

XENOS

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Xenos is a quarterly magazine that attempts to bring contemporary light to God's Word and life to the message of Christian discipleship.

A non-profit publication, Xenos is directed toward Christians interested in resolving their personal conflicts with the world, and their role in the mission of today's church.

Subscriptions are \$2.00 per year or 50 cents per issue. Back issues are available upon request.

Xenos-welcomes letters to the editor, and reserves the right to edit for space limitations.

Executive Editor	Dennis McCallum
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Xenos writer Geoff Mitchell was incorrectly identified as Geoff Mitchell, M.D., in the January issue of Xenos. Mitchell in June completes academic course work for his medical degree.

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Most religions treat the world in terms of good and evil. But Christianity deals with the world in more significant terms — life and death. Page 11

Absent-minded

The pervading theme of Harry Blamires' book, *The Christian Mind*, is that there is no Christian mind in society today — no set of ideas that typify Biblical Christian thought. But the Christian mind doesn't have to be absent Page 12

Shifting gears

The Radical Wesley, the conclusion of Howard Snyder's trilogy on church structure, starts out solidly, but falls into trouble when it attempts to answer the question, "How radical should today's church be?" After advocating radical ecclesiology in the trilogy's first two books, Snyder quietly tries to shift gears Page 13

LETTERS

Furthering a vision

My wife and I picked up your magazine at Grace Haven Farm's recent conference on Christians in Politics. After reading the first three articles, we are very impressed. Your articles we found to be terribly relevant to our vision for the church. We are very eager to see what future issues hold. The depth and level-headed analysis of our culture and the need for a radical response from the church that you express is outstanding. Your mag, as well, is technically well done. Paper quality, layout and artwork are all superb. Really appreciate the fine artwork! It was a joyful surprise to discover that you were not just "another Christian magazine." You are saying stuff we need to hear and your first issue has been very helpful in solidifying some fuzzy notions we had about direction and purpose where our vision of the church is and also in our understanding of the culture around us.

*Chris Raker
Mansfield, Ohio*

Meeting a need

I raced through your inaugural issue with interest and enthusiasm. Many of the articles merited a second and a third reading. If Xenos' debut is an indication of the quality of Christian journalism that you intend to purvey, may you be blessed with many open ears and softened hearts. I pray that you continue to speak out boldly about issues that challenge the Truth and pervert the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We Christians need to confront Satan's lies fearlessly and articulately.

*Dan Hartzler
Albuquerque, N.M.*

Congratulations! I enjoyed your first issue.

*Elizabeth Henricks
Saratoga, Calif.*

Greetings and blessings to each of you and to your Xenos endeavor. I am rejoicing as I read Volume 1, Number 1, with the quality of both content and of presentation. There is such a famine for a "Kingdom-standard" Word among the members of His Body and I am thrilled that your efforts can be a response to that need.

*Michael Walton
Whitehall, Ohio*

Body builder

I really enjoyed the first issue of Xenos. It's a top-quality magazine with very well-written articles. I think it's an excellent way for the Fish House to build up the body.

*Craig Eller
Ghent, W Va.*

How about some tapes

Please give some consideration to making tapes of teachings available through the mail also. The magazine would be a good vehicle to expand your ministry in this way and make your excellent teachings available beyond your immediate geographical area. The tapes are very important to us, and those who receive them from us are just as anxious to obtain them each week as we are.

*Karel M. Waer
Pataskala, Ohio*



INDIVIDUALITY vs. INDIVIDUALISM

By Dennis McCallum

One of the most confusing questions confronting Christians today is the relationship between the individual and the community — between our own personal spirituality and the common spiritual life of the Body of Christ.

The Bible affirms both roles for the Christian. At times the individual is held totally responsible for his own responses to God's grace. At other times, the individual is shown to be helpless apart from the Body.

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A good example of these two roles being affirmed side by side is found in Romans 12. Verse 1 calls on the individual believer to make a "decisive dedication" of his body "presenting all your members and faculties as a living sacrifice to Christ" (Amplified). This challenge expresses the significant role of individual choice in Christianity.

Yet in the same context Paul goes on to say, "so we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another" (verse 5).

