

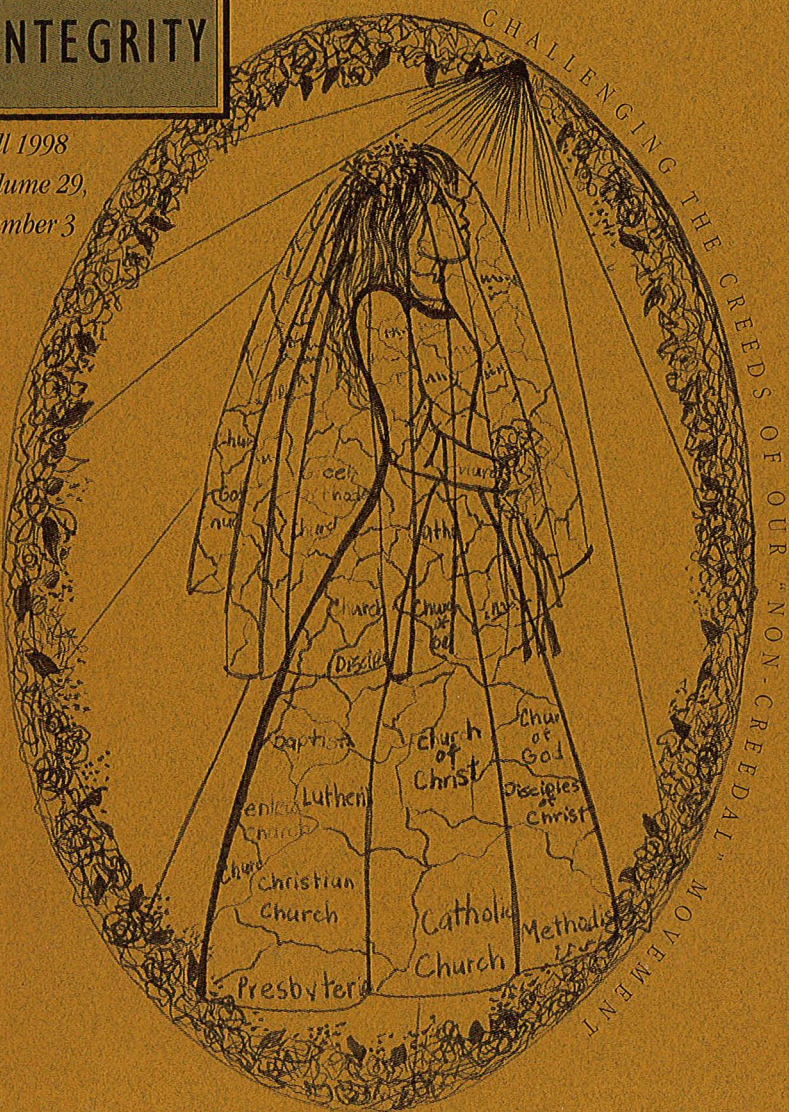


No creeds but Christ:

Fall 1998

Volume 29,

Number 3



May the God
who gives endurance and
encouragement

give you
a spirit of unity among yourselves
as you follow Christ Jesus,
so that with one heart and mouth
you may glorify the God and Father
of our Lord Jesus Christ.

—Romans 15:5-6



5393 Crooks Road
Suite 44
Troy, MI 48098
ADDRESS
CORRECTION
REQUESTED

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



Fall 1998
Vol. 29, Number 3

Editor-in-Chief
Curtis McClane

Managing Editor
Noreen Bryant

Board of Directors
Kathleen Blakely
Bruce Bryant
Noreen Bryant
Elton D. Higgs
Laquita Higgs
Kay Kendall

Diane G. H. Kilmer
J. Bruce Kilmer
Curtis Lloyd
Carole Lloyd
Curtis McClane
Nancy McClane
Henrietta C. Palmer
William Palmer
Keith Price
Debi Shepherd
Kelly Sprague
Steven Sprague
Jan Van Horn
John Van Horn

Board Member Emeritus
Amos Ponder

Editorial Advisors
Hoy Ledbetter
Joseph F. Jones
Diane G. H. Kilmer
J. Bruce Kilmer

Integrity is a quarterly journal dedicated to stimulating personal and public thought, prayer, and discussion about living the Christian life. Its roots are in Restoration Movement Christianity, encompassing Churches of Christ, Churches of Christ/Christian Churches, and the Disciples of Christ, but Integrity strives for unity among all Christians. Published by a non-profit corporation, Integrity is intended to be a ministry of reconciliation which utilizes the varied talents of a large community of believers. These believers, united in faith but divergent in opinions, seek to accurately reveal God to both the church and the world so that all may become one as He is one. Accordingly, it should not be assumed that the views expressed by individual authors necessarily represent the opinions of either the editors or of the Board as a whole.

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

Editorial Address
Curtis McClane
800 Trombley
Troy, MI 48083
diakonos@gateway.net

We welcome your letters, comments, and suggestions. We also welcome submissions of articles, narratives, poetry, artwork, meditations, and the like. For submissions, please send a hard copy, along with a diskette in text-only format, to Curtis McClane. You can also append your article text to an e-mail message to diakonos@gateway.net. The editors reserve the right to edit materials for length, grammar, and clarity.

Web Site
<http://www.mich.com/~integrit>
(that's right—integrity without the "y.")

E-mail Subscriptions
Bruce Bryant
integrit@mich.com

Please include your full name, postal address, and e-mail address. You will receive the entire issue via e-mail in plain text format.

Subscriptions, Address Corrections
Steve Sprague
5393 Crooks, Ste. 44
Troy, MI 48098

Subscriptions are by written request. There is no subscription charge, but we depend on your contributions, which are tax-deductible. You can reach Steve in the conventional manner, or e-mail him at sksprague@juno.com.

Donations
Jan Van Horn
4860 Livernois
Troy, MI 48098

Did we mention that your contribution is tax-deductible? When you donate to *Integrity*, you enable us to send this journal to students and those on fixed incomes.

Back Issues
William Palmer
1607 Rockford
Troy, MI 48098

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

Contents

Fall 1998 • Volume 29, Number Three

Editorial: An incredulous creed	4
<i>Curtis McClane</i>	
I believe: Creeds in the Stone-Campbell movement	7
<i>Doug Foster</i>	
The only real path to unity	12
<i>Aline Edson</i>	
Exciting implications: Challenging our creed of the Lord's Supper	13
<i>Reed Christian Benedict</i>	
My struggle with the "one true church"	16
<i>Sandy Leftwich</i>	
Surprised by the Apostles' Creed	17
<i>Curtis McClane</i>	
The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery	20
What does <i>your</i> Mom do?	23
<i>Noreen Bryant</i>	
Hot Topic responses	26
Telling the truth: Evangelizing postmoderns	28
<i>Terry Ferguson</i>	
Bending the twig	39
<i>Laquita and Elton Higgs</i>	
Readers' response	43
Unity sightings: the World Convention of Churches of Christ	45
Kindred Spirits	46



An incredulous creed

I believe in . . . what? I used to believe in a horde of religious issues that do not save. Neither do they promote unity. And they certainly do not glorify God. It has been painfully embarrassing for me to discover that my credo was anything but Christ.

I used to believe in baptism. My faith was in the correct mode for the correct reason with the correct candidate. My belief in this watery metaphor was my idol.

I used to believe in the "church of Christ." My faith was in the correct name on the front of the church building. My belief in this sectarian appellation was my idol.

I used to believe in the King James version of the Bible. My faith was in the correct translation of the Bible that was "authorized" by God. My belief in this authoritarian text was my idol.

I used to believe in the five steps of salvation. My faith was in this indisputable formula that even the wayfarer and simple could understand. My belief in this salvific stepladder was my idol.

I used to believe in the five "facts of worship." My faith was in the weekly performance of this quintuplet ritual every Sunday. My belief in this liturgical transaction was my idol.

I used to believe in my religious

superiority and exclusivism. My faith was in being one of the only few going to heaven. My belief in this meritorious standing was my idol.

Idols have a way of dying hard. They provide security. They are intensely personal, private, and powerful. They shape one's view of reality and function as a religious rabbit's foot.

When bowing down to an idol we prostitute our relationship with God. Baptism was my adulteress. The church of Christ seduced me. The King James translation was my temptress. "Formula-salvation" fluttered her eyelids at me. The acts of worship made me swoon. And my meritorious sectarian standing led me astray.

But one by one God wielded the sovereign sledgehammer of truth and smashed to pieces every one of my idols! I tried picking the pieces up to see if I could fit them all back together again. The dust and debris of self-reliance lay scattered about my feet. I groped for something to hold on to. My world was falling apart because the old and familiar was shown to be insufficient. Something had to change.

Now, instead of these issues being objects of passionate self-delusional desire, I realize that the substance of each one flows from the center of God's being. The power of baptism is

not based on how strongly I can argue for it. Baptism flows from the heart of God, through the blood of the cross, and immerses me in the Holy Spirit of God.

The nature of the church comes from being called by God—it is brought into reality by divine initiative—and I do not know who is in or out of the kingdom. God alone reserves the right for that kind of judgment.

Which version of the Bible I read is really immaterial. Whether or not I listen to God's voice and follow it is the real issue. All translations are human products, and as such have unique weaknesses. But God in a mysterious, extraordinary way has chosen to speak to humanity through that channel. If I read, meditate, and listen, God's voice will be discernible—no matter which one I pick up.

Salvation is a process and not a formula. Each day I am being transformed more and more into the image of Christ. Like the grain of wheat that must die first before life springs forth, my soul has to go through that process constantly. Since salvation is a process, I humbly recognize that every person is usually at a different place in that process and I must respect where that is.

Worship is a presence and not a transaction. The form is secondary to the meaning. The most important part about the corporate assembly is that we are calling God to be in our presence so we can experience His presence. Transactional language is replaced with adoration and praise. Time and space are transcended with constant relationship.

Religious exclusivism has been replaced with inclusive love. This is the kind of love we see Jesus displaying toward the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, and the tax collector up in a sycamore tree. The "church of Christ" has been replaced with the kingdom of Christ. The name over the door has been replaced with God reigning within.

My polytheistic world of religious idols has been so hard to relinquish through the years. It provided a false sense of security that kept me fearful. I was afraid that I could never do enough, even though I knew I was doing everything right. The irony was that everything was not right enough, and not often enough! It produced a neurotic, toxic faith that threatened to poison my soul.

So now, I only believe in Jesus Christ. What about you?

As you take up this issue and read it, allow yourself to ask this question: is there something I am believing in that is replacing Jesus? Has it kept me separated from other believers? Has Satan used this idol to keep me from pursuing unity and love?

I am encouraged that God has granted our contributing writers this issue the courage necessary to boldly confront the nemesis of our movement—the statement that goes something like this: *others are responsible for the religious division in our world because they have creeds. We are God's true church because we do not. Anyone who was really honest and sincere would throw away their creed books and come over to our position.*

Our arrogant anti-creedalism has almost done us in. By God's grace there will arise a generation which does not know the rigid sectarianism many of us have had to reject before we could even come to Jesus. I think it is more difficult to come out of a narrow mindset and try to read Scripture and discover Jesus than it is for individuals who have had no church background. Some of our churches are selling their buildings, signing property deeds over to businesses, and burying the last leaders of a bygone era.

I dream of the day when this journal will no longer need to address the problem of sectarianism. This

particular issue is being offered with the sad realization that there are still many good church-going Christians who think they are the only ones right, and the only ones going to heaven. It is ironic that a unity movement claiming to set aside divisive creeds created some unwritten, divisive creeds of her own. Please read carefully, prayerfully, tearfully, and hopefully what God is trying to tell us at this time in the kingdom.



