

Integrity

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INTEGRITY seeks to encourage all believers in Christ to strive to be one, to be pure, and to be honest and sincere in word and in deed, among themselves and toward all men.

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Summertime Sentiments

Depressed in the concrete depression, surrounded by fuming cars and drivers, who have switched from "air" to "heater" as motors and motorists idle painfully and threaten explosion, we may lose some of our passion for summer. Or when we slide our syrupy skin between resisting wilted sheets, and our eager nostrils scan the dead breeze, and we wait apprehensively as an invisible mosquito circles to attack, our midsummer night's dream may turn to more congenial seasons. Nevertheless, I relish summer, and I bear its banes much better than the woes of winter.

Hermas said that "the world to come is summer to the righteous," and I like to think of heaven as one continuous summer, although that is not what Hermas meant. He referred to the manifestation of fruits; and summer is when God, who once worked such wonders with a single rib, shows us what he can do with dead branches.

Summer is mentioned in just one instance in the New Testament, but harvest occurs often (the Greek word is from *theros*, "summer"). Summer's harvest warns the disciple that he awaits the eschatological decision of God. Yet summer lades the churches with loneliness, when fellowship falters under the weight of wanderlust ("I just had to get away") and negligence ("It was hot, and I forgot").

This year I planted a garden, my first one since my teens (which our younger son has innocently called "the olden times"). Great

things have happened in gardens. In a garden began the drama of life ("the female lead blundered on page one," as Samuel Hazo so well said). In another garden the Author of salvation showed us how it should have been: "Not my will, but thine, be done." As a gardener, then, I stand on the hallowed ground of history. But my reasons were practical: to frustrate the wolf at the door, and to spend a little more time outside the booky nook.

As summer arrived late, the tardy plants reminded me of Denney's reference to man's "irreligious solicitude for God." We may plant and water, but only God gives the growth. Our impatient attempts to hasten the harvest only spoil the crop. We have ruined quite a few of his plants with our skeptical tugging, and we need his warnings against our presumptuous pagan tendencies.

I am writing this on Independence Day—hardly a *holiday* for many of us, for we have forgotten the revolution. Which, I think, is one of the problems in our own restoration movement. Such historic documents as Campbell's Declaration and Address sound suspiciously strange to us, if we bother to read them. We would escape much needless agony if our roots went deeper into our rich heritage. The enemy always sows weeds in the wheat. We should recognize the difference, but we must also remember that God's crop always survives, despite the weeds, and that our "irreligious solicitude" for him betrays a lack of faith. —HGL

Getting to the Point

CRAIG WATTS & KEN CARTER

Interviewed by the Editors

RECENTLY one of our readers pointed out the need for "practical articles that show us how people can and are practicing a fuller fellowship . . . and how we can grope with current issues that face the Christian . . ." (*Integrity*, June 1974, p. 3). These two interests are emphasized at Reference Point, a youth-oriented project in Flint, Michigan. The editors of *Integrity* recently interviewed Craig Watts and Ken Carter, leaders of this work, in order to acquaint our readers with a positive attempt to relate the Good News to Modern Man.

Believing that although (in their words) "today's youth are better educated, the philosophies they have learned have neither provided them with a sense of direction nor given an answer to the loneliness and loss (perhaps a better word is *death*) that they feel; too often they have been stripped of significance, then clothed with the shabby apparel of despair," Craig and Ken are determined to "offer Jesus Christ as the only reference point through which existence makes sense and the sole way to meaningful life." Both are young men, in their early twenties, but let no man despise their youth. We believe that their answers to our questions contain much that will inform and inspire you.

EDITORS: What were the original goals of Reference Point, and to what extent have these been met?

CRAIG: At first we planned a campus ministry. There are two colleges within walking distance of the house which was bought to serve as a base of operations. However, since both are commuter schools, and nearly all the ties of students are off campus, our work has turned more toward helping high schoolers and youth not currently in school. We've also had opportunities to work with several Jesus People. Basically, ours is a "soft sell" ministry to whoever seeks our help. A number who come to Reference Point are among those who are turned off by organized religion.

KEN: I'd like to add that God has opened many doors beyond our wills.

EDITORS: Why will youth who are turned off by churches relate to a work like Reference Point?

