and natural extension of the worship God calls us to do. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Matt 25:40). Our sacrifice is one of praise, both in direct communication with God and in how we live our lives. We cannot offer meritorious sacrifices, but "through him let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name" (Heb. 13:15). The heart and life are to be consistent with the fruit of our lips, as verse 16 urges.

Does God Need Our Worship?

In a more specific manner, worship may be through prayers and hymns directed to God. But feeding and bathing the baby should also be an offering to God. These actions all emanate from the same whole-life offering and are both actions intended to glorify him in every thought and deed of our God-conscious lives. Really, I think that the Lord may be more concerned with our nurturing a child than our offering words of praise to him. He may prefer our singing spiritual songs to the child than to him. The child needs them; God doesn't. Both, however, are in order, as expressions of dedication and praise.

Am I being irreverent in these assertions? I think they are valid. We do not assemble in order to worship and

serve properly. We who worship and serve as a way of life gather at times to do these things together in programs for mutual edification. Assemblies are for the good of the people, not God. God has no needs! (Or do his desires indicate an emotional need?) The primary purpose of corporate worship is horizontal in upbuilding through songs, prayers, teaching, praise, reaffirmation in communion, and association. Even a collection is for the believer's welfare. That does not eliminate the vertical element of praise, for that also uplifts the believer, by intensifying her sense of God's presence, making her humble, and reinforcing her faith. Otherwise, wouldn't our praise be to gain points with God? Or can a child give pleasure to the father without thought of gaining favor?

So we ask: Is worship an effort to please the Lord? (Another foolish question?) If it is, then how much of what actions suffice to gain God's approval? Do we need to stress ourselves in extensive activities to gain favor? Wouldn't that become approval gained by actions of merit? Is praise a commending of ourselves to God? Or is it a response to the favor he has already shown us? Is it the attitude or the ritual that pleases God? It is better to have both. As an illustration of weighing attitude and performance, think of the medieval Catholic believer, so awed by superstition. Was that person not praising God with a proper attitude, even though he or she was misdirected about the rituals?

"Improving Our Worship"

There are questions in my contorted mind yet. May we "improve our worship" by such things as rehearsing songs and sermons for better performance? Is the artistic rendition impressing God, or people, or both? If improvement in the technique is better praise, doesn't that become merit-based? Does she who sings best, praise best? God hears and observes while we practice, often

mirthfully, singing a new hymn. Do we then flip a switch at the proper time so that the song goes out as solemn worship? Is the rehearsal secular and the performance spiritual? Or, could it be that practice is *latreuo* (service) while the rendition is *proskuneo* (worship)? Or, are both the rehearsal and the exhibition exercise intentionally honoring God in all that we do? Then, too, from any perspective, if the poetically extravagant expressions exceed the feelings of the heart, is it acceptable worship?

The questions continue to bubble up. Is singing praise the same as worship? Is a recording of it, praise? Is listening to the recording worship? What about getting a copyright on praise and selling it? Can singing hymns be a kind of entertainment? Is Amy Grant, or a paid song leader, a professional worshiper?

Is preaching worship? How about writing and publishing messages? Is listening to a recording, or reading the published word, worship? Can our edifying messages be copyrighted, restricted, and sold for profit since we worship/serve through them?

Nothing Can Separate Us From God's Love

Our Maker loved us enough to send his Son to bring us to him. We are invited to come to him in boldness, without fear, shame, or timidity. There we are accepted and honored to sit at his table of provision as his daughters, sons, and friends. His very Spirit lives within us. Nothing can separate us from his love. We come to him rejoicing and we live in

him in continual praise.

Does the Lord then delight in the prostrate body, the abject mind, the wretchedness of soul, the broken and contrite heart, the trembling fear before him, the groveling supplicant?

The alienation of the rebellious grieves God. So he may be pleased to see these attitudes work to bring a soul back to him in penitence. The broken and contrite heart will not be considered lightly (Ps. 51:17). But does he want us to continue in such a wretched state of mind? He welcomes us to share the joy of salvation. The response will be joyful adoration and service, not for God's benefit, but for our own.

One more question and I will leave you in peace. What about lapses in our holiness? What about selfish moments, indulgent gaps, and times of inattention? Our intentions are for total dedication, but we stumble. God knows our frailties. Only he can make us perfect, and he doesn't do that. He credits Jesus's perfection to our account. His dedicated ones are cleansed from all sin. Jesus lifts us up to the Father as perfected offerings of praise.

