Edward Dering: A Model of Puritanism

by Art Lindsley, Ph.D.
C.S. Lewis Institute Senior Fellow

Edward Dering (1540-1576) was one of the early models who set the pattern for future Puritan ministers. Although he is less well known than other theologians or pastors of later Puritanism, he was well known to them. People such as William Perkins and William Ames, who were leading Puritan theologians, looked to him as a model for the kind of pastor they wanted to produce. He was trained in Christ’s College at Cambridge, the “seed-bed of Puritan religion.” Later, Perkins, Ames, and many others were to come out of this same college.

Dering’s central concern was the preaching of sin and its remedy. His emphasis (and that of later Puritans) was that since this was the central task of the minister, the worst thing to happen to England was the presence of ignorant, non-preaching clergy. In fact, few people, even in Puritanism, have held a higher view of ministry. Dering was the only early Protestant writer to maintain that the mere fact of preaching—apart from the truth of the doctrine preached—was an essential mark of the Church.

Dering had an opportunity to preach before Queen Elizabeth I. He laid his career on the line in this sermon. He presented a classic example of uncompromising Puritan preaching and of the intense concern for an educated, godly ministry. No Elizabethan sermon was more often reprinted in later years, and Elizabeth never forgot the sermon or Dering. His promising career was limited by the Queen’s wrath. Here is a sample of the sermon:

I needed not seek far for offences where God’s people are grieved, even round about this chapel I see a great many, and God in his good time shall root them out. If you have said sometime of your self, tanquam ovis, as a sheep appointed to be slain, take heed hearer not now of the prophet, tanquam indomita luvenca, as an untamed and unruly heifer.

Later he said to the Queen:

Look upon your ministry (clergy), and there are some of one occupation, some of another: some shake bucklers, some ruffians, some hawkers and hunters, some dicers and carders, some blind guides and can not see, some (continued on page 10)
In the legacy of C.S. Lewis, the Institute endeavors to develop disciples who can articulate, defend, and live faith in Christ through personal and public life.

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Thomas A. Tarrants, III, D. Min.
President, C.S. Lewis Institute

Dear Friends,

In the last two issues of Knowing & Doing, I commented on the sad state of the church in contemporary America. Such a tragedy should move us deeply, because Jesus established the church, loves the church, and gave his life for the church. If Jesus so loved the church, how can those who love Jesus not share that love and work for the church’s restoration and flourishing?

What is necessary for the church’s restoration in our day? There are some today who, critical of the church and the faith, have embraced postmodern theology. They urge us to discard old and outmoded ideas and become “relevant” to contemporary culture. What they propose, however, would lead not to the restoration but to the transmogrification of the church. No, the answer to our question is much closer at hand. It is found in both the Holy Scripture and the history of the church over the centuries.

Throughout the Bible and church history, God’s people become spiritually sick and backslidden when they depart from God’s word; for departing from God’s word is departing from God himself. This departure usually occurs gradually. In its wake follow idolatry, immorality and acceptance of the beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors of the fallen world. In time, the church becomes a pale reflection of the surrounding culture, as is the case with many churches in America today. In times like these, the great need of the hour is once again to hear God’s word proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit, confronting us with truth and reality and calling us to return to the God we have forsaken.

John Stott points the way forward when he says, “One of the greatest needs of the contemporary church is conscientious biblical exposition from the pulpit. Ignorance of even the rudiments of the faith is widespread. Many Christian people are immature and unstable. And the major reason for this sorry state of affairs is the paucity of responsible, thorough, balanced biblical preachers.” If we would see the church Jesus loves restored, let us earnestly pray and work for a return of clear, faithful teaching and preaching of God’s word in our own church and the churches in America. In the next issue, we will look at another key to restoration of the church.

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John
A Spirituality of the Body

by Dennis Hollinger, Ph.D.

President and Professor of Christian Ethics, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

It may seem unusual to speak of a spirituality of the human body. After all, many Christians have believed that spirituality is being free from the body and its impulses. The spiritual life is understood as saying yes to the Spirit’s work in our spirit and saying no to the “flesh,” which is often perceived to be related to the human body. Moreover, our body often gives us fits. We are not sure what to do with its urges, failures, and pain. Thus, many perceive the body to be an enemy of true spirituality.

But true spirituality is not a disembodied faith. We each live within the body God has given us, and God calls us to lives of holiness and spirituality within and through our bodies.

Role of the Body in Christianity

The starting point for a spirituality of the body is to understand the body’s role in Christian theology. Some theologians have suggested that Christianity is the most physical or material religion in the world. By this they do not mean a love of money or a fixation on material things. Rather, in contrast to many religions and philosophies that find the body and material reality to be problematic, biblical faith strongly affirms the material world, including the human body.

Christian spirituality is not a freedom from the body, but a freedom within the body. Spiritual maturity comes not by negating our physical dimension, but by harnessing its capacities and impulses for the glory of God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The significance of the body and material reality is grounded in several biblical doctrines. First, a theology of creation incorporates a strong affirmation of the material world with God’s pronouncement of its goodness (Gen. 1). Genesis 2:9 notes that “out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.” When God created humans in his image, “male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27), clearly implying that the biological and physiological side of life is significant. After God made this physical world and embodied humans, he looked at all he had made and pronounced it “very good.”

Second, the body is affirmed in the incarnation: God taking on human flesh in his Son, Jesus Christ. That “the word became flesh and lived among” (Jn. 1:14) is a clear sign that the body in and of itself is not evil. Some early Christians had problems with the incarnation, believing that the physical realm is so evil that God could never take up residence in a real physical body. This view, called docetism, said that Jesus only appeared to have a material body. The Church condemned this view as heresy, declaring that Jesus was fully divine and fully human. All of this means that if God can come in a human body, it is evidence (continued on page 11)
In the ancient world, if someone complained of hearing voices in their head or became suddenly and inexplicably ill, the diagnosis was quite easy: the person was possessed by an evil spirit. A folk healer was needed who knew the proper incantations, rituals, and formulas for dealing with this kind of spirit.

The explanatory power of personal evil also worked on a larger scale. If a city or village was losing people to a plague, it was often concluded that the village must be under a curse. The solution was for a powerful shaman to be called in to avert the spirits responsible for the devastation.

Today we know better. Voices in the head are a common phenomenon that can be explained in a variety of ways ranging from a neurological disorder (such as schizophrenia) to a psychological condition (such as dissociation or post-traumatic stress disorder). Meteoric advances in science in the past three centuries have moved beyond these simplistic and primitive ways of evaluating life’s issues.

The same can be said about evil experienced at a much larger scale. Most historians appeal to sociological and psychological factors to explain the horrific scale of evil perpetrated by figures like Adolf Hitler or the Khmer Rouge leader, Pol Pot. We also now know that an earthquake is not an expression of anger from a disgruntled god or a powerful demon; it is simply a natural geological phenomenon. Pressure builds up in massive underground tectonic plates, which sometimes slip, resulting in seismic activity.

Consequently, many people today consider a belief in a literal Satan flanked by hosts of demons to be on the same par as believing in Santa Claus, a flat earth, and the tooth fairy. And this is precisely where the difficulty surfaces for Christians. From the satanic serpent in the garden of Eden to the banishment of the devil into the lake of fire, the Bible speaks about personified evil from beginning to end.

To make matters more complicated, the demonic interpretation of life did not decline from the Old Testament to the New Testament, but rather intensified. Jesus had many encounters with demonically afflicted people, and the Apostle Paul cast spirits out of the oppressed as part of his ministry as he took the Gospel to the Gentile world. In fact, Paul even defined our present struggle in terms of a conflict with evil spirits. He declared,
How does this square with a modern scientific worldview? Is this one area where Christians need to admit that biblical teaching is out of sync with reality as we know it today?

**Exploring the Nature of the Collision**

Many Christians have recognized this apparent conflict and have tried to overcome it. The celebrated scholar Rudolf Bultmann, no doubt inspired by the example of Copernicus, allowed modern science to trump biblical teaching. He argued that the Bible was hopelessly constrained by a pre-scientific and obsolete view of the world. His now famous judgment—“now that the forces and the laws of nature have been discovered, we can no longer believe in spirits, whether good or evil”—has been oft repeated by scholars. He suggested that biblical scholars identify and eradicate every relic of primitive worldview and mythology embedded in scripture—a process he called “demythologization.”

More recently, some scholars have argued that this approach is too radical and causes us to lose some of the valuable and important insights that the Bible provides. Still controlled by the a priori belief that such spirits do not exist, they argue for a reinterpretation of the language of spirits and powers. Some run the language through a Jungian psychological grid and interpret the statements about demons as projections of the inner self, that is, the interior spirituality of a person or even a social institution. Still others see the terminology of Satan and demons as political code language and read it as referring to the political powers in ancient Israel, such as the Pharisees or the Roman imperium.