KEN: Some feel they have been intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually stifled in organized religion. They like the freedom to share freely. However, in some cases I think we've seen a reverse form of bigotry in youths who hate all adults. They come to Reference Point to get away from adults.

CRAIG: Many churches are over-structured. Young people are trying to relate to contemporary problems, so they want to go

beyond all the "Thou shalt nots." They are looking for more than rules: they want some reasons behind them. They like to participate in what we are doing because they can express themselves without being censured. They want creativity in worship.

EDITORS: Will not such terminology as "creativity in worship" and "looking for more than rules" raise suspicions of liberalism at Reference Point? Can you relate that to your conservative stance?

KEN: Of course it will raise suspicions of liberalism. I'm not sure I understand myself what is meant by "creativity in worship." Honesty of expression is most important. Each group has a different mood. If we come together and aren't happy, we won't

*There will be suspicions
anywhere there is an attempt
to put truth in the present tense.*

necessarily sing happy songs. We try to be flexible enough to deal with the problems at hand. For a group of people who have always viewed worship as a ritual, what we do might seem scary. So much of our culture is so secretive. Mothers chastise their children by asking, "What would people think?" We live in a society of fronts, and at Reference Point we get together and try to be honest in expressing ourselves to each other before God.

CRAIG: We can't get too worried about suspicions of liberalism. There will be suspicions anywhere there is an attempt to put truth in the present tense. We must not become too preoccupied with this because we just don't have time. As far as creativity is concerned, it must go beyond worship and include all of life. Francis Schaeffer talked about the concept of "form and freedom,"

which I feel is important. We need freedom to express ourselves, but we need a certain form to work within. We need areas, we need bounds, we need boundaries that people can understand. If we have just form, we're going to wind up being stagnant, in our worship and in our life. If we have just freedom, we'll become so random that we will lack the fullness of communication that we need. We really need both form and freedom, that form that we can relate to—that *reference point*—and the freedom to express ourselves and to enjoy the diversity which is in the Lord.

EDITORS: Could you elaborate on this point a little more?

CRAIG: One of Schaeffer's illustrations related to modern art. In this area people no longer accept absolutes. There is all the freedom in the world, but no structure. A common person looks at modern art and wonders what he sees, because he has nothing to which he can relate the particular work. In worship and in life there is a similar problem. People who will not accept the Bible as an absolute want to emphasize their freedom, but they have no structure to which their life relates. I reemphasize the need for both form and freedom.

EDITORS: Do you think the generation gap is tending to disappear?

CRAIG: It is disappearing, but the result is not necessarily positive. Those who were the radicals a few years ago are now simply forming a kind of new middle class. There was a time not so long ago when idealism was running free. I remember how Graham Nash sang, "We can change the world, rearrange the world, it's dying to get better." Many of us really believed that. There was a lot of sacrifice involved in the protest movements. But things have changed. The ideals went sour. Change didn't come fast enough,

and so a sickening disillusionment set in. Many involved in the movement have settled for a piece of suburbia. Oh sure, there are some external symbols, like beards and long hair, but they really don't have much meaning any more. Here's how I see it: where the older middle class sat in front of the TV with a beer in hand, the younger ones sit in front of the stereo with a joint. Really there isn't any substantial quality difference. The generation gap is closing, but what's it worth? Now we share our apathy together.

KEN: I believe the gap is not as great, but it's still there.

EDITORS: Are young and old able to share in worship to a greater extent now?

CRAIG: This is not a problem related to age. Letting worship become a rut is a problem with some people of all ages. We tend to stick with the familiar, and so we fear change, even if it is constructive. Eric Hoffer in *The Ordeal of Change* told how he once worked in fields picking beans. After some time his employers wanted him to move into a pea field to work for a while. He was terrified! From beans to peas, and he was afraid! You can imagine how we react when we need to make significant alterations and adjustments in such matters as worship. It's tough. But I must say that many young people crave fellowship with mature Christians with open minds. Let's face it, we really need each other.