I have asked many questions. I have suggested some answers for your further consideration. Others I leave open for your continued pondering.

Cecil Hook retired more than 10 years ago from being a career preacher for the non-instrumental Churches of Christ. He and his wife, Lea, recently moved to Tigard, Oregon to leave nearer their daughter. Cecil is the author of several books.

The righteous walk in integrity--happy are the children who follow them!--Proverbs 20:7

Worship Planning 201

KATHLEEN BLAKELY

It's been 20 years or more since I first helped prepare and lead a worship service. I've learned a couple of lessons along the way that I'd like to share with you. Sometimes it seems to me that it took a long time to learn these lessons; maybe it's true that a lesson learned the long, hard way is a lesson learned best!

Hardest To Learn, Yet Most Important

1. *Pleasing God has to be our first priority.*

In high school, I wanted to please the adults in my church. They let me sing in the choir, and sometimes I would be allowed to lead the music on Sunday nights. The only feedback I remember concerned my clothing. I usually wore slacks and men's pullover shirts out of my brother's closet--before it became fashionable. Not a good idea when you are leading songs. One of the women in the church gave me some hand-me-down blouses to wear instead. The clothing issue had such an impact on me that I remember little of the music or other parts of worship. I just wanted to please the church!

At the college I attended, we had chapel twice a week. Since I was a music major, I was often given the chance to plan and lead the hymns. All I cared about at that point in life was pleasing the professors and the administration. The only service I remember leading from those years was one where all the songs had to do with grace. All during the music, the college president, sitting toward the back, kept staring at me. I was completely unnerved. My mouth was leading songs, but my mind had a million questions running through it: "Doesn't he like the songs? Doesn't he like *me*? Doesn't he think we should sing songs about grace? Is he secretly a works' kind

of guy? Who does he think he is, anyway?"

Never one to believe in hidden agendas, I approached him after chapel. "Why were you watching me so intently?"

"Well," he replied. "I couldn't find a hymnal, so I was watching your mouth to pick up the words to the hymns."

You'd think that by this point I would have started to learn that you can't work on a holy thing like worship when pleasing people is your top priority. But I wasn't that far along yet.

After college and the death of my father, I found myself where I never planned to or wanted to be--in the town where I grew up, in the church where they knew all my weaknesses and knew how far I still had to go. I did whatever jobs in the church they let me do, but my motivation was off. I was trying to prove my worth to the minister, to the elders, to the other leaders. Some of them thought I had promise, but some of them I incessantly rubbed the wrong way. The latter, perversely, were the very ones I wanted most to please. My efforts only seemed to make things worse. And in trying to "please men," I moved pleasing God way down the ladder of importance.

This next statement might sound overly dramatic, but it's difficult to express how strongly I feel about this topic. I have vowed in my heart that I will never again play the game of appeasing people. When I plan services, I ask for the help and wisdom of the Holy Spirit and set my aim at pleasing God, and that will just have to do. It doesn't mean I throw my musical training out the window, nor does it mean that I set the agenda for the direction of the congregation all on my own.

I follow the emphasis of the leadership under which I serve; however, as much as I love the elders of my current congregation, I do not plan services to

please them, or with their personal tastes in mind. That would be just as wrong as trying to placate a vocal opposition, or selecting songs based on my own musical style.

What's All the Flap About?

2. *Friction over music isn't about music at all.*

I have served in churches where there was a lot of disagreement and even some animosity about musical style and selection, and I have served where the harmony of voices echoed the harmony of spirit. Here I go--out on a limb: The difference between these two types of churches is not in the age of the people or the leadership style of the elders, or any such easily measurable thing. The difference is how much the people love Jesus, and long for his presence in their lives. If you are hungry for Jesus, musical style isn't your main priority. You care more about being loved and accepted, finding peace with God through his Son, and helping others you love along the same path. If you have been in the Lord for years, and have matured in him, you care more about filling the pews with young people than you do about singing your old favorites every Sunday. If you love Jesus, but cut your musical teeth on pop or rock, you can learn to sing and appreciate traditional hymns because so many of them glorify God.

It is not difficult to integrate musical styles if the hearts of people are knitted together in love. It is impossible, however, to glorify God, whatever you sing, if you deem your taste in music more important than building up God's kingdom in unity.

