PROFILES IN FAITH
William Wilberforce (1759-1833)
The Shrimp Who Stopped Slavery
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The most malignant evil of the British Empire ceased largely because of the faith and persistence of William Wilberforce.

Today one of his full portraits hangs in a pub. Another in the same town, Cambridge, hangs in a hotel. Another still, in his old college, St. John’s. In each he peers at the world quizzically through small, bright eyes over a long, upturned nose. He was said to be “the wittiest man in England, and the most religious” (Madame de Stael), and one who possessed “the greatest natural eloquence of all the men I ever met” (William Pitt). When he spoke, another quipped, “The shrimp became a whale” (James Boswell). Historian G.M. Trevelyan called this “shrimp” the primary human agent for “one of the turning events in the history of the world.”

It’s hard to imagine that this man, with the gentle grin and the small, twisted body, could move the world in a new direction. Yet William Wilberforce did.

Born on August 24, 1759, the third child of Robert and Elizabeth Wilberforce grew up surrounded by wealth. The Wilberforces had settled in Hull, England, at the beginning of the 1700s and made their wealth in the booming Baltic trade. When William was 9, his father died. The boy was sent to stay with his childless aunt and uncle, who were “great friends of Mr. [George] Whitefield.” They exposed their young charge to the evangelical preaching of John Newton, the ex-slave trader. Years later Wilberforce spoke of “reverencing him as a parent when I was a child.” Newton’s immediate influence, however, was short lived.

Fearing her son might be infected by the “poison” of Methodism, his mother brought him back to Hull and enrolled him at his grandfather’s old school at Pockington near York. His education as a gentleman continued among the commercial “aristocracy.” He learned to play cards and sing and developed his gift of witty repartee.
Of the Imitation of Christ, and Contempt of All the Vanities of the World

Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471) was an Augustinian monk and member of the Brethren of the Common Life, part of a reform movement called the Devotio Moderna. He wrote out of a profound knowledge of Scripture (having copied the entire Bible four times), and a deep relationship with Christ. He opposed speculative theology and encouraged believers to a life of holiness, humility, and intimacy with Christ. He has been described as a reformer before the Reformation, and his works have had a powerful impact on both Catholics and Protestants for over 500 years. Next to the Bible, The Imitation of Christ is the most widely read book in the history of the church. The following excerpt is the First Book, Chapter 1, of The Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis.

“He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness,” saith the Lord. These are the words of Christ, by which we are taught, how we ought to imitate his life and manners, if we will be truly enlightened, and be delivered from all blindness of heart. Let therefore our chief endeavor be, to meditate upon the life of Jesus Christ.

The doctrine of Christ exceedeth all the doctrines of holy men; and he that hath the Spirit, will find therein a hidden manna. But it falleth out, that many who often hear the gospel of Christ, are yet but little affected, because they lack the spirit of Christ. But whosoever would fully and feelingly understand the words of Christ, must endeavor to conform his life wholly to the life of Christ.

What will it avail thee to dispute profoundly of the Trinity, if thou be lacking in humility, and art thereby displeasing to the Trinity? Surely high words do not make a man holy and just; but a virtuous life makes him dear to God. I had rather feel compunction than understand the definition thereof.

If thou didst know the whole Bible by heart, and the sayings of all the philosophers, what would all that profit thee without the love of God, and without grace? Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, except to love God, and to serve him only. This is the highest wisdom, by contempt of the world to tend toward the kingdom of heaven.

Vanity therefore it is, to seek after perishing riches, and to trust in them.

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Fortunately for all of us, human nature is not fixed but plastic. Every human being is in a state of becoming, of passing from what he was to what he is to be. And this is as true of the Christian as of every other person.

The new birth does not produce the finished product. The new thing that is born of God is as far from completeness as the new baby born an hour ago. That new human being, the moment he is born, is placed in the hands of powerful molding forces that go far to determine whether he shall be an upright citizen or a criminal. The one hope for him is that he can later choose which forces shall shape him, and by the exercise of his own power of choice he can place himself in the right hands. In that sense he shapes himself and is responsible at last for the outcome.

It is not otherwise with the Christian. He can fashion himself by placing himself in the hands first of the supreme Artist, God, and then by subjecting himself to such holy influences and such formative powers as shall make him into a man of God. Or he may foolishly trust himself to unworthy hands and become at last a misshapen and inartistic vessel, of little use to mankind and a poor example of the skill of the heavenly Potter.

To any who might object that we cannot fashion ourselves, that God alone can fashion us, we offer this explanation: A young man decides he wants the benefits of a healthy tan. Now, does he tan himself or does the sun tan him? Of course the answer is that he tans himself by exposing himself to the sun. He has but to bring himself into contact with the sun’s rays and the sun will take care of the rest.

So we fashion ourselves by exposing our lives to the molding influences, good or bad, that lie around us. Let us pull this thought down from the theoretical to the practical and identify some of the powers that shape us.

FRIENDS. We are all influenced powerfully by our companions. Even the strongest characters are shaped by the company they keep. They may flatter themselves that they, with their dominant personalities, are shaping others and are uninfluenced by the lives of their friends; but we cannot escape the power of friendships.

LITERATURE. What we read with enjoyment does much to decide what we shall be finally. To lend the mind to the spell of a book is to become clay in the potter’s hand. In our Protestant system no one can decide what we shall read, but what we read will shape us for good or evil.

MUSIC. There is about music a subtle charm that no normal person can resist. It works to condition the mind and prepare it for the reception of ideas, moral and immoral, which in turn prepare the will to act either in righteousness or in sin. The notion that music and song are merely for amusement and that their effects can be laughed off is a deadly error. Actually they exercise a powerful creative influence over the plastic human soul. And their permanent effects will be apparent in our growth in grace or in evil.

PLEASURES. The human constitution is so constructed that it requires a certain amount of pleasure; it is built for it as a harp is built for music, and remains incomplete and unfulfilled without it. Sin lies not in receiving pleasure but in deriving it from wrong objects. A mother tending her baby (continued on page 17)
As I have gone deeper in my Christian walk, I have struggled to figure out how I can impact the culture for Christ. I have had a strong desire to impact others for God’s kingdom—family, friends, co-workers, and my community—but I haven’t known how to do so. I have questioned what my calling is and how God intends for me to use the spiritual gifts He has given me. Many of my friends have similar questions, and a few have found their calling in the church. I’ve come to believe that my calling is outside the church.

It seems that I walked by the “burning bush” many times before I noticed that God was showing himself to me at my job. For many years I’ve wrestled with how to be salt and light, never realizing that my ministry could be at work. God has chosen that I serve Him at my job, and as a result I have seen significant changes in how I view and perform my duties. My perspective has changed—

• from performing a job for my employer to fulfilling my calling from Christ
• from being a manager to being a leader
• from personal achievement to serving others
• from skills development to character development.

This changed perspective has made me more effective at performing my job. My ability to take action and get results has improved dramatically.

Background
When I moved to Northern Virginia in November 2000 to take a new job, my family stayed home in Southern California until the end of the school year. I had lots of time to reflect on my life—to take stock of my successes and failures, and to review my objectives for the future. I came to three conclusions:

1. Despite career successes, I was no happier than when I graduated from college 17 years earlier. Self-sufficiency and achievement, objectives I had pursued for years, weren’t fulfilling for me. The benefits I had expected didn’t materialize.

2. I had important questions that I couldn’t answer. I spent many evenings pondering the purpose of my life and the destiny of my family. I realized that my two sons would be going off to college soon. Due to my frequent business travel and long work hours, I didn’t feel I had given them a solid foundation to live their lives. Worse, I didn’t know what I should be teaching them.

3. I was still searching for the truth, and wanted a life of significance and coherence. I wanted to be able to explicitly articulate beliefs and values that could guide my family in living their lives and dealing with life’s challenges.

I resolved to pursue a work/life balance that would allow me to spend more time with my family, to raise my children in a Christian household, to deepen my relationship with Christ and to live a life consistent with my beliefs.

We joined a church when my family moved to Virginia, and my wife and children accepted Christ and were baptized. I joined the C.S. Lewis Institute’s Fellows Program and was blessed by the depth of the instruction on both Christian doctrine and spiritual disciplines. The small group, mentoring, and fellowship ignited my passion to know the Lord in a real and personal way. My activities at my church, combined with the Fellows Program, broadened my faith from a Sunday-only activity to a seven-days-a-week walk with the Lord. I began to live all aspects of my life according to a Christian worldview. I sought to live a life...
consistent with my faith that would impact not only my family, but also my workplace and local community. But I was still looking to see where God would reveal Himself—where He would call me to serve Him according to His plan.

