



PROFILES IN FAITH

Francis of Assisi (1182–1226)
Mystical Founder of the Franciscans

by Mark Galli, *Managing Editor, Christianity Today*



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It is difficult to think clearly about Francis of Assisi. The first thing that comes to mind is the gentle saint who preached to birds, tamed wolves, and padded about in flower-filled fields basking in the love of God. But it's also difficult to imagine how such a benign figure could turn thirteenth-century Europe upside down.

In fact, Francis was a complex figure, a man who contemporaries claimed lived out the Sermon on the Mount better than anyone else, except of course, the man who first preached it. If that's even close to the truth, it's a bit easier to see why he left such an impression on his age and every age since.

From Hermit to Itinerant

He was born in Assisi, Italy, as Giovanni Francesco Bernardone, son of a wealthy merchant. As a young man, Francis led a worldly, carefree life. An early biographer said, "He squandered his time terribly. Indeed, he outshone all his friends in trivialities." In 1202 he marched off to battle against the city of Perugia, full of a young man's dreams of military glory. But

he was taken prisoner during the battle, and a year passed before his father could arrange ransom. That was followed by a year's convalescence in Assisi, a year in which Francis, now in his early twenties, was slowly transformed.

During his illness, he experienced dreams and visions. One day as he prayed in a dilapidated church in San Damiano, at the edge of Assisi, he heard Christ say three times from the crucifix: "Francis, go repair my house, which, as you can see, is falling completely to ruin." Francis understood that he was to repair the church he prayed in (though his followers later would see this as his call to reform the church), so he proceeded to sell off family goods to raise money for repairs.

When his father caught wind of this, he was furious. He dragged Francis before the local bishop to force his son into changing his unseemly behavior and to pay him back. In the course of the interview, Francis took off his clothes and laid them neatly in a pile before his father. "Up to today I called you 'father,'" he said to him, "but now I can say in all honesty, 'Our

...Francis was a complex figure, a man who contemporaries claimed lived out the Sermon on the Mount better than anyone else, except of course, the man who first preached it.



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Editor's Note



Most of the time, gifts come at Christmas. But the start of 2004 brought some *wonderful* gifts for the C.S. Lewis Institute. Let me “unwrap” them again and tell you about them.

First, we were greatly blessed with a generous outpouring of year-end gifts. In early January we were greeted with the happy news that we had been given enough to pay all of our remaining 2003 expenses and some of our early 2004 expenses as well. Thanks be to God! And, thank you to those who have faithfully supported us in the work of discipleship of heart and mind.

Next, we were delighted to learn that a small but faithful group of friends had signed up to serve as the Institute’s first regular prayer support team. We call them the Prayer Net because they are contacted via e-mail with key requests for the Institute and its people and programs. These praying friends are invaluable to us, and we are so grateful for the vital role that they will play. (You can still sign-up! Just e-mail us at staff@cslewisinstitute.org and put “Prayer Net” in the subject line.)

Third — and most surprising — we received a gift in the form of a new staff person: Thomas W. Simmons, our new Executive Vice President. After a number of months of prayer and discussion, Tom has agreed to offer his energies and experience in the areas of operational management/planning and resource development. With our recent growth in the past few years, our “plates” were over-filled, and we were in great need of strong help. The Lord heard our prayers and answered them with Tom.

In this new organizational structure, Tom Tarrants will continue his visionary role as President, but will also be able to devote greater attention to the development of the Fellows Program. My new title of Director of Communications reflects the focus of my role in the swiftly growing arena of the Institute’s communications functions — including an expanded *Knowing & Doing*. In addition, I will continue to assist with the Fellows Program. And, with Tom Simmons overseeing the Institute’s operations and fundraising, 2004 is indeed looking very promising for the work the Lord has given us to do.

Enjoy this year’s first issue of *Knowing & Doing*. I think you will find some valuable gifts inside for you, too!