KEN: A change in my own attitude came during an ACC Preacher's Workshop. After the first round of speeches during this particular workshop, Craig and I got together with some who identified with us culturally—long hair and beards—and said, "Let's go somewhere and pray while the old men argue." We met that night in a private home and, much to our surprise, some of the young guys started bringing in some old

ones. I thought, "Oh, oh, here come the witch hunters!" For about a year before this I had been meeting in small groups with mostly young people and had become a leader in these. It seemed to me that we were part of a spiritual chain, and that the young people were always pulling others up to higher levels. But this night at Abilene was such a turn-around. It was such a humbling experience for me. The old men were not witch hunters, because Marty Hooper played a guitar and sang some songs he claimed the Lord had revealed to him, and the old men enjoyed them! Here all the time I was expecting a sermon on instrumental music, but they seemed to be more interested in other things. During the meeting one of the persons present received a long

*"Let's go somewhere and pray
while the old men argue."*

distance call from his girl friend, who told how severely depressed she felt, and for no apparent reason. When he relayed the message to the group, I believe it was Don Finto who suggested that we pray. For the first time in my life, the prayer meeting was turned around. It was the older men who were at the top that night! I felt that I was on the very bottom. Talk about faith, and understanding, and wisdom! I have never felt the same toward older people and feel that I got over my prejudices against age at that time. These are characteristics we all admire and want in our lives.

EDITORS: What do you consider to be your greatest successes in this work? How has the Lord provided blessings through your efforts?

CRAIG: I don't think we can talk about our greatest successes without mentioning

some of the greatest problems. We've had to work with people from a great diversity in religious background. It would be easier if everyone came from a Church of Christ background, because even with all our differences there are enough basics that we'd have something in common to build on. But when we come together at Reference Point, we have a few from Churches of Christ, some from a Presbyterian, Baptist, or Nazarene background, and several from a "non-church" setting. It's not nearly as difficult to write articles about fellowship as it is to put your ideas into practice in a situation like this! You have to face up to people who see things drastically different from the way you see them. The "doctrine" and practice of fellowship can present very interesting problems. Also, in our present group about half

*... through our prayers God
enabled us to be more honest ...*

are charismatic. This has created some real difficulties. Although they may not say it, some non-charismatics feel that charismatics are mentally unbalanced. The signs, such as tongue-speaking, are tabbed as crutches. On the other hand, the charismatics may feel that the non-charismatics are not as spiritual as they ought to be and are second-class citizens in the kingdom of God. The hidden barriers have really presented us with problems.

KEN: A sort of "Us and Them" situation has developed.

EDITORS: How have you dealt with this particular problem?

CRAIG: We've spent an awful lot of time praying about it. We also spent more time in the Word—studying. We've also made some adjustments so that both groups could

continue to work and worship together.

EDITORS: How have you adjusted?

CRAIG: Fortunately, the group of charismatics who come to Reference Point do not feel that speaking in tongues is a necessary evidence of having been baptized in the Holy Spirit. The non-charismatic people have also recognized that they do lack spiritual depth, that their prayers lack confidence. The cop-out is "Thy will be done," because we really don't have enough faith that what we are praying for will actually happen. Changes in both these groups helped everyone.

KEN: I think that one of the things that really helped was that through our prayers God enabled us to be more honest in looking at each other. The feelings about "Us and Them" were helped when we could see each other's good and bad points. Real love is considered more important than whatever the division is, and barriers are broken down.

EDITORS: As you have worked with young people, you've run into opposition from church leaders and parents. How have you been able to work around such opposition?

CRAIG: You run into opposition no matter what you do. It's like something I heard recently: "The only persons who aren't criticized are those who do nothing, say nothing, or are nothing." I really believe that. I think that we still have lots of people supporting us in spite of the opposition. In one instance I think of, a church in this area has leaders who just don't understand what is going on. They wanted the kids to do everything their way. What they didn't know was how many of them were involved in the dope scene. When we first came to the area we were told there were more "dopers" in that congregation than just about any place in Flint. The first two kids I met from there were both deeply involved in dope, and one

was a runaway. Although their insensitivity may be understandable, the result was that when we became increasingly involved in helping the kids, the church leaders really cracked down on them for coming to Reference Point! From the kids' point of view, it seems the church leaders would rather have them involved in the dope scene than to be part of something the leaders didn't totally agree with. The hard line from these leaders has caused several kids from that church to return to the crowd they had left when they started coming to Reference Point.