Curtis McClane
Editor-in-Chief



A note on the cover

This month's cover, in keeping with our newly-acquired ability to provide our readers with visual art in these pages, is designed to provoke your thoughts about the issue at hand. We present you with a pen-and-ink drawing by *Integrity* Board Member Nancy McClane.

Says Nancy, "The picture on the cover shows the church as the bride of Christ in all her splendor. She is washed in the precious blood of her Lord. She is pure, and her whole being is focused on him. However,"

continues Nancy, "her gown is not the lovely, smooth unified cloth of a traditional wedding gown. It has been pieced together with the many odd, unique shapes of the creeds of men.

"Will this bring shock or anger to her Lord on the wedding day? Will he be humiliated when she comes to him? Will he reject her or will his love for her accept the imperfections? This is something to think about."

Thank you, Nancy, for giving us a new way to look at unity.



"I believe: Creeds in the Stone-Campbell Movement

Doug Foster

Creeds. Definitely bad. They separate believers, stifle growth, and claim final word in defining Christianity. If they contain less than the New Testament, they don't have enough; if they have more than the New Testament, they have too much; and if they contain all the New Testament contains, they are not needed. We have no creed but Christ, no book but the Bible. Sound familiar? These and similar statements reflect the predominant rhetoric of the Stone-Campbell Movement since its beginning.

The attitude has never been unique to us, however. Freedom from coercive structures and the right of every individual to arrive at his or her own conclusions was a cause on which Americans embarked enthusiastically after the Revolution. The assumptions embodied in this quest pervaded all aspects of American life and thought. The anti-creedalism that resulted played a powerful role in shaping American Christianity in the early 1800s.

After surveying the doctrinal beliefs of fifty-three American religious bodies in the 1840s, German Reformed scholar John Nevin remarked that the claim of adhering to "no creed but the Bible" was the single most common characteristic of the

group.¹ Ironically, the anti-creed statements made by many early American religious leaders were, of course, themselves statements of belief.

The Latin term *credo*, from which "creed" is derived, simply means, "I believe." Every Christian is charged with being able to articulate the faith they hold, to give an answer to everyone who asks (1 Peter 3:15). Articulating one's religious beliefs is both natural and essential. Clearly the earliest church had such statements of its foundational beliefs (reflected in passages like 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; Philippians 2; 1 Corinthians 8:6; and 1 Timothy 3:16). These scriptures appear to have functioned as concise statements of Christian belief that arose out of specific circumstances.²

- Why can creeds be harmful?

Historically, problems arise when a specific creed, for whatever reason, is made the standard for certifying who is a true Christian. All creeds, whether created by individuals or groups, are tied to a certain time period, set of circumstances, and culture. That does not make all creeds inherently evil. It would be ridiculous to suppose that anyone's beliefs could or ought to be detached from who they are and the circumstances that have shaped and

continue to shape them. It is, in fact, a wonderful thing that people in every era and set of circumstances have been serious enough to articulate what they saw as essential matters of faith for themselves and others. They at least were willing to grapple with the issues and state plainly where they stood.

Once again, however, when attempts are made to impose such creeds on all other believers, problems arise, because: 1) individual Christians who are supposed to be judged by the statement are at different stages in their theological development, and 2) every creedal statement will need revision as the circumstances and understandings that brought it into existence change.

Thomas Campbell in the "Declaration and Address" was well aware of these difficulties while at the same time recognizing the legitimacy of articulating one's faith. In "Proposition Seven" of his *Declaration and Address* he readily admits that "doctrinal exhibitions of the great system of Divine truths, and defensive testimonies in opposition to prevailing errors" were needed, the more detailed and explicit the better. They ought not, however, be made terms of Christian communion, because they will necessarily contain matters arrived at through inference. Inferences, which are inherently based on human reason, cannot be made the foundation of one's faith, he insisted.³

Some conclusions in the creeds, while they may be considered true doctrine, are conclusions at which not all who are truly Christians will

have arrived. Later in the same document Campbell asserted that those who were accusing the reformation—of which he was a part—of being opposed to creeds and confessions were mistaken. It was only the abuse of such statements that he opposed: where they served to divide the church over tenets not expressly taught in Scripture and where they "oppress the weak of God's heritage."⁴ Yet even while insisting that the church's only book is the Bible and that all other "standards" must be judged by it, Campbell specifically extolled the *Westminster Confession and Catechisms* as "eminently useful" in coming "to a distinct and particular knowledge of every truth they [the Scriptures] contain . . ."⁵

As stated, creeds and confessions always arise out of particular circumstances that lead believers to articulate their faith carefully and positively. Most often the impetus is in reaction to those they believe to be teaching false doctrine. When individuals or groups come to clarify their faith in this manner, there is a strong temptation to move into an attitude of superiority, as if we now have put all questions to rest; the conclusions reached must be seen as the final word on these matters.

- Do we have creeds, or don't we?

The problem with which we in the Stone-Campbell Movement have had to deal is that our creeds and confessions, while no less powerful, have been less formal and often unwritten, at least in forms that would be readily

acknowledged as creedal. Barton Stone was criticized heavily by Cumberland Presbyterian colleagues for his anti-creed rhetoric when it was apparent that his movement did have distinctive doctrines and practices that were clearly articulated and known among members of the movement. They lashed out at the assertion of the Stone people that they had no creed but the Bible. "What would be thought," one apologist asked, "of a political organization that would say 'The Constitution is our Creed'?"

Would not all other political parties say the same? Most assuredly they would. The party, therefore, that claims the Constitution as its platform, must tell the world what it understands the Constitution to teach. Then, when a church says that the Bible is its creed, have we not a right to ask that church what it understands the Bible to teach on the great and fundamental doctrines of our religion? Away, then, with such a subterfuge on the subject of creeds!⁶

The point was that the articulation of beliefs is inevitable. Yet the strongly anti-creed position taken by Stone and his followers put them in an awkward situation as they tried to live out their position. While the chief focus of the early leaders of the Stone-Campbell Movement was on the dangers of creeds, there is also a grave danger in decrying attempts to articulate the faith.

- Dangers of being anti-creed

Anti-creed language may mask an unwillingness to do the serious and sometimes difficult work of study and articulation of Christian belief based on responsible exegesis and positive application of Scripture. The other subtle and corrosive danger in anti-creed language is the desire of some to impose their conclusions on others even while—ironically—accusing those they oppose of constructing creeds. Neither of these dangers is confined to a specific place on the "theological spectrum."

Two events from our history illustrate the problems, yet inevitability, of creeds. In 1863, Isaac Errett wrote a tract titled "A Synopsis of the Faith and Practice of the Church of Christ Meeting at the Corner of Jefferson Avenue and Beaubien Street, Detroit" for the congregation where he was minister. It contained ten articles of belief and the bylaws under which the congregation conducted its business, and was intended as a way of introducing people to the congregation. Despite its own disclaimer that it was not to be taken as a creed binding the conscience of anyone, it was attacked harshly by several leaders of the day. Moses Lard called it "a deep offense against the brotherhood: an offense tossed in the teeth of a people who, for forty years, have been working against the divisive and evil tendency of creeds." It was, he insisted, "a creed without appropriate label: a genuine snake in the grass, wearing a honeyed name." He proceeded to analyze and ridicule

each article in the document, concluding with a call for the church to repudiate the Synopsis.⁷

In 1994 a heated debate broke out among non-institutional Churches of Christ over a list of twenty-eight doctrinal questions sent by a Texas church to a number of people with whom they worked. The list, designed to test the recipients' soundness on some specific matters, was requested by other congregations. This prompted accusations of a creed. "Even when true," wrote one opponent, "it [a creed] is more or less than the whole truth, and promotes man-made standards." The bulk of questions had to do with marriage and divorce issues, and all agreed that the topic needed special attention at the time. But to conclude a person or church was "sound in the faith" because they hold or reject certain positions concerning marriage and divorce, or any other narrow set of issues, is, critics charged, to make that set of issues into a sectarian creed. "A church, and a preacher, must be measured by much more than what they believe about some special problem, important though it may be."⁸

- How to use creeds

All of us who are trying to follow Christ, wherever and wherever we are, have much to learn. Much of what we need to learn is from each other. If "creeds" could be used seriously but humbly—that is, if we took the matter of articulating our faith seriously but were willing to acknowledge that all creeds are human productions with the imperfections that entails,

and we were eager to engage in exchanges with other believers, the creedal impulse might just be harnessed for the ultimate good of Christ's followers today. Perhaps the greatest barrier to our moving into such activities is the fear that we will be forced to relinquish truths that we believe are essential: truths that not all believers or Christian bodies hold. We fear being forced onto the "slippery slope of compromise from which there is no return." The scriptures clearly teach it is possible to move away from truth, to apostatize. But is it not also possible to move closer to the truth? Is it not possible to grow and mature—individually and collectively—to a level of understanding and obedience that ever more closely approximates the love and obedience of Christ? If it is not, then the gospel is negated and the admonitions of scripture to grow up in Christ mean nothing. Quoting from *Coming together in Christ* by Barry Callen and James North:

The imagery of "slippery slope" suggests that one person is at the peak of the mount while others are not. It may be that neither group is at the peak; both groups are somewhat down from the peak and in danger if sliding down their respective sides. They need to hang on to each other and thus save themselves from sliding down the slopes as well as save their brothers and sisters on the other side from their

downward slide. In this image Christians need each other to balance their views and achieve a greater wholeness that neither can know otherwise.⁹

When, in grappling to understand and articulate specific doctrines, we break the unity of Christ's church,

we must realize that something is fundamentally wrong. We have missed what Christianity is all about—reconciliation.

When, in grappling to understand and articulate specific doctrines, we come together in love with other believers, assuming both the sincerity and imperfection of all parties, I believe we will have begun to understand what Christianity is all about. †

NOTES

1. Quoted in Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 166.
2. See Abraham J. Malherbe, "Creeds and Their Uses: The New Testament." Paper presented at the fourteenth annual Christian Scholars Conference, July 22, 1994.
3. Thomas Campbell, "Declaration and Address" (St. Louis: Mission Messenger, 1975) 46.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 89. In current usage, "creeds" are understood to be concise statements of essential Christian beliefs, while "confessions" are more detailed and comprehensive expositions of the faith. The Apostles or Nicene Creeds and the Westminster Confession are examples. Both function as authoritative statements, though confessions are most often associated with a particular denomination or historical theological movement.
6. T.C. Blake, *The Old Log House: A History and Defense of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church* (Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House, 1878), 248-9.
7. Moses Lard, "Remarks on the Foregoing," *Lard's Quarterly* 1 (September 1863) 100-107.
8. Robert F. Turner, "A List of Questions Can Be a Human Creed," *Guardian of Truth* 38 (2 June 1994) 16-17; "Does 'The Twenty-Eight' Have the Elements of a Creed?" *Guardian of Truth* 38 (2 June 1994) 20-21.
9. Barry Callen and James North, *Coming Together In Christ: Pioneering a New Testament Way to Christian Unity* (Joplin: College Press Publishing Company, 1997) 68.

Douglas A. Foster is an Associate Professor of Church History and the Director of the Center for Restoration Studies at Abilene Christian University. He and his wife, Linda, and their children, Mary Elizabeth and Mark, are members of the Minter Lane Church of Christ in Abilene.



The only real path to unity

Aline Edson

The ideal answer to the Lord's prayer for unity of believers would be to drop every human division, sectarian creed, name, dogma, etc., and to assemble worldwide as the church, the body of Christ, acknowledging Him as our Lord, commissioned and determined to do His will and His work in the world until His return. And our prayer, along with His, as well as our teaching, ought always to be that this blessed unity will one day come about.

But while we wait and live in a divided world, it is comforting to consider that there is a spiritual dimension to unity that supersedes and makes less important the physical and obvious separation that exists in the here and now. And there may be a great deal more spiritual unity present than meets the eye. Our Lord knows the true membership of His church. He knows His sheep by name, and they hear and recognize His voice over the tumult, and they follow Him. Wherever we are, God reads our hearts and recognizes us as His children—or disavows us. This heart-reading ability belongs only to the Lord Himself.