But is there really a conflict between the Bible and science on this issue? I would argue that there is not. Just as it is beyond the scope of science to determine the ultimate question of whether God exists, so science cannot adjudicate the question of whether the Holy Spirit, angels, or evil spirits exist. Certainly science has performed a valuable role in helping us better understand certain phenomena that were formerly interpreted as demonic activity. But science cannot rule out potential spirit involvement on every issue. In other words, voices in one’s head cannot always and invariably be explained by the phenomena of dissociation, chemical imbalance, or psychological disorders. The international community of mental health professionals recognizes this and includes a diagnostic category called “Trance and Possession Disorder,” as seen in the World Health Organization’s standard diagnostic manual (the ICD-10).

Purely sociological and psychological factors may help us understand someone like Hitler to a certain extent, but such an understanding does not rule out the possibility of spiritual involvement in his life. In other words, is it still possible that a supernatural intelligence was also working behind the scenes enticing, planting ideas, and inspiring the mind of the leader of such extraordinary atrocity?

Finally, we surely need to ask ourselves whether it could be slightly myopic (dare I say, even arrogant) to ignore the fact that most cultures of the world grant a prominent role to spirits in their world views. Throughout Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands, and elsewhere in the non-Western world, the belief in evil spirits continues to be an integral part of the world view of many people groups. Historically, we are, in fact, the anomaly. The last 300 years in the West represent the only time in human history when the existence of evil spirits has been treated with widespread skepticism.

**Perhaps the Bible Is Right After All**

Maybe we have constructed a false dichotomy between science and religion and should instead give our attention to developing a proper

(continued on page 14)
C.S. Lewis wrote in eleven literary genres: apologetics, autobiography, essays, fantasy, letters, literary criticism, lyric poetry, novels, narrative poetry, satire, and science fiction. Lewis’s focused vision is not to be missed amidst his wide-ranging capacity for literary success. He wrote often, and without equivocation, “I am a rhetor.” Every time he put his pen to paper, he sought to persuade his readers to accept some point of view. This being so, it might be asked, “What is his rhetorical point,” or “To what is he calling his readers to attend?”

Like any good rhetorician, Lewis does not make it difficult for his readers to grasp his point. He wrote, “Correct thinking will not make good men out of bad ones; but a purely theoretical error may remove ordinary checks to evil and deprive good intentions of their natural support. An error of this sort is abroad at present. I am not referring to the Power philosophies of the Totalitarian states, but to something that goes deeper and spreads wider and which, indeed, has given these Power philosophies their golden opportunity. I am referring to Subjectivism.”

Lewis, no matter what genre he employed, seems to have been perennially concerned about subjectivism, and his rhetorical interest in warning against its abuses weaves each of his literary genres into a seamless garment.

Subjectivism Defined

Lewis was an objectivist. He believed Reality existed independent of whatever one might think about it. Reality is objective. He did not believe that an objective person understood reality absolutely. One might believe in absolutes but still not understand anything absolutely. An objectivist lives in recognition that one’s thoughts and impressions, that is, one’s subjective responses, ought to approximate objective reality. When error occurs, it can be corrected by an appeal to reality. Truth is not reality; truth is what I think about reality when I think accurately about it. That which is asserted by a false statement does not exist.

This does not mean that Lewis denied the importance of the subjective. In fact, when he wrote The Abolition of Man, he began that treatise about objectivity by contextualizing his discussion within a framework of “just sentiments,” or what Augustine called ordo amoris (“ordered loves”). He quotes Thomas Traherene, who asked, “Can you be righteous unless you be just in rendering things their due esteem?” Justice is reasonable, for it seeks to render to reality accurate thought about it; it seeks to render to Natural Law moral choices in accordance with it; and it seeks to cultivate that kind of emotional life that feels in a manner that is in accordance with reality. Therefore Lewis asserts, for good reason, that “emotional states can be in harmony with reason (when we feel liking for what ought to be approved) or out of harmony with reason (when we perceive that liking is due but cannot feel it).”

Long before Lewis applies his rhetorical concern about objectivity of thought, he writes about objective sentiments; just sentiments, congruent with objective reality.

The point is that Lewis does not write against subjectivity, but subjectivism. And again, subjectivism is that form of subjectivity no longer tethered to reality as best it might be known at any given moment. Subjectivism projects onto reality...
whatever it wants. It feels no obligation to ontological imperatives. It chooses whatever it desires, and rationalizes and justifies whatever choices it makes. In this way subjectivism seeks to adjust reality to itself, rather than adjust the scoliosis of its own soul to reality.

Furthermore, reality is more complex than one’s best thoughts about it. Consequently Lewis wrote, “All Reality is Iconoclastic.” One may have an image of reality formed directly by observation or indirectly: by the reported observations of others from books, lectures, conversations, and the like; or by inferences; and so forth. These may be true impressions, but they must be held loosely. If one holds too tightly to what is currently known, that knowledge will begin to compete against the possibility of growth. God always kicks out walls of temples built for Him because He wants to give more of Himself. Augustine said, “Narrow is the mansion of my soul; enlarge Thou it, that Thou mayest enter in.” Any truth known can always be plumbed more deeply; it can be applied more widely; and it can be seen in coherent relation with other truths. In a growing process, truths known do not have to be discarded as understanding increases any more than trees must give up interior rings just because they add new ones. Reality is not dynamic, but it is complex. A true understanding of reality, on the other hand, must be dynamic. Lewis is adamant that all images must be discarded images wherever growth in understanding is occurring. The subjectivist ceases to be responsive to the real world. Furthermore, subjectivists can be found in any intellectual camp.

Certainly the materialist who is unwilling to consider the (continued on page 22)

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**After Theory** by Terry Eagleton
Reviewed by Jerry Root

Academic papers are read at untold numbers of conferences each year and, in the worst cases, simply allow professors to document one more item in their *curriculum vita* to satisfy those who scrutinize the tenure process. In the best cases, these papers stimulate academic discussions that invite scrutiny of new ideas and widen debate. Students paying the high cost of tuition do not want courses taught from a teacher’s old, yellowing notes; these papers and presentations demonstrate the professor’s mind is on the stretch.

But most papers create no stir; most are read and forgotten. Many, many ships raise their sails in this harbor, but few actually catch the winds of the imagination and launch their vessels out onto the high seas to influence the thinking of a generation or two and perhaps even start a movement. While no single event creates a movement, such papers can be the match that lights the fire. Such was the case with Derrida’s paper on Difference in Toronto in 1968. Martin Luther’s 95 Theses did not cause the Reformation. Hus, with similar ideas, had been burned at the stake some 100 years earlier; and Wycliffe was stirring up the pot about 80 years before that. As C.S. Lewis once observed, there is nothing in the history of thought like a shoreline in geography. But as (continued on page 25)
Directions for Leading a Christian Life

by Henry Venn

Updated into modern language by Elizabeth McBurney

To Jonathan Scott, Esq
November 6, 1765

Dear Sir,

I am overjoyed to learn of your knowledge of Christ and your determination to live in His service. This connects us more closely than if we were brothers, for many times brothers will be separated, but all who love the Lord Jesus will dwell with Him forever. Love for Him and for your soul prompts me to lay before you a few hints gained from long service in the church of Christ, which, had I received on my entrance into it, might have preserved me from many hurtful mistakes.

Your Christian calling is a warfare, where no quarter can be given on either side. If you prove faithful to death, angels will receive your departing soul, eternal glory will be your crown, the armies of the saved will receive you with delight, and the Redeemer’s presence will be your Heaven forevermore. Should you forsake Him, or hold secret sympathy with His foes, you must be punished, like them, with eternal infamy in Hell.

Your first “enemies” will probably be your former intimates, friends, and nearest relations, whose polite conversation and affection for you have been so pleasing. For until their understanding of sin, true religion, and humanity’s chief good are formed from Scripture, as your own now is, they will despise your new way of life. Your corrupt nature will be tempted to join them—along with a subtle destroyer, long practiced in arts and wiles—to the ruin of your immortal soul.

In this perilous condition you have joined yourself (having been influenced by grace) to Christ as your Leader and Commander. Under his banner, diligently using the means He in tender love commands, you should confidently expect both protection and victory.

These means are secret prayer, Bible study, public worship, hearing faithful preachers, Christian society, and much solitude.

Secret Prayer

Our Lord frequently practiced secret prayer at stated times, and all His illustrious saints have done the same. Indeed, stated times of prayer, where they can be had, are as necessary to make the soul flourish as stated meals to keep the body in health. To willfully neglect them is to walk contrary to the example of Christ and His saints, and such behavior will never reproduce their holiness in our own lives.

But when you do observe stated times of secret prayer, you will often find great stupidity of mind and not know what to pray

The Rev. Henry Venn, M.A., (1724-1797) was educated at Cambridge University, where he was a Fellow of Queen’s College. He was one of the earliest Evangelicals in the Church of England, in which he had a long and fruitful ministry. He deeply impacted a number of Anglican ministers of his generation, including Charles Simeon and John Newton. Henry Venn’s letter to Jonathan Scott, Esq., has been reprinted many times over the centuries as a valuable guide to practical Christian living.
for. You may feel that your faith is very weak or be oppressed by a swarm of idle thoughts. Do not, on this account, leave off your constant devotions or question whether they will profit your soul.