Answering a Calling for Christ

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men. (Colossians 3:23)

It used to be that I defined myself by my job. I lived and died by how well I was performing and if I was getting recognized for my accomplishments. I was placed in my role based on my natural talents, and my objectives were the same temporal objectives as my company: shareholder value creation, satisfied customers, efficient processes, and contented employees. But as I matured in my faith, my role changed. God began to put me in situations where I increasingly had to use my spiritual gifts. I soon found myself working with more focus and enthusiasm. There was a clarity I hadn’t had before. And interesting experiences began to occur one after the other. God has gifted me with leadership, administration, and teaching. He has placed me at my job to shape and mold me—to show me the gifts He has given me and how to use them. What better place could there be to use leadership and administration than in a strategy and planning role at work? I have been called to be a living example of God’s truth, mercy, and justice. It is no coincidence that as I began to live out this calling, I gained the ability to put my faith into words in a unique and personal way.

Truth

I am the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:6)

God has instilled in me a passion for the truth—for what’s right instead of what’s wrong. One of the core beliefs I hold is the reality of an absolute standard for morality and justice. While secular society relies upon feelings and reason to determine right and wrong, I believe in the absolute truth of God’s word. I am called to be the light of the world by applying God’s truth to the issues and situations I find myself in at work each day. I am willing to stand alone, if necessary, on the side of truth.

Looking back over my career, I have always had a passion for making the business case for various opportunities. Typically, making the business case involved providing a rationale for an investment decision. I found that the more that was at stake, the more I enjoyed doing the analysis. I believe that God was honing this ability so that I could make the ultimate business case—the case for Christ. And there are no higher stakes than a life spent with an eternal reward versus a life spent with eternal punishment.

Mercy

Mercy triumphs over justice. (James 2:13)

It used to be that I held justice to be supreme over mercy. I can think of countless times that I sought to take justice into my own hands at work—to right the wrongs committed against me. But what the Lord calls for is forgiveness. I have found joy in forgiving others—in seeking reconciliation instead of retribution. I’ve learned that people value mercy far more than recognition—just as God created us to do.

Justice

Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause. (Isaiah 1:17)

Each day at work, I can live for Christ by treating everyone as a fellow image-bearer of God. No one is any better or worse than anyone else. I can step alongside my colleagues at the most difficult times and share their burdens, frustrations, and setbacks. There have been many occasions where I have had the opportunity to fight for the dignity and rights of other workers who have been wronged in their jobs. Although at times this has meant criticism, ostracism, and persecution by others, this

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As an ambassador for Christ, I find that I no longer define myself by my job. I work for God, at the place of my employer.

Being a Leader
I used to think of myself as a manager whose primary purpose was to supervise my subordinates. I thought my job was to manage people to achieve a specific outcome. As I have matured in my faith, I have begun to think like a leader whose job is to empower others. My focus has become longer term—more on mission and purpose—and less on short-term tactical objectives. As someone who works for the Lord and not for men, I am focused on God’s mission and purpose for me.

My purpose is to glorify God by showing His glory through my leadership, administration, and teaching at work. In order to successfully fulfill this purpose, I must be in fellowship with God and the family of Christ. My problem is rebellion against God. Every time I sin, I alienate myself from God. As a result of this alienation, I constantly need to be reconciled with God. Because of the cross and God’s grace, my sins have been forgiven and my relationship with God restored. As God has reconciled me to Him, so I must reconcile myself to others. Each day at work, it is my job to be a unifying, reconciling force rather than a divisive one.

This means I must lead people rather than manage them. I need to spend more time contemplating what’s possible instead of settling for what’s doable. And I must hire people differently. As a manager, I used to hire people for the task at hand—whatever the specific competency was that the immediate task required. As a leader, I am more concerned with identifying and leveraging a person’s strengths. This means hiring with growth potential in mind—what a person can become is just as important as who they currently are. I think long-term, looking for people with diverse and unique skills who can ensure the long-term success for the organization. Hiring for long-term potential has also meant that my perspective has changed from personal achievement to serving others.

Serving Others
The greatest among you shall be your servant. (Matthew 23:11)
I used to focus on personal achievement—meeting my individual performance targets.
My motivation was on the values of the earthly kingdom—power, money, success, and recognition.

Luke 6:24-26 tells us about the values of the earthly kingdom:

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.
Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.
Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.
Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to false prophets.

As I have matured in my faith, my focus has changed to serving others as Christ did. This means encouraging and developing others. My motivation is to do God’s will through helping the weak, poor, suffering, and rejected. Luke 6:20-23 summarizes the values of the heavenly kingdom:

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.
Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.
Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!
Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven.

I have an opportunity to elevate God’s values over worldly values. Every day at work, I can stand apart from others by how I conduct myself. My eternal perspective means I will make decisions for different reasons than nonbelievers. I try to treat people the way I would want to be treated. I try to help and serve others with no expectation of a benefit in return.

**Relationships**

*Therefore if we love our neighbor as God made him, we must inevitably be concerned for his total welfare, the good of his soul, his body and his community.* (John Stott)

I was created to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world in community with others. This means that relationships are a crucial part of my mission. I have an opportunity to engage others in a way that exhibits my spiritual depth. I keep in mind that:

We must always be aware that there are leaders who can build great organizations on natural gifts. Say the right words, be smart enough to do the right things, be insightful enough to connect with the right people and one can go a long way before anyone discovers the inner life is close to empty. (Gordon MacDonald)

I want to be known as someone with spiritual depth. This means being genuinely interested in the people I work with, getting to know what they stand for and believe in, and sharing what I stand for with them. People have often shared personal issues with me or asked open-ended questions about the challenges of life. I’ve noticed that as I’ve focused on encouraging and developing others, the opportunities to teach and mentor have increased. My colleagues have noticed that I welcome the opportunity to share thoughts on how to cope with challenges and issues and am genuinely interested in their success. The result has been increased trust. This increased trust has led to an increased commitment to each other, and in turn a deeper, more meaningful relationship. The deeper relationships have allowed me to better understand the needs of my colleagues and better serve them. It used to be that work was a place where I did my job. Now work is a community of friends and colleagues where we share with each other and work together to overcome challenges.

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The Way Things Ought To Be
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One of the great questions that philosophers ask and answer is this: is it possible to create an “ought” from an “is”? If things are a certain way—just the way things are—can we argue with that? How dare we? To do so is to argue against what is natural, what seems plainly normal, i.e., it’s just how it is…always has been, and always will be.

Of course, it is not just philosophers who debate this question. It is all of us, ordinary people each one: butchers, bakers, candlestick-makers, and architects and attorneys, painters and plumbers, teachers and financial counselors, computer engineers and advertising executives, parents and children, neighbors and citizens, the whole range of human responsibilities and relationships. This is just the way it is—how can you argue with that? But the question remains: can you get an “ought” from an “is”?

The question makes assumptions about life, perhaps most importantly, that there is an “ought,” a way that human beings are supposed to live, and that we have access to it. In our world today that is a much-debated assumption. As Steve Turner has put it, brilliantly, in his poem “Creed,” setting forth the “whatever” character of contemporary culture:

We believe that each man must find the truth
that is right for him.
Reality will adapt accordingly.
The universe will readjust. History will alter.

No matter how complex the issue, how perplexing the question, how weighty the idea, we can always respond with a shrug-of-the-soul and say, “Whatever.”

And of course in the culture of whatever no one can make any judgments. The charges of arrogance and intolerance are thrown up against any opinion that an “ought” does in fact exist. At the dawn of the 21st century, perhaps this is most painfully seen in the arena of sexuality, where hopes and habits are often on very public display, for very public debate, i.e., who are you to say that I am wrong? that my desires are wrong? that my feelings are wrong? This is what I want to do with whom I want to do it. It is in this area of human life, where the most tender affections are known, that personal decisions, snowballing across a society, become global dilemmas. Everything in life is not sexual, but its meaning does reach far beyond the bedroom door. The cultural conversation that begins there, and is experienced most poignantly there, ranges far and wide, touching human experience from the most personal to the most public, from family concerns to political commitments—because it is in the is/ought relationship where so much about who we are and how we are going to live is forged.

And She Cried
In my own university years, trying hard to make sense of the world and of my place in it—especially so in relation to sexuality—it was another poem of Turner’s that first opened my eyes to the moral meaning of the is/ought tension, and gave me a window into its resolution.