Since it is humanly impossible to effect the physical unity of believers, it

behooves us to make sure we are spiritually united with Christ and the sheep of His fold.

The truths illustrated in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:24-30) seem applicable here. When the servants suggested to the householder that the tares sowed in the wheat fields by an enemy ought to be removed, his answer was to let them grow together until harvest time—that they would then be separated and dealt with appropriately.

We would do well to continue to pray earnestly for the unity of believers, but not to waste our substance decrying the divisions among us or trying to force change. That is in the Spirit's realm. Nor must we allow ourselves to become bitter toward each other over it. That is also a serious violation of the Spirit of Christ. The Lord knows where His sheep are, and we recognize His voice. Our steady prayer for the ability to discern between good and evil and to try the spirits to see if they be of God and not to listen to the voice of a stranger will protect us in a higher unity than physical. The wheat and the tares will grow together. The harvesting belongs to the Lord, and we rest in His hands until that time. †

Aline Edson, of Cedar Park, Texas, is a longtime contributor to Integrity. Says she, "Although nearing the age at which Moses encountered the burning bush, I am still putting pen to paper now and then." And what a blessing this is for us!



Exciting implications: Challenging our creed of the Lord's Supper

Reed Christian Benedict

The event of Eucharist has always fascinated me. On any given Sunday in any Church of Christ congregation the people of God surround a simple table with one task. The task of "Do this in remembrance of me." It is fascinating to watch and hear the one providing the communion thoughts reflect on the life of Christ and the communal event. This is fascinating not only because of what is remembered and spoken of, but also to note what is unspoken or implied. I would like to take some time to reflect upon what we as a denomination expressly state and tacitly imply during our homilies concerning the communion. I will be using the terms *Eucharist*, *Communion*, and *Lord's Supper* as synonyms and indicators of my experiences with communion beyond the Churches of Christ. As a minister and "pewside" participant in a variety of Churches of Christ throughout Michigan and Texas, my communion experiences outside of our fellowship helped to raise the fol-

lowing issue.

The title of this article indicates that what takes place verbally within the communion service is creedal. I am using the term "creed" in its most basic and simplistic sense. A creed is designed to demarcate characteristics indicative of the Christian faith. They are purposeful statements, which are meant to include and exclude with thoughtful precision definitive aspects of Christianity. In my experience I am convinced that much of what I have heard is creedal, that is, that in the churches of Christ, the communion homily follows a pattern that consistently describes what is important to us as a people. I would like to take a short time to identify the "creed" and reflect upon what is and is not said.

In examining what is said during communion it is important to note the location at which the Lord's Supper takes place in the order of the worship service. Many of us can recite the order of worship by heart, with the understanding that there are occasional variations from time to time. Service usually begins with an opening statement and hymns. It then proceeds to opening prayer, followed by more singing. There may be another prayer called the intercessory prayer or a scripture reading. What

**... in the Churches of Christ,
the communion homily follows a
pattern that consistently describes
what is important to us as a people.**

follows is another hymn as a predecessor to "prepare our minds for communion." We then enter into the Lord's Supper and hear a short homily followed by prayer for the bread, cup, and the offering. We may then sing another hymn or two and then hear the sermon. Following the sermon we stand to a song of invitation. Worship then concludes with some form of benediction and announcements.

- What is the focal point of our worship service?

I recite this order of worship not to state what is already obvious, but to note the focus of our worship services. The central focal point of our worship is the sermon. That is where we expect the word of God, the deep stuff, the substance. We recognize significance in other parts of the worship service, profound events in fact, but if we were to be honest, most of us wait for the sermon. The Lord's Supper all too often seems like something we pass through in the order of worship to get to the sermon. From the standpoint of the "big picture," communion's place within the order of worship appears to be essential but peripheral. I think this "essential but peripheral" paradox of communion's location within worship has a shaping and defining effect on how we as a people think and speak about the Eucharist.

- Elements of the Lord's Supper

When an Eucharistic homily is offered, we usually expect to hear certain elements. This expectation for me is based on experience. Many

speak of the night before, the Passover dinner, the breaking of the bread and the cup. The most common element we hear during communion is a description or reflection on the crucifixion. Many homilies include graphic visual details regarding the sacrifice of Christ. The death of Christ and the effects of that death upon the people who were witnesses are often discussed. Others talk about the emotions of Christ or the reaction of God. Frequently the words of Christ according to a certain gospel writer are cited. As a result, our sinfulness and forgiveness of our sins is a theme. We also speak from I Corinthians 11 often. According to some interpretations of the passage, we are encouraged to be introspective in light of the cross. We expect to hear how one should examine one's self and discern the body of believers. From this passage we hear how the judgement of God can be brought upon oneself during communion. Usually the one speaking from Corinthians encourages us toward a pure heart that examines itself in light of God.

All of these communion scenarios are fairly common among Churches of Christ. These homilies are beneficial and sincere expressions of a disciple's heart, seeking the holiness of God. One extraordinary element of our worship for which I am thankful is our emphasis upon the cross. Discussing sin, forgiveness, the anguish of the cross, self examination, one's place within the community of faith, and the witness of Jesus are strong Christological elements of our wor-

ship. I am thankful that our Eucharist is rooted in the scriptures when the gospel writers or the epistle to the Corinthians is cited.

If I may, I would offer that this, then, is our basic creed based on the previous discussion:

- We believe in God the father.
- We believe in God's only son, Jesus, who was both God and man.
- We remember the upper room and follow the command of our Lord to share the bread and the cup.
- We believe Jesus died on the Cross for the forgiveness of our sins and the salvation of humankind.
- We are saddened by this painful death of Jesus and bring ourselves to self-examination.
- We believe that by remembering the cross, self-examination will result and allow us to repent of our sins.
- We believe that this self-examination in light of Jesus' painful death will allow us to seek a purer heart.

I want to affirm that our creed, at least the one that is spoken, is biblical and builds faith in our churches. At the same time, what is not spoken of is also our creed. I believe that we exclude a critical aspect of communion theology in our worship services. When something is left out, there is a reason. I am not going to presume to know the reason why we tend to leave essential elements out of our Eucharistic homilies, but I would like to ex-

amine what is missing and its possible implications.

- What's missing?

The most critical element that I find missing from our communion homilies is the event of the resurrection. Some would say the resurrection is implied when we speak of the cross. However, when what is implied is not expressly spoken of, what is implied becomes forgotten. All too often, the resurrection is left at Easter. I believe that our communion theology has become compartmentalized. We tend to speak of the cross and the resurrection as separate independent events, rather than events which are mysteriously and inextricably bound to one another.

It has not been often in my experience during communion in the churches of Christ when I have heard a homily on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In fact, I believe that sometimes we tend to leave our God dying on the cross on Friday, observing the death and despair, without ever looking forward to Sunday. In some senses we are a Friday people, and Sunday becomes the silent aftereffect of the most definitive event in history. In essence, each and every Sunday we leave our God to bleed a painful death. If we leave God as a sacrifice, a martyr who dies on a cross one dark Friday, then his death is no more unique than that of any other martyr in history. The uniqueness of the cross is not only the event of Friday, but also the resurrection to life on Sunday. Forgiveness on the cross without the resurrection is despair; it denies us hope. If we only speak of

Friday, then we stop short of what God himself would not stop short of: a resurrected Son in whom death three days later ultimately had no sting.

We are a community of both the Cross and the Resurrection; the two are inextricably bound. All of us have sinned, but in the end we are a people in whom sin and death will not be victorious. The hope provided by the resurrection of Jesus the Christ is often ignored simply because we fail to speak of it.

- A plea for balance

My plea is for a more balanced communion service. What would hap-

pen if we stopped implying the resurrection? How would our worship transform if we spoke of the cross and the empty tomb together? How would our lives change? When we begin to speak of life after death during the Eucharist, we will become a people defined by the cross and the empty tomb.

I find this to be a great adventure to embark upon in our communion service. I am not sure where the journey will take us, but I do know the effect will be resurrecting to our souls on earth long before we are raised to eternal life. †

Reed Christian Benedict is a graduate of Abilene Christian University. He currently resides in Lansing, Michigan.



PERSPECTIVES

My struggle with the “one true church”

Sandy Leftwich

I was raised Catholic and attended Catholic school for eleven years. I went to church, studied religion in school and kept the Ten Commandments. But I felt something was missing. I knew Jesus was the Son of God, part of the Trinity and savior of the world. But I didn't feel forgiven or connected in a personal relationship with Him. I felt that because my soul was so black with sin that I could never measure up to the priests' and nuns' level of spirituality. Christianity wasn't real to me. I fell away from even attending church when I went to college.

After about 15 years of searching for the answers to fill my emptiness, I met a minister from the Church of Christ. We started studying the Bible together. I was amazed at the answers that pertained to my everyday life found in the Bible. I started attending church, and because everyone was so friendly, it met many of my relationship needs. I was told the church was non-denominational, and that our only rule for faith and practice is the Bible. Jesus Christ is the head of the church and there is only one true church, the one described in the Bible. The Church of Christ, I was

told, is trying to restore that church. That sounded good to me.

However, in the Church of Christ, I started to hear that other churches were wrong because of their doctrines. I heard a few people say in Bible class things like, “Catholics are idol worshipers because of the statues in their churches,” and, “the pope is the antichrist,” and, “the Catholics live by creeds and not the Bible.” These statements were shocking to me and made me feel uncomfortable; indeed, hearing these things made me feel like defending the other denominations. I also began to ask a lot of questions: what makes us think we in the Church of Christ are any different from any other denomination? Why do we think we're the only true church? Many other churches use the Bible as their basis for living. Are they not a part of God's chosen people? I only asked these questions of people I considered “safe”—those who wouldn't wonder why I would think such things. I felt that it would be ter-

ribly inappropriate to ask this type of question in a Bible class. But I knew so many other believers who weren't members of the Church of Christ, but who were serving Christ with all their hearts. It felt self-righteous and judgmental to cast them aside as not being Christian.

I came to realize that the Church of Christ had as many unwritten rules and regulations as other denominations. These unwritten creeds were distracting me from loving God and loving my neighbors as my self.

My struggle with the one true church isn't with statues or unwritten rules and regulations. My struggle is with Satan, the ultimate legalist, and how he keeps my focus blurred.

It's not about whether the Catholics or the Church of Christ are right that's important. It's whether or not my own relationship with God is right. I need to concentrate on what His word commands of me. Jesus Christ will keep me in *his* church and directs me to it, not people. †

Sandy Leftwich resides in Cadillac, Michigan, with her husband, Gary, and son, Nathanael. Gary has been a minister in the Church of Christ for 11 years and they have been married for 6 years.



A CLOSER LOOK

Surprised by the Apostles' Creed

Curtis D. McClane

In my formative, youthful years I was taught that there was only one thing worse than being a Communist, and that was believing in a creed. Communism and creedalism were considered scourges of Satan. Both were the incarnation of a de-

monic plot to overthrow the country and the church. Though I was never privileged to see Communist nor a creed, I was led to believe that behind every tree, down every dark alley, and inside every other church building, you could find one, if not both!

Imagine my surprise when one day in the library I ran across the Apostles' Creed in the Ante-Nicene Fathers collection. I nervously turned to the page indicated in the contents. With growing surprise and amazement I found myself agreeing with every phrase in that creedal statement. Stunned, I sat there reminiscing over my past, rehearsing in my mind the numerous sermons I had heard blasting and castigating human creeds.

This experience rocked my foundation of believing in what others had told me to believe. If the warnings of unfounded fears could be so wrong on this, what other things had been misrepresented?