It is actually good for you to feel that you have no power to command your own thoughts, so that your own experience will confirm what the word of God and His people teach—that you are weak and poor, always standing in absolute need of the mercy of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost.

On the contrary, beware of being elated with spiritual joy, which sometimes will flow into your soul. Should this experience lead you to think highly of yourself, watch out: Carelessness first, and then a miserable fall, will follow, for self-exalting thoughts always defile the soul and grieve the Spirit of God.

Neither can any assurance as to future safety be justly built on what has passed in our own minds. Witness the noble confession Peter made of his faith in Christ one hour, and the astonishing reprimand he received the next: “Get behind me, Satan! You are an offense to me.”

These sweet sensations of spiritual joy fulfill some of the precious promises made to believers in Christ and are designed to allure us, not to excite a conceit of anything good in ourselves.

**Bible Study**

To secret prayer you should add devout study of the Bible, because it is our infallible guide and the treasury of all truth necessary to salvation. But the riches laid up there will not be found by proud or careless minds: None possess them until they dig for them as for silver, longing to know the will of God, that they may do it.

To superficial readers, the Bible presents little more than a great number of duties that must be performed and sins that must be renounced, along with insupportable pains at failures in obedience. But earnest and devout readers discover much more: the tender heart of Christ, the efficacy of His blood to cleanse from all unrighteousness, and a variety of spiritual blessings,

![I am at a loss for words to express how much solid knowledge and transformation of mind you will gain by persevering in prayer for wisdom and holiness, and for the true interpretation of God’s Word, year after year.](image)

which are the present reward of being true-hearted in His service. I am at a loss for words to express how much solid knowledge and transformation of mind you will gain by persevering in prayer for wisdom and holiness, and for the true interpretation of God’s Word, year after year. A pattern is plainly set before us in these memorable petitions from scripture: “I am a stranger on earth (very soon to leave it; therefore its riches and honors cannot profit me); hide not your commandments from me, which will enrich me forever! Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things in your law! Your hands have formed and fashioned me. Give me understanding, that I may know your law!”

May these prayers come from our hearts and ever dwell on our tongues!

**Worship**

Secret prayer and devout study of the Bible will prepare you to worship in the house of God. And here you must beware of a fatal error, common among those who love to hear the Gospel:

Assured that preaching the gospel is the appointed means to convert sinners, and knowing that they were (continued on page 28)
Certainly these are daring words to say to a queen. It would be fair to say that the frequent reprinting of the sermon was due not only to the uncompromising manner, but also to the content. This emphasis on a godly preaching ministry was central to the Puritan concern. Elizabeth was willing to live with a relatively ignorant clergy. But the Puritans saw that the only way to reform the people, and the nation, was to reform the ministry.

Dering’s focus in his preaching was a practical divinity. His letters show a great desire to heal troubled consciences. Collinson says:

...that Dering was first and always “a physician of the soul,” a practical divine whose letters were full of little but encouragement to forsake the world and to go forward in the pursuit of godliness. It has sometimes been implied that the Puritans discovered this practical divinity only in the early seventeenth century when their attempts to reform the externals of worship and church government were finally defeated, but I have no doubt that “mere religion” had always been the first concern of the majority of the godly preachers of the Elizabethan Church.

This “practical divinity” with its focus on conscience and “cases of conscience” was part of Puritanism from the very beginning. We see this illustrated in the letters of Dering to Mrs. Honywood. She was a woman who was troubled with the greatest of all the cases of conscience—lack of assurance of salvation. In fact, she thought that she could not be saved. Dering’s letters are directed to comfort her by showing that her afflictions were a sign of God’s favor. This focus on the judicial aspect of conscience—establishing the state of a person before God—and providing comfort, especially with regard to the assurance of salvation, was important to the Puritans. They were concerned about applying the Word of God to troubled consciences.

Dering is especially revered as the model Puritan in the way that he was written about after his death. Memorial verses were composed by Thomas Norton, a writer on early Puritanism. Dering’s letters containing spiritual counsel were collected and published; he was the first Puritan to have his work posthumously published. His final words were preserved. In all these ways Dering became a Puritan example and hero. He had fought the good fight, he had not compromised his conscience, he had finished the course faithfully.

Dering in his life and work showed a number of the marks of Puritanism. He objected to the Anglican ceremonies and church order—in a moderate fashion. He believed in the sole authority of Scripture. Preaching was viewed as an essential for the Church. Practical divinity—with a focus on comfort for the wounded conscience—was important to Dering’s idea of ministry. Dering truly was a model Puritan. His life helped set the pattern for later Puritan ministers.
A Spirituality of the Body

(continued from page 3)

that the body itself is not our primary spiritual foe. Rather, the incarnation is a model for our own lives.

Third, the physiological side of life is avowed through the future resurrection of the body. In our final abode we will not exist as disembodied souls, but as resurrected bodies. Such a notion would be foreign to a worldview in which the body is intrinsically evil or the primary barrier to goodness. Life in eternity with a body is an affirmation of its significance.

Of course the body, like mind and heart, bears the marks of the fall, and as such is prone to lead us to sin. But God has created us to be in bodies. We might say that we are embodied souls, or ensouled bodies. Our bodies in and of themselves are not evil. They are a significant part of who we are and even have a role in influencing our thinking and the affections and emotions of our hearts.

As Dallas Willard puts it, “My body is the original and primary place of my dominion and my responsibility. It is only through it that I have a world in which to live. That is why it, and not other physical objects in my world, is part of who I am and is essential to my identity. My life experiences come to me through or in conjunction with my body” (Dallas Willard, Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ, p. 161).

Whenever we act within the world we do so in our bodies; we can never act apart from them. Our interaction with other people and the world in which God has placed us is always in and through our physical existence.

The Body and Sin

Though the body is not inherently evil, it is fallen and thus is often the locus and impetus for unrighteousness, injustice, and moral failure. In Romans 6, in the context of clarifying freedom in Christ, Paul writes: “Do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness” (vs. 12-13). Sin often reflects itself in bodily actions and through various parts of the human body, what Paul calls our members. These bodily actions certainly reflect our thinking and our passions, but the body also has its own impulses and tendencies.

For example, James speaks of the deadly role of the tongue:

The tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains (continued on page 12)
A Spirituality of the Body
(continued from page 11)

the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell…. No one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison (James 3:5-8).

The tongue, as James points out, has great potential for good such as worshipping God, speaking the truth, and encouraging other people. But in its fallen state this good, divine gift also has a propensity for great damage and evil.

We can further understand the role of the body in sin when we think about sexual immorality. God has created our bodies good, and that includes our sexual parts as well. Yet in our fallen state the sexual parts can be misused. In I Corinthians 6, Paul reminds us that our “body is not meant for fornication but for the Lord” (vs.14). The body meant for the Lord includes the sexual dimension when it is utilized for God’s glory, within the purposes and designs of God in creation. Even bodily pleasure in sex can be for the glory of God, for the physical parts that bring pleasure are gifts of God’s good creation. But sexual immorality is a misuse of the bodily gift, forgetting “that our bodies are members of Christ” (v.16). Thus, in sexual immorality (sexual intimacy outside God’s designs), “the fornicator sins against the body itself” (v.18).

We live in a time when the right to control our own bodies is deemed to be an absolute right. The judicial system in the United States (and in many countries of the world) has extended bodily control to the right to terminate another human life growing in one’s own body. In a few countries and jurisdictions the right over one’s body has been extended to ending one’s own life when faced with extreme pain or physical debilitations. Euthanasia, or its narrower version of physician-assisted suicide, is really an extension of the ethos that we have an absolute right over our own bodies.

These kinds of sentiments are certainly understandable within a naturalistic world view in which the body and material reality are the only givens. But solid reasoning, observation, and historic experience can help us see the dead-end street to which this world view can lead. We are never isolated beings, and thus what we do with our bodies always impacts others and society. And Paul writes, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body” (I Cor. 6:19-20).

The Body and Righteousness

Though our fallen bodies have a propensity for sin and injustice, the believer is called to use his or her body for good. Our hands, face, eyes, feet, stomach, and genitals can be the instruments of evil but also instruments of righteousness, love, and justice. The very same tongue that through slander, lies, and cursing can cause so much pain to another person is the same tongue that can bring comfort and encouragement to another and adoration to God. The bodily parts that fornicate and even rape are the same parts that can express love to a spouse and generate the beginning of new human life. The key is that our bodies need to be brought under the lordship of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Just as our thinking and inner affections must experience the ongoing work
of God’s grace and transformation, so too must the body. Thus, Paul writes, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom. 12:1). Here the focus is on commitment of our bodies as acts of worship to God through what we do in them. Not only are we to refrain from letting our bodies be under the dominion of sin, but we are to “present [our] members to God as instruments of righteousness” (Rom. 6:14).