My love,
she said
that when all’s considered
we’re only machines.
I chained her to my bedroom wall for future use and she cried.

Simply believing something to be true does not make it true; that was the gist of Turner’s poem. If I believe that I am a machine, treating myself and others as a machine, then it still does not change the reality that I am in fact a human being with longings and yearnings to know and be known, to love and be loved, to touch and be touched. If I am treated like a machine, then for awhile, maybe, I will act like a machine, but eventually I will cry—because I really am a human being, after all, and I want to be treated like a human being ought to be treated.

But there is that word ought again. That it is there, and that it always will be there, is morally instructive—for those with ears to hear.

I once asked Steve Turner if he had seen the film Dangerous Liaisons and thought about its last scene as the cinematic version of his poem; at critical points there are eerie echoes. (He had not, but was intrigued by the question.) Profoundly framed by the is/ought conundrum, the story has been told and retold. Set in late 18th-century France, the pre-guillotine France of “Let them eat cake,” it tells the tale of a group of men and women who treat each other as sex objects, as machines. Day after day, year after year, their lives are bed-hopping extravaganzas, with one word at the heart of all they think and say and do: sex. Quite openly they confess to all who are interested, “We do not believe in love. We believe in sex. Our bodies have desires, and we will satisfy them. But love, relationships, no, not ever.”

All this seems to work very well until one of the characters (played by the actress Glenn Close) begins to feel weary of her casual sexual encounters; she wants to love one man, and be loved by one man. Thus begins the dissolution of their happy world. As the impersonal nature of their interactions begins to sour even sex, she becomes an object of scorn, viz. What?! You believe in love?! The final scene of the film shows her face, pondering the reality of her humanity, tears beginning to grace her cheeks. They are not from some new-found gladness—that love, sweet love is finally possible—but from her grief that what she believed was so profoundly out-of-kilter with her deepest desires as a human being, that even though her worldview had no place for love, those convictions proved achingly unsatisfying to her as a woman. And she cried.

And she cried of course, because there is an ought—not just an is.

We Are Without Excuse
But why? Why the “ought”? And how do we know what the “ought” is like? A generation ago, Francis Schaeffer said it very well: “God is there and he is not silent.” The work of the L’Abri community, founded by Schaeffer and his wife, was rooted in that commitment, and day by day their life together was formed by its meaning. It is one thing to confess, to even begrudgingly acknowledge, that God is there, that we are not alone in the universe. But it is something else altogether to confess that God has spoken about who we are and how we are to live.

The Bible begins with a Story that has cosmic consequences, situating us in a world created by God, in a world in which we are given a task that is written into our natures, the fabric of our existence: to care for the

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The Way Things Ought To Be

creation, to be responsible stewards, exercising dominion in the earth, discovering its possibilities, unfolding its resources—all for the sake of the glory of God, imaging his rule in our lives.

God has not hidden this from us, making it known to only a select few. No tribe or tradition is “privileged.” As Paul writes in Romans 1, “God has revealed himself so plainly in what he has made, that we are without excuse.” There is a way we are supposed to live, a way that is most satisfying, a way of true and genuine flourishing, but when we do not, God holds us accountable, because he has made us responsible. Though not a Christian, Vaclav Havel, the great Czech playwright-who-became-president, sees this all very clearly, image-bearer of God that he is. “The secret of man is the secret of his responsibility.” And so he argues that if God is gone from the universe, if we are really on our own, then we no longer have access to words like accountability and responsibility, in fact to words like purpose and meaning. For Havel, these words, and the rich visions that accompany them, are only possible if God is there.

The beliefs-behind-the-beliefs, the presuppositions, that shape both Schaeffer and Havel, create the conditions for understanding that there is an “ought” to human life under the sun, that we are made for a purpose, with certain tasks to take up, with meaning written into our deepest longings.

Words like accountability and responsibility are all bound up with an “oughtness” about the universe, and our place in it, viz. that there is a way that we ought to live, and that we are not clueless about that (Romans 1); in fact the “ought” is so plain, that we are without excuse.

The Rule of Creation

The novel Cold Mountain by Charles Frazier, winner of the National Book Award for Fiction, offers a window into this reality in the story of Stobrod Thewes, “a notorious local ne’er-do-well and scofflaw.” A native of Cold Mountain, he enters the Civil War on the side of the South, ends up in Virginia, fighting a fight that he does not care about. Not a good father, not a good husband, not a good soldier, he becomes a good fiddle-player.

Stobrod put the dollar in his shirt pocket and left. Time and again during the walk back to the camp he stopped and looked at his fiddle as if for the first time. He had never before thought of trying to improve his playing, but now it seemed worthwhile to go at every tune as if all within earshot had been recently set afire.

The music he had made up for the girl was a thing he had played every day since. He never tired of it, and in fact, believed the tune to be so inexhaustible that he could play it every day for the rest of his life, learning something new each time. His fingers had stopped the strings and his arm had drawn the bow in the shape of the tune so many times by now that he no longer thought about the playing. The notes just happened effortlessly. The tune had become a thing in itself, a habit that served to give order and meaning to a day’s end, as some might pray and others double-check the latch on the door and yet others take a drink when night has fallen.

From that day of the burning on, music came more and more into his mind. The war just didn’t engage him anymore. He became casual in his attendance. And he was little missed.
There is an “oughtness” built into the creation itself, a way for things to be ordered that makes for human flourishing in every area of life: aesthetics and arts, economics and education, family and marriage, politics and play. In the beginning God created not just beavers and bears, but a cosmos, i.e., the universe considered as a system with an order and pattern. This is the truest truth for fiddles and tunes, with their thousands of thousands of possibilities. But the same is true for story-telling and poetry, for painting and film-making, for sculpture and dance. Is it written in a book, even a Great Book, so that all can know? Is the Bible itself a textbook for ballet, a manual for becoming a great guitarist? Of course not; rather God has created a cosmos where in the act of discovery, indwelling an art with thoughtfulness, determination, and skill, there is the possibility of learning to “read” the rule of creation, finding shape and aim as we do so.

What Stobrod found as he “fiddled,” is the experience anyone has who takes the time to develop a vocation with the skills (continued on page 22)
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He later wrote, “I was naturally a high-spirited boy and fiery. They [his friends] pushed me forward and made me talk a great deal and made me very vain.” His grandfather’s death in November 1774 left him richer still and more susceptible to the temptations of plenty.

In October 1776, Wilberforce entered St. John’s College, Cambridge. His three years there were pleasant but unproductive. He had “unlimited command of money” and little academic pressure from his tutor. “As much pains were taken to make me idle as were ever taken to make any-one studious,” he later complained. His intellectual aspirations were no match for his passion for socializing. His neighbor, Thomas Gisborne, later recalled, “When he [Wilberforce] returned late in the evening to his rooms, he would summon me to join him. …He was so winning and amusing that I often sat up half the night with him, much to the detriment of my attendance at lectures the next day.”

Wilberforce graduated the same year as the hard-working William Pitt (future prime minister). Their friendship grew throughout 1779. Together they watched Parliament from the gallery and dreamed of political careers.

In the summer of 1780, the ambitious Wilberforce stood for election as a Member of Parliament (MP) for Hull. He was only 21, and one of his opponents had powerful supporters. His chances of winning were slim.

In the campaign, Wilberforce relied on his charm, energy, tact, and powers of persuasion, and in the end, he secured as many votes as his opponents combined. He was to remain an MP, for various constituencies, for another 45 years.

“The first years I was in Parliament,” he later wrote, “I did nothing—nothing that is to any purpose. My own distinction was my darling object.” He frequented the exclusive clubs of St. James and acquired a reputation as a songster and wit who was professionally “careless and inaccurate in method.” His fertile mind flitted from topic to topic. His early speeches, though eloquent, lacked focus and passion.

Starting in 1784, however, all that changed.

Birth of a Christian Politician
In 1784, after his election as the MP for Yorkshire (one of the most coveted seats in the House of Commons), Wilberforce accompanied his sister Sally, his mother, and two of his cousins to the French Riviera (for the sake of Sally’s health). He had also invited Isaac Milner, tutor at Queens’ College, Cambridge, an acquaintance. Though friends counted “Wilber” both religious and moral, had he known that Milner’s huge frame housed both a fine mathematical brain and a strong “methodistical” [evangelical] faith, it is unlikely he would have invited him. The combination was unimaginable in an English gentleman!

Milner’s clear thought and winsome manner were effective advertisements for “serious” Christianity. Wilberforce had the quicker tongue, Milner the sharper mind. As they journeyed, they debated the evangelicalism of Wilberforce’s youth.