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EDITORS: Have you been able to work with any parents, in spite of opposition from others, because of good things happening to their children?

CRAIG: Yes, because some have been strong enough to ignore the opposition. They feel that the good fruit is worth whatever hassle it takes to get it. Others have not been capable of, or willing to, fight. It all depends on the parents. One girl was deeply hurt because her parents couldn't tolerate opposition from some church leaders. She truly loves her parents and has no desire to be opposed to them, but she also recognizes that her friends at Reference Point mean much to her. Everyone means well, but these are difficult areas.

KEN: Sometimes I wonder how much of the difficulty is our fault. Maybe we're not as good at public relations as we should be. Most of our working around opposition when the kids need help has resulted in going "underground" by meeting with them in parks and restaurants. Sometimes they

sneak over when they're supposedly on a shopping trip. It's the only way we can have fellowship with some. Really, in some ways, we operate like an underground church!

CRAIG: For some of these kids, there's downright persecution for doing what they think is right.

KEN: That's right. Persecution! Some of them just give up, but some of them fight back—and hard enough that we can continue to have fellowship.

EDITORS: Do you encourage this type of meeting?

CRAIG: It's not what we prefer, but there are times when they feel they have no choice, and I recognize that. It's better for them to face their parents and get it out in the open, but some parents (and others) just won't be understanding at times, so there seems no other way than to do what is not the preferred way in order to help. Early Christians had to sneak around sometimes. That undoubtedly was not the way they wanted it, but they had no choice.

EDITORS: Are there some older people who also "sneak around" to come to Reference Point?

CRAIG: Yes, there are people working in different churches in the area who like to come over and talk, but if it were generally known, I'm afraid they would be in trouble with others in the same churches.

KEN: I'd like to say more about some of the kids sneaking over. Sometimes they call and say, "I *have* to talk to someone." I tell them to sneak on over! At the same time, I tell them they still have to live with their own situation and that they need to make a concession whenever possible.

CRAIG: I remember one girl who skipped school and came over one day. After we talked for a while, she said the real reason she came over was because she wanted to be

baptized. She was afraid to come other than when some would think she was in school, and we were glad to help her become a Christian. It isn't normal for us to baptize at the "regular" times. I think the first person who was baptized through this ministry started a trend. He was immersed at 4:30 in the morning, and I think each baptism has been at an odd hour since then!

EDITORS: What age persons are you speaking about?

CRAIG: These are people who are over sixteen. Most of the people who meet with us are late-high-school, early-college age.

... they're getting hassled in more instances than seems necessary ...

Still they're getting hassled in more instances than seems necessary or logical.

EDITORS: Naturally a work such as this has many frustrations. What have been some of the greatest rewards from your efforts?

KEN: It is a beautiful thing when God teaches anyone how to love. I believe I have learned to love a lot of people at Reference Point. What a joy it is to see one you've worked with for so long and so hard to get him over doubts and to convince him about Jesus suddenly embrace you in full fellowship in the Lord!

CRAIG: I'm happy to be doing exactly what I want to do: working with people and teaching and counseling. It's good to be able to teach the Word and have a sense of helping people. You have to find the things that really matter in life, and I don't believe that anything matters apart from the Lord. Everything is put into perspective in Christ. I have a real joy in spreading the Word and watching personalities develop more into the image of God.

EDITORS: You have mentioned several baptisms as a result of this work. Do you stress baptism?

KEN: We try to emphasize balance in our teaching. From our viewpoint, it seems that some find it difficult to be intellectually honest in accepting the scripture teaching on this and other topics.

CRAIG: We still use the "soft sell" approach. Baptism is considered essential, and we try to establish the connection between this obedient act and the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

EDITORS: Is there a possibility that Reference Point may become a surrogate church?

CRAIG: For some, yes. There are some strong prejudices against organized religion. Churches have made some real blunders and are not above reproach in this matter.

KEN: Some with whom we work are well on their way to establishing the very thing they oppose! There is a tendency on the part of these to narrow the bonds of fellowship, and they seem to get hung up on themselves.

EDITORS: What is your personal position on this?

CRAIG: I continue to try to teach by agreeing with legitimate criticisms of the established religions, while pointing out weaknesses in the positions of those who criticize.