This means that God’s work within us will be demonstrated not only by what we refrain from doing but, even more significantly, by what we do in and through our physical bodies. Our actions in everyday life are the real test of our faith and commitment to Christ. In one sense they are the natural overflow of minds and hearts shaped by the work of God, and certainly good bodily actions will never develop without a transformation of these dimensions. But we must also give attention to the body in the process. The body too must be made holy (i.e., sanctified in traditional language) so that we act for the glory to God.

Our Bodies as the Image of Christ
True, vibrant spirituality is not a freedom from our bodies. The body is not intrinsically evil. It is a good gift of God, and though fallen, it is the physical reality through which we are called to live our lives for the glory of God.

We face a host of problems in and through our bodies: physical lust, eating disorders, rejection of our bodies, idolatry of the body, addictions to certain physical impulses, and the list could go on. The real issue in all of these problems is not our physical body any more than it is our soul. The real issue is that our good but fallen body, like our soul or spirit, needs the renovation of the Holy Spirit to bring our total being into the image of Jesus Christ. Our calling is to glorify God in our body—in the physical world—the place to which God has called us. And even that final place to which God has called us, presence with Him in heaven, will probably turn out to be more physical than we ever imagined.
integration. This reflects my own conviction on the issue.

We need to begin by properly understanding what the Bible says about spirits and work to eliminate the false impressions we have in our minds that may have had their origins in movies like The Exorcist or Disney films like Fantasia. It is crucial for Christians to develop a strong biblical theology of Satan, demons, and principalities and powers.

Once we have done this, we have the proper basis for an appropriate biblical integration with sociology, psychology, medicine, and all other relevant disciplines regarding the role of evil spirits.

**What Are Evil Spirits?**

The Bible never explicitly addresses the origin of evil spirits or their ruler, Satan. Possible insights into the original state and fall of Satan, and many angelic beings with him, may be couched in the prophecies against the king of Tyre (Ezek. 28) and the king of Babylon (Isa. 14). This was how early Jewish interpreters (as well as early Christian interpreters) understood these two passages. The biblical writers are far more concerned about the fact of his existence (and the host of evil spirits associated with him) than with speculations about how he rebelled against God.

There is also a unanimous opinion among the biblical writers that Satan is not an equal with God. While Satan and his forces oppose God, there is never a hint he could possibly win. The end is certain: God is sovereign.

Nearly everyone living in the Mediterranean world during the Old and New Testament eras would have believed in the real existence of good and evil spirits. In the first century, the Jews, Greeks, Romans, Anatolians, and Egyptians all believed spirits populated the heavens, the underworld, and the earth. Rather than questioning the existence of this realm, people sought ways to control the spirits and to protect themselves from the sometimes dreadful workings of these spirits through ritual means (magic). Most people, regardless of religious background (even Jews), found the practice of magic helpful.

It was in this kind of environment that Jesus ministered and the early church came into existence. Jesus and the early Christian writers shared a basic belief in the reality of this realm, but with some important modifications. They believed there was only one true God, the God of Israel. They believed that the “gods” of pagan religion were really the manifestation and working of demons, opponents of the one true God working a deceptive influence. They believed that these evil spirits were organized under the leadership of the one prime adversary—Satan. Further, the early Christians believed that the practice of magic, witchcraft, and sorcery—so popular among the common people—represented the pure work of Satan and his forces of evil.
Both the Old and the New Testaments assume some kind of hierarchy within the realm of the hostile supernatural powers. But they never give any delineation of the chain of command. Satan is “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (Eph. 2:2), and he has within his sphere of authority a vast assembly of powers, dominions, thrones, angels, world rulers, demons, unclean spirits, and elemental spirits. While some contemporary Christian authors have attempted to speculate on the relative authority of each group, it remains speculation. It is better to work with the concept of the evil spirit and recognize that there appears to be a range of both abilities and functions among the totality of evil spirits.

The scriptures portray evil spirits as sometimes influencing people to the extent of “entering” them. For instance, John tells us that Satan “entered into” Judas in order to betray Jesus (John 13:27). The account of the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:1-20) demonstrates that a person can be afflicted by more than one evil spirit at a time, perhaps even hundreds; when Jesus asked this man his name, he replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many.” Normally a Roman military legion consisted of 5,000 men. All of the exorcism stories of the Gospels and Acts also vividly illustrate that evil spirits are intelligent and are capable of exercising will. They frequently talk to Jesus, usually expressing their fear, by speaking through their victim’s vocal apparatus. Satan, of course, is usually depicted as a clever strategist constantly plotting against the purposes of God.

The Activity of Evil Spirits

The best way of summarizing the activity of evil spirits is by stating that they do everything that God does not; they stand for everything that is contrary to God’s purposes and his people.

Evil powers work on every level—from influencing individuals to exerting control over the social order. Since his success with Adam and Eve in the garden, the classic activity of Satan and his powers is the activity of enticing individuals to act in ways contrary to the revealed will of God. This has garnered him the title of “tempter” (1 Thess. 3:5). While the Bible does not describe in a precise way how Satan tempts people, it appears that he does so through exploiting each person’s inner tendency toward evil (what Paul calls “the flesh”). By doing so, the devil expects to enslave people to his dominion, keeping them apart from the kingdom of God (Eph. 2:1-2).

Part of his method entails the use of deceit. In John’s gospel, Jesus says, “when [Satan] lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44; see Rev. 20:10). Satan can influence what people believe to be true about themselves and God.

Through temptation, deceit, and a variety of other methods, “the god of this age” tries to blind unbelievers from discovering the good news of Christ’s redeeming work on the cross (2 Cor. 4:4). He uses the same strategies against Christians in an effort to re-enslave them (Gal. 4:8-9).

Some people, however, have been victimized to such an extent (continued on page 16)
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(continued from page 15)

that an evil spirit (or group of spirits) may exercise an exceptionally high level of control over their lives. The Gospels and Acts refer to these people as “demonized,” deeply influenced by evil spirits. Jesus and his disciples engaged in spiritual intervention for such people, through which the spirits were “cast out.” The New Testament epistles, however, stress the need for believers to draw on their close relationship with Christ and the power of his Spirit as the primary means for resisting the influence of evil spirits.

The New Testament clearly teaches that Jesus’ cross, resurrection, and exaltation marked the decisive victory of Jesus over Satan and the powers of darkness.

The Work of Satan at a Macro Level

The Bible speaks of the work of evil spirits as extending even to entire nations. The book of Daniel reveals that evil spirits were assigned both to Persia and Greece (Dan. 10:13, 21). While the New Testament does not elaborate on this idea, it does use the same terminology for evil spirits (e.g. archōn) and refers to the devil as “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and “the god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4). Satan and his forces do attempt to exert their influence on the social, economic, political, and even religious order.

Many of the New Testament writers often use the term “world” in a moral sense. Paul, for instance, frequently uses “world” (and the idea of “this age”) as the totality of people, social systems, values, and traditions, in opposition to God and his redemptive purposes. This is what he has in mind when he speaks of “the present evil age” (Gal. 1:4). Working primarily through key people, evil powers strive to pollute society in their larger effort to lead humanity astray from God.

For example, Satan can oppress a whole country by focusing his supernatural influence on one holding absolute power. Reinforcing thoughts of greed, suspicion, and hate, a ruler can reign tyrannically over a country for years.

In the Old Testament, false gods and pagan cults were frequently used by evil spirits to cause the people of God to turn their backs on him. This is why there is such strong anti-idolatry polemic throughout the Old Testament. In describing Israel’s abandonment of God for idols while in the wilderness, the book of Deuteronomy represents the Jewish conviction that pagan religion had a close connection with the work of demons: “They [the Jewish people] made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols. They sacrificed to demons, which are not God—gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear” (Deut. 32:16-17). The Apostle Paul was also convinced that the powers of darkness were especially active in non-Christian religions. He sternly warns the Corinthians to avoid participation in pagan sacrifices because of this. He contends, “The sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons” (1 Cor. 10:19-20). It is thus perfectly clear why Paul urged the Corinthians to “flee from idolatry” (1 Cor. 10:14). By maintaining any kind of involvement with pagan temples, the Corinthians were exposing themselves to powerful demonic activity and compromising their allegiance to the one true God.

Throughout his ministry, the Apostle Paul struggled against perverted understandings of Christ and his atoning work that crept into the churches. Paul implies that the false teachings influencing the churches at Colossae and Corinth...
were demonically inspired (2 Cor. 10:4; 6:14-17; Col. 2:8).

What Did the Cross Accomplish?

The New Testament clearly teaches that Jesus’ cross, resurrection, and exaltation marked the decisive victory of Jesus over Satan and the powers of darkness (Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:4). John expresses it succinctly: “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8).