Faithfully,



True Tolerance

from Art Lindsley's coming book:

True Truth: Defending Absolute Truth in a Relativistic World (IVP)

by Art Lindsley, Ph.D.

Senior Fellow, C.S. Lewis Institute

C.S. Lewis Institute Feature Article



Dr. Art Lindsley

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A conversation between a believer and a relativist reveals a major cultural viewpoint based on a common misunderstanding of the concept of tolerance:

Bill: I think a Christian assertion of absolute truth leads to intolerance.

John: I certainly agree that there have been many intolerant Christians throughout the ages and that intolerance is wrong. But do you think that intolerance is wrong and tolerance is right?

Bill: Of course.

John: Don't you realize that you've just made an objective moral judgment? You've said something is really right and something is really wrong. I thought you believed everything was relative?

Bill: Don't try to trap me. I'm just saying that Christianity is intolerant.

John: Believers in Christ have a solid foundation for defending tolerance that relativism lacks. In fact, I call cultural relativistic tolerance false tolerance. Tolerance has become their only "absolute."

Bill: Why is it false?

John: Because it provides no basis for tolerance to be right; whereas, a believer can call tolerance really right and intolerance really wrong.

Bill: Doesn't tolerance lead to the idea that all views are equal? I didn't think you held to that.

John: No, I don't. But believers can argue for legal and social tolerance without obliterating deep differences. In fact, I think that relativistic tolerance pretends to embrace everyone, but it is also exclusivist in its views. It excludes anyone that doesn't hold to relativism and despite its welcoming embrace, gives the fatal hug to anyone who would object to its view.

Bill: I don't get it. Explain what you mean.

John: Okay. Let me show you how a believer can uphold and defend tolerance and a relativist can't....

Mark is a medical student who happened to mention in class that he is a believer in Christ. Not long after, his advisor called him in. "I'm concerned, given your religious views, about whether or not you'll be able to be a good doctor. By that I mean, whether or not you'll be able to be tolerant of your patients' various religious beliefs. It could affect how you function on a hospital staff with other doctors and nurses, too."

(continued on page 4)

Adapted from *True Truth* by Art Lindsley.

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True Tolerance

(continued from page 3)

There is no basis other than personal preference to uphold tolerance and condemn intolerance. In some quarters, tolerance seems to be the only "absolute" but, of course, there are no absolute values or virtues, not even tolerance.

Ann is a graduate student in counseling at a secular institution. She has been told that she must help students work through, accept, and embrace, in the name of "tolerance," sexual practices and lifestyles that she as a believer regards as wrong.

Michelle began to wonder why she was bringing in as much business for the law firm, and handling as many important cases, as anyone else—and still, after years, not even being considered for partner. One day, one of the secretaries confided, "I heard two of the partners talking. They were agreeing that, because you're 'one of those born-again Christians' that you're going to turn out to be too black-and-white on business issues. So they're not comfortable offering you partnership."

Intolerant?

Often, those who believe in objective truth are thought of as "intolerant" merely because we believe that something is good or evil, true or false.

It is time that believers regain the moral high ground on the issue of tolerance.

"Tolerance," used in the relativist sense, has no reason for being thought of as "the right" position. In fact, in this sense tolerance is not really right and intolerance is not

really wrong. In many ways, it is a "false tolerance." It is "false" because it implicitly undermines the basis for and motive to tolerance. On the other hand, believers have many solid reasons for being defenders of tolerance, and they have a sure foundation for upholding this virtue.

It is time we learned how to make, and stand for, the distinction between a "true" and a "false" tolerance.

Tolerance is a Virtue and Intolerance a Vice

In the secular version of tolerance, there are no absolutes and everything is relative. That means that tolerance is not really objectively good and intolerance is not really objectively evil. There is no basis other than personal preference to uphold tolerance and condemn intolerance. In some quarters, tolerance seems to be the only "absolute" but, of course, there are no absolute values or virtues, not even tolerance.