EDITORS: We know that your financial support comes in small amounts from several sources and that religious works generally are under economic strain. How are you doing financially?

CRAIG: We've had contributions from different churches, as well as from a number of individuals. But it seems that ministries of this type have difficulty raising funds, and as of now we have never met our budget. The Lord has always pulled us through, and

we certainly believe he is able. We've had a hard time on a number of occasions, even on some of the small things that people take for granted. There have been many sacrifices to keep us going, but I feel really blessed to work in this ministry in spite of the cost. I just feel the work is that necessary.

KEN: The entire nation has had financial problems, but Flint has been hit particularly hard. A lot of people in churches that support us have had their faith severely tested with regard to what should come first. Charity always seems to be cut out first when we come under financial strain.

CRAIG: Frankly, I don't look at our work as charity. I feel that people have an obligation to support good work and that

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some are just not living up to their responsibility in this matter. Perhaps we just don't trust the Lord enough. There is a lack of willingness to sacrifice on the part of a lot of people.

KEN: As usual, the few carry the load.

EDITORS: How do you compare with other youth ministries in this respect?

CRAIG: We're sharing the difficulty. I haven't seen any statistics, but we may be doing worse than some. We've been able to eat most of the time, but people have not been as generous as we had hoped. Maybe they just don't see the urgency of the situation. Perhaps if this were seen, more help would come.

EDITORS: Could you give us some idea of your specific activities?

CRAIG: Each week we have at least one main devotional. During the week we have

some small meetings. We just started a Bible study class for some who cannot attend in the evening. Also we recently began a work in some convalescent homes in order to befriend old people who are lonely. A jail ministry has been under way on a limited basis and we think this will open up even more soon.

KEN: There are not a lot of regularly scheduled activities, but the place is always busy. It's always full of people, and it seems there's never enough time to do all the things we want to do.

EDITORS: Let's look at the matter of expanding such works as Reference Point. Do you see possibilities of growing here in Flint as well as being of service to others in areas where spiritual help is needed?

CRAIG: There is a definite need for work such as this in almost any metropolitan area. I'd like to see a considerable growth in our work here before taking on anything else. Since my work now is primarily that of a counselor and teacher, I'd like to continue with my own education in order to provide a more solid type of teaching. Youth ministries are needed everywhere, but we need to refine our efforts here and learn to work as a group before reaching out.

KEN: I see a real need for efforts to be made. There is a lot of frustration in trying, but God didn't command us to be successful. We have to keep going.

EDITORS: Thank you. Perhaps some of our readers will want to communicate with you, so we will mention that you can be contacted at 523 Avon, Flint, Michigan 48503, telephone 313/238-7457. Also that contributions to your work may be sent to Community Church of Christ—Reference Point Project, 8494 Bush Hill Court, Grand Blanc, Michigan 48439. □

Church Buildings and the Church

EARL A. MARTIN

West End, New Jersey

Some years ago my home church decided that it had outgrown its old white frame building and embarked on an ambitious building program. This was what the church needed to “grow and prosper,” they all said—a spacious, beautiful new brick building with a landscaped lawn and new parking lot. It was to be the newest and nicest church building in town, and it was hoped that the impression that it would make on people might draw them to the Church of Christ. One day someone brought the church’s charter member and aging elder over to see what marvelous progress the church was making in building this new structure. And I remember very clearly what the wise old man said. So feeble he could hardly stand alone, he looked around and said, “The Lord told us to preach the gospel, not build new buildings.”

Despite our brethren’s usual conservative, biblical carefulness, the use of church buildings has, for the most part, escaped examination. Despite the lofty goal of taking all matters of faith and practice from biblical example or command, there is no scriptural justification for church real estate. How have we come to adopt unquestioningly our present allegiance to costly and elaborate church buildings?

Most commonly, church buildings are thought of as a means toward carrying out the Lord’s work. Certainly we are in a dif-

ferent world from that of the early church. While homes or caves or catacombs were sufficient places for their meetings because of their circumstances, our world has other alternatives and makes other demands. A church building seems a logical solution to present church situations. Where people are spread out over a large geographical area, it provides a central place to meet. Where large numbers of people wish to fellowship together, it provides the space needed. There is nothing wrong with this line of reasoning in itself; it is the application of it that has taken us beyond biblical propriety.