Here is what I found:

I believe in God the Father Almighty;
And in Christ Jesus, His only Son, our Lord,
Who was born from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried,
He descended to hell,
on the third day He rose again from the dead,
He ascended to heaven,
He sits at the Father's right hand,
Thence He will come to judge living and dead;
And in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Church,
The remission of sins,
The resurrection of this flesh.

- Origins of the creed

This concise, succinct statement of the Christian faith was not formulated by any one individual. From the scant

information we have it appears to have come down to us from the ecclesiastical formulation of the third and fourth century western Church. Apparently it grew out of the necessity for a baptismal statement which would serve to encapsulate the most important aspects of the new faith about to be embraced.

There has been a resurgence of interest in creeds lately. And both sides of the issue are being strongly represented. A few voices from the Restoration movement today are recognizing that creedal formulations of faith are necessary for imparting and sustaining Christian belief. I accessed the Restoration Serials Index and searched the word "creed." Twenty articles popped up on the screen. Of these twenty, only two appeared to be sympathetic with the existence of and need for creeds.

The one article that represents a seismic shift in Restoration theology is the article by Abraham Malherbe published in *Christian Studies* and originally given as a lecture at the Christian Scholars' Conference in 1994. The author undertakes the task of highlighting creeds in the New Testament and showing their uses. One would never have read an article such as this one fifty or more years ago. Malherbe recognizes that faith has to be verbalized and articulated in a form that captures the essence of what one believes. The New Testament is essentially creedal in form and was written to Christians to tell them what to believe.

I had a delightful experience a few months ago when a dear brother in

Christ asked me to listen to the song "Creed" by Rich Mullins. It is from the CD album entitled *A Liturgy, a Legacy, and a Ragamuffin Band*. The one phrase that captured my attention and spoke to my heart was the following:

And I believe what I believe is what makes me what I am

I did not make it—no, it is making me

It is the very truth of God and not the invention of any man.

After hearing this, I realized that this is exactly what has happened to me in my devotions and meditations. I have come to use and appropriate this creed, and in turn it made me what I am. It is the very truth of God and not a sectarian invention of any one narrow group.

In the monumental work *Creeds of Christendom*, Philip Schaff makes the following observation about the Apostle's Creed: "It is by far the best popular summary of the Christian faith ever made within so brief a space. It still surpasses all later symbols for catechetical and liturgical purposes, especially as a profession of candidates for baptism and church membership. It is not a logical statement of abstract doctrines, but a profession of living facts and saving truths. It is a liturgical poem and an act of worship" (Vol. 1, 6th edition, p. 15).

What I have come to see and experience is that the creed helps formulate, stabilize, and express my faith. It is a holy act of reverence as I profess my faith to the living God. My devotional life, my journaling, my

corporate assembly experience, and my hymnology has all been made richer because of it.

Earlier this year I read the reprint of an article entitled "The Creed of the New Testament Church." The first sentence read, "The church set forth in the New Testament has a creed, but not of human origin." This is the type of language I grew up hearing. This is confusing and certainly does not help the reader understand the role and function of creeds. The church in the New Testament was different in every city. What it believed and practiced varied according to the locale in which the believer assembled. All creeds are of human origin. They are attempts at codifying, understanding and passing on what is important in one's belief system.

As early as 1834, Walter Scott attempted to address the notion that creeds were responsible for the religiously divided landscape of his day. He divided the world into four religions: Pagans, Mahometans, Christians, and Jews. He writes down the Mahometan Credo, the Jewish Credo, the Greek Credo, the Romish Credo, the Protestant Credo, the unbeliever's Credo, and the Christian's Credo.

For Walter Scott the Christian's Credo is: "Behold my beloved Son in whom I delight" (*The Evangelist*, no. 1, vol. 3, 1834, pages 4-13). Historically, his approach at simplicity has been a double-edged sword for us. Its appeal is trying to find the least common denominator among professing believers so that unity can be pursued glorifying God. On the other hand, the self-inflicting wound has

been a rejection of serious attempts to grapple with the meaning of faith, the limits of fellowship and the need for catechetical instruction at baptisms, etc.

The *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, which we are including in the next article, is one of the defining documents of the Restoration Movement. Its “witnesses,” or signers, recognized that even though as a body they had tried to cultivate a spirit of love and unity, they found it “extremely difficult to suppress the idea that they themselves were a party separate from others.”

One hundred ninety-four years later, we can safely say we have come full circle. Even though we have tried to cultivate a spirit of love and unity, we are finding it extremely difficult to suppress the idea that we are a religious party separate from others.

Yes, I was surprised by the Apostles’ Creed. Can we ever leave the creeds behind? I doubt it. Even an anti-creedal movement like ours has crystallized its many unwritten

creeds. What is the answer? Perhaps we can capture the original fervor of the early church by proclaiming that we believe in Jesus Christ as Lord. Other formulations that we attach to it may be as numerous as those who attempt the process. Perhaps it is time for us to call for the death of an “anti-creedal” war cry and realize all of us have creeds.

Do creeds divide believers? Unfortunately, yes. Are they needed? Unfortunately, yes. Perhaps we need to call for the unity and union that our original thinkers called for. Perhaps we need to call for the biblical creed of belief in Jesus as Lord of our lives. Perhaps it is time to allow God’s Holy Spirit to produce the fruit of belief in us, no matter what the historical creeds we may have inherited or subscribed to.

At this point in my spiritual journey I have to admit that participating in other creedal communities has opened my eyes to the richness of practice in the Christian faith. I also am excited to learn that I share a simple, powerful credo with many others:

I believe in Jesus Christ as Lord. †

The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery

For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of the testator; for a testament is of force after men are dead, otherwise it is of no strength at all, while the testator liveth. Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. Verily, verily I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. Whose

voice then shook the earth; but now he hath promised, saying, yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain—Scripture.

THE PRESBYTERY OF SPRINGFIELD, sitting at Cane-ridge, in the county of Bourbon, being, through a

gracious Providence, in more than ordinary bodily health, growing in strength and size daily; and in perfect soundness and composure of mind; but knowing that it is appointed for all delegated bodies once to die: and considering that the life of every such body is very uncertain, do make, and ordain this our last Will and Testament, in manner and form following, viz.:

Imprimis. We will, that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large; for there is but one Body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling.

Item. We will, that our name of distinction, with its Reverend title, be forgotten, that there be but one Lord over God’s heritage, and his name One.

Item. We will, that our power of making laws for the government of the church, and executing them by delegated authority, forever cease; that the people may have free course to the Bible, and adopt the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Item. We will, that candidates for the Gospel ministry henceforth study the Holy Scriptures with fervent prayer, and obtain license from God to preach the simple Gospel, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, without any mixture of philosophy, vain deceit, traditions of men, or the rudiments of the world. And let none henceforth take this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

Item. We will, that the church of Christ resume her native right of internal government—try her candidates for the ministry, as to their soundness in the faith, acquaintance with experimen-

tal religion, gravity and aptness to teach; and admit no other proof of their authority but Christ speaking in them. We will, that the church of Christ look up to the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest; and that she resume her primitive right of trying those who say they are apostles, and are not.

Item. We will, that each particular church, as a body, actuated by the same spirit, choose her own preacher, and support him by a free will offering, without a written call or subscription—admit members—remove offences; and never henceforth delegate her right of government to any man or set of men whatever.

Item. We will, that the people henceforth take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven; and as many as are offended with other books, which stand in competition with it, may cast them into the fire if they choose; for it is better to enter into life having one book, than having many to be cast into hell.

Item. We will, that preachers and people, cultivate a spirit of mutual forbearance; pray more and dispute less; and while they behold the signs of the times, look up, and confidently expect that redemption draweth nigh.

Item. We will, that our weak brethren, who may have been wishing to make the Presbytery of Springfield their king, and wot not what is now become of it, betake themselves to the Rock of Ages, and follow Jesus for the future.

Item. We will, that the Synod of Kentucky examine every member, who may be suspected of having de-

parted from the Confession of Faith, and suspend every such suspected heretic immediately; in order that the oppressed may go free, and taste the sweets of gospel liberty.

Item. We will, that Ja _____, the author of two letters lately published in Lexington, be encouraged in his zeal to destroy partyism. We will, moreover, that our past conduct be examined into by all who may have correct information; but let foreigners beware of speaking evil of things which they know not.

A NOTE ABOUT "THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT"

Baron W. Stone, the co-founder of the Stone-Campbell religious movement in America, was born in 1772 and died in 1844. Stone came out of a religious tradition that saw its greatest event in the Cane Ridge, Kentucky, Revival of 1801. He, along with other ministers, objected to the exclusive doctrine of Calvinism that sought confirmation of salvific election through emotional experiences.

In an act of rejection, he and his colleagues, wrote this "Last Will and Testament" as a declaration of religious freedom and sought a biblical platform for unity. His aversion to experimental religion and divisive, authoritarian creeds is evident throughout this document.

Many of our readers have never had an opportunity to read this work of Stone's. Along with Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address*, it served as a theological document

Item. Finally we will, that all our sister bodies read their Bibles carefully, that they may see their fate there determined, and prepare for death before it is too late.

Springfield Presbytery, June 28th, 1804.

Robert Marshall
John Dunlavy
Richard M'Nemar
B. W. Stone
John Thompson
David Purviance
Witnesses

which launched our movement. After reading it, you can see how the different ideas, presuppositions, and theological perspectives from so long ago still are relevant and alive in many of our congregations today.

What Stone and others did not acknowledge is that "The Last Will and Testament" was itself a creed! Many aspects of this 194-year old creed are still needed in our religious landscape in America. Other concepts seem to be naive about the nature of faith and the human profession of it. Read thoughtfully and meditate on the significance of this document. Is it time for churches of the Stone-Campbell movement to admit their creedalism? If we were to write a creed, what would it say? Would it represent the majority of our congregations? Would it promote unity for which Jesus so fervently prayed? †

Curtis D. McClane is the Editor-in-Chief of Integrity, and the Minister of the Word at the Troy Church of Christ in Troy, Michigan.



UNITY SIGHTINGS

"What does *your* Mom do?" "She prays for me and my school."

Noreen Bryant

This year, I winced and stuck my foot out into the shallows of the real world: the public elementary school. Since leaving the outside work world to have babies, I have relished my hermit status, consciously and carefully immersing myself in my Christian family and shunning most involvement in the secular world. I rarely watch TV, and I have discovered with some chagrin that I don't know how to dress "cool" any more. (And I don't even care!)

Now, while public elementary school isn't exactly the maelstrom of worldly wildness, it is not a place where Christians are always welcomed with open arms. I was shocked, even in this caring environment meant for nurturing children, how difficult and uncomfortable it can feel to be open, much less enthusiastic, about one's Christianity.

I live in an ultra-normal Midwestern town where the biggest scandal in school is the fact that a kid had lice once (people are *still* shuddering about it). We have a really great school—teachers are for the most part caring professionals, and there are actually rivalries over who will get

to be the "room parent." So everything is very genteel and "nice." But if it's so darned nice, how come I feel like such an alien?

For example, one mom told me that one of our first grade teachers is a Christian, but the teacher had begged the mom not to let anyone know, lest her job be put in jeopardy!

I was horrified when I heard that. Determined to find other Christian parents, I prayed and did some networking and discovered Moms in Touch International.

- Moms in Touch International

This is a twelve-year-old organization with branches all over the world—a very loosely-connected network of every kind of Christian parent, organized by school, whose sole focus is to get together once a week or so and pray for their kids.

Two moms at my kids' school had been meeting as a Moms in Touch group for the past couple of years, but this year, thanks be to God, we have grown to a group of seven or eight moms who meet every other Wednesday for one hour, simply to pray for our kids, their school, their teachers, and their administrators.

We get together and ask God to put a hedge around our children, and he does.