There is a reason Paul can speak of these two roles in one context. Both our individual standing before God and our membership in the Body of Christ are based on the fact that we are "in Christ." Therefore Paul feels that any total commitment to Christ is a total commitment to His Body. Nor is this commitment to the Body some

Continued

'Christian community is . . . an organic interdependence based on close personal relationships between people of diverse types.'

abstract commitment to the universal Body of Christ. Both here and in parallel passages in I Cor. 12 and 14, the context is speaking of a specific local fellowship, and the interaction of the members in it. (The interaction of spiritual gifts would be nonsense in the context of the universal body).

The difficulty that the modern Christian has in harmonizing the Bible's teaching on the individual and the community comes from being confronted with extremist distortions on both sides.

On one hand, many modern Christians have had an experience, or know of a case, where an unbiblically authoritarian "cult" or legalistic church has tried to minimize the significance of the individual by dominating every area of his life. Such groups are threatened by individual decision or action and try to discourage and repress it.

These groups frequently cite Scriptures teaching obedience to authority to justify the church making decisions in all areas of the believer's life, such as where he may work, or where he may take a vacation. In this system, the believer is taught to see himself "in Christ only" and as such incapable of independent action apart from the church.

In applying the Bible this way, these groups deny individuality for Christians, and closely resemble the teachings of Eastern religions, which hold that individuality is a myth or illusion.

Jesus, on the other hand, taught that He deals with people on an individual basis. In John 10:3, He says the Good Shepherd "calls his own sheep by name." Christians should always hold closely to the biblical teaching on the significance of individual choice.

On the other hand, "individualism" is an even more common extremist distortion of Scripture in modern Christianity. Individualism is an ideology that refuses to acknowledge the role of the community, and leaves the individual alone and autonomous in all of his decisions. The Bible affirms individuality; it condemns individualism.

When a church teaches individualism, it is likely to do so subtly. For instance, it is common for churches to give a nod of the head to community

by quoting Hebrews 10:25, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . ." Yet it is probably safe to say that many and perhaps most Christians don't understand (or have a sub-biblical view of) the role of the Body of Christ in their lives. Many have not experienced the total community involvement that should be normative for Christians. If a Christian in one of these churches has an autonomous individualistic attitude, he will rarely be confronted about it.

Perhaps one of the reasons for the loss of truth in the area of individualism is a lack of clear teaching on Christian community. Many times the church is willing to compromise with the individualistic attitudes of the modern world rather than risk losing members.

An example of this kind of compromise is found in the common liturgical practice usually called the "ritual of fellowship." In this ritual, a card in the pew is signed by each member in that pew. Then it is passed back down the pew, each person looks at the names on it, and ritual of fellowship has occurred.

It is easy to see how these shallow conceptions of "Body Life" fit in perfectly with the rest of our superficial "mind-your-own-business" culture.

Instead of quoting Hebrews 10:25, we should focus on passages like I Cor. 12:21, which says, "the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you.'" Here is a passage that directly refutes individualism. While Hebrews 10:25 can be taken to mean that only our presence at meetings is necessary, I Cor. 12 shows that it is not the other members' presence that we need, but their function. The eye cannot do without the hand because the hand is necessary to do the work — the eye can only see. It is not enough that the hand is there; it must also fulfill its role.

This means that real Christian community is more than attending a couple or three meetings a week. It is an organic interdependence based on close personal relationships between people of diverse types. God makes sure that no one has all gifts of the Spirit so that each must depend on others to meet his needs. This in turn implies the

need to be close enough for them to know each other's needs. In this way our individuality becomes the real basis for our community.

Dependence and accountability are both dirty words to the modern man. However, the believer should gravitate toward these things while realizing that others cannot live his Christian life for him.

Church leaders and spokesmen have to examine their stand on this issue also. Is the message we are teaching just watered-down institutional individualism? Are we perhaps usurping the role of the individual's choice?

Any local fellowship needs to carefully meditate on where the dividing line between individuality and individualism lies. What are the areas that lie outside of the church's right to intervene?