Over the next months, Wilberforce read Philip Doddridge’s The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul (1745) beside an open Bible. His reading and conversations with Milner convinced him of wealth’s emptiness, Christianity’s truth, and his own failure to embrace its radical demands. Outwardly he looked ever confident, but inwardly he agonized. “I was filled with sorrow,” he wrote. “I am sure that no human creature could suffer more than I did for some months.”

He considered withdrawing from public life for the sake of his faith. He confided in his friend Pitt, now prime minister. Pitt told him not to withdraw. With “ten thousand doubts,” he approached John Newton. The aging saint advised him, “It is hoped and believed that the Lord has raised you up for the good of his church and for the good of the nation.”
Wilberforce’s unnatural gloom finally lifted on Easter 1786, “amidst the general chorus with which all nature seems on such a morning to be swelling the song of praise and thanksgiving.” He believed his new life had begun.

His sense of vocation began growing within. “My walk is a public one,” he wrote in his diary. “My business is in the world, and I must mix in the assemblies of men or quit the post which Providence seems to have assigned me.” He also increasingly felt the burden of his calling: “A man who acts from the principles I profess,” he later wrote, “reflects that he is to give an account of his political conduct at the judgment seat of Christ.”

Finding His Purpose
Wilberforce’s diary for the summer of 1786 charts his painful search for greater discipline and a clearer vocation. He flitted between humanitarian and local causes, between parliamentary and national reform. He studied to correct his Cambridge indolence. He practiced abstinence from alcohol and rigorous self-examination as befitted, he believed, a “serious” Christian.

After one dinner with Pitt, he wrote in his diary about the “temptations of the table,” meaning the endless stream of dinner parties filled with vain and useless conversation. “[They] disqualify me for every useful purpose in life, waste my time, impair my health, fill my mind with thoughts of resistance before and self-condemnation afterwards.”

In early 1786, Wilberforce had been tentatively approached by friends who were committed abolitionists. They asked him to lead the parliamentary campaign for their cause. Even Pitt prodded him in this direction: “Wilberforce, why don’t you give notice of a motion on the subject of the slave trade?” But Wilberforce hesitated.

The slave trade in the late 1700s involved thousands of slaves, hundreds of ships, and millions of pounds; upon it depended the economies of Britain and much of Europe. Few were aware of the horrors of the so-called “Middle Passage” across the Atlantic, where an estimated one out of four slaves died.

Some Englishmen, including John Wesley and Thomas Clarkson, had taken steps to mitigate the evil. Yet few in England shared the abolitionists’ sense that slavery was a great social evil. Some presumed that slaves were a justifiable necessity or that they deserved their plight.

For Wilberforce light began to dawn slowly during his 27th year. His diary for Sunday, October 28, 1787, shows with extraordinary clarity the fruit of prolonged study, prayer, and conversation. He realized the need for “some reformer of the nation’s morals, who should raise his voice in the high places of the land and do within the church and nearer the throne what Wesley has accomplished in the meeting and among the multitude.”

He also summed up what became his life mission: “God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners” (i.e., morality).

Later he reflected on his decision about slavery: “So enormous, so dreadful, so irremediable did the trade’s wickedness appear that my own mind was completely made up for abolition. Let the consequences be what they would; I from this time determined that I would never rest until I had effected [the slave trade’s] abolition.”

Enormous Foes
Wilberforce was initially optimistic, naively so, and expressed “no doubt of our success.” He sought to stem the flow of slaves from Africa by international accord. The strength of his feelings and the support of prominent politicians like Pitt, Edmund Burke, and Charles Fox blinded him to the enormity of his task.

From his deathbed, John Wesley wrote him, “I see not how you can go through
your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy, which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you?”

In May 1788, Wilberforce had recovered from another of his periodic bouts of illness to introduce a 12-point motion to Parliament indicting the trade. He and Thomas Clarkson (whom Wilberforce praised as central to the cause’s success) had thoroughly researched and now publicized the trade’s physical atrocities. But Parliament wanted to maintain the status quo, and the motion was defeated.

The campaign and opposition intensified. Planters, businessmen, ship owners, traditionalists, and even the Crown opposed the movement. Many feared personal financial ruin and nationwide recession if the trade ceased. Wilberforce was vilified. Admiral Horatio Nelson castigated “the damnable doctrine of Wilberforce and his hypocritical allies.” One of Wilberforce’s friends wrote fearing he would one day read of Wilberforce being “carbonadoed [broiled] by West Indian planters, barbecued by African merchants, and eaten by Guinea captains.”

Wilberforce’s spirit was indomitable, his enthusiasm palpable. As the slave owners’ agent in Jamaica wrote, “It is necessary to watch him, as he is blessed with a very sufficient quantity of that enthusiastic spirit, which is so far from yielding that it grows more vigorous from blows.”

The pathway to abolition was fraught with difficulty. Vested interest, parliamentary filibustering, entrenched bigotry, international politics, slave unrest, personal sickness, and political fear-all combined to frustrate the movement. It would take years before Wilberforce would see success.

Prime Minister of Philanthropy
The cause of the slaves was not Wilberforce’s only concern. The second “great object” of Wilberforce’s life was the reformation of the nation’s morals. Early in 1787, he conceived of a society that would work, as a royal proclamation put it, “for the encouragement of piety and virtue; and for the preventing of vice, profaneness, and immorality.” It eventually became known as the Society for the Suppression of Vice. Enlisting support from leading figures in church and state—and King George III—Wilberforce made private morality a matter of public concern.

Laws restricting drinking, swearing, and gaming on Sundays were enforced. “All loose and licentious prints, books, and publications” were suppressed, including Thomas Paine’s The Age of Reason. Wilberforce was criticized for his “priggish” concerns, yet John Pollock, a recent biographer, wrote, “The reformation of manners grew into Victorian virtues and Wilberforce touched the world when he made goodness fashionable.”

It has been estimated that Wilberforce—dubbed “the prime minister of a cabinet of philanthropists”—was at one time active in support of 69 philanthropic causes. He gave away a fourth of his annual income to the poor. He also gave an annuity to Charles Wesley’s widow from 1792 until her death in 1822. He fought the cause of “climbing boys” (chimney sweeps) and single mothers. He sought the welfare of soldiers, sailors, and animals, and established Sunday schools and orphanages for “criminal poor children.” His homes were havens for the marginalized and dispossessed.

Targeting the powerful as the agents of change, Wilberforce made common cause with Hannah More, the evangelical playwright, whose Thoughts on the Manners of the Great appeared in 1787. “To expect to reform the poor while the opulent are corrupt,” she wrote, “is to throw odors [perfume] on the stream while the springs are poisoned.”

Clapham, a leafy village south of London, became a base for a number of these influential people, who became known as...
...he did not embrace a dull, joyless legalism. His personality alone was too lively for that.

The Public Man’s Private Side

Wilberforce’s health was blighted by weak and painful eyes, a stomach prone to colitis, and a body that for many years had to be held upright by a crude metal frame. In his late 20s, he already wrote from his sickbed, “[I] am still a close prisoner, wholly unequal even to such a little business as I am now engaged in: add to which my eyes are so bad that I can scarce see to how to direct my pen.” His gloomy doctor reported, “That little fellow, with his calico guts, cannot possibly survive a twelve-month.”

He did, though in the process he became dependent on small doses of opium, the nearest thing to an effective pain killer and treatment for colitis known at the time. Wilberforce was aware of opium’s dangers and was not easily persuaded to take it. After taking it for some time, he noticed that omitting his nighttime dose caused sickness, sweating, and sneezing in the morning. Opium’s hallucinatory powers terrified him, and the depressions it caused virtually crippled him at times.

His notebooks contain anguished prayers: “I fly to thee for succor and support, O Lord, let it come speedily. …I am in great troubles insurmountable by me. …Look upon me, O Lord, with compassion and mercy, and restore me to rest, quietness, and comfort in the world, or in another by removing me hence into a state of happiness.” In his later years, he showed the long-term effects of opium use, particularly listlessness and amnesia.

His marriage to Barbara Spooner, in 1797, brought him much joy. On the other hand, the financial iniquity of his oldest son in 1830 (reducing his parents to a peripatetic existence in their children’s homes) and the death of his second daughter in 1832 caused his final years to be overshadowed by grief and poverty. (In time, three of his four sons became Roman Catholics, one an adversary of Lord Shaftesbury, Wilberforce’s successor in many ways).