All of us moms are from different Christian backgrounds: Lutheran, Missionary Church, Catholic, Church of Christ, community churches, etc. All of us are at different points in our walk with God. But—*eureka!*—we've found unity: we get together to do our work of praying for each other's kids, and we hold each other up, and that's it. We don't quibble about how to pray. Or how to interpret specific scripture passages. Or about how to worship.

We just pray! And I can't tell you what a joy it is, to sit in my living room with these moms and enter into a whole new level of fellowship with them. Every other week, we approach the throne of our Creator and talk with him about our precious kids.

As our Moms in Touch group has developed, we have moved rapidly from the normal after-school banter all the other parents engage in, to a true connectedness and love for each other and each other's kids. This is no PTA subcommittee. This is unity in Jesus, outside of any church, in a public forum. And in a world becoming more and more antagonistic toward Christians, that is a truly awesome thing.

- The Moms in Touch Creed

You're probably wondering what this article is doing in this "creeds" issue of *Integrity*. Moms in Touch International has a creed. Here it is:

The Moms in Touch Statement of Faith

1. We believe the Bible to be

the inspired, the only infallible authoritative Word of God.

2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

3. We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his virgin birth, in his sinless life, in his miracles, in his vicarious and atoning death through his shed blood, in his bodily resurrection, in his ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in his personal return in power and in glory.

4. We believe that for the salvation of a lost and sinful person, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.

5. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a Godly life.

6. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; the saved unto the resurrection of life and the lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

7. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

8. We believe God concerns himself mercifully in the affairs of people, and that he hears and answers prayer.

This creed serves a useful purpose: it states what a diverse group

of believers can agree on. Being in general agreement about these important principles helps us do our job. Furthermore, none of us has bothered to pick apart or closely examine the exact wording of this creed. It's pretty self-explanatory: it lets us know that we're all on the same page, so we can nod our heads in agreement, then bow our heads to pray.

What a great concept! This creed simply says, "Here's what we believe, so let's not quibble about the details; let's just do the work God wants us to do."

God has blessed Moms in Touch International with amazing results. Their informational video highlights moving testimonials from moms with children on drugs who have turned from their ways; a principal who has turned back to God as a direct result of prayer by his Moms in Touch group; a mom in Arabia who feels connected in her faraway country to a larger community of Christians, all because of Moms in Touch. This group, affiliated with no particular denomination or movement, has become a powerful force for God's work in our children. Its simple creed is a tool to help its members stay focused.

Then, too, Moms in Touch is a powerful force for unity in Jesus. Women *all over the world* are uniting in Christ's name to offer their children to his care, believing that their prayers are answered, and that our awe-inspiring and loving God is pro-

tecting our kids. These women cross denominational lines on a regular basis to be with the Lord. Once a year, there is a Moms in Touch convention somewhere in the U.S. Jenny Simoni, a group leader in metropolitan Detroit, reports that at one point during this year's convention, Fern Nichols (the founder of Moms in Touch), made a powerful illustration about unity. She requested all 400 participants to simultaneously say aloud the name of their church affiliation. The result, of course, was gibberish. Then Nichols had all 400 women simultaneously say, "Jesus!" What a perfect illustration for what this group is all about, and what all of us as Christians should be about.

As for me, I have found through Moms in Touch a haven for my children even when they're out in the world: Christian schoolmates, and a shield of prayer held up by a group of mothers allied to utilize the most powerful defense in the world: prayer. Says another Moms in Touch leader, Kris Davidson, "You cannot imagine the comfort I take daily sending my children off to public school because I have bathed them in fervent, effectual prayer with other Christian women."

It seems to me that deep thinkers, scholars, and other church leaders grappling with "issues" can learn a lot from us busy moms: agree on the basics, don't nitpick about the details, and get down to the business of praying. †

Noreen Bryant is the Managing Editor of Integrity. If you would like more information about Moms in Touch, their web site is www.eurpoa.com/~philbow/moms_in_touch.html. You can also reach them at (619) 486-4065.



We occasionally print a question about a subject of current interest in the Stone-Campbell movement churches, or in Christendom at large. The "Hot Topic" question is designed to generate dialogue from those holding pertinent opinions on any facet of the subject. We will print responses to the previous issue's "Hot Topic" in this space.

From Ray Downen, Joplin, MO:

"The previous issue (Spring 1998) was superb indeed, addressing pertinent issues and suggesting the way of peace in every case. The present issue (Summer 1998, The creative expression of spirituality) overlooks the fact (apparently) that Christians are to be passers-by rather than settlers in this world, and calls on gifted artists to paint murals in church buildings, and otherwise decorate worship centers. Not much New Testament scripture for that, I notice!

"Christian artists should be at work in the world, but not much in church buildings, which should be disposable even in this nation. It's

"It's tragic that some people invest their lives in buildings, when God want us to be investing ourselves in people who need his love."

Last issue's "Hot Topic" was:

Is art important in the life of a Christian?

Here is a sample of the responses we received:

tragic that some people invest their lives in buildings, when God want us to be investing ourselves in people who need his love. Yes, of course gifted Christian architects can work for God, but their efforts should be directed toward building useful structures, not temples chiefly aimed at being looked at, as was the case in Europe in former years.

"Our call is to preach the gospel, not to build physical structures to house the work of our artistic brethren. Their good work should be housed in museums and galleries which house other works of art. I don't mean to disparage best use of talents God gives. I do mean to call attention to the fact that what we are called to do is *not* settle down in monasteries and nunneries and cloisters and sanctuaries, but to be out in the world where our salt can be tasted and our light can be seen." †

From Marge Wood, Abilene, TX:

"I didn't used to think art was important, even though I was and am an artist. Now I know differently. The arts are a powerful collection of languages for communicating a wide array of concepts in a variety of ways.

"For example, singing is one of the most powerful binding agents we have available to us. Not only does it convey information, but during the act of singing, we become one.

"Architecture is another of the arts that has power. We can both

lingers with us for many years, reminding us of the fact that Christians must live differently and be willing to take risks that non-Christians might not be willing to take. Botanical gardens, weavings and quilts left for us from ancient times; beautiful clocks, dishes, cutlery and other household items generally forgotten, whether thought of as arts or crafts, are reminders of quiet lives, and we would be impoverished without them.

"Yes, art is important to the life of a Christian, whether individually or collectively." †

Afternoons spent spellbound silently in front of huge paintings or sculptures refresh our souls and allow our minds to rest and receive new insights as we dwell on a passage of Scripture.

symbolize our spirituality and also our ecological response by planning buildings so that they are a responsible offering to God.

"Visual arts can be as simple or as complex as we want them to be; we all have memories of childhood storybooks that remind us of our heroes of faith, or of Jesus the Good Shepherd, or of the angels that brought tidings of great joy. Afternoons spent spellbound silently in front of huge paintings or sculptures refresh our souls and allow our minds to rest and receive new insights as we dwell on a passage of Scripture.

"Powerful fiction such as John Irving's *A Prayer for Owen Meany*



Our "Hot Topic" for next issue is:

Should congregations make written statements of faith and practice?

Please send us your thoughts—short or long, pro or con. We want to hear from you!

Send them to Kelly Sprague, who can be reached at:

sksprague@juno.com, or integrity@mich.com

or: Kelly Sprague, c/o 2931 Vinsetta Blvd. Royal Oak, MI 48073



Telling the truth: Evangelizing postmoderns

Terry Ferguson

The Church was given a mandate by her Lord before he returned to be with the Father—“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28: 19,20). Evangelization and discipleship is the heart of the purpose of the Church whether we hold to a specific creedal statement or hold only Christ as our creed. The message of this mission is centered in the love of God for the world as demonstrated in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—the Good News, the Gospel.

The mission and the message are unchanging, and have been so since the decree was uttered by Jesus on the mount before his departure to be with the Father. Other than the clear procedure of “go, make, baptize, and teach,” no “how” was specified. The specific methodology that the Church was to use was only limited by its mission and message. That is, the mission and the message placed limitations on how the Church was to present them to the world. It is not a mission to gain wealth or personal peace. It is not a message about how humans can become their own gods. The mission and the message would determine the exact “how” at any

given time and in any given place. The history of the Church shows, at least, that the Church needed different methods for trying out its mission of sharing its message with the peoples of the world.

- How do we evangelize?

History also shows that when the Church forsook its mission and/or its message it suffered greatly and its unique position in culture was in jeopardy if not completely called into question. But that is not our immediate concern here. The concern of this article is the methodology of the evangelistic/discipleship task. How is the Church, standing on the verge of entering a new millennium, to carry out its mission and proclaim its message; especially in a world that is radically different from the world of just a few decades ago?

- The conference

It is this question that motivated the organizers of the “Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns” conference to explore the issue of evangelistic methodology. Perhaps we could get a better grasp of the sense of the conference by quoting from the welcome letter of Dr. John F. Kilner, director of the Bannockburn Institute for Christianity and Contemporary Culture, one of the conference’s co-sponsors:

In a rapidly shifting culture, we find ourselves sharing our faith with people who have never heard of Moses, David, or Paul, and preaching to people who are not only unchurched but who have consciously or unconsciously adopted outlooks strikingly removed from that of the Bible. Perhaps the most challenging are those so committed to the systematic relativism commonly dubbed “postmodern” that any demand for allegiance grounded in truth, even God’s demand, strikes them as bizarre, even arrogant. Recognizing the distinct challenges to evangelism posed by these developments, this conference aims to address the biblical and theological priorities essential to responsible communication of the Gospel to people who know virtually nothing of the Lord Jesus Christ, people for whom the cross and resurrection are entirely alien.¹

This was . . . the goal of the Evangelizing Postmoderns Conference: to better equip the Church to carry out its mission and to proclaim its message.

This was essentially the goal of the Evangelizing Postmoderns Conference: to better equip the Church to carry out its mission and to proclaim its message in a vastly different world. The need is dramatically present.

Though the number of people worshipping in our churches on any given Sunday has gone basically unchanged over the past twenty or so years, the mind-set and the mere presuppositions of these average worshipers has changed radically and it matters little whether or not one holds to a specific creed.

It would be impossible to cover every keynote address and every workshop topic in an article such as this, so instead, I thought it would be helpful to give *Integrity’s* readers a sense of the conference by highlighting one keynote address and one workshop topic.² After that we shall consider some concluding comments about the conference, some of its strengths and weaknesses and where conference participants feel the Church is to go from here.

- How do we reach biblical illiterates?

Perhaps one of the most important main sessions, specifically with regard to addressing the issue of evangelistic methodology, was the session by Dr. Donald A. Carson³ entitled: “Athens Revisited: Evangelizing Biblical Illiterates.” In this session Dr. Carson set forth a method for bringing the message of the Good News of Jesus Christ to a group of people who are biblically illiterate. It is certainly a method that will or should be used by more and more Christians as they seek to evangelize a growing biblically illiterate world. It is a method that has a tendency to favor the “non-creedal” position of the Restoration Movement. It is to this main session and the thoughts

and comments of Dr. Carson that I now wish to turn.

If there is any one place in the ancient world that most resembles the religious pluralism of our world today, it must certainly be the city of Athens, the intellectual center of antiquity.⁴ Therefore, it is most appropriate to look at Paul's sermon to his Athenian audience. Carson points out that there is a strategic modification made in the Acts 17 sermon when

If there is any one place in the ancient world that most resembles the religious pluralism of our world today, it must certainly be the city of Athens, the intellectual center of antiquity.

compared to, say, Paul's sermon in Acts 13. In Acts 13, Paul makes reference to points that were common knowledge to his hearers, for example, the history of the Hebrew people and the prophecies of the Old Testament with reference to the Messiah. Paul proclaimed Jesus as the one who was the fulfillment of those prophecies. Carson's point is that Paul preaches to the people of Pisidian Antioch from a foundation of shared perspectives. However, as Paul moves to Athens the common ground of Biblical revelation is no longer present so he must start "further back" in his sermon. He must start with foundational worldview concerns. As Carson noted, "We cannot agree on the answer that Jesus offers if we cannot agree on the problem that he addresses." Paul, as the

quintessential evangelist, finds a way into his "hearers' world view and frames of reference" in order to make contact and thus the reason for the strategic modification of his preaching in Acts 17. This sermon modification is an important point for the contemporary preacher/teacher. As the people we preach and teach to become less knowledgeable of God's Word it will be vital for us to move further back in our evangelistic efforts and construct a common ground of founda-

tional worldview concerns before we can present the message of Jesus Christ.

