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Editors' Notes

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Editors' Notes

D'ESTA LOVE AND STUART LOVE

For some time, your editors have seen the need for an issue of *Leaven* on the topic of spirituality. But who best could serve as a guest editor? We wanted someone capable of developing a theology of spirituality, one who could critique needed aspects of the topic, and one who could build the issue biblically, historically, and theologically. We also wanted someone "on top of" practical questions and issues based on extensive experience. That's a tall order, but we believe Dr. Curtis D. McClane has achieved our criteria admirably, and we believe you also will agree as you read the articles in this issue.

Let us introduce Dr. McClane. He earned a doctor of ministry degree from Drew University and completed a post-doctoral two-year program at the Academy for Spiritual Formation. He has guided numerous contemplative retreats, published six articles in *Integrity*, titled "Spiritual Truths for my Sacred Journey," and an article in *Leaven*, (8, 2, [2000]: 96-98) titled "The Search for Ministerial Integrity."

He is a member of the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality and currently is engaged in research on spirituality of the Apostolic Fathers. He also has taught a course titled "Spiritual Formation and Ministerial Ethics" at Rochester College. You may know of his work as editor-in-chief/vice president of *Integrity Journal*, 1998-2000. Dr. McClane serves as full-time minister of Highland View Church of Christ in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. What follows is his introduction to this issue.

One last thought: our next issue will be on 1 Timothy based on the Pepperdine University Bible Lectures, 2004.

God is Spirit. Spirituality and spiritual formation have to do with God. It is allowing God to infuse us with that Spirit so that we are transformed daily more and more into the image of Christ for the sake of others. This process of transformation is initiated by God, and our willingness to be open to this divine influence indicates the depth and maturity of our own spirituality.

If we hold to the faith assumption that life is sacred, then how much more sacred and precious it becomes when molded by God's Spirit. Such molding is critical in all that we claim to be spiritual. There is a danger here. Far too often our own language and choice of words betray our inadequate concepts and practices related to spirituality. We may talk about "practicing the disciplines" and "doing" spiritual formation retreats. Actually, the opposite is the case. If we allow the divine process of spiritual growth to occur, then we permit the disciplines to "practice" on us, and the spiritual formation retreats to "do" us.

When we affirm by the Spirit of God that God is Spirit, we are ushered into the realm of divine mystery. Restoration theology has finally acquiesced to the rising fervor of voices clamoring to recognize that very mystery and to be obedient to the vision such mystery lays upon its followers. Consequently, (perhaps in God's fullness of time?) it appears that a new day is dawning in which the Spirit supercedes the letter, mystery claims the mind, and transformation takes precedent over information.

This pneumatic, paradigmatic shift is seismic in its aftershocks. Perhaps seismology will provide for us a new metaphor that more adequately describes this new landscape we see changing before our very eyes. All that one has to do is look at the many new books published in the Stone-Campbell tradition just in the last five years on ecclesiology. The upheaval is not about ecclesiology. It is about theology. It is about God and the divine work among us.

It is a fascinating thing to notice the metaphors appropriated down through the ages that try to describe the spiritual life: journey, wilderness, theater, walk, desert, ride, etc. Perhaps earthquake is the right one now for our day and time.

Spiritual formation can be a slow process. Just as with an earthquake, pressure and movement occur over a long period of time. Finally, the time comes when what once was indiscernible now becomes “earth-shattering,” rocking our very foundations, and providing aftershocks that continually remind us of how vulnerable we are. It is no longer “our” movement, but the movement of God we feel beneath our feet.

This particular issue of *Leaven* focuses on various facets of spirituality. Just as a diamond displays radiance of light reflecting dazzling colors due to the angles of cut, so do our current contributors display their own perspective on the spiritual life. The articles selected can roughly be grouped under the following four headings: biblical, theological, historical and practical.

From the biblical perspective, **Craig Bowman** shows us how the suffering love of Jeremiah enables us to embrace our particular call to ministry, recognizing God’s very presence as permission to voice our complaints while at the same time responding to the fire burning within. **Carlus Gupton** holds forth hope in anxious times by lifting up the model of spirituality exemplified in the Apostle Paul’s leadership with the Philippian church. And, **M. Robert Mulholland** convincingly proposes that any notion of a biblical spirituality must begin with the idea of God becoming flesh, the incarnate Word becoming enfleshed in us.

From the theological perspective, **Gary Holloway** and **Earl Lavender** demonstrate that Christian spirituality is uniquely centered in the Triune relationship that expressed itself in love, and it finds that love expressed through an open invitation to all who seek to love and be loved. Metaphors of spirituality have often been neglected or not seriously considered. **Randy Harris** attempts to correct the misconception that spirituality is just a journey. Rather, it is a journey with a destination described as “homelessness.” It is easy to see how these two articles feed on each other. It is the call “home” rooted in divine love that compels us onward and upward.

From the historical perspective, **Carson Reed** looks at the life of Robert Richardson, biographer of Alexander Campbell, through a threefold framework of healthy spirituality and suggests that his writings and life can serve as a viable source of spiritual formation from the early Stone-Campbell movement. **Curtis McClane** brushes the dust off of the apostolic fathers and uses those volumes in actual *lectio divina* to discover the nature of God and the importance of humble-mindedness in one’s interior journey of spiritual formation.

And finally, from the practical perspective six significant articles are offered. **Andrew D. Kronwetter** discloses that contemporary pop culture offers many examples of spiritual quests, and helps us to see it through the life of Sculley from the X-Files. **Lee Magness** keeps unified for us an individual and corporate spirituality that finds its fullest expression in the image of being the temple of God. **David Fleer** argues persuasively and passionately for a new way of preaching—one that engages the creative imagination of preachers who allow God’s presence through “paradigmatic texts” to shape their world, shape their self, shape their message, and consequently, shape the listener. **Diane G.H. Kilmer** shares with us the invitation she responded to as a participant in the ancient tradition of spiritual direction and how it enables one to ask others, “What’s God up to in your life?” **Dan Homan** tantalizes us with a new view of hospitality: it is the radical response of embracing people where they are in a world filled with hostility. And David Wray provides a wonderful summary and suggested resources to enable you, the reader, to travel further on your spiritual journey.

Several other individuals contributed excellent articles, but there was not enough space for them to be printed at this time. The editors of Leaven have decided to publish these articles in forthcoming issues, so we invite you to watch for them. The following provides a preview. **Graham McKay** strikes the chords of our hearts with a reminder that the history of our hymnody has nurtured our souls, even when preaching and teaching failed to do so. **Curtis McClane** shares that the diversity and presence of God in nature evidences the divine will unfolding for the receptive eye and ear. **Lynn Anderson** provides direction and insight into helping elders move from managers to shepherds. The latter is the predominant biblical metaphor for any understanding of spiritual leadership for church leaders. **Jerry Taylor** reminds us that spirituality has a significant dimension of being still long enough to discern God's movement in our lives. **Craig Watts** adds a rough edge to our too often soft view of spirituality. He maintains that being for God is also being against all other rivals that threaten a total embracing of God's all-encompassing love. **Jeremy Hoover** defines for us the ancient art of *Lectio Divina*, delineating its process for us while at the same time suggesting ways in which it can be very helpful in our life with God. **D'Esta Love** gives us a meditative prayer on Luke 24.13-35 as an example of *Lectio Divina* (praying the scriptures). And, **Charme Robarts** offers tremendous help for those in ministry whose calling is to get others involved in the life of the church. Her view of involvement stems from a spiritual center that is grounded in a daily practice of the spiritual disciplines.

CURTIS D. MCCLANE