Wilberforce’s life was not without criticism. Some see in his sons’ five-volume Life muted praise of both his evangelicalism and his parenting. Opponents of abolition bitterly denounced both his character and his cause. A Wimbledon man, Anthony Fearon, attempted blackmail (causing Wilberforce to write, “At all events, he must not be permitted to publish”), but the precise grounds are not known.

Through all this, Wilberforce drew spiritual and intellectual strength from the Bible and the Puritans (such as Richard Baxter, John Owen, and Jonathan Edwards), and built his evangelical faith on a mildly Calvinist foundation. Philip Doddridge’s Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul continued to shape his spirituality: daily self-examination, and extended times of prayer, regular Communions and fasting, morning and evening devotions, and times of solitude. He also paid careful attention to God’s providential provision in his life, the needs of others, and his own mortality.

For all of Wilberforce’s appeal to “real” and “vital” Christianity, especially in his best-selling A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System…Contrasted with Real Christianity (1797), he did not embrace a dull, joyless legalism. His personality alone was too lively for that. As he once wrote to a relative, “My grand objection to the religious system still held by many who declare...

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Profiles in Faith: William Wilberforce

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themselves orthodox churchmen...is that it tends to render Christianity so much a system of prohibitions rather than of privilege and hopes...and religion is made to wear a forbidding and gloomy air.”

Vocal Until Death

It is hard to comprehend the extent of Wilberforce’s labors and scope of his achievement. He contributed to the Christianization of British India by securing chaplains to the East India Company and missionaries to India. He worked with Charles Simeon and others to secure parishes for evangelical clergy, thus shaping the future of the Church of England. He helped form a variety of “parachurch” groups: the Society for Bettering the Cause of the Poor (1796), the Church Missionary Society (1799), the British and Foreign Bible Society (1806), the Africa Institution (1807), and the Anti-Slavery Society (1823).

But his greatest legacy remains his fight against the slave trade, which frustrated him for years. As early as 1789, he achieved some success in having 12 resolutions against the trade passed—only to be outmaneuvered on fine legal points. Another bill to abolish the trade was defeated in 1791 (by 163 to 88) because a slave uprising in Santo Domingo made MPs nervous about granting freedom to slaves. Further defeats followed in 1792, 1793, 1797, 1798, 1799, 1804, and 1805.

But Wilberforce persisted, and finally, on February 23, 1807, a political ruse by Lord Grenville’s more liberal administration (pointing out that the trade assisted Britain’s enemies) secured its abolition by 283 votes to 16. The House cheered. Wilberforce wept with joy.

Wilberforce became a national hero overnight, and his opponents sharpened their knives. Lord Milton Lascelles spent no less than £200,000 to fight (unsuccessfully) against Wilberforce in the election in 1807.

The next issue was ensuring that the abolition of the slave trade was enforced and that eventually slavery was abolished. This last goal took another 26 years, and Wilberforce’s health prevented him from continuing to the end. At age 62, he turned over parliamentary leadership of emancipation to Thomas Foxwell Buxton.

But Wilberforce continued to play a role. In 1823 he published An Appeal to the Religion, Justice and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire on Behalf of the Negro Slaves in the West Indies. Three months before his death he was found “going out to war again,” campaigning for abolitionist petitions to Parliament. He declared publicly, “I had never thought to appear in public again, but it shall never be said that William Wilberforce is silent while the slaves require his help.”

On July 26, 1833, the final passage of the emancipation bill was insured when a committee of the House of Commons worked out key details. Three days later, Wilberforce died. Parliament continued working out details of the measure, and later Buxton wrote, “On the very night on which we were successfully engaged in the House of Commons in passing the clause of the Act of Emancipation...the spirit of our friend left the world. The day which was the termination of his labors was the termination of his life.”

Parliament overruled family preference and designated Westminster Abbey as the place for both his funeral and memorial. Parliamentary business was suspended. One MP recalled, “The attendance was very great. The funeral itself, with the exception of the choir, was perfectly plain. The noblest and most fitting testimony to the estimation of the man.”

It is right that Wilberforce is remembered in a church; he was a churchman through and through. But the places where his portrait hangs in Cambridge are in their own ways also fitting. His walk was indeed in the world, though not of it.
in a glow of delight or smiling in death when she hears that her late-born is normal and will live presents a tender picture of unselfish pleasure. A man at the card table fascinated by the thrills and perils of gambling is an example of degraded and demoralizing pleasure. The Christian should look well to his pleasures for they will enoble or debase him, and this by a secret law of the soul from which there is no escape.

AMBITIONS. The great saints of the world have all been ambitious. They were driven forward by an inward urge that finally became too much for them. Paul stated his ambition as being a desire to know Christ and to enter into the fullest meaning of His death and resurrection, and toward this goal he pressed with everything that lay in him. By this ambition he was propelled upward to the very peak of spiritual perfection. Carnal and selfish ambitions, however, have just the opposite effect. Each one should watch his ambitions, for they will shape him as an artist shapes the yielding clay.

THOUGHTS. We Christians need to take into account the tremendous power that lies in plain, ordinary thinking. We have allowed ourselves to be cheated out of a precious treasure by the irresponsible babblings of weird occultists and quack religionists who make too much of the human mind or who misunderstand it altogether. From them we have turned away, and have turned so far that we forget that it is still true that a man will finally be what his active thoughts make him. It is hardly too much to say that no Christian ever fell into sin who didn’t first allow himself to brood over it with increasing desire. And every godly soul knows how much spiritual meditations have meant to the total success of his inward life. “As (a man) thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

There are of course many others, but these are among the major forces that shape our lives. To sum up, the wise Christian will take advantage of every proper means of grace and every ennobling and purifying influence that God in His providence places in his way. Conversely, he will avoid every degrading influence and flee from these forces that make for evil. He has but to cooperate with God in embracing the good. God himself will do the rest.

Impacting the Workplace for Christ

Character Development
He who abides in Me and I in him bears much fruit. (John 15:5)

I used to focus on developing new skills on the job to ensure growth and advancement. Now my focus is to mature in my faith through character development. My goal is to conform more and more to the image of Christ—to practice the spiritual disciplines and to fulfill my calling to glorify God. My faith in God and obedience to His will have given me peace. The cross and the salvation I received from Christ give me an eternal perspective. A 75-year life span is equivalent to five minutes in eternity. I have learned to put aside worries about my career path, reorganizations, and work force reductions. If a major change at work occurs tomorrow, I am okay with that. I will assume that I’ve graduated from my current “class” and that it’s time for the next part of the Lord’s calling for me. This has given me a broader perspective and calmness that has made me more effective in performing my job. I’ve learned that work/life balance isn’t just about how much time I have outside of work to spend with my family. It’s also about having a peace of mind that allows me to weather the storm in good times and bad.

As I continue to grow in Christ, the fruits of the spirit should be more evident in my life. In addition to peace, others should see love, joy, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control.
When we meet some people we know immediately and instinctively that they are different. We are anxious to learn their secret. It is not the way they dress or talk or behave, although it influences these things. It is not that they have affixed a name tag to themselves and proclaimed themselves the adherent of a particular religion or ideology. It’s not even that they have a strict moral code which they faithfully follow. It is that they know Jesus Christ, and that he is a living reality to them. They dwell in him and he dwells in them. He is the source of their life and it shows in everything they do.

Not merely in the words you say,
Not only in your deeds confessed,
But in the most unconscious way
Is Christ expressed.

Is it a beatific smile?
A holy light upon your brow?
Oh no! I felt his presence
When you laughed just now.

To me, ’twas not the truth you taught,
To you so clear, to me still dim,
But when you came you brought
A sense of him.

And from your eyes he beckons me
And from your heart his love is shed,
Till I lose sight of you and see
The Christ instead.

These people have an inner serenity which adversity cannot disturb; it is the peace of Christ. They have a spiritual power that physical weakness cannot destroy; it is the power of Christ. They have a hidden vitality that even the process of dying and death cannot quench; it is the life of Christ.

To use Biblical expressions, “The peace of Christ rules in their hearts,” “the power of Christ is made perfect in their weakness,” and “the life of Christ is made manifest in their mortal flesh.”

The commonest description in the Scriptures of a follower of Jesus is that he or she is a person “in Christ.” The expressions “in Christ,” “in the Lord,” and “in him” occur 164 times in the letters of Paul alone, and are indispensable to an understanding of the New Testament. To be “in Christ” does not mean to be inside Christ, as tools are in a box or our clothes in a closet, but to be organically united to Christ, as a limb is in the body or a branch is in the tree. It is this personal relationship with Christ that is the distinctive mark of his authentic followers.