This is a methodology that greatly favors the "non-creedal" position. On the one hand, the holder of a specific creedal statement will have to move two steps back, so to speak, in order to make contact with her/his postmodern hearers, from creedal statement to Scripture, to worldview. On the other hand, the "non-creedal"

Christian will only have to take one step back, from Scripture to worldview.

To this point Carson has noted first the realities which Paul faced in his visit to Athens—the Roman Empire and its religious pluralism, the competing world views (Epicureanism and Stoicism, perhaps others), and the sneering tone of condescension when an alien worldview is secure with the speaker (Acts 17,18). Secondly, he has noted the "priorities" that Paul adopted, that is,

Paul's God-centered cultural analysis has shown him that Athens is an intellectual center, a city filled with idols, and a people in need of evangelizing—the Jews, the God-fearing Greeks and the pagans. From these Paul will establish his "framework" on which he will bring the Good News of Jesus Christ.

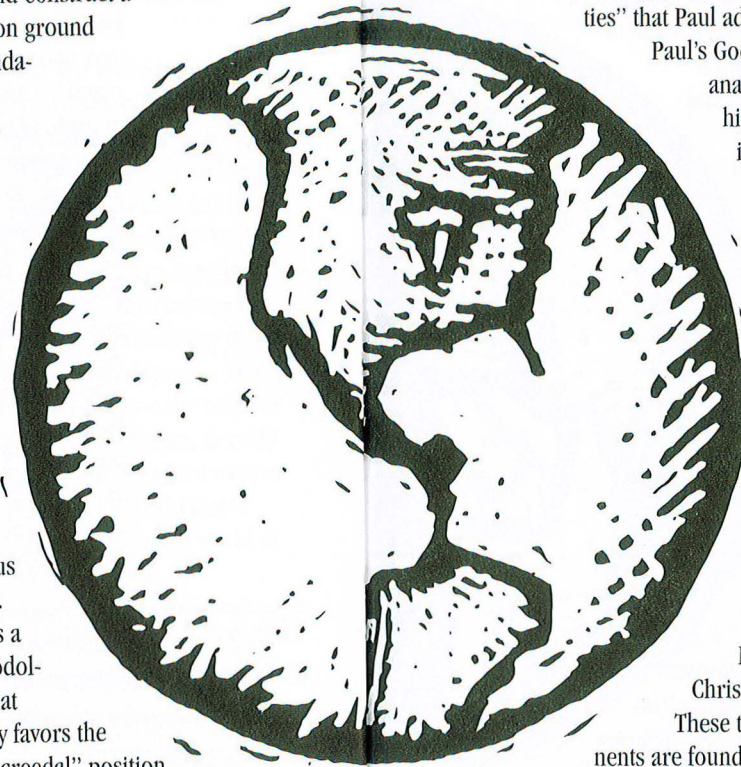
These three key components are foundational for evangelism in our postmodern world and must be undertaken by every witness if she or he is going to adequately advance the Gospel message in these new and different times. Carson notes, "There was a time when the Bible informed western culture,

therefore the categories of dialogue were Christian. But, not any more, so evangelism must take on a different perspective."

- Paul tailors his message to his audience

Paul begins, Carson observes, by establishing a Biblical worldview using categories that his hearers would understand, thus his observation of the altar "To An Unknown God." What they held in ignorance Paul now wants to proclaim to them by "introducing the God who is known, the God who has revealed himself."⁵ Over the worldview of his hearers, with regard to the unknown god, Paul presents the idea of the Biblical God. This God is the Creator; he "made the world and everything in it" (17:24). He is the sovereign "Lord of heaven and earth" (17:24). This God is so transcendent that "he does not live in temples built by hands" (17:24). As Carson notes, "he cannot be domesticated by human forms of worship."⁶ The Creator God does not need anything from his creation; rather, we need him. He is a personal God who gives life and provides the necessities of life (17:25) Paul begins his framework by setting forth a view of ultimate reality. He presents a theology thoroughly grounded in revelation. Paul's view of God is foundational to everything else he will say in his message.⁷

Paul doesn't stop with the theological perspective—he goes on to unfold an anthropological perspective of his worldview. All humans have descended from one man and



God is sovereign over the affairs of humanity. He is immanently involved in his creation, particularly human creation. God is God over all the earth (17:26). "God's purpose in his ordering of history is to incite human beings to pursue him (17:27)."⁸ But they do not, although God is not far from them (17:27). Even the pagan poets are aware of his nearness. Rather, there is rebellion in their camp and humans make for themselves gods after their own likeness.⁹ These rebellious actions will certainly incur the wrath of the Creator-God who is also the Judge (17:29-30). He calls all people everywhere to repent (17:30). The call to repentance is an invitation to accept God's grace. But, humans have a problem: they don't know God properly.

Paul moves from the anthropological features of his world view to set forth, in the simplest of terms, a philosophy of history. In speaking of the fact that history is moving in one direction and with a purpose, Paul challenges the cyclic historical assumptions of much of Greek thought. As Carson points out, there are "developments within history . . . there are salvation-historical or redemptive-historical developments. History is constrained not only by creation at

that "in the past God overlooked such ignorance" (17:30). Now (in the present), however, God calls all people to repentance (17:30). The reason this is so is because God has set a day (sometime in the future) in which he will judge all the world by one man (17:31).

- Paul's Framework

Paul has provided his framework for proclamation by setting forth the foundational worldview concerns of his listeners. He has brought them to a common ground and has, as Carson notes, provided them with a "frame-work from which Jesus and his death will make sense." It is imperative that we note that Paul establishes the frame-work *before* he introduces Jesus to his audience. In the terminology of postmodernism, Paul provides his hearers with a biblical metanarrative so that the Good News of Jesus Christ will make sense. It will be far easier for the "non-creedal" Christian to provide an ad-

equate and concise metanarrative than it will for the creedal Christian. One will simply present the biblical story-line; the other must sort

. . . Paul has provided(his listeners) with a framework from which Jesus and his death will make sense.

one end and judgment at the other, but by singularities."¹⁰ Those singularities can be seen in the fact

Paul does not allow the cultural/intellectual dynamics of his audience to mar the acceptability of his message.

through the creedal statements about the biblical story-line. With the establishment of this biblical

metanarrative Paul does not

hesitate to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus from the dead

(17:31). Before Paul is able to continue in his proclamation he is cut off and unable to complete his message at that time (17:32-34).

The mention of bodily resurrection creates a bit of a disturbance among the crowd. Why? As Carson

rightly points out, the perspective of his audience was dualistic—the spiritual was good and the physical was bad.

Paul's hearers would say, "It is inconceivable that God, who is by definition good, would raise someone up to physical life, which is at least rela-

tively bad."¹¹ Any thought of a bodily resurrection was impossible in his listeners' worldview. Paul does not allow the cultural/intellectual dynamics of his audience to mold the acceptability of his message. He boldly presents the Good News of Jesus Christ, which resulted in the conversion of a number of Athenians.

- Essential for postmodern evangelizing

Carson concluded his presentation with a few important points that are essential for the postmodern evangelists. First, it is important in worldview evangelism to "make assumed things clear to others" especially in a world that is becoming more and more biblically illiterate. Even things as simple as who God is or who Jesus Christ is may of necessity need to be explained so that there is true communication going on between people. As Carson noted, "sooner or later you will have to debunk a world view that doesn't deal with reality." This can be done only by adequately explaining the essential points of contact. The "non-creedal" Christian is at a distinct advantage here. Her or his explanations do not need to be filtered through creedal statements making the ability to explain uncertain or unclear terminology easier.

Secondly, Carson concluded by reminding his audience that "worldview evangelism is not primarily about dealing with philosophical categories, but about pointing people to Christ and the cross." By this Carson does not mean that philosophical argumentation is not impor-



tant. Certainly it is; it can even be used to point the hearer to Christ and his cross. Thus, it can have a specific place in the presentation of the Gospel message. Carson's point is that worldview evangelism is not about philosophy, it is about bringing the hearer to a clearer understanding of who Jesus Christ is and of what he has accomplished for us. As evangelists we need to "point out the problem and then work through to the Biblical answer." We can take Carson's point one step further. Worldview evangelism is about pointing people to Christ and the cross. It is not about pointing people to a specific creedal statement.

- The roots of postmodernism

As noted earlier, the "Evangelizing Postmoderns" workshop topics were wide-ranging, from the practical to the philosophical, and were offered by just as wide of range of speakers from all over the world—from Sri Lanka and Australia to the Harvard Yard and American suburbia.

Perhaps the most philosophical of the workshops, but certainly the most basic for understanding the roots of postmodernism, was the workshop offered by John Hinkson and Greg

workshop traced the roots of the postmodern mind-set and gave consideration to the cultural climate in which the message of Jesus Christ now finds itself. It is a climate in which the notion of absolute, objective, and universal truth is challenged. In such a climate, what are the challenges and opportunities for evangelism?

Greg Ganssle brought the first section of the workshop by considering the work of one of the seminal postmodern philosophers, Richard Rorty, who teaches at the University of Virginia. Rorty's "Project 13" is centered in the rejection of epistemological certainty for the privileged few. He rejects the privileged knowledge of those who claim to know with absolute, objective certainty.¹⁴ Resident in this rejection is Rorty's rejection of the correspondence theory of truth, where truth is that which corresponds to reality. In its place he commends pragmatism as the philosophy for helping us cope in this world. Since we are left to drift in a world where nothing is absolutely, objectively true, we must find truth in what works. Of course, the workability of truth is centered in what the self wants. But, if there is more than one self, then the truths of each self are almost certain to conflict. Rorty is aware of such a problem, so the truths that the self holds must always be held and believed within a community setting in order for solidarity to exist in society.

The second section of the workshop was presented by John Hinkson, who presented another of the promi-

nent postmodern thinkers, Michel Foucault.¹⁵ Foucault's starting point was the push to exit from the bounds of limits, specifically the limits that were absolute, objective and universal. These things¹⁶ needed to be over-

The challenges that postmodernism raises for evangelism are certainly serious, because they strike at the heart of the Good News of Jesus Christ, and thus they affect creedal and "non-creedal" positions alike.

come and flaunted. They must be given up, and truth must be fashioned by each individual. The self must break free from all limits. In essence, Foucault's position was a battle to change the rules of the game, so to speak.

The breaking of such limitations took place, for Foucault, in the realization that knowledge and power are connected.¹⁷ Those who have knowledge always seek to use that knowledge and the power that comes with it, according to Foucault, to control others. So the self must free itself from all that subjects it. The power must be broken and fragmentation must reign.

- Challenges and opportunities

The final section of the workshop focused on the effects of postmodernism for evangelism. This section was broken down into the challenges and opportunities raised by postmodernism. The challenges that postmodernism raises for evangelism are certainly serious, because

they strike at the heart of the Good News of Jesus Christ, and thus they affect creedal and "non-creedal" positions alike.

First, because of the inadmissibility of a universal account or metanarrative in the postmodern perspective, it has become more difficult for the evangelist to talk about the universal nature of the Gospel story. Second, the current cultural climate, which lacks a grounding in the belief in absolute truth, makes it hard for the evangelist to proclaim God as the foundation or grounding of all truth. Third, in the current moral anarchy, it seems impossible for the evangelist to point out that life is a life of morality. Fourth, the postmodern mind-set makes it very difficult for the evangelist to talk about truth without it being connected, in the mind of the hearer, to the abuses of power by those who have claimed to have absolute, objective truth. These challenges are very real and often very frustrating for the evangelist who wishes to witness to the postmodern world. Though there are challenges, God can certainly help us to overcome them given the proper preparation and tools.