This line is not always clear. One example would be marriage choices. Marriage and family are clearly institutions that belong within the context of the church. Ephesians 5 shows this relationship in verses 21, 22 and 25. In addition, a couple being joined in marriage asks the church to witness and affirm that union in the ceremony. Clearly, the church has the right and the responsibility to refuse to marry couples when the marriage is outside the biblical norms, as in Christian-non-Christian marriages or marriages based on sexual immorality. Indeed, there may be other cases where no specific Scripture is being violated when the church may still refuse to be involved. This is in contrast to many churches where no questions are asked concerning marriage choices. Beyond these disciplinary measures, there is the very influential counsel of the community. Philipians 2:2 says that we should "say the same thing as one another in all things." Young Christians should seek for harmony in the witness of the Body of Christ because the counsel of the Body is a strong, although not infallible, indication of what God's will is.

At the same time, only the individuals involved in the marriage can ultimately be responsible for the choice they make. After all, they are the ones who have to live with it. For this reason the

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counselor should impress on the couple their own responsibility. The counselor can give them his advice, but he should refuse to make their decision for them, even if asked to, unless, of course, Scripture speaks to the situation. In such a case, he should speak authoritatively. This in turn contrasts directly with authoritarian or cultish groups, where life mates are sometimes actually chosen by the church.

At all times it should be possible to maintain both the individuality of the believer and his or her dependent and committed role in the Body of Christ — at once and equally. Only in this way will we truly reflect the Bible's teachings on the nature of man created in God's image. The trinity allows for both individuality and community within the Godhead.

Probably half the battle is won if we are simply consciously thinking about this balance as we act and speak. Usually groups that go off the deep end into authoritarianism do so unthinkingly. Their heavy emphasis on authority is not a well thought-out policy, but merely a reaction to chaos and instability in the group. Also there are those who want others to make their decisions for them. Every seasoned counselor has had the experience of talking to people who don't want the responsibility of living their own lives. To begin catering to this weakness is a dangerous step in the wrong direction. People will never learn to live maturely by having others make their decisions for them.

Similarly, many of the churches that don't teach community have accepted traditional models of church life without ever carefully thinking through the Biblical teaching on the subject. In this case, other churches or historical norms have unconsciously been accepted as absolutes in place of Scripture. These groups need to become more bold in making their legitimate claims on the individual's life. We need to realize that we are not doing our people any favors by catering to their sinful inclination to live autonomously. Deeper commitment to the Body will result only in their happiness.

Of course there are always those who are concerned only with not rocking the boat, by telling their people exactly what they want to hear. There are always those who crave the chance to dominate others' lives. In these cases we can't say that their excesses occurred by mistake. Neither is there anything we can probably say to change their minds. Believers should avoid groups of this kind.

If we manage to maintain a substantially balanced position between individuality and individualism, our fellowship will be edifying and more attractive to the world. The result will be greater spiritual growth, and more effective evangelism.



'The eye cannot say to the hand,
'I have no need of you''



JERUSALEM UNDERFOOT

Editor's note: The God of the Bible revealed Himself through history. "I am the God of Abraham . . . Isaac . . . and Jacob" (Ex. 3:6). "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of . . . the land of Egypt" (Ex. 20:2). The life, death and resurrection of Jesus were historical events through which God revealed Himself.

This historically rooted revelation of God was in marked contrast to the ancient Near-Eastern gods who invariably revealed themselves primarily through nature. This follows from the fact that these were nature deities

whereas Yaweh is the creator — the Lord of history.

To substantiate His claim to be the only true God of history, God challenges the other ancient idol deities to match His ability to predict the future. In Isaiah 41, Yaweh calls on the false gods, saying, "Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place . . . or announce to us what is coming. Declare the things that are going to come afterward, that we may know that you are gods" (Is. 41:22, 23).

The false gods can respond only with silence to this challenge. "Behold, you are of

no account" is God's verdict in Isaiah 41:24. Then God goes on to make a series of detailed predictions to substantiate His own claims.

This is why historical research is an important area of study for Christians, especially as it relates to predictive prophecy. This article examines one such historical incident that was predicted in both the Old and New Testaments — the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Our main historical source for this incident is Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian commissioned to write a history of it for the Romans.