The word “Christian” occurs only three times in the Bible. Because of its common misuse we could profitably dispense with it. Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul never used the word, or at least not in their recorded teaching. What distinguishes the true followers of Jesus is neither their creed, nor their code of ethics, nor their ceremonies, nor their culture, but Christ. What is often mistakenly called “Christianity” is, in essence, neither a religion nor a system, but a person, Jesus of Nazareth.

Now let us explore some of the implications of being “in Christ.” First, to be in
Christ brings personal fulfillment as a human being. All around us are men and women who are unfulfilled and alienated, who are asking what it means to be a human being. They are seeking the secret of satisfaction, of happiness, and are searching for their own identity. Where is it to be found?

Jesus said, “I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to me will never hunger, and he that believes in me will never thirst.” There is a hunger in the human heart which none but Christ can satisfy. There is a thirst which none but he can quench. There is an inner emptiness which only he can fill. I don’t know any more striking expression of this in contemporary literature than in the writing of Malcolm Muggeridge, who said, “I may, I suppose, regard myself as being a relatively successful man. People occasionally stare at me in the street. That’s fame. I can fairly easily earn enough to qualify for admission to the highest slopes of inland revenue. That’s success. Furnished with money and a little fame, even the elderly, if they care to, can partake of trendy diversions. That’s pleasure. It might happen once in a while that something I said or wrote was sufficiently heeded to persuade myself that it represented a serious impact on our time. That’s fulfillment. Yet I say to you, and I beg of you to believe me, multiply these tiny triumphs by a million, add them all together, and they are nothing, less than nothing, a positive impediment, measured against one draught of that living water that Christ offers to the spiritually thirsty.”

Secondly, to be in Christ brings brotherly unity. The expression “in Christ” has a collective as well as an individual implication. It means to be related not only to the Messiah personally, the Christ, but also to the Messianic community he came to build. Indeed, it is not possible to belong to him without simultaneously belonging to it. In this new community Jesus has abolished the barriers of race, nationality, class and sex, which normally divide mankind. In its place he has created what the Apostle Paul calls a “single New Humanity.” He writes again that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Now this unity was a sensational fact in the early days of the Church. For in those days women were despised, slaves had no rights, and Jews and Gentiles were not on speaking terms. Today, however, to claim brotherly unity between the followers of Christ sounds like a rather sick joke, when so-called Christians are fighting one another in Northern Ireland and are segregated from one another in Southern Africa and elsewhere. Moreover, the Church of Jesus Christ is split into Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, and Protestantism is further splintered into five main ecumenical families, not to mention the thousands of smaller denominations and house churches. Dr. David Barrett has documented 6,000 African Independent Churches. How can we possibly claim “brotherly unity?”

Only in this way: Although every follower of Jesus should blush with shame over the fightings and factions that have disgraced the history of the Church, yet those who are truly “in Christ” enjoy a unity with one another which transcends nation and denomination, race and rank, class and culture.

I quote Bishop Stephen Neil: “In the fellowship of those who are bound together by personal loyalty to Jesus Christ, (continued on page 20)
We are always in danger of trivializing what it means to be converted, or to be a follower of Jesus. To be “in Christ” is to be radically transformed, to the roots of our very being.

Thirdly, to be “in Christ” brings radical transformation. We are always in danger of trivializing what it means to be converted, or to be a follower of Jesus. To be “in Christ” is to be radically transformed, to the roots of our very being. As Paul says, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” And again, he speaks of our having died to the old life and risen again with Christ to a life that is new.

Notice that creation and resurrection language are the only vocabulary that can do justice to the experience of new life in Christ. And new life in Christ leads inevitably to a new lifestyle, with a new value system and new moral standards, as becomes plain to those who read the Sermon on the Mount. In that Sermon, Jesus sets before us a choice between two value systems—his own and the world’s.

The world admires the powerful, the successful, the tough and the brash, the achievers and the go-getters. But Jesus says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” who are humble before God.

We are always in danger of trivializing what it means to be converted, or to be a follower of Jesus. To be “in Christ” is to be radically transformed, to the roots of our very being.

Blessed are the meek,” who are humble towards one another.

The world’s model, like that of the 19th century German philosopher, Nietzsche, is the super-man, tough and overbearing. But the model of Jesus is still the little child.

The world is concerned with appearances, external conformity to conventions, rules and regulations. But Jesus again and again talks about the heart, “The pure in heart,” or “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

The world says, “Sex is for fun, enjoyment without commitment.” But Jesus says, “Sex is for love, enjoyment within commitment.”

The world’s philosophy is, “Give as good as you get. Love those who love you and repay evil for evil.” But Jesus still says, “Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, do good to those who hate you, overcome evil with good.”

The mind-set of the world is extremely materialistic, covetous for consumer goods. But Jesus says, “Don’t be anxious about what to eat and drink and wear. Instead, seek first God’s rule and God’s righteousness.”

We have no liberty to dismiss the teachings of Jesus as unpractical and unrealistic, or to convert it into a prudential little middle-class respectability. No, no, Jesus still says to us, “You’ve got to choose. Nobody can serve two masters.” We have to choose between him and the world—between the broad road that leads to the destruction and the narrow way that leads to life.

But are the followers of Jesus interested only in themselves and one another, and let the rest of the world go hang? No. Jesus told us to be the salt and light of the world. That is, he means us to permeate secular society, seeking to arrest its social decay, as the salt hinders decay in fish and meat. He means us to be the light of the world, shining into the darkness of its tragedy and evil.
You know the name, perhaps, of Robert Bellah, who is a sociologist at the University of California at Berkeley, and also head of the Center of Japanese and Korean Studies there. In an interview with him some years ago, I read to my astonishment that he said this: “We should not underestimate the significance of the small group of people who have a new vision of a just and gentle world. In Japan a very small minority of Protestant Christians introduced ethics into politics and had an impact beyond all proportion to their numbers. They were central in the beginnings of the women’s movement, labor unions, and virtually every reform movement.” Then he added: “The quality of a culture may be changed when two percent of its people have a new vision.” Now we are many more than two percent. We could have a far greater impact on society if we were truly the salt and the light of the world. Sharing the good news of Jesus is not to be the hobby of a few eccentric enthusiasts. Mission is the concern of every follower of Jesus.

But there is a precaution that I need to add. To proclaim the uniqueness of Jesus is one thing; to proclaim the superiority of Western Civilization or ecclesiastical culture is something quite, quite different. The 19th Century missionaries were great in their self-sacrifice and their courage, and we honor them for their devotion. Would that we had half their zeal for Christ! But with the benefit of hindsight, we have to say that they made a grave mistake in confusing the gospel with culture. The most striking example I have found is in West Africa, where I have seen with my own eyes Gothic spires rising above the coconut palms and Anglican bishops sweating copiously in Medieval European dress. And I’ve heard African tongues trying to speak Jacobean English. It’s ludicrous.

Stanley Jones, who was himself an American Methodist missionary to India, put it strikingly. At the end of his book, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, he writes, “There is a beautiful Indian marriage custom, that dimly illustrates our task in India and where it ends. At the wedding ceremony in India, the women friends of the bride accompany her with music to the home of the bridegroom. They usher her into the presence of the bridegroom, but that is as far as they can go. They then retire and leave her with him. “And that,” he says, “is our joyous task in India. To know Him, to introduce Him, and then to retire. Not necessarily geographically, but to trust India with Christ, and trust Christ with India. We can only go so far. He and India must go the rest of the way.”

Our concern as followers of Jesus is neither with a religion called “Christianity,” nor with a culture called “Western Civilization,” but with a person, Jesus of Nazareth, the one and only God-man who lived a perfect life of love, died on the cross for our sins, bearing in his own person the condemnation that we deserve, was raised in triumph from the grave and is now alive, accessible and available to us through the Holy Spirit. He is also coming again one day in sheer magnificence, that every knee should bow to him. That is the Person with whom we are concerned.

To be “in Christ” is to find personal fulfillment, to enjoy brotherly unity, and to experience a radical transformation. Only then can we become the world’s salt and light, sharing the good news with others, making an impact on society, and above everything else seeking to bring honor and glory to his wonderful Name.
The Way Things Ought To Be
(continued from page 11)

required to understand that things don’t “just happen,” that life and the world are not always “just tangle and drift.” As my father told me many times over the course of his career as a University of California scientist, “The longer I work at understanding the physical world, plants and how they grow, the more certain I am that this is a creation, an incredibly complex creation. The intention and order is there—if you have eyes to see.”