On the other hand, "true" tolerance is the kind that can and ought to be defended by believers because we have good reasons for maintaining that rightly defined tolerance is a virtue and rightly defined intolerance is a vice. For believers, there is an adequate basis to sustain this virtue and to teach it to their children.

Legal Tolerance

We as believers have a good basis for being defenders of religious liberty and the First Amendment.

First, many of the initial settlers in this country left England because their religious liberty was being threatened. You could call religious liberty and tolerance America's "first freedom."

Second, we do not believe that you can or ought to physically coerce someone into religious belief, such as occurred during the Inquisition or during the persecution of the Scottish Covenanters. We can defend people's *legal rights* even when we believe them to be wrong from our perspective, for Scripture defends the right to freedom of conscience (see Rom. 14:23).

Third, we have a good reason for desiring the non-establishment of a particular religion or denomination. Generally, where religion has been established, it becomes diluted and weak; when it is allowed freedom, it thrives. Look at the dwindling established churches (with a few exceptions) in England, Scandinavia, and Europe, compared on the other hand with the vitality (despite many imperfections) of non-established Christianity in America. In the founding of this country, only about ten percent of people attended church once a week. At present, about forty percent attend church in a given week. Where there is full freedom to persuade, the best and most attractive options prevail and gain the most adherents. As in free enterprise, the best products often get the lion's share of the market. Finally,

the best way to retain our own freedoms is to be defenders of others' freedom. Do we want justice or "just us?"¹ Leslie Newbigin says,

If we acknowledge the God of the Bible, we are committed to struggle for justice in society, justice means giving to each his due. Our problem (as seen in light of the Gospel) is that each of us overestimates what is due to him as compared with what is due to his neighbor.... If I do not acknowledge a justice which judges the justice for which I fight, I am an agent, not of justice, but of lawless tyranny.²

Social Tolerance

Believers must uphold social tolerance. Christ encourages in us a broader love, encompassing not only family, friends, and neighbors, but also even our enemies. Christ's radical call to "love your enemies" is unique among the world religions. Christ extends the love of neighbor to the love of enemies. In Jesus' day, there was a debate as to who was included in the definition of the neighbor. The lawyer asked the question, "Who is my neighbor?" T. W. Manson says that even the very question is revealing:

The question is unanswerable and ought not to be asked. For love does not begin by defining its objects; it discovers them.³

Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan perhaps had in mind the debate of that day about the neighbor, and the lawyer was asking Jesus to take a position. Some religious leaders insisted that Gentiles, heretics, or Samaritans were not neighbors. In a midrash on Ruth, it says that the death of Gentiles should not be sought:

...but if they be in any danger of death, we are not bound to deliver them; e.g. if any of them fall into the sea, you *shall not need* to take them out for it is said, 'Thou shalt not rise up against the blood of thy neighbor,' but such a one is not your neighbor.⁴

In the Jewish apocryphal book *Sirach* we see similar advice given.

If you do a good turn, know for whom you are doing it and your good deeds will not go to waste. Do good to a devout man and you will receive reward, if not from him, then certainly from the Most High. Give to a devout man and do not go to the help of a sinner. Do good to a humble man, give nothing to a godless one. Refuse him bread; do not give him any; it might make him stronger than you are; then you would be repaid evil twice over for all the good you had done him. For the Most High detests sinners and will repay the wicked with a vengeance. Give to the good

man and do not go to the help of a sinner.⁵

Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan casts as an unlikely hero a class of person who was often hated because of theological and historical rivalry. To Orthodox Jews, Samaritans were more despised than Gentiles. Jesus not only made a Samaritan the hero, but He also implicitly identified himself with this one so despised. We might ask, "Who are the Samaritans today?" Who are those that we have a difficult time loving? Who are those that you feel no compassion towards? It is those people that Christ calls us to love. We are called to love across deep religious, cultural, ethnic, and racial divisions. The eventual picture shown to us in heaven is one of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (see Rev. 5:9). Christ is such a great leader that He can command respect and love from the most diverse crowd of followers. Believers should be on the forefront of upholding a multicultural vision, embracing with love people from every culture. There is no basis for ethnocentrism here; Jesus is not Western or Eastern, and His Church knows no cultural boundaries.⁶

Even in the case of people that are not just different, but religiously and morally objectionable, we are to love. The Apostle Paul reaffirms Jesus' teaching in Romans 12:14-21:

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Christ's radical call to "love your enemies" is unique among the world religions. Christ extends the love of neighbor to the love of enemies.