A Question of Priority . . .

It is one thing for a church building to be a means for carrying out the Lord’s work; it is quite another to be an end in itself—a substitute for the Lord’s work. A preacher once explained to me that he had come to his particular congregation “for one reason: to build a new building.” New mission outreaches begun in our brotherhood seem to consider a building the first priority—and then the search is on for people to pay for it! Real estate costs are the biggest hunk of practically every church budget in the country with only indirect relation, at best, to the church’s primary function. Buildings have not, for the most part, served as a convenient means of carrying out the Lord’s work, but rather have formed a mammoth

hindrance to it. Churches are notorious for turning down every kind of benevolent and charitable work because they are paying for their buildings. Yet serving the physical and spiritual needs of people is the mission of the church. “Go forth to every part of the world, and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation” (Mk. 16:15). And in his description of the judgment, Christ accepted and gave his blessing to those who had fed the hungry and thirsty, given hospitality to the stranger, clothed the naked, helped the sick, and visited those in prison (Mt. 28:35-37). This is the work of the church—not maintaining expensive buildings with exposed beams, padded pews, and wall-to-wall carpets.

Church buildings have in many ways become our idols. There was a time when the Church of Christ was the Campbellite church on the other side of the tracks. Definitely lower class. But now we’ve outgrown that. We want to impress people with our middle class bigness—big buildings, big budgets, big attendance. When we find ourselves on the wrong side of the tracks, we move out and build a new building in respectable suburbia. We don’t want poor people and the down-and-out dirtying up our pretty buildings. Haven’t our buildings taken us away from the very people Jesus came to save?

Our attitude toward church buildings has a great deal to say about our concept of the church. They have become a place to put Christianity. One does his Christianity at the church building, like he does his laundry at the laundromat.

In the beginning, the way of the Lord did not suggest place, time, or name. Not 10:30 Sunday morning at the Pleasantville Church of Christ or workday on Saturday morning. Christianity for the early disciples was not a

place to go, obligations to meet, occasions for wearing their best clothes, things to do and not to do. These were not people who believed in Christianity; they were Christians. Alone, together, at home, or in the street, they were the church.

How We View the Church . . .

While most of us have heard and have said to others that the church is the people, not the building, and that our church buildings are not sacred, our cathedrals tell a different story. Examples: (1) Whether or not a kitchen can be in a church building is still a live issue in some places. (2) While members of some churches participate in auxiliary organizations for Christian colleges, etc., they dare not hold any fund-raising functions in the church building. (3) People who don’t “dress up” are not welcome in many church buildings. (4) All “official” functions of the church are expected to be clustered around the church building and anything that does not is immediately suspect.

The early Christians met in their homes. When there must have been hundreds—even thousands—of Christians in a single city, why did they meet in small groups in each other’s homes? This was a wonderful way of saying that Christianity was a way of life—not a segment of life. Indeed, their joy of Christian living began at home and spread out from there. Often our Christianity is confined to the church building and may not significantly affect our attitudes and conduct at home. It’s a frightening thing to meet people face to face informally in your home for sharing and worship if you are used to hiding behind a Sunday morning smile. But when the nucleus of Christian living belongs to the home, this has a way of bringing your Christianity down to the way you treat your

children, the TV programs you watch, the way you react to a nasty neighbor or the way you drive your car.

Church buildings have put walls around our ministry and worship. We start thinking of our lives in two parts—the religious and the secular. And while we are free to be ourselves in the secular part of our lives, the religious part—performed mostly at the church building—requires us to put on our best clothes and be formal, as though we have to put on a good show for God. We follow a preset order of events, look at each other's backs, and spend most of our time listening (or sleeping) through a long speech that may or may not be relevant to our experience with God.

If we could sit next to each other and talk about our problems and confess our faults and share our faith and give Him our spontaneous, unpolished praises and prayers, this would be worship! Straight from the heart. Meeting in homes—as the early Christians did—makes this possible. With the strength of biblical example behind it, meeting in homes should be an open alternative to any church that wishes to do so. Without the burden of a building, collective and individual contributions could more freely respond to the cries of human need.