Creation’s Seventh Sunrise
Someone who has had eyes to see is Wendell Berry, poet, novelist, essayist, and farmer. I have almost all that he has written, some forty books, and have found him to be a wise guide, pointing the way to a more fully human life—which in his terms, is also a more holy life, as his vision is deeply wrought out of the Christian story. With keen perception, one reviewer described him in this way:

Wherever we live, however we do so, we desperately need a prophet of responsibility and...Berry may be the closest to one that we have. But, fortunately, he is also a poet of responsibility. He makes one believe that the good life may not only be harder than what we’re used to but sweeter as well.

In his own art as a writer, Berry thinks deeply and widely, time and again reflecting upon what it means to be human in the modern world; and conversely, what we are losing as humans when we disengage and disconnect from the conditions which make humanness possible, viz. our relationships and responsibilities to people and places. And he has found a way to do so that carries his craft into the marketplace of ideas. It would be the very rare “Christian” bookstore that would carry his work; on the other side, few serious bookstores in America would be without his books.

He has found a voice that communicates to people, whatever their beliefs may be about the Apostles’ Creed.

In his stories of the Port William “membership,” he tells about the interconnected lives of a community of family and friends over the course of a century. Loving them as we come to know them, in their homes and in their fields, in all of their joys and their sorrows, we meet Uncle Jack, Mat and Margaret Feltner, Wheeler Catlett, Uncle Peach, Burleigh Coulter, Elton and Mary Penn, Nathan Coulter, Andy Catlett, Jayber Crow, and many more. And he is a poet as well, with work reflecting upon the cares and concerns of the human heart: work and worship, marriage and family, birth and death, pleasures and pains, rural and urban. One reviewer says it this way: “[Berry’s poems] shine with the gentle wisdom of a craftsman who has thought deeply about the paradoxical strangeness and wonder of life.” Yes, again and again and again.

But he is also an essayist with an eye that ranges across the landscape of “sex, economy, freedom, and community,” to quote the title of one work. Always concerned about what it means and takes to be human, Berry writes for Everyman, even as he does so with Christian conviction intact. Sometimes his flag flies for all to see—for example, in “Christianity and the Survival of Creation”—but more often than not he writes for those with ears to ear. In his newest collection, Citizenship Papers, he writes:

In the year 2000, I published a small book, Life Is a Miracle. My friend Charlie Sing has now asked me to deal with the question “Is life a miracle?”—thus inviting me to defend my title. Did I really mean it?

Yes, I did, and I do, mean it. And I mean it practically. I know that humans, including modern biologists, have learned a
good deal about living things, and about parts of living things. But I don't believe that anybody knows much about the life of living things. I have seen with my own eyes and felt with my own hands many times the difference between live things and dead ones, and I do not believe that the difference can be so explained as to remove the wonder from it. What is the coherence, the integrity, the consciousness, the intelligence, the spirit, the informing form that leaves a living body when it dies? What was the “green fire” that Aldo Leopold saw going out in the eyes of the dying wolf? When you watch the eyes of the dying you see that they no longer see. I think a great painter can paint the difference between an eye that is dead and a living eye, but I don’t think anybody can explain the difference except by an infinite regression of responses to an infinitely repeated question: “But what was the cause of that cause?”

To me, as a matter of principle and of belief, life is a miracle.

The cause of that cause? Berry is never, ever cheap. He doesn’t farm cheaply, write cheaply, think or live cheaply. For him to ask a question about causation means that he will answer with care and rigor, and he will offer nothing cheap. As a habit of heart, this prophet and poet of responsibility weighs his words carefully, setting them before the watching world with craft and intention, exploring both delights and tragedies, glories and shames. If you have ears, then hear.

In his most “confessional” of works, the book where his own beliefs are most explicitly stated, A Timbered Choir: The Sabbath Poems 1979-1997, he reflects on what he has seen, and longs to have seen, with these words.

To sit and look at light-filled leaves
May let us see, or seem to see,
Far backward as through clearer eyes
To what unsighted hope believes:
The blessed conviviality
That sang Creation’s seventh sunrise.

Time when the Maker’s radiant sight
Made radiant every thing He saw,
And every thing He saw was filled
With perfect joy and life and light.
His perfect pleasure was sole law;
No pleasure had become self-willed.

For all His creatures were His pleasures
And their whole pleasure was to be
What he made them; they sought no gain
Or growth beyond their proper measures,
Nor longed for change or novelty.
The only new thing could be pain.

Berry comes close to the glory of the creation, imagining creatures and their pleasures together as one with the pleasure of God, *viz.* “The blessed conviviality that sang Creation’s seventh sunrise.” The poem is one of many in his work that wisely and wonderfully allows us to come close ourselves, to see what God made and what it means.

In the beginning God did create the heavens and the earth, a cosmos with purposes and plans built into its very structures. There is an “oughtness” that gives shape and aim in every sphere of human life, in every dimension that humans take up their responsible action in history....
We live in a time of growing secularism. The separation between the sacred and secular, the ecclesiastical and political, is growing. The accent of living is on the present. Life is to be lived according to the present pressure without a view towards ultimate meaning and significance.

Within the church, membership is down in all the major denominations. At the same time, there is growing membership in cult and occult groups. The central doctrines of the gospel are questioned not only from outside the church but from inside. Unless there is an authoritative standard by which we can give clear answers to the above problems, we are caught in the same relativism and flux as the culture.

Sartre once said that no finite point has any meaning unless it has an infinite reference point. In his Tractatus Logico Philosophicus, Wittgenstein argues that the sense of the world must lie outside the world, that man never has sufficient perspective from within this world to build an eternal structure of truth and value. If there is any value that does have value, it must lie outside of the whole sphere of what happens now. In other words, ethics are transcendental.

In a lecture (published in the Philosophical Review, January 1965), Wittgenstein said that if a man could write a book of ethics which really was a book of ethics, this book would, with an explosion, destroy all other books in the world.

Neither Sartre nor Wittgenstein seriously considered the Scriptures as the answer to the need for that reference point. Unless we do have that reference point in Scripture, we are bound to be uncertain about the message we have to proclaim.

There has been a widespread retreat from the absolute authority of Scripture even in conservative circles. Probably the most important factor is the massive assault of secular science and negative biblical criticism. Nearly the entire biblical framework of history and doctrine has been repudiated by a substantial segment of modern culture—including some of the theological sectors. Some feel that the inerrancy of Scripture cannot survive the scrutiny of critical study.

There are three basic ways to deal with the allegation that there are errors in the Bible. First, one can try to solve the problems uncovered by critical study. Second, one can hunt for a way to do theology without a reliable Bible. But when the authority of Scripture is surrendered, it is far from clear on what ground Christian truth can be predicated, because the tendency has been to appeal to biblical patterns and themes to illuminate the views put forward. The third alternative has been to limit inerrancy so that it is unaffected by certain kinds of errors.

Both liberals and conservatives have failed to be sufficiently critical of the critical theories. Obviously a full discussion is not possible here, but there is an approach to the problems that does show what is at stake, which is a consideration of Christ's view of the Bible.

A number of significant liberal scholars have concluded that Jesus held an extremely high view of biblical authority. Kenneth Kantzer writes:

H.J. Cadbury, Harvard professor and one of the more extreme New Testament critics of the last generation, once declared that he was far more sure as a mere historical fact that Jesus held to the common Jewish view of an infallible Bible than that Jesus...
believed in His own Messiahship. Adolph Harnak, greatest church historian of modern times, insists that Christ was one with his apostles, the Jews and the entire early church, in complete commitment to the infallible authority of the Bible. John Knox, author of what is perhaps the most highly regarded recent life of Christ, states that there can be no question that this view was taught by our Lord Himself.

Quotes from critics Bultmann and F.C. Grant could be added to the same effect. R.T. France in his excellent study, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, lists 164 references (not including parallels) in the synoptic gospels that need to be examined in determining Jesus’ view of Scripture. If the Gospel of John were included, the number would be nearly 200.

Christ refers to Abel, Noah, Abraham, Sodom, and Gomorrah, Lot, Isaac, and Jacob and David eating showbread. It seems that he accepted the entire historical fabric of the Old Testament including those stories that are most troublesome to modern minds. In his various debates with religious leaders he never criticized them for following the Old Testament too carefully. He criticized them sharply for exalting their tradition above Scripture and for not reading it profoundly enough (Matt. 23:23; Mk. 7:1-13; Matt. 19:16-22; Matt. 22:29). Jesus also complied with relatively minor matters of the Law, for example, in making a leper show himself to the priest (Mk. 18:16) and in the payment of the temple tax (Matt. 17:24).