Revelation & Interpretation

from the book: *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs*

by J.I. Packer

Retired Professor of Theology, Regent College



J.I. Packer

J.I. Packer, now retired, was for many years Professor of Historic and Systematic Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. He is a senior editor of *Christianity Today* and is author of numerous books including, *Knowing God*, *Rediscovering Holiness*, *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God* and *A Quest for Godliness*. He is an ordained Anglican minister and holds the D.Phil. from Oxford University.

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REVELATION *Scripture is the Word of God*

Christianity is the true worship and service of the true God, humankind's Creator and Redeemer. It is a religion that rests on revelation: nobody would know the truth about God, or be able to relate to him in a personal way, had not God first acted to make himself known. But God has so acted, and the sixty-six books of the Bible, thirty-nine written before Christ came and twenty-seven after, are together the record, interpretation, expression, and embodiment of his self-disclosure. God and godliness are the Bible's uniting themes.

From one standpoint, the Scriptures (*Scriptures* means "writings") are the faithful testimony of the godly to the God whom they loved and served; from another standpoint, through a unique exercise of divine overruling in their composition, they are God's own testimony and teaching in human form. The church calls these writings the Word of God because their authorship and contents are both divine.

Decisive assurance that Scripture is from God and consists entirely of his wisdom and truth comes from Jesus Christ and his apostles, who taught in his name. Jesus, God incarnate, viewed his Bible (our Old Testament) as his heavenly Father's written instruction, which he no less than others must obey (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; 5:19-20; 19:4-6; 26:31, 52-54; Luke 4:16-21; 16:17; 18:31-33; 22:37; 24:25-27, 45-47; John 10:35), and which he had come to fulfill (Matt. 5:17-18; 26:24; John 5:46). Paul described the Old Testament as

entirely "God-breathed" — that is, a product of God's Spirit ("breath") just as the cosmos is (Ps. 33:6; Gen. 1:2)—and written to teach Christianity (2 Tim. 3:15-17; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11). Peter affirms the divine origin of biblical teaching in 2 Peter 1:21 and 1 Peter 1:10-12, and so also by his manner of quoting does the writer to the Hebrews (Heb. 1:5-13; 3:7; 4:3; 10:5-7, 15-17; cf. Acts 4:25; 28:25-27).

Since the apostles' teaching about Christ is itself revealed truth in God-taught words (1 Cor. 2:12-13), the church rightly regards authentic apostolic writings as completing the Scriptures. Already Peter refers to Paul's letters as Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15-16), and Paul is apparently calling Luke's gospel Scripture in 1 Timothy 5:18, where he quotes the words of Luke 10:7.

The idea of written directives from God himself as a basis for godly living goes back to God's act of inscribing the Decalogue on stone tablets and then prompting Moses to write his laws and the history of his dealings with his people (Exod. 32:15-16; 34:1, 27-28; Num. 33:2; Deut. 31:9). Digesting and living by this material was always central to true devotion in Israel for both leaders and ordinary people (Josh. 1:7-8; 2 Kings 17:13; 22:8-13; 1 Chron. 22:12-13; Neh. 8; Ps. 119). The principle that all must be governed by the Scriptures, that is, by the Old and New Testaments taken together, is equally basic to Christianity.