The first three Gospels record the teaching of Jesus himself on the significance of the cross with respect to the powers of evil. He expresses himself in the form of a parable: “No one can enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house” (Mark 3:27; see also Matt. 12:29, Luke 11:21-22). Satan is the “strong man” and “his possessions” are the people held in bondage to his kingdom. Jesus has come to “tie up” this strong man so he can plunder his house by liberating the prisoners (see Luke 4:18-29), that is, people enslaved to sin and trapped in the bondage and oppression of the kingdom of Satan. Jesus’ many exorcisms clearly demonstrate his power over the strong man, but it was only through the cross that Satan and his hosts were dealt the unrecoverable blow that spells their final doom. The strong man was defeated, and Christ could now build his church.

Nowhere else in the New Testament is Christ’s victory over the powers of darkness given fuller expression than in Colossians 2:15. Paul proclaims, “And having disarmed the powers and...” (continued on page 18)

RECOMMENDED READING

Two Books from John Stott

The Cross of Christ

This book is a classic study of that which is at the center of our faith—the Cross. It is a clear and profound exposition of such themes as propitiation, redemption, justification, and reconciliation. In addition, Stott’s book applies this important truth to our spiritual lives. The Cross of Christ is a thorough study (380 pages), but repays a careful meditation.

Your Mind Matters: The Place of the Mind in the Christian Life

Many people in the Christian Church discount the importance of the mind in biblical discipleship. Stott calls us to love God fully with our minds as well as our heart, soul, and strength. He shows how the mind, will, and emotions are related in Scripture. He counsels zeal directed by knowledge and knowledge fired by zeal. The heart cannot embrace what the mind rejects. True worship is in spirit and in truth. We are called to give a reasonable defense for the hope within us. Knowing, to be sure, is not enough, but it should lead to love for God and others, as well as obedience to the truth. Speaking the truth in love (Eph 4:15) is always to be our goal. This book is short (91 pages) but can expand your perspective and help you develop a discipleship of heart and mind.
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(continued from page 17)

authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” Having sought to frustrate the redemptive plan of God by instigating the death of Christ on the cross, the powers of darkness unwittingly became mere instruments in God’s hands. Christ rose from the dead and assumed the position of “head” over a new body—a body of people in union with himself who would now spread the message of redemption all over the world.

Nevertheless, the forces of evil continue their hostile activity. The cross represents the major victory of the war, but the battle continues (like D Day compares to VE Day in World War II). There is a vital difference, however, between the time before the cross and after, between unbelievers and believers. Evil powers have indeed been “disarmed” with respect to believers. By virtue of Christ’s victory on the cross over evil powers and our identification with him, believers share in his present power and authority over evil powers.

Are Believers Immune to Demonic Influence?

The New Testament teaching is clear that becoming a Christian does not bring about automatic immunity to the influence of evil spirits. Becoming a Christian links one to a new resource for dealing with these hostile forces. Jesus teaches his disciples the possibility and necessity of “abiding” in him, like a branch in a vine, in order to be infused with his divine enabling power (John 15:1-8). In a similar fashion, Paul constantly affirms our identity as being “in Christ.” Through this real union with Christ believers can draw on divine resources provided by Christ—the head of the body who empowers the body and enables it to resist Satan and fulfill its mission in spite of intense demonic hostility. Christ as the head is able to accomplish this because God has exalted him and placed all of the evil demonic powers under his feet (Eph. 1:22).

Evil spirits are thus weakened in their ability to influence Christians only insofar as believers realize their position in Christ and draw on the divine power and authority over this realm that is theirs in Christ. Paul wanted believers to regard themselves as so closely united with Christ that they considered themselves as having died with him on the cross and having been raised with him to an exalted position, “far above” every rank in the hierarchy of evil spirits (Eph. 2:5-6; 1:19-22). Just as Christ holds a position of superiority to the powers, so too

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.”

C.S. Lewis
believers have a position of superiority and authority over the forces of the devil. Paul tells the Colossians, while facing a demonically inspired opposition, “you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every [demonic] power and authority” (Col. 2:10). Becoming a Christian means being linked to a powerful Lord who wields overpowering (“disarming”) authority over the realm of darkness.

Being a Christian does not guarantee victory over every demonic attempt at influence. The Apostle Paul envisions the real possibility of Christians “giving a place to the devil” in their lives (Eph. 4:27). Paul stresses that believers can resist Satan and make progress in their Christian lives only when they draw on the divine enabling power that God supplies (see also James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:8-9).

Discerning the Demonic

How can a person detect the direct influence of Satan or an evil spirit, as opposed to a social influence or one’s own inner bent toward doing evil?

In the Gospels and Acts, it appears that Christ and the apostles had little trouble detecting the work of evil spirits in the lives of demonized people. Their physical conditions (sometimes unusual muscular strength, at other times physical debilitation and illness), bizarre behavior (like living among tombs), extreme reaction to Christ or to the use of his name and authority, or using a person’s vocal apparatus in direct response to Christ or one of his followers appear to have been foremost among the evidences.

Many would contend that the same evidences of intense demonic influence can be seen in certain people today. People involved in satanism and the occult open the door wide to this kind of severe demonic control; in most instances, such people specifically seek communion with demons and the prince of evil. It also appears from the evidence of scripture that those who persistently and willfully continue in certain patterns of sinfulness may experience increasing amounts of direct demonic influence.

While Satan may manifest himself in these ways, what I have just described is also the stereotype of satanic activity. Limiting our perception of his activity to these more severe and dramatic forms of his influence could hinder us from seeing the more subtle ways he operates. We need to be wary of too readily restricting the devil’s work exclusively to murderous satanic rituals, scenes similar to the The Exorcist, and occult activities. Satan and his spirits can influence even those who do not experience voices in their heads or roam graveyards.

The church has often ascribed the source of evil influence to “the world, the flesh, and the devil” which I believe accurately reflects the teaching of the Bible (especially Paul, John, and James). While Satan may often work in a direct and immediate way in people, he also asserts his sway more indirectly through exploiting “the world” and reinforcing the appetites of the flesh (our inclination toward evil). Thus we need to speak of varying levels of his influence.

First, we must remember that as “the prince of this world,” Satan attempts to exert his polluting influence on all aspects of societal life and culture. When biblical ethics are portrayed in a negative light in society, Satan has been successful in extending his evil influence on a broad scale. For instance, when pilfering from one’s
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employer can be rationalized, Satan has been victorious. When vengeance is regarded as the best course of action against a person who wrongs us, Satan has successfully twisted our moral conscience. In short, Satan can pervert societal morals, traditions, and customs.

Secondly, we need to realize that Satan works in concert with an individual’s inclination toward evil (“flesh”). If a person is naturally inclined toward anger and bitterness, in some way an evil spirit may directly encourage that attitude. If the malice continues and intensifies, the more direct the demonic involvement in the person’s life may become. This is what Paul would refer to as giving “turf” to the devil (Eph 4:27).

Engaging in “Spiritual Warfare”

Paul claims that all of us—not just a few involved in deliverance ministries—struggle against wicked spiritual forces of evil (Eph. 6:12). He urges us to recognize that the only way we can succeed in this struggle is by appropriating the power of God.

As Paul portrays it in Ephesians 6:10-20, spiritual warfare is primarily concerned with Christian conduct—not with exorcism or eradicating structural (institutional or societal) evil. It is practical instruction for the day-to-day lives of all Christians. Four times in the passage Paul uses the word “stand/withstand” (same root in Greek). This means that Paul does not want believers to “give a place to the devil” (Eph. 4:27) by lying, stealing, being excessively angry, or succumbing to any other temptation to moral impurity. Spiritual warfare is therefore resistance. It is a defensive posture. It involves recognizing the supernatural nature of temptation and being prepared to face it. It also implies appropriating the power of God to make progress in eradicating moral vices that already have a place in one’s life.

Spiritual warfare is not only defensive, it takes the offensive. Paul calls the soldiers of Christ to advance on enemy territory by proclaiming the gospel of peace. Many commentators have correctly observed that the only offensive weapon in the entire list of the armor of God is the sword: “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17). In a related sense, the footgear of the Christian needs to be “the readiness to announce the Good News of peace” (Eph. 6:15 GNB). A typical soldier would journey for miles as his army advanced to the battlefront, and would then pursue the enemy. According to Paul, the primary aggressive action the Christian is called to take in the world is to spread the gospel—the good news of salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ. John Stott notes that the gospel represents “God’s power to rescue people from [the devil’s] tyranny.” The whole course of Paul’s ministry is a model of this aggressive proclamation. The church should follow Paul’s lead.

If Paul were to summarize the primary way of gaining access to the power of God for waging successful spiritual warfare, he would unwaveringly affirm that it was prayer. On behalf of the Ephesian believers Paul asks God, “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being” (Eph. 3:16). Prayer is given much greater prominence in the spiritual warfare passage than any of the other implements. Prayer is closely related to faith and in many ways is the practical manifestation of faith.