In the temptation narratives, Jesus says man is to live not by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. In Matthew 5:17 he states that he did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them; not one jot or tittle will pass away. Whoever relaxes the least of the commandments and teaches others to do the same will be least in the kingdom, and whoever does and teaches the least of the commandments will be great in the kingdom.

In John 10:31-39 Jesus calls the Scripture Law even though the passage is from Psalm 82:6—no doubt because all Scripture possesses legal force. He inserts the phrase “Scripture cannot be broken.” Its significance is not just as an isolated proof text, but as an indication of Jesus’ normal trust in Scripture.

One recurring objection to this line of approach is that Jesus accommodated his views to those of his contemporaries without committing Himself to the correctness of their position. There are two basic objections to this. First, Jesus was no conformist in theology. He was not afraid of conflict. Secondly, His doctrine of Scripture was too close to his own self-understanding to be assumed. Clark Pinnock says,

Our Lord’s view of inspiration was not an isolated tenet of the border of his theology. His belief in the truthfulness of the Old Testament was the rock on which he based his own sense of vocation and the validity of much of his teachings.

Tasker writes:

Indeed, if he could be mistaken here on matters which he regarded as of the strictest relevance to his own person and ministry, it is difficult to see exactly how or why he either can or should be trusted anywhere else.

If Christ did hold such a high view of Scripture, then this might provide a clue as to how we are to approach our biblical difficulties. Should we not at least give the passage the benefit of the doubt? Should we start inductively with the difficulties and allow them to determine our view of Scripture, or should we start with Christ’s view of Scripture and view our difficulties in light of that?

At stake in the debate on the authority of Scripture is the authority of Christ Himself. Either we have a divine Christ and an infallible Bible, or a fallible Bible and no divine Christ.
Imagine being able to listen to favorite worship songs, favorite chapters of the Bible, favorite sections of devotional books, favorite prayer books, and favorite sections of inspirational books in one easy resource. Imagine having all of these favorites arranged in an order that guides your daily devotion. Imagine that your favorites could be arranged in any order, keeping them fresh, meaningful, and spontaneous, yet still focus on the heart of what you’ve come to love and live. Now, imagine having all of these possibilities at the touch of a button. The Apple iPod makes these imaginings a reality.

Introduced in 2001, iPods are now in their 5th generation. iPods interface with your computer through free software, iTunes, a user-friendly program that organizes audio files by title, artist, album, and other categories. I own a 4th generation iPod, which plays music and audiobooks and displays photos. Though I have not yet felt the need to upgrade to the 5th generation iPod, I have transformed and upgraded my use of it to include devotions, sermons, prayers, and even the Bible itself.

Many churches have websites on which they make their recorded sermons available online for downloading and listening on your personal computer. Some of these churches and other Christian organizations offer “podcasts,” a term for a broadcast adapted for use on an iPod. A podcast is a subscription, almost always free, of sermons or talks that are delivered to your personal computer daily or weekly, that can then be easily added to your iPod for you to explore at your convenience. Manually transferring these resources to your iPod usually requires just one click of the mouse to download them to your computer and then another click to transfer them to your iPod. I subscribe to R.C. Sproul’s free weekly podcast, Renewing Your Mind, and Alistair Begg’s free daily podcast, Truth for Life. While I love listening to Alistair on the radio during his morning broadcast, my work schedule doesn’t allow me to listen at that particular time of day. Instead, I download his sermon and listen to it as I walk to work each morning.

iPods and iTunes also store and play audiobooks. An audiobook is a book which has been read, usually by a trained speaker, into an audio file for use on an iPod. The Bible, for example, is an indispensable audiobook for Christians to have. My iPod has the complete NIV Bible read by Max McLean, but you can easily use the iTunes software to place only selected books or chapters of the Bible on your iPod if you so desire. This makes the listening manageable and digestible. I can pause when I want to meditate on a particular verse or replay passages that are tougher to digest or more thought-provoking.

In addition to the audio NIV Bible, my iPod has Christian audiobooks that deepen my study and fellowship with the Lord. A few books available in audio format that are on my iPod include Thomas a Kempis’s *The Imitation of Christ;* Lesslie Newbigin’s *Foolishness to the Greeks;* Francis Schaeffer’s *He is There and He is Not Silent and True Spirituality,* John Stott’s *The Christian Mission in the Modern World;* and, of course, unabridged readings of C.S. Lewis’s *The Great Divorce,* *The Problem of Pain,* *The Screwtape Letters,* and *Mere Christianity.*

Using the high-tech iPod and iTunes software for prayer might seem a bit odd at first, but incorporating these resources into your spiritual life can be very helpful. For
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example, Max McLean’s powerful reading of The Valley of Vision, a collection of Puritan prayers, made it easy for me to set up a prayer schedule and provided prayer topics. Those who pray the Psalter might find The Psalms of David sung by the choir of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London to their liking; those who love evensong and the other beautiful service expressions of the Psalms will surely enjoy adding these audio prayers to their daily supplication and devotion. Christians familiar with the Daily Office from the Book of Common Prayer will find organizing a prayer and Bible reading schedule with an iPod simple and useful.

Where can you find good Christian material for the iPod? There are two major sources for podcasts: the first is the iTunes software itself, and the second is the online resource GodCast 1000. Browsing the Spirituality and Religious section for podcasts in iTunes will reveal many podcast choices. GodCast 1000 (www.godcast1000.com) is a vast source of sermons and talks heard in hundreds of churches and Christian organizations around the world. There is some overlap between what is found in iTunes podcasts and GodCast 1000. Many of the podcast options may not be readily recognizable as a source of sound Christian teaching, so if in doubt, listen and discern carefully. To get started in podcasts you may want to explore the following as a starting point from iTunes:

“Renewing Your Mind” with R.C. Sproul
“Desiring God” with John Piper
“Truth for Life” with Alistair Begg

If you are interested in “Christianity and Culture” or Christian Apologetics, you might want to try from iTunes:

“BreakPoint” with Chuck Colson
“Just Thinking” with Ravi Zacharias
“The Veritas Forum” with various invited speakers
“Stand to Reason” with Greg Koukl

A visit to The Veritas Forum’s website (www.veritas.org) or Ravi Zacharias’ website (www.rzim.org), will reveal more downloadable material ready for your iPhones and iPod. In fact, those wanting more material for apologetics may also want to look into Be Thinking (www.be-thinking.org) for a rich source of material dealing with areas of the Christian faith being challenged by our current postmodern culture. For those wanting to go even deeper, full and complete seminary courses are available at Biblical Training (www.biblicaltraining.org) for free downloading.

A good starting site for Christian audible books is Christian Audio (www.christianaudio.com), where you may purchase books in audio CD format and easily transfer them to your iPod, again using iTunes. Christian Audio is rich in variety and, if you register at their site, you’ll receive one free audiobook a month. For January 2007, the free audiobook was Absolute Surrender (unabridged) by Andrew Murray. Christian Audio is a first stop for me when I’m looking for new audiobooks. The C.S. Lewis Institute plans to place a list of relevant podcast sites and notable audible book material on the Institute’s website. New, relevant, and biblically sound podcasts, discovered and vetted by the CSLI Fellows, will also be made available at the Institute’s site, which may expand the list of material to enrich your walk with Christ.
Thoughts to Ponder
(continued from page 2)

It is also vanity to hunt after honors, and to climb to high degree.
It is vanity to follow the desires of the flesh, and to labor for that for which thou must afterward suffer more grievous punishment.
Vanity it is, to wish to live long, and to be careless to live well.
It is vanity to mind only this present life, and not to foresee those things which are to come.

It is vanity to set thy love on that which speedily passes away, and not to hasten thither where everlasting joy abides.

Call often to mind that proverb that, “The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.” Endeavor therefore to withdraw thy heart from the love of visible things, and to turn thyself to the invisible. For they that follow their lusts, do stain their own consciences, and lose the favor of God.

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Who Was C.S. Lewis?
C.S. Lewis—or “Jack,” as his friends called him—was an outstanding scholar of English Literature, author, apologist, and ardent follower of Jesus Christ. An Oxford University don for almost three decades and a former atheist, Lewis was never a minister in the formal sense, yet he ranks among the 20th century’s most influential exponents of “mere Christianity,” the essential truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

More on Lewis at www.cslewisinstitute.org
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