Let me close with a little story. My two youngest nephews, aged 7 and 9,

recently spent the weekend with me. On the drive from their place to mine, they begged me to play a tape of what they call "rock and roll Jesus music" on the car stereo. They sang along at the tops of their lungs. When we got to my apartment we took the tape inside, and they sang and danced to it several times through. (My neighbor later fibbed, "No, we didn't hear a thing Saturday afternoon!") At the end of the weekend, after being tucked in and prayed with, they spontaneously started to sing the old hymn, "Blessed Assurance." (I know, they are my nephews, and I am prejudiced, but I am not making this up, and I did not give them the idea.) We had sung the hymn in church that morning, and the chorus is easy to relate to and understand. These boys love Jesus, and they find all kinds of ways to praise him--no matter what the musical style!

I thank God for wise parents and church leaders who expose their children in the Lord to all different kinds of music, and teach them that music is judged by its quality and its message, not by its style. I praise God when his people defer to one another in brotherly love and look out for the interests of others instead of self-interest. And I give God the glory when the practical preparation for a service comes together with people whose hearts are open to his Holy Spirit, and real worship happens.

Kathleen Blakely's occupation is a Medical Claims Processor. A graduate of Great Lakes Christian College (Lansing, Michigan), she's also a part-time staff member at the South Redford Church of Christ (Instrumental). Kathy's duties include Worship Leader/Planner and Children's Choir Director.

What Is The Church's Function?

JOHN EOFF

Proclaiming the gospel throughout the world. Edifying the individual members. Sharing with those in need. Worshipping God in spirit and in truth. The reason we have churches is to perform these honorable endeavors. Right? I'm not so sure.

Through careful consideration of the Scriptures, including study of various translations of some of the passages, the thing that has been most deeply impressed on my mind is that the church serves one purpose only: to divide the body of Christ. While this may seem to you a blasphemous statement, please examine the matter with your mind as open as possible.

Church vs. The Body of Christ

The first matter that must be addressed is the difference between the church and the body of Christ. Many of us, if not all of us, have been taught that the church is the body of Christ. We seek proof positive in the letter Paul wrote to the Christians at Ephesus (Eph. 1:22-23): "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body..." There it is written, plain for all to see, that the body of Jesus and the church are the same thing. There is one serious fault in this conclusion. Paul never wrote any such thing.

What Paul actually wrote was, "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the *group of called ones*, (or the assembly) which is his body..." (Christian Bible translation). Writing in Greek, Paul used the word *ekklesia* to identify those who constituted the body of Christ. "Church" is not a translation of *ekklesia*.

Ekklesia means a group gathered for a purpose--a "called-out people"--while "church" has various meanings, among

which are a religious organization, a building where such a group meets, etc. I am not being overly critical by pointing out this difference. There is a significant difference between a called-out people and an organization. A group of called-out people is human, while a church is an entity separate from the people who compose it. A called-out people can organize itself into an organization, and, obviously, this has happened repeatedly.

A Mistaken Concept

The mistaken concept of equating Paul's *ekklesia* with an organization (a "church") is so strong in the minds of Christians that translators balk at correctly translating this word. The reason for this stems from the time King James authorized a translation of the Bible from Greek into English. The translators knew that *ekklesia* did not translate into "church," but were prevented from translating it accurately by King James himself, who was the head of the Church of England. This church was a definite organization over which he ruled, and if the translation were made correctly, he could lose his basis for control. Furthermore, the idea of the church organization had been firmly established in the minds of its members for centuries, handed down from the original organization, the Roman Catholic Church, and on through its various reformers.

There were a number of types of churches during the reign of King James in England. There are many more today, each established in order to differentiate itself from the others, with various degrees of difference. This is the very reason each type of church was established: to separate itself from all other churches. Some churches cooperate with others in spite of their doctrinal differences, while some do not cooperate at all because they

feel that they alone are correct in their beliefs.

Ekklesia vs. Church

A church is an entity separate and apart from its individual members. As an entity, it can collect money, purchase property, build buildings, hire personnel, et cetera. We find no such organization described by Jesus or his apostles. The called-out people met as individuals: they met to encourage one another to love and good works, and admonish one another and help each other as the need arose. They didn't hire someone to do this for them through an organization. They never heard of a church building or a local preacher. Their leaders were servants to care for those who needed it, not bosses to dictate policy. The called-out people did not give their money to a treasury to be disbursed by someone with authority to make decisions for the organization, because there was no organization. Each was free to give to a specific need as he or she was able, and as each discovered the need and desire to help.