The spiritual warfare passage is often viewed in individual terms, that is, each individual Christian should pray and ask God for strength to do battle. This is true, but it does not go far enough. Paul depicts the “arming” in corporate terms, with the

According to Paul, the primary aggressive action the Christian is called to take in the world is to spread the gospel—the good news of salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ.
whole church involved in the process. In fact, each believer is responsible for arming other believers. All of Paul’s admonitions in this passage are plural. More importantly, however, is the fact that Paul urges believers to pray “for all the saints” (Eph. 6:18). Paul, in fact, models this activity in his two prayers recorded in Ephesians 1 and 3. In essence, Paul prays that God would endow them with power so that they could successfully resist the temptations of Satan and be divinely enabled to proclaim the gospel fearlessly in spite of demonic hindrance and hostility.

Spiritual warfare, therefore, is more proactive than reactive. It is the preparation before the storm. It involves praying for individuals to resist temptation in their personal areas of vulnerability. It involves praying for the progress of the gospel, especially where there is localized and intense demonic opposition. It goes far beyond merely praying for the sick. This concept has the potential to rejuvenate prayer groups and prayer meetings in the church today—to unleash the power of God to accomplish great things.

**What Does the Future Hold?**

There is a message of hope for all who have come to know Christ. The grievous persistence of evil in the world, largely instigated by the devil and his powers, will soon meet its end. This will happen in spite of the fact that Satan will launch a powerful widespread rebellion against God just prior to Christ’s second coming (2 Thess. 2:1-12). Jesus promised to return “with great power and glory,” setting in motion a series of events that will include consigning the devil and all his angels to the torment of an eternal fire that is prepared for them (Matt. 25:41). The Apocalypse of John elaborates on this theme. The seer’s vision of the conclusion of the thousand-year reign of Christ includes an account of Satan’s doom. He will be thrown into a “lake of burning sulphur” (also called “the second death”) where he will face an eternal punishment (Rev. 20:10).

Paul also speaks of this future time when Christ will “destroy every rule and every authority and power” (1 Cor. 15:24). All of the evil spirits the church has struggled with throughout its existence will be finally and ultimately vanquished.

This vanquishing is still in the future. The church today is yet in the middle of the battle. God has given us access to his own power to be conquerors in every skirmish. It remains for us to discern the spiritual nature of our struggle as believers and to rely on the power of God.

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**Notes**


2. See my essay, “Can We Still Believe in Demons,” in *The Apologetics Study Bible* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2008), 1475.

possibility of the existence of the supernatural is a subjectivist. He cannot be open enough to consider the possibility that a supernatural explanation may best fit certain situations. The supernaturalist, on the other hand, may conclude that a natural or supernatural explanation works best to describe some events; therefore, being open to the facts wherever they lead, he can be more open-minded than the materialist.

Nevertheless, Lewis understood that those with a religious inclination could also become subjectivists. He noted that of all bad men, the worst of bad men are religious ones. The sooner one is willing to die for his faith, the sooner he may be willing to kill for his faith. Lewis was offended by those forms of religious fundamentalism that are quick to paint a “Thus saith the Lord” across any particular opinion held. Once the religious zealot has ceased to consider the possibility of deficiency in his own interpretations, he can no longer enter into the realm of dialectically safe engagement. He has become a subjectivist, and worse for the wear; he has made his word equal with God’s, and all positive engagement ceases; who can argue with someone such as this?

Subjectivism can occur in any camp. No one is free from the possibility of pushing a point beyond what is reasonably sustainable; the habit of doing so can move subjectivistic self-referencing towards evil. Lewis believed subjectivism was likely to lead to the justification of evil.

In what is perhaps the most important statement in Lewis’s most overt book on objectivity, The Abolition of Man, he wrote, “Only the Tao [‘the doctrine of objective value’] provides a common human law of action which can over-arch rulers and ruled alike. A dogmatic belief in objective value is necessary to the very idea of a rule which is not tyranny or an obedience which is not slavery.” He also wrote, “An accusation always implies a standard.” So it is with any judgment. An architect seeking to communicate dimensions to a contractor by means of a “blueprint” assumes that the two of them will be using standards of measure common to them both. Consequently, they will be using objective standards that transcend, so to speak, the whims of feet and inches either of them might have apart from the benefit of a tape measure. Without such objectivity, the society relative to construction—not to mention law, mathematics, physics, history, and the like—would be utter chaos. One could imagine that a society arbitrary about such things would become chaotic; anarchy would prevail. On the other hand, if one anarchist achieved control, a tyranny of the most powerful would be likely to prevail.

There are rules that govern reason as there are rules that govern the game of chess; knowing the rules does not guarantee you win every time you play the game, but not knowing the rules makes the game impossible. The rules of reason make it possible to describe material objects as well as objects of thought with clarity. Humility and honesty allow one to reason in community in ways that add perspective and corporate understanding. Evil, on the other hand, is destined to manifest itself in a culture leaning in the direction of subjectivism. Once an objective standard for morality is neglected, there is no longer any means for a proper appeal to objective reality whenever disputes arise; that is, there is no longer a way to settle disputes. Harmony is lost because the culture has no common tuning fork by which that harmony might be achieved.

He noted that of all bad men, the worst of bad men are religious ones. The sooner one is willing to die for his faith, the sooner he may be willing to kill for his faith.
Why Did Lewis Use Fiction?

A detailed study of all of Lewis’s books—pre-Christian and post—reveal that he is, one way or another, addressing the matter of subjectivism rhetorically. Of course, subjectivism is not the only matter that concerns Lewis, but in all of his books a strong case can be made that he is arguing for objectivity, whether he is defining reality or warning against rationalizing and self-justification. Interestingly, this is also true of his fiction; his rhetorical interests were also served by this literary genre. Sometimes stories say best what one wants to say, argued Lewis.

Some have suggested that Lewis’s interest in fiction was motivated by a failed debate with philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe at the Oxford Socratic Club on February 2, 1948. He was said to be no longer capable of keeping up with the rigors of serious philosophical debate and thus backed into writing fiction instead. (continued on page 24)

Questions & Answers on C.S. Lewis

Q: Is it wrong, as some charge, to have a witch as a central character in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe?

A: The best response to this question is a question. Does this story make us want to be like the witch? Or does the story make us want to reject witchcraft and all it stands for?

Q: How would you contrast the Narnia and Harry Potter series?

A: One interesting contrast is that in the Narnia series, magic is part of the genre of fairy tale. In the Harry Potter series, magic is the central focus and draws attention to itself. In Narnia, magic exists primarily in the fantasy world, apart from our world (with a couple of exceptions). In the Harry Potter series, magic is located in our world. In The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, magic is practiced primarily by supernatural agents, whereas in the Harry Potter series, magic is the result of human spell casting and occult practice. In Narnia, the children are not generally permitted to engage in magic, but are invited to call on Aslan for help. Lewis labels some attempts at magic as sorcery (i.e., the wicked dwarf Nikabrik in Prince Caspian).
There is no support for such a position. In fact, Lewis wrote thirty-six essays on Christian apologetics before the debate, and another thirty-four—nearly fifty percent of all his apologetic essays —after the debate. Furthermore, Lewis’s first apologetic work was a work of fiction. It is certain Lewis began his career as an apologist believing that fiction could be used as an effective tool in the apologist’s tool box.

After he published his first work of science fiction, Lewis wrote, “Any amount of theology can now be smuggled into people’s minds under cover of romance without their knowing it.” He saw that stories were a means to reach some people who were not likely to be reached by any other means.

So what rhetorical point was Lewis making in his fiction? Among other things, he was most certainly addressing the matter of subjectivism, for he cast all of his evil characters as subjectivists. He did this consistently over a period of four decades.

Subjectivism Addressed in Lewis’s Fiction

Lewis’s fellow Inkling and friend, Charles Williams, wrote a cycle of poems about King Arthur and Camelot. After Williams died, Lewis wrote a book of literary criticism about this poetry. In this study, called Arthurian torso, Lewis makes it explicit that characters in fiction can become subjectivists. As he writes about William’s King Arthur, Lewis notes a fatal flaw in Arthur that manifests itself the moment the king wonders, “ ‘The king made for the kingdom, or the kingdom made for the king?’ That is the question. The right answer has been given in the quotation from Dante’s De Monarchia prefixed to the whole Taliessin volume: ‘Hence it is that the proper operation does not exist for the sake of the essence, but the essence has its being for the sake of the operation.’ Lovers exist for the sake of love, poets for the sake of poetry, kings for the sake of kingdoms: not vice versa. And Arthur is already wrong about this matter.”

Williams believed that “function precedes essence.” One’s essence was brought into being because of some prior function that it was necessary to fulfill. In the Genesis account of creation, light is created before the luminaries; that is, the function of light preceded the creation of the essences sun, moon, and stars that were designed to fulfill the function of light. Arthur fails as a king the moment he speculates that the kingdom might be made for the king rather than the king for the kingdom. The subjectivist is no longer responsive to the world the way that it is; he would rather deny the reality and play the utilitarian.