As with the challenges that postmodernity presents it also offers the evangelist some great opportunities. First, with the postmodern attack upon the long-held assumptions of modernism, modernity has been brought down to a more manageable size, resulting in an open door for Christianity in the marketplace of ideas. This allows the evangelist to present Christianity as a viable option

. . . the message of Jesus Christ now finds itself . . . in a climate in which the notion of absolute, objective, and universal truth is challenged.

Ganssle entitled: "A Cunning Sleight of Hand—Epistemology¹² at the Core of postmodernism: Rorty, Foucault, and the Gospel." This particular

without being immediately shut out on a drummed up charge of irrationality. Second, the evangelist is now enabled to present, with more easily recognizable evidence, how the human reasoning processes are affected by our rebellion from God (Rom. 1.18-21, 25, 28). Third, the demonstration of the need for the self to be emancipated from those things that hold it in bondage has been made easier for the evangelist by the postmodern flaunting of truth and morality. The moral disasters that

- Effects of the conference

The "Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns" conference was an important step in helping to equip the Church and those interested in evangelizing the postmodern generation¹⁹ and those affected by postmodernism.

Six evangelical organizations combined their efforts in order to bring this information to the Church at large. It was a well-designed conference, offering a wide variety of ministering options. It certainly was a call to the Church to prepare for the next millennium, for the next generation. It was a call to minister in and to a world that is radically different from the world of just a decade ago. It is sometimes easy for the Church to become complacent when some of the old enemies (Marxism, for example) seem to be in retreat. However, evil continues to confront the Church in new and even more insidious ways and she needs to be constantly on her mental and spiritual toes.

Perhaps the only obviously apparent weaknesses of the conference were the dizzying array of workshop options (certainly influenced by postmodernism itself) and the structure of the conference. Fewer workshops would have allowed attendees to better assimilate the information presented and would have done much to alleviate the feeling of being overwhelmed. It also would have been more helpful to have structured some of the more philosophically oriented workshops early in the conference so that a proper foundation could have been laid for understanding postmodernism. If the confer-

ence attendees came with little or no understanding of postmodernism, the tools that were offered them at the conference would have been of limited use.

It should also be noted, by way of conclusion, that such a conference is perhaps a decade too late. Whatever one thinks of Francis Schaeffer, he certainly was prophetic, as he witnessed the onslaught of early postmodern thinking in Europe in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, in calling the Church in

America to prepare itself for the coming storm. It is important that God's people respond to this urgent need lest the postmodern generation is lost in the postmodern confusion. It seems fitting here to quote Ravi Zacharias, "What one generation neglects, the next generation will reject" and to conclude with the warning of the famous Russian author Dostoevsky, "Great events could come upon us and catch us intellectually unprepared." †

The Church of Jesus Christ is the only true multicultural community, and thus stands as an example to the world of what humans and their societies are called to be.

are affecting every society provide the evangelist with solid empirical corroboration that something very deep, very profound, and very foundational is going on here,¹⁸ something from which every person and every society needs to be freed.

Fourth, postmodernism calls for coherence and community but it supplies no tools for such—it is self-centered and often fragmenting in its outlook. The Christian evangelist has a perfect opportunity to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a message that brings real coherence and community, unity and yet diversity. The Church of Jesus Christ is the only true multicultural community and thus stands as an example to the world of what humans and their societies are called to be.

ENDNOTES

1. These comments are taken from Dr. Kilner's welcome letter on page iv of the syllabus given to the attendees of the "Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns" Conference held in Chicago, IL on May 13-15, 1998 and presented by Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. The co-sponsors of the conference were Campus Crusade for Christ, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, The Navigators, the Billy Graham Center Institute of Evangelism, and the Bannockburn Institute for Christianity and Contemporary Culture.
2. The keynote speakers and their topics at the conference were: Ravi Zacharias, "The Challenge of Evangelizing Postmoderns;" Roy Clements, who offered two sermon approaches to reaching the postmodern mind—"The Passion at the Heart of the Universe" and "The Crucifixion of Truth;" Ajith Fernando, "The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ;" and Donald A. Carson, "Athens Revisited: Evangelizing Biblical Illiterates." The workshop topics ranged from the practical to the philosophical and were offered by folks who are all currently doing battle in the postmodern trenches to one degree or another.
3. Dr. Carson is the research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. He is also the author of the acclaimed *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996). Herein known as Carson.
4. See Acts 17:16,22. We should notice, as Dr. Carson points out, that Paul's "reactions were based not on aesthetics, but on a Christian analysis of the culture" (Carson, p. 498).
5. Carson, p. 499.
6. Ibid., p. 500.
7. For some helpful insights on a Christian worldview and God's place in that worldview see, James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), pp. 21-38.
8. Carson, p. 500.

9. We have seen this form and method of proclamation before. It is certainly not an accident that Paul presents a similar line of thought in the first chapter of Romans, verses eighteen through the end of the chapter and goes on to develop his thoughts in chapters two through eight.
10. Carson, p. 500.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 501.
12. Epistemology is an area of philosophy that deals with theories of knowledge. It is concerned with how humans know, how they know they know, whether human knowledge is a reflection of reality or not, whether human knowledge is really knowledge about reality, and so on. Although epistemology seems so esoteric, it deals with foundational concerns with which every human being ought to be aware.
13. For a fuller summation of Rorty's philosophical position see Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996): pp. 151-60. The reader is also encouraged to look at Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).
14. Often, such words are spoken in opposition to the epistemic position or positions held by the Church. In all fairness to postmodernism, it is certainly true that humans cannot know truth exhaustively or absolutely. We are finite creatures who do not possess the attribute of omniscience, but this does not mean that we cannot know objective, absolute, universal truth.
15. For a fuller summation of Foucault's philosophical position see Grenz, pp. 124-38. The reader is also encouraged to look at Paul Rainbow, ed., *The Foucault Reader*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).
16. Again, such language is, more often than not, directed toward Christianity and its claim to absolute, objective and universal truth and morality.
17. Christians should certainly recognize that there is truth to the fact that knowledge/truth and power are connected. We are reminded that Jesus tells us that knowing the truth will liberate us (John 8.32). Certainly knowing the truth that brings me such freedom enables me to have power for living my life as God intends me to live it.
18. Christians label this thing sin or rebellion against the will of God.
19. The postmodern generation usually refers to those called "Generation X," men and women born between the period of the mid 1960s through the mid 1980s. However, the postmodern mind-set has tellingly affected every generation from its very early inception up to the present and will continue to do so well into the future.



Terry Ferguson ministers to the University Christian Church in East Lansing, Michigan.



Bending the Twig

Laquita Higgs

Though "authority" is hardly a popular word in our culture, godly parenting clearly involves the exercise of authority over minor children in the home. Such authority is given by the Lord, but it is not to be used simply to exert power or to make the children do only what the parents want. The goal is to empower children "to be self-controlled people living freely under the authority of God." Those ideas are from "Shepherding a Child's Heart" by Ted Tripp (pp. 13,14) and are only the beginning of the rich concept that good discipline involves not just the right outward behavior but the attitudes of the heart. According to Tripp, the ultimate role of the parent is to shepherd the heart of the child, that is, to encourage the Godward orientation of the inner self.

Tripp writes from his two decades of experience as a minister, counselor, school administrator, and father. The book is not a slick production: the style is sometimes uneven, faulty, and repetitive; and my copy is already

coming apart and has thirty pages upside down. Nevertheless, "Shepherding a Child's Heart" is the most practical guide to the positive directing of a child toward God that I have ever read, and I strongly urge every parent to read it. Following is a summary of the main points of Tripp's cogent suggestions for Christian parenting.

Tripp notes that there are various shaping influences in a child's life, such as the structure of family life and family values, but he cautions that parents make a serious mistake if they assume that a child will turn out all right if only the right influences have been provided. The child himself is responsible for how he responds to those influences. Since a child is made in the image of God, "he is designed with a worship orientation toward God," but the "idols of the heart" are in competition (pp. 37,38). Good parenting, then, must not only provide godly influences but must address the issues of the heart.

Tripp asserts that a biblical approach to the discipline of a child is two-pronged, involving "rich, full communication" and "the rod" as exemplified in Proverbs 23. The first task in communication is to try to understand what is going on within the child—why he behaved as he did.

"Shepherding a Child's Heart" is the most practical guide to the positive directing of a child toward God that I have ever read, and I strongly urge every parent to read it.

We must help the child to understand himself and be able to "speak with clarity and honesty about his internal struggles with sin" (p. 101).

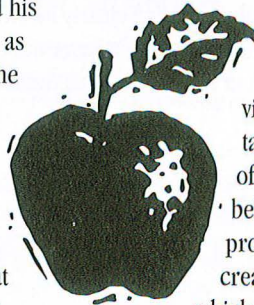
Only when we have begun to see the problem through the child's eyes can we begin to know what part of the biblical message would apply to his situation so that we can teach him those principles. To shepherd the child is to help him understand his temptations, fears, and doubts, as well as helping him to know "the ways of God, how sin works in the human heart," and how the gospel meets our deepest needs (p. 114). We must convey that we were made for a relationship with God and that "life worth living is life lived under the Lordship of Jesus Christ" (p. 94).

Though we may have excellent communication with our child, our shepherding is not complete, says Tripp, without some reinforcement—"the rod of correction." The basic problem is sin: "there are things

wrath upon a small helpless child. The rod is a faithful parent, recognizing his child's dangerous state, employing a God-given remedy" (p. 129). The use of corporal punishment should be driven by love, never anger or mere frustration; it should be "careful, timely, measured and controlled," (p. 132) designed to drive foolishness from the heart of the child (Proverbs 22:15) and to teach obedience. "It provides an immediate tactile demonstration of the foolishness of rebellion" (p. 129), and, properly administered, it creates an atmosphere in which life-giving instruction can be given.

Tripp notes that the most powerful appeals will be those that touch the God-given conscience, the reasoning ability that distinguishes right and wrong, thus going beyond behavior to the issues of the heart. Tripp writes:

The central focus of child-rearing is to bring children to a sober assessment of themselves as sinners. They must understand the mercy of God who offered Christ as a sacrifice for sinners. How is that accomplished? You must address the heart as the fountain of behavior and the conscience as the God-given judge of right and wrong. The cross of Christ must be the central focus of your child rearing.



"The cross of Christ must be the central focus of your child rearing."

within the heart of the sweetest little baby that, allowed to blossom and grow to fruition, will bring about his eventual destruction" (p. 127). While discussing the modern attitude that views all corporal punishment as abuse, Tripp makes some practical suggestions about spanking a child. He also stresses that "the rod is not a matter of an angry parent venting his

You want to see your child live a life that is embedded in the rich soil of Christ's gracious work. The focal

The focal point of your discipline and correction must be your children seeing their utter inability to do the things which God requires unless they know the help and strength of God.

point of your discipline and correction must be your children seeing their utter inability to do the things which God requires unless they know the help and strength of God. Your correction must hold the standard of righteousness as high as God holds it. God's standard is correct behavior flowing from a heart that loves God and has God's glory as the sole purpose of life. This is not native to your children (nor to their parents) (pp. 145-46).

- The stages of childhood

The alternative is to cast the child on his own resources, moving him away from the cross of Christ. The last six chapters take the reader through the three stages of childhood, with suggestions of reasonable goals for each of the stages and ways to achieve them. We found the section on early childhood (from birth to age four or five) to be very helpful in dealing with our four-year-old, with the primary lessons being that the child is "an individual under authority"; that we were made by God and for God and that He has a right to rule us; and that children

must be obedient to parents, as that reflects obedience to God. As I write this, Rachel is singing her "made-up" song about obedience; we'll see if she remembers tomorrow!