Traits That Churches Share

Although every type of church exists to separate itself from all other churches, every type of church has three things in common. The first is that each church is fueled by money extracted from its members with the false claim that the members are "giving to God" what they put into the church treasury. THEY ARE NOT! They are giving to an organization--a legal entity. God doesn't need anybody's money; however, many of his children are in need and could be aided much more abundantly if so much money was not solicited by the church, which is spending money mostly for the comfort of its members.

The second thing churches have in common is that they hire personnel to do what each individual should be doing himself. Members become spectators in

comfortable surroundings through their "free will offerings" instead of participating in the building up of each other or in exhorting one another to love and good works.

The third thing that churches have in common is that worship has become a performance, mostly observed, rather than a service rendered (see Romans 12:1). Dissatisfaction with the quality and quantity of edification received by members of churches has grown to such a degree that people are leaving them in large numbers.

The Called-Out Ones

However, there are people out there who are getting together with others whose faith is in Jesus, and they are finding new heights of commitment and love--gathering together in various homes as did the original Christians, not as an organization but as individuals: nothing more than the called-out body of Jesus.

When the body of Christ is viewed solely as a group of called ones, it ceases being a costly organization. Every group of called ones is self-supporting, with no need for financial assistance from some other group until it becomes financially independent. The cost of mission work is eliminated: the evangelist is willing to support himself, as did the early evangelist. It is such a simple system when the organization--church--is eliminated! This should be obvious and of great importance to all who seek unity within the body of Christ: only through elimination of the church as an organization can the division of the body be eradicated. All believers are, in fact, united in the body. All division is merely in churches.

Please give this your most diligent and prayerful consideration.

John Eoff (a contractor-builder) and several other Christians in the Kerrville/San Antonio, Texas area meet regularly in each other's homes for worship and fellowship.

Book Review:

Singing From The Heart: Discovering Worship That Rejoices And Restores; Jack W. Hayford (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville. 1993. 160 pp.)

Reviewed by HENRIETTA C. PALMER

"Draw near to God and he will draw near to you." (James 4:8, RSV)

Responses to the recent survey mailed to *Integrity* readers indicated an interest in articles which will help believers draw closer to God in their daily lives. Readers suggested many ideas for articles but there seemed to be a yearning for teaching on God's Word, the value of prayer, and the working of God and the Holy Spirit in our everyday lives. In response to the suggestions for ways of drawing nearer to God and having a richer personal relationship with the Lord, I would like to review a study guide which has brought personal inspiration and spiritual strength to many of us who are currently using it to explore the enriching revelation and everlasting beauty of the Book of Psalms: *Singing From The Heart: Discovering Worship That Rejoices And Restores* by Jack Hayford. This study of the Psalms reassures the reader that God is deeply concerned about our daily needs, fears, and our petitions for his constant guidance and care.

Although I have read and studied the Psalms many times, Hayford's study guide

has brought new meaning and insight because the Psalms are grouped according to topic. The thirteen lessons focus on wisdom, creation, joy, sorrow, trust, fear, protection, thanksgiving, God's Word, the Messiah, salvation, and witness. Each lesson includes enough material for two study sessions and the lessons are appropriate for home study groups, church-sponsored classes, or family devotionals.

Thrill to the beauty of the psalms as they are read aloud in your group. Share the experiences of David and the other psalmists as they pour out their hearts to God. Know that God has promised to hear our prayers and to answer them according to his marvelous wisdom and love. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

Henrietta C. Palmer, a retired elementary school principal, actively serves the Troy Church of Christ in Troy, Michigan, along with her husband Bill, an elder and also an *Integrity* Board member. Henrietta recently retired as *Integrity* Board secretary, a position she held for 15 years, but continues to serve on the Board.

Readers' Response

Thanks for your great journal! The more I observe what goes on around me, the more convinced I am that we are children of our culture in its many different faces. *Integrity* provides a forum that allows us to face up to and recognize the effect that culture has on our Lord's wonderful

church! Keep up the open, honest and God-fearing, Christ-seeking quest.

Preston Hathaway
Chula Vista, CA

(Continued on the back cover)