So it is with virtually all of Lewis’s evil characters in his fiction. Each in some way draws on the example set forth and modeled after Williams’ King Arthur. And with each, Lewis is making a rhetorical point: he warns his readers about subjectivism.

Limits of time and space prevent a full analysis of all of Lewis’s villains; nevertheless, the most impressive example of a subjectivist villain in Lewis’s Narnian books is Jadis, Queen of Charn, who becomes the White Witch of Narnia. As a Queen in Charn, Jadis is so evil that her entire kingdom mounts up in a war against her. She has learned through magical arts how to speak “the Deplorable Word.” This word gives the one who utters it the power to destroy the whole world while saving only oneself. As the war goes against her, and it is evident she is unwilling to be held accountable for her evil, Jadis uses this weapon. In that very act, she becomes anti-Aslan (or anti-Christ). She destroys others to save herself; by contrast, Aslan gives his life to save others.

The self-referential acts of Lewis’s villains tend not only to destroy others but to destroy
self as well. Lewis wrote, “Unity is the road to personality.” I can truly know myself only in the context of relationships and the give and take that goes with them. To deny the validity of others is, in the end, to deny my own humanity and the road to maturity.

Lewis makes this point rhetorically in his science fiction through the character Weston, who comes to be called the unman. Similar instances abound in Lewis’s The Great Divorce. Those whose controlling interests have denied humanity to others become little more than nearly evaporated beings. It is all consistent rhetoric for the man whose warnings against subjectivism have their zenith in The Abolition of Man.

So what is the point of all of this, and what application might it have? First, Lewis saw the dangers of subjectivism. He recognized that, “In coming to understand anything we must reject the facts as they are for us in favor of the facts as they are.” To fail at this point is to lose any sense of perspective; as Lewis observes, it is as if one might begin to believe the train tracks really did narrow the further they moved towards the horizon. The subjectivist becomes self-referential and utilitarian towards others; he does so in a way that can imperil the humanity of those around him as well as lead to the loss of his own humanity. The loss of objective value leads to the abolition of man, and puts the subjectivist at risk of becoming an unman.

A second point can be found in this; the self-aware are more likely to be empathetic. Empathy is an incarnation-like quality; it allows one to enter into the real world of others as Christ did—to be a giver, not a taker. Lewis wrote, “There are three images in my mind which I must continually forsake and replace by better ones: the false image of God, the false image of my neighbors, and the false image of myself.” Empathy begins with the assumption that I know something of others by virtue of a shared humanity. I may disagree with them, but I will treat them the way I would want to be treated. An empathetic and objective person not only sees the world and its need, but also recognizes that all have a propensity to subjectivism and all are capable of cloaking their own evil as well as that of others.

### After Theory Review

(continued from page 7)

Luther was the match in the Reformation tinderbox, so too Derrida was the match in the tinderbox that started the fires of postmodernism, although it took another twenty or thirty years before the word “postmodern” was on the lips of the populous.

Why is it that some ships are launched out of the harbor of the academy and sail on to affect the culture so widely? It would make an interesting study if one could ever discover the answer; but the question would still remain, who could ever predict when and why such a thing might happen? What is the next movement that will replace postmodernism?

In his book, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Thomas Kuhn reminds us that reality is far more complex than the capacity of any paradigm or worldview to describe completely. Certainly some truth is acquired and remains after each paradigmatic exploration, but in the end, the periphery of human ideologies must give way to larger, more robust descriptions of the world. As C.S. Lewis wisely noted, all images of the universe must, in the end, become discarded images, holding on to what they can and purging what they must. Certainly not everything that appears to be an advance proves to be so. (continued on page 26)
After Theory Review
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History is full of examples. Nevertheless, it may be possible both descriptively and definitionally to argue which ships ought to be affecting the next generation of thought; new presentations describe reality with at least enough precision to stir up significant conversation given the state of the present tinderbox.

Perhaps such a book is Terry Eagleton’s *After Theory*. Eagleton was formerly the John Edward Taylor Professor of Cultural Theory at Manchester University and is now teaching at Lancaster University. *After Theory* is written in recognition that postmodernism, as a dominant worldview, has nearly run its course and is on the threshold of giving way to some new paradigm. Eagleton is convinced there will not be a regression, at least in one particular regard. The postmodernists have taught the culture to be aware of embedded assumptions in texts and also in the interpretations of those texts. It is good to be mindful of impulses that can cloud objectivity and prevent sane debate and helpful discussion. In this regard, Eagleton acknowledges that the early postmodernists were not relativists; they were perspectivalists. The relativist point of view is seldom shaped by reality; it champions what C.S. Lewis called a subjectivism. Lewis is not denying the necessity of subjectivity; all attempts to know must be filtered through lenses, but all human lenses are fraught with limits. The relativist, like the fundamentalist, tends to be too self-referential to be objective. The community is seldom benefited by relativists or fundamentalists, for both are functional anarchists. Unable to participate in dialectically safe engagement, their tendencies are utilitarian. The fundamentalist may paint a “Thus saith the Lord” across his own opinions, but the relativist, acting in anarchist fashion, plays a sort of godlike role as well.

Who can ever discuss with such people? The delusion that one’s view is equal to God’s is very difficult to dissipate by reason; it is not held by reason and it will not dissolve by debate. Eagleton reminds his readers that the early postmodernists were perspectivalists. They did not deny objective reality, they simply asserted that it is complex and therefore to understand it well requires community. It is open to perspectives that invite participants from both genders and a variety of cultures, races, and economic positions to contribute what they see from their various points of view.

Eagleton laments the fact that many in the second generation of postmodernists did not stay true to this vision and turned the movement toward relativism. Postmodernism is itself a complex movement, and those who spoke against it, failing to address the complexity, simplified their descriptions and leveled their attacks at a straw man. The irony cannot be neglected. Those who opposed postmodernism for its relativism and self-referential ways were equally self-referential in their descriptions of the postmodernists. In the end, the critics were jousting at windmills. Nevertheless, the relativism that did creep into the second generation of postmodernists certainly contributed to its present unraveling. Relativists are not good at unity; their alliance cannot last very long. Eagleton gives a brief, but helpful, informed survey of the history of postmodernism, sorting out truth from myth.

The most compelling chapter in *After Theory* is “Truth, Virtue, and Objectivity,” in which one discovers Eagleton’s hope for the future. Beyond the debates of the modernists and postmodernists, this chapter is a call to return to the objectivity of texts. No matter what the buried assumptions are, texts still...
say something, and those wanting to grow beyond the limits of their own assumptions will seek to understand what others have said before disagreeing with them.

Eagleton’s call to objectivity is also a call to dialectically safe community. He writes, “Trying to be objective is an arduous, fatiguing business, which in the end only the virtuous can attain. Only those with patience, honesty, courage, and persistence can delve through the dense layers of self-deception which prevent us from seeing the situation as it really is. This is especially difficult for those who wield power—for power tends to breed fantasy, reducing the self to a state of querulous narcissism.” Quick to take on atheists such as Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, Eagleton, far from a model Christian, is nonetheless grateful for his Catholic background. He believes it was the Church that provided him an example of how to think critically in community. He writes, “Nobody who was not open to dialogue with others, willing to listen, argue honestly, and admit when he or she was wrong could make real headway in investigating the world.” In rhetoric that reads as if it was informed by the Upper Room Discourse, Eagleton notes that love is necessary to any environment where dialectically safe engagements can occur. “In the act of trusting self-disclosure, knowledge and value go hand in hand. Similarly, only if one knows that one will still be accepted can one dare to encounter the truth of oneself. In these senses, too, value and objectivity are not the opposites which so many seem to think them.”

In fact, Eagleton notes that “Objectivity does not mean judging from nowhere...you can only know how the situation is if you are standing in a position to know. Only by standing at a certain angle to reality can it be illuminated for you.” The perspectivist is able to champion his point of view without asserting that it be universally accepted. The truth one sees from his angle of vision allows one to make a significant contribution to the corporate understanding. Party politics and creedal prevent one from growing if those positions shut down dialogue. Furthermore, such positioning can distance one from those very points of view that will allow for the possibility of holding to a position and doing it without prejudice or rancor. Perhaps it is through participation in the daily struggle of life’s complexities that we begin to sense our need for dialectically safe community; perhaps, but not necessarily. Some tend to justify their own positions even if those positions, by their very nature, are incomplete if not wrong altogether. These rationalizations can take a good idea and make it static. Once such a position is self-justified it will look at all difference with condescension, and the static idea calcifies.

Understanding becomes dynamic and vital only when it remains in a context where it is infused with challenge and debate is valued. Again, Eagleton sees that this approach is difficult to achieve without that kind of psychological wholeness that breeds love and trust.

It remains to be seen if Eagleton has raised his sails enough for the winds of the imagination to launch After Theory out of the harbor and onto the high seas. What is certain is that his call for objectivity in the midst of dialectically safe engagement is not new. The New Testament is full of such instruction. Christians should heed this call to dialectically safe community, for Christ called them to it two thousand years ago.
themselves illuminated by good preaching, many Christians shamefully disparage public worship, as if all good to the soul were to come through the speaker and none from the congregation’s calling, with one heart and voice, on the name of the Lord.