What Scripture says, God says; for, in a manner comparable only to the deeper mystery of the Incarnation, the Bible is both fully human and fully divine. So all its manifold contents — histories, prophecies, poems, songs, wisdom writings, sermons, statistics, letters, and whatever else — should be received as from God, and all that Bible writers

teach should be revered as God's authoritative instruction. Christians should be grateful to God for the gift of his written Word, and conscientious in basing their faith and life entirely and exclusively upon it. Otherwise, we cannot ever honor or please him as he calls us to do.

INTERPRETATION

Christians Can Understand the Word of God

All Christians have a right and duty not only to learn from the church's heritage of faith but also to interpret Scripture for themselves. The church of Rome doubts this, alleging that individuals easily misinterpret the Scriptures. This is true; but the following rules, faithfully observed, will help prevent that from happening.

Every book of Scripture is a human composition, and though it should always be revered as the Word of God, interpretation of it must start from its human character. Allegorizing, therefore, which disregards the human writer's expressed meaning is never appropriate.

Each book was written not in code but in a way that could be understood by the readership to which it was addressed. This is true even of the books that primarily use symbolism: Daniel, Zechariah, and Revelation. The main thrust is always clear, even if details are clouded. So when we understand the words used, the historical background, and the cultural conventions of the writer and his readers, we are well on the way to grasping the thoughts that are being conveyed. Spiritual understanding—that is, the discernment of the reality of God, his ways with humankind, his present will, and one's own relationship to him now and for the future—will not however reach us from the text until the veil is removed from our hearts and we are able to share the writer's own passion to know and please and honor God (2 Cor. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:14). Prayer that God's Spirit may generate this passion in us and show us God in the text is needed here. (See Ps. 119:18-19, 26-27, 33-34,

73, 125, 144, 169; Eph. 1:17-19; 3:16-19.)

Each book had its place in the progress of God's revelation of grace, which began in Eden and reached its climax in Jesus Christ, Pentecost, and the apostolic New Testament. That place must be borne in mind when studying the text. The Psalms, for instance, model the godly heart in every age, but express its prayers and praises in terms of the typical realities (earthly kings, kingdoms, health, wealth, war, long life) that circumscribed the life of grace in the pre-Christian era.

Each book proceeded from the same divine mind, so the teaching of the Bible's sixty-six books will be complementary and self-consistent. If we cannot yet see this, the fault is in us, not in Scripture. It is certain that Scripture nowhere contradicts Scripture; rather, one passage explains another. This sound principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture is sometimes called the analogy of Scripture or the analogy of faith.

Each book exhibits unchanging truth about God, humanity, godliness, and ungodliness, applied to and illustrated by particular situations in which individuals and groups found themselves. The final stage in biblical interpretation is to reapply these truths to our own life-situations; this is the way to discern what God in Scripture is saying to us at this moment. Examples of such reapplication are Josiah's realization of God's wrath at Judah's failure to observe his law (2 Kings 22:8-13), Jesus' reasoning from Genesis 2:24 (Matt. 19:4-6), and Paul's use of Genesis 15:6 and Psalm 32:1-2 to show the reality of present righteousness by faith (Rom. 4:1-8).

No meaning may be read into or imposed on Scripture that cannot with certainty be read out of Scripture—shown, that is, to be unambiguously expressed by one or more of the human writers.

Careful and prayerful observance of these rules is a mark of every Christian who "correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). ■

“All Christians have a right and duty not only to learn from the church's heritage of faith but also to interpret Scripture for themselves.”



The Word Made Flesh

Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* and Wolfe's *A Man in Full*
as *Windows into the Heart of Human Life*

by Steven Garber

Senior Fellow, C.S. Lewis Institute



Steven Garber

Steven Garber is a Senior Fellow for the C.S. Lewis Institute. The author of *The Fabric of Faithfulness: Weaving Together Belief and Behavior During the University Years*, he speaks widely on the relation of learning to life. He is also a Senior Fellow with The Clapham Institute in Annapolis, Maryland, as well as Fellow and Lilly Faculty Scholar at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. A native of the great valleys of Colorado and California, he is married to Meg and with their children (and several chickens) lives in Virginia, where they are members of The Falls Church (Episcopal).