Practical Church Buildings . . .

If we must have church buildings, why not make them informal, functional, and economical? Couldn't a rather simple box structure serve our purposes? A prefabricated building could be used, and even these buildings can be made to look fairly attractive. One large room could serve as auditorium, fellowship hall, and basketball court, if it were furnished with folding chairs and tables. Folding chairs would also allow the

flexibility of different seating arrangements. People could face each other. Or different classes could be conducted in different corners of the room. In the event of an emergency or a need for temporary housing for a homeless family, cots could be moved into the all-purpose room. Rooms on either side of this large room could provide space for a baptistry, a few classrooms, a nursery if necessary, a kitchen, bathrooms, and a storage room for clothes and food. Such a building as this could serve all the functions of the church and would give the church more flexibility and more opportunity for service to the community for recreation, day care, benevolence, and emergency situations. Yet it would be less of a strain on a church's budget and would allow the church to participate in various other ministries.

If how we spend our money tells us what our priorities are, then our churches have become terribly materialistic. Church leaders encourage members to sacrifice and be more generous in their giving to the church, and yet the churches are themselves committing the sins the members are accused of by sinking all their financial resources in self-serving, materialistic objectives. Our churches have not been very good stewards of the money supposedly given to carry out the Lord's work when, in fact, the cost of maintaining our buildings does not permit us to financially participate in what the Lord's work might be. I believe that the Lord would have us put much less emphasis and expense into our buildings and give more devotion to the mission he has called us to.

The church is the "called out." Perhaps we should be called out of our expensive buildings and into the places where we can more effectively minister the Good News of Jesus Christ. □

REVIEW

BY JIM REYNOLDS

FOR THE NORMAL AND ABNORMAL

Joy! A Homosexual's Search for Fulfillment by Pat Boone. Correspondence with Barbara Evans. Carol Stream, Illinois: Creation House, 1973. 144 pages. \$3.95 hardback.

The book is a collection of the written correspondence between Pat Boone and Barbara Evans (fictitious name) spanning a period of approximately ten months. Barbara, a 27-year-old graduate student and lesbian, after reading his book *A New Song*, wrote Pat a letter requesting help. The book records these facts and factors of her life as a lesbian. From the time she entered adolescence her father warned her to beware of the male animal. He criticized the boys in whom she showed interest as a young teenager. Her mother was kind and loving, but because of her younger brother's continuing illness, she was forced to devote much of her time to him. As a result she had no one to whom she could turn in her adolescent years—except her lesbian music teacher. During her junior year an older man whom she had been dating regularly showed up in church with his wife. She was completely broken and fell back upon her teacher friend. The summer after her graduation she was introduced to the gay life. During Christmas vacation in her freshman year in college, she attended a gay party and was "married" to her lover.

This writer does not agree with some elements of Pat Boone's theology, but that does not hinder him from applauding the

recorded sequence of Barbara's turn to God: (1) A conviction that homosexuality is not God's way. (2) A conversion to a dynamic, living God as opposed to her previous conversion to the god of the status quo. (3) The confession of Jesus as Lord and the power of God's Spirit in her daily walk with God. (4) A drastic change in life-style—she leaves her companion, renouncing all lesbian sexual experiences. (5) Deliverance from the idolatry of love. Whereas lesbian love was her god she now confesses Jesus as Lord of her love. (6) She personally knows faith, hope and love in the midst of a tremendous struggle with the forces of her past. (7) The reality of reconciling love—she *feels* love for God, for herself and her once hated father, and for men in general.

Near the end of the book Barbara writes, "In church I watch our minister's wife with their new baby. Just recently I have begun to think I would like to have a child of my own. I never felt that way before." The book does not conclude with a magical deliverance, but with hope for one who has experienced a real and apparently victorious struggle.

The book reflects the Spirit of the Great Physician who met spiritual diseases with compassion, not condemnation. It reveals the relevance of the living God to the promiscuity, the idolatry, the despair and the loneliness of the lesbian. It dispels the notion that all lesbians or homosexuals are hopelessly entangled in a sexual labyrinth.

It indicates that Christians who take the time to be reasonably well informed can be of tremendous help to their homosexual brothers and sisters.