So while both minister and people should be abased before God in confessing sin and pleading for pardon, asking for more grace to serve the Lord, and with true compassion praying for all peoples—while this grand business should fill their souls, a total inattention is visible in many countenances.

Their entertainment seems to begin only when the preacher has taken his text. Gross ignorance! Impious indecency! Professed believers, can you imagine you shall ever receive profit in one means of grace while you pour contempt on another? Or that after passing through a time of divine worship without any exercise of repentance, love, and devotion, you can be fit to hear the words delivered from the pulpit? Be un deceived! You are seeking merely novelty and curiosity.

I would have you raise your expectations of the good you will receive from first praying with the congregation, as a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus, before you hear the pastors of His church. There is a necessity for this: It is intended to prepare and soften the ground for receiving the good seed and to open the heart for believing and obeying the truth.

Please do not misconstrue these remarks to mean that preaching Christ is not of the utmost importance, and something all Christians should value and attend to. It is the good seed, which, when it falls on good ground, brings forth fruit abundantly. Only remember to honor equally every ordinance of God: Esteem spiritual worship of Him, in His house, as no less profitable than the dispensing of His holy Word.

**Christian Society**

To secret prayer, study of the Bible, public worship, and hearing the Word, you should add time spent in the society of Christians engaged in the same warfare as yourself. This is commanded by our God and is of great advantage. We are social by nature, and our companions must be either infectious, if destitute of faith, or greatly improving, if we make a right choice.

Love for our Savior should give us a strong aversion to conversation and company that pour contempt on His excellence and precepts. And it is not possible to consort with profane and voluptuous people, where business or office does not oblige us, and be guiltless.

The command is peremptory: Go from the presence of a man, as soon as you perceive the words of wisdom are not in him. The warning is merciful, and very alarming: A companion of fools shall be destroyed. And, lest worldly interests or a remaining love for the witty, enlivened conversation of profane people should convince us that we may sometimes associate with them and not be harmed, the salutary advice is: Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners. Your society, therefore, must be with real, not nominal Christians, for one who walks with the wise will be wise.

But do not expect to find actual Christians as flawless as you would like to imagine them, nor view their lives with a severe eye. Judge your fellow-soldiers by what you know of yourself: Innate corruptions are very stubborn, and though besieged and doomed to death, make frequent sallies. It is extremely difficult to master a besetting sin, and such victory is seldom accomplished at once or without many falls.
Beware of the hypocrisy, natural to us all, of condemning others for the same things we find in ourselves. Alas! The very best people have abundant cause to think themselves vile. For believers in Christ, one and all, are polluted, imperfect, inconstant, impatient with each other’s frailties, and scarcely able to be at peace among themselves, even though they all experience every day the tender compassions of their heavenly Father.

Don’t be surprised if you meet with many hollow Christians, talkative and full of confidence on account of their supposed conversion and the knowledge they have attained in spiritual things. So it has been from the beginning.

Upright followers of the Lamb are few in every age. You will know them by their disclaiming all trust in their own spiritual attainments, by their tender fear of offending God, by their humility and meekness, by their generosity and compassion, and by the great benefit to be derived from their conversation.

Cultivate intimacy with people like this. They will build you up in your holy faith and will establish you in every good purpose. You will burn with desire to be like them, and on leaving their company, you will find a spirit of prayer springing up in your mind.

Solitude

But company, beyond a certain measure, is of bad consequence. Keeping much retired and by ourselves is most profitable for us all. Indeed, when our worldly business is attended to as it ought to be, and secret duties are punctually observed, there simply is not much time left for people in any stage of life to spend in company.

Those who imagine that praying at certain seasons, hearing the gospel, and then entering into a sort of general conversation about religion and religious people will be sufficient for their spiritual growth are grievously mistaken.

Unless we love to be much alone, and strive to allow time for it, how can we often and solemnly feel contrition for the follies of our innate depravity? How, with the blessed Mary, ponder in our hearts the sayings of our Lord? How can we enter deeply into His agony and death, which paid the price for our peace and eternal life? How consider the weight of the crown of glory laid up for the faithful? How feel the strength and multitude of our obligations to live in exemplary obedience?

The most distinguished saints, before they entered on any arduous work for the glory of God or the good of others, did not think that the purity of their intention or the promise of God’s Spirit was sufficient without spending time alone in preparation—consider Moses, Elijah, Daniel, John the Baptist, and our Lord Himself.

When the church neglects the practice of solitude, many evils grow up: Popular teachers become puffed up and jealous of those they fear as their rivals. Professing Christians become errant Pharisees: They can talk, without humiliation, of

“Now the whole offer which Christianity makes is this: that we can, if we let God have His way, come to share in the life of Christ…”

C.S. Lewis
Thoughts to Ponder

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church and we should share His concern for its upbuilding.

Does it tend to enslave? “All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (I Cor. 6:12, ASV). Even things in themselves lawful can become our master and get out of proportion. They can so demand our attention that we neglect other things of more importance. For example, secular reading can so enslave a reader that it vitiates his appetite for the reading of the Word of God and spiritual books. Such a condition must be jealously guarded against by strict self-discipline, both as to the quality and the quantity of our secular reading.

Will it strengthen me against temptation? It is of little avail for us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation,” if we voluntarily go where we will be exposed to temptation. It is one thing for a Salvation Army officer to enter a tavern to sell his War Cry but quite another for a young man to “celebrate” with his friends. Any place or practice which tends to make sin less sinful is to be shunned.

Is it characteristic of the world or of the Father? “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (I John 2:16). If the proposed course of action is more characteristic of the world, our course is clear for “if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (I John 2:15). The world and the things that are in the world are not to be dominating objects of our affection.

But there are many relationships, pleasures, and activities which, while not sins, could be termed “weights,” for they impede progress in the heavenly race and should therefore be laid aside. Dr. G. Campbell Morgan points out that “the things which hinder are not necessarily low or vulgar. They may be in themselves noble things, intellectual things, beautiful things. But if our participation in any of these dims our vision of the ultimate goal in the purpose of God, holds us back in our running, makes our going less determined and steady, they become weights and hinder.”

Directions for Leading a Christian Life

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man’s total corruption; they can talk, without gratitude, of redemption by the blood of God. And this will be the case with us, unless we carefully balance solitude with society.

As to the many ignorant and immoral people in the world, you must expect their ridicule and censure and not let it irritate you. You could not be a servant of Christ if they approved of you: “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

Love will enable you to meekly receive contemptuous treatment and hard speeches against your faith, your conduct, and your friends. Do not be too eager to justify yourself, nor over-forward to make converts by much speaking: An irksome truth becomes only more so if unseasonably urged.

But in victory over pride, anger, and all wickedness—in steadfastly observing every rule of holy living laid down by our Savior, in courteous behavior to all, in calmly urging the Word of God when some favorable opportunity occurs—in these things you cannot exceed. Wait patiently, and you will by such irreproachable and wise conduct stop the mouth of prejudice and win some to come and live a Christian life as you do.

I wish you much of the presence and peace of God in your soul; in your practice and tempers, much steadiness and love; and a gracious answer to your prayers for your friends, relations, and fellow-sinners.

*Taken from* Letters of Henry Venn, (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust; first published 1835), 535.
THOUGHTS TO PONDER

Some Guiding Principles of Conduct

by J. Oswald Sanders

Taken from the book by J. Oswald Sanders, A Spiritual Clinic: A Suggestive Diagnosis and Prescription for Problems in Christian Life and Service (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1958), pp. 94-96.

All of us, but perhaps more particularly younger Christians, are perplexed at times concerning the righteousness or otherwise of a course of action we propose to follow. “Would it be right for me as a Christian to do this, or to go there?” is a question to which we earnestly desire to find an authoritative and satisfying answer. How can it be found? Many have been brought up under a series of taboos, especially on questions of worldliness, and have often yielded to the convictions of others of which they themselves are not fully convinced.

Such an attitude is not always conducive to a virile and healthy spiritual experience since it is one derived largely at secondhand. We must by diligent study of the Scriptures, by thought and prayer, arrive at our own convictions and not weakly adopt those inherited from others.

Six Eliminating Questions

To ask and answer the following positive questions will automatically dispose of many problems concerning doubtful things.

Will it bring glory to God? “Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (I Cor. 10:31). If the chief end of man is to glorify God, this should be our first test and chief concern. If the proposed course terminates on self and does not bring glory to God, it is something which can well be laid aside.

Is it profitable? Will it help me in my Christian life, my witness, my service? “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not” (I Cor. 10:23). Will it tend to make my life more profitable to God and to my fellow man?

Does it edify? Does it build me up in my Christian character and will it help me to build up the church of God? “For edification, and not for your destruction” (II Cor. 10:8). God’s supreme interest is centered in His... (continued on page 30)
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