For the middle years, from five to twelve years, the primary objective is character development, working on such traits as honesty, kindness, dependability, and moral purity. Tripp uses Proverbs 1:7-14 to set out three goals for the teenage years: the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom; adherence to parental instruction, which grows out of your love for and understanding of your children, and their respect for you; and disassociation from the wicked.

We're going to buy several copies of "Shepherding a Child's Heart" to give to family and friends. Though I do not fully agree with all the details, I am convinced that the book will help you articulate and work toward biblical goals for your child. It may be ordered from Shepherd Press, P.O. Box 24,

Wapwallopen, PA 18660, or by phoning 1-800-338-1445. The cost is \$11.00 plus shipping and handling, but the price goes down with multiple copies. They also have audio and video tapes on the same material, but I have not used those.

- Veggie Tales

And now a review of a popular video series, the *Veggie Tales*, which is being sold in some large retail chain stores and has become a bestseller. Produced by Big Idea



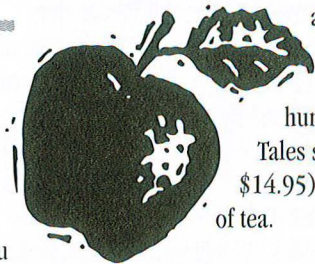


Productions for three-year-olds and up, the computer-generated videos have been eagerly received by many children.

Adults, at least everyone to whom I have talked, are less enthusiastic, often noting that the use of vegetables to depict Bible characters is a bit silly. As a friend commented, "Why not instead use animated characters that look like people?" I was not going to review the series, but "Josh and

against a boy who hit him. The answer is given by telling the story of Joshua, who is depicted by a cucumber (or is it a zucchini?). The video is colorful and the worthwhile message is sung in a catchy tune, "God's Way Is the Best Way," but some of the details are rather off-beat and lacking in coherence. For example, a silly song by Larry the Cucumber is gratuitously inserted in the middle, and the promised land is depicted by an ice cream sundae and cupcakes.

But if you have a zany sense of humor, the Veggie Tales series (Word, \$14.95) may be your cup of tea.



Don't forget to give us your suggestions for good Christian parenting. Write us at 9 Adams Lane, Dearborn, Michigan 48120, or by e-mail: <Ehiggs@umich.edu>.



One tape tells the story of Joshua, who is depicted by a cucumber (or is it a zucchini?).

the Big Wall" was given to our Rachel, so let me tell you about it, and you can judge for yourself. The narrators, Bob the Tomato and Junior Asparagus, both with bulging eyes and bulbous noses, begin by reading a letter from a boy who wonders if he should retaliate

Laquita and Elton Higgs, both graduates of Abilene Christian University, have generously offered time, talent, and spiritual direction to the Integrity ministry for more than 17 years. Both are occupied as professors at the University of Michigan, and as parents to four-year-old Rachel.

Says Laquita, "Alexander Pope, the 18th century English poet, said, 'Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined.' Accordingly, we call this regular feature of parenting advice 'Bending the Twig.' All of us as Christian parents should be committed to a great deal of unashamed 'twig bending' for the Lord, and we need each other's help to do it."

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



READERS' RESPONSE

Regarding the ministry of writing Dallas, Texas

Victor Knowles' article on the ministry of writing in *Integrity's* excellent Summer 1998 issue struck a responsive chord with me, as a member of the library services ministry at the Skillman Church of Christ in Dallas. Recently, in our library, we set aside two of our bookshelves for the books of two specific authors—a tribute, in a sense, to both the quality and the quantity of their writing, as well as a recognition of the constant interest in their books among members of our church.

One shelf is dedicated to the books of C.S. Lewis, the Oxford professor who became, as J. I. Packer recently said, "a Christian spokesman in an anticlerical age" and "a Lay evangelist conservative in his beliefs and powerful in his defense of the old paths." Packer pointed out that although Lewis died in 1963, sales of his books have risen to two million a year.

The second shelf is dedicated to the books of Max Lucado, minister of the Oak Hills Church of Christ at San Antonio. His books surely must be a stellar example of the writing ministry discussed by Mr. Knowles in *Integrity*. Our library offers readers Max Lucado's books in hardcover and paperback editions, and also on books-on-tape. We have just received

Spanish-language editions of three Lucado titles.

Looking over Word Publishing's January-March 1999 catalog, I see that his *In the Grip of Grace* will be released in a large-print edition in February. The catalog page notes that the book's original edition has sold more than 550,000 copies, and that Lucado titles have collectively sold more than 11 million copies. Not every copy will reach as many readers as those in library circulation, but it's awesome to consider the millions of persons who have turned those pages and share this Christian writer's insights.

Bill Bradfield

Regarding Art and Christianity Cedar Park, Texas

Just received the Summer 1998 edition of *Integrity* and offer my congratulations on its new format—not that there was any criticism of the old one. But I'm so pleased to see you widen the horizons for Christians and to embrace all expressions of the creativity that reflects our Maker. Surely our ability to produce and appreciate beauty came from being made in His image.

Aline Edson

Regarding *Integrity* via e-mail

I have not had the opportunity of reading any of the paper issue (vol. 29, no. 2) but I'm overwhelmed by the "look" of the issue! It's fantastic! It's beautiful!

Please give my compliments to the art director.

I did see the dedication to the memory of Maude Endres. She did have a positive impact! May you continue to be overwhelmed by his grace,
Rowland Craig

Regarding art and Christianity Abilene, TX

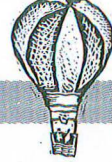
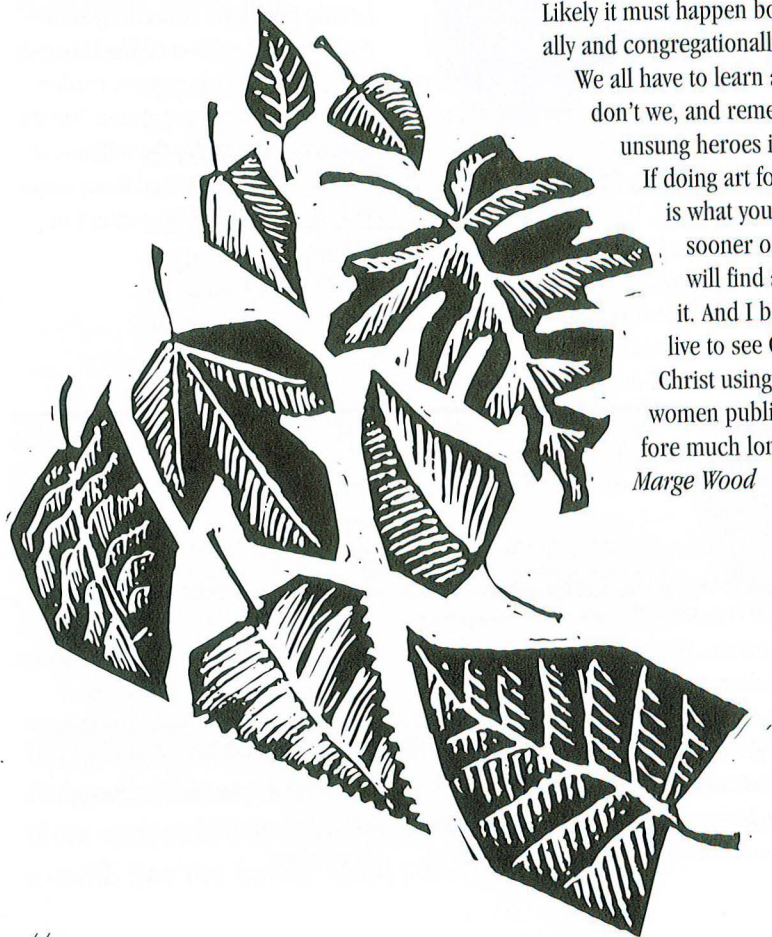
I just read Nancy McClane's article ("A Christian artist's odyssey: Where can I use *my* gifts?"). It really got to me. Even though I always was encouraged to use my artistic gifts by my mother, I believe that our Christian brethren were sometimes averse to visual arts. Music was the one "okay" thing to do. Probably this goes back to the Jewish/Arab teaching going way back that art must be non-representational.

But your story! I can't imagine people destroying art. I'm sorry; I don't know what the solution is. Likely it must happen both individually and congregationally.

We all have to learn and grow, don't we, and remember all the unsung heroes in the Bible.

If doing art for the church is what you want to do, sooner or later, you will find a way to do it. And I believe we will live to see Churches of Christ using the talents of women publicly a lot before much longer.

Marge Wood



The World Convention of Churches of Christ

Lorraine and Lyndsay Jacobs

The following is an "Internet Reflection" from Lorraine & Lyndsay Jacobs, General Secretaries of the World Convention of Churches of Christ (Church of Christ-Christian Church-Disciples of Christ):

'BRISBANE 2000' - NEW PROGRAM DIMENSION Program Chair Keith Farmer in Australia, and a program advisory group of Australians, have been working hard on details for our fifteenth convention in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia from August 2-6, 2000. We are pleased to announce that this convention will have several afternoon 'streams', in what has traditionally been 'optional time', where conventioners will be able to share in some depth in areas such as Youth Leadership Resourcing, Worship and Creative Ministries, Care Ministries, Women's Ministries, and Mission in the 21st Century.

Registration forms (& tour arrangements) for 'Brisbane 2000' are out and obtainable on our web site (<http://users.aol.com/worldconv/>) and in our quarterly publication 'World Christian'. We hope you are making travel plans to meet 'Under the Cross in 2000!

'WORLD CHRISTIAN' - LATEST ISSUE Issue 22 of 'World Christian' was mailed in September. It provides news of our family around the world.

It is the only publication which covers the whole 'Stone-Campbell' family globally. (And it always includes a statement of the aims of 'World Convention' and a prayer list of the 161 countries in which there are Stone-Campbell congregations.) If you haven't received your copy perhaps your address has changed? Let us know! If you don't yet receive *World Christian*, email us your mailing address. There is no subscription charge, though we invite readers to become 'Friends of World Convention' and support this global ministry. The next issue of 'World Christian' will be mailed late in November.

RESTORATION FORUM IN NASHVILLE - NOVEMBER 1-3 On our return to Nashville we will become involved immediately in the 16th Restoration Forum. These gatherings, begun in 1984, are a continuing dialogue amongst Christian Churches and Churches of Christ for the purpose of promoting mutual understanding and unity. The host this year is the Woodmont Hills Church of Christ. It is open to all. Registration is \$20 if you are able and wish to attend. (You can email us for how to register & housing arrangements.) Our address is 1101 19th Ave South, Nashville TN 37212. †

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

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

One Body

Victor Knowles, editor

This quarterly magazine "calls the body of Christ to peace" (Col. 3:15), and features a variety of essays, letters, columns, and reports on Christian unity and world evangelism. Put out by Knowles' organization, POEM (Peace on Earth Ministries), One body seeks for the unity of all believers.

Subscription information:

One Body
Peace on Earth Ministries
Post Office Box 645
Joplin, MI 64802-0645

Cost: \$15/year

Leaven

Stuart and D'Esta Love, Editors

This publication "exists to help fellow Christians think together about the challenges that face them in ministry," says its boilerplate.

Subscription information:

Leaven is quarterly.

You may subscribe or inquire care of the editors:

Stuart and D'Esta Love
c/o Religion Division
Pepperdine University
Malibu, CA 90263-9721

email: slove@pepperdine.edu

Cost: \$15/year



Coming up in *Integrity*

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

Winter 1998/99

Clash of consciences:

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

Spring 1999

A resurrection devotional

Summer 1999

Ministering to our ministers

Fall 1999

Death and dying from a Christian perspective

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