One can easily discern this reviewer's joy about *Joy*. Why not? This writer is aware of only one other book, John Drakeford's excellent *Forbidden Love*, that has the same powerful message—God can change homosexuals!

The book is certainly not above criticism. Pat says "the homosexual act is considered more than sin in the sight of God. It is a fatal disease" (p. 136). Paul considered it a *symptom* of sin, man's fatal disease (Romans 1:24-27). He quotes Kinsey as having said that 37 percent of U.S. men are inclined toward homosexuality (p. 134). Kinsey actually said that 37 percent had known at one time or another homo-erotic sexual experiences. The book almost equates liberation from sin and death with absolute liberation from lesbianism. This perfectionistic strain tends to demand more of the homosexual than of any other saved sinner.

There are unanswered questions: Will Barbara be able to physically and emotionally love a husband? What about the more thoroughly conditioned homosexual? (Barbara functioned heterosexually until her junior year in high school.) What are the dynamics of sin and sickness in the homosexual? Are they distinguishable?

The struggle with homosexuality on the pages of *Integrity* reflects our concern as well as our ignorance and fear. This writer doesn't consider homosexuality normal. But neither does he consider double standards, the willful ignorance and the witch hunting mentality of the Church to be "normal." After all, if we dealt with homosexuals the way we deal with gossipers we would be an instant "gay liberation" front!

Pat Boone's book needs to be read by the normal as well as by the abnormal. Normal self-righteousness is a far greater problem than abnormal homosexuality. It is in a common community that all of us will find our answers. Though I don't agree with all that is in "A Homosexual's Viewpoint" (*Integrity*, January, 1974), his last paragraph convicts me and calls me to be an authentic disciple of Jesus the Messiah and outcast.

The healing power of his Spirit is evidenced to me by the fact that I would like to sign this article openly and honestly. It's not because of me that I can't but because of you. You would hurt my family, my church, the person I love. Perhaps if you could create an atmosphere and an environment in which I could sign this without fear of your hurts, I could live there freely, you could live there freely, and *we could be healed together*. □

THOUGHTS ON THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS

To serve our Master well is, some would say,
Synonymous with singleness of creed,
A neat, dogmatic binding of the way
By which they formulate their heart's belief.
The momentary light that Reason brings
Lays bare the fragile framework of that faith;
Yet to their mind-worn litanies they cling,
Exhaling orthodoxy with each breath.
Our service needs the inward turning eye,
The clean excision of those boils of hate
Whose festering has led us to deny
That Grace extends to all God did create.
We cannot put in chains what Heaven freed,
Nor make a sin of Love that Christ decreed.

—Kenneth A. Frazier

Musings on Community

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That ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

—Philippians 2:2

As we may physically reach out to touch hands, to be of one mind, we must be able to reach out and touch spirit with spirit.

Spirits, in order to commune, must not of necessity be upon the same plane of understanding, but upon the same foundation, and this foundation is Christ. We have faith in and love for our Lord and Savior.

If I try to press upon you the acceptance of my experience or you press upon me the conviction that such an experience cannot occur, are we not each acting as clogged conduits through whom the love and Spirit of Christ cannot flow?

In "standing firmly for God," could it be that we are only demonstrating a strong self will? "The sacrifices of God are a *broken spirit*; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

Our outward man must be broken, so that the Christ in each of us may be felt by every other one! You may smile, shake my hand, even pat me on the back; but unless your spirit touches mine, there is no confidence that I can call upon you in my time of need, or you upon me.

"I am right and you are wrong; I have the truth and you do not"—is the most soul-devastating climate one may produce.

In promoting the nurturing and maturing of souls it is not so much a matter of being either liberal or legal; it is the possession of the spirit of Christ, who condemned no man except the arrogant self-righteous. The broken sinner he forgave.

When the outer man with its arrogance and dogmatism is broken, we can then commune spirit with spirit and truly be strengthened in the inner man. Our hearts will glow with a warmth and fellowship conducive to maturing in Christ. People who worship with us will feel and say that God is with us. "And so falling down on his face he will worship God and report that God is in you of a truth" (1 Cor. 14:25).

O Lord, break me that I may know my understanding of your will is not infallible. Ever teach me anew and establish within me a spirit of meekness.