I want to feel it like you do!

No one who has heard the Irish poet Bono sing his songs has any doubt that he is serious about wanting to feel the world like God does. The lyrics of U2 are psalm-like, a cry to the heavens from someone living on the earth, someone seeing and hearing a world full of sorrow and injustice and evil.

"When I look at the world," it is not the way it is supposed to be, and Bono grieves, lamenting its condition and his own inability to make sense of it all. Burdened but not crushed, he calls out, "I want to feel it like you do!"

Words can be cheap. It is only when words are made flesh that we understand them, that we see what they mean.

Take the word *passion*, for example. Like the words *pathos*, *empathy*, *sympathy*, *compassion*, and *apathy*, it grows out of a Latin word *pati*, "to suffer." The *Oxford English Dictionary*, which offers in its definitions a history of the word, tells the story of *passion* by beginning with the death and resurrection of Christ. The very definition of the word is bound up historically and etymologically with the suffering of Christ.

So the word *compassion* is "to suffer with," while the word *apathy* is "without feeling, without suffering, without passion."

Two Words, Two Worldviews

Those two words are at the heart of two worldviews, two stories, and two story-tellers, Tom Wolfe and Mel Gibson. For three decades the one has been America's best reporter on the unfolding drama of what it feels like to be human, his last novel, *A Man in Full*, summing up the century and the 1990s. The other is America's favorite leading

man, hero of the best stories that Hollywood has told over the last generation; this week* his film *The Passion of the Christ* opens, and before the lights go down in the first theater, it has already created a huge buzz. For weeks, newspapers, magazines, the Internet, radio, and TV have been full of the film, wondering, accusing, pondering its meaning.

Wolfe and Gibson are wonderfully gifted artists, telling tales in novels and films that reflect upon the human condition, asking the most searching questions: who are we? why are we here? what is it that matters most? how shall we live? Those questions come out of the human heart, always and everywhere. We expect that a person's work will reflect their worldview, that what one believes will shape how one sees and hears; strangely, it is equally true that the way we live in the world affects what we believe about the world. Worldviews are dynamic, as belief and behavior form each other.

In his novel Wolfe tells a tale of a wealthy entrepreneur who is largely responsible for reshaping the Atlanta skyline over the course of his career. This is the Atlanta of the biggest airport in the world, of the 1996 Olympics, of the New South and the New America. "The last great white football player at Georgia Tech," Charlie Croker at 60 has a far-flung business empire, spanning the continent. But in his greed he overreaches, and his accountant suggests he lop off a venture in California that involves huge frozen food warehouses. To Croker and his accountant, it is only a line item in a very complex budget.

To Conrad Hensley, the last man hired at one of the warehouses, it is his job—and he has a wife and two small children, and no other marketable skills. Going into

* This article was also published in the Breakpoint Webzine, February 25, 2004, Ash Wednesday, the first day of the release of *The Passion of the Christ*.

downtown Oakland in an attempt to address his situation, he gets a parking ticket. Protesting his innocence all the way into court, the judge tells him to either pay the fine or go to jail. Believing himself wrongly accused, he takes imprisonment—leaving his family to fend for themselves.

Preparing for the months of his confinement, he chooses a book from the prison library. But, the wrong book comes! Rather than his choice, he is given the Stoic philosopher Epictetus. Very bright but unschooled, Conrad begins to read, surprising himself with the interest he has in the Greek philosopher's meditations. In particular he is intrigued with the call for "detachment," to be someone who knows about the sorrows and pains of the world, but finds within himself the ability to stand clear of them, maintaining his happiness and humanity—which is the goal of life. *Apatheia* allows one to live in the world without being overwhelmed by it.

It is not a cheap answer. To look unblinkingly at the complex corruptions in the world—in our own hearts and rippling out into the farthest reaches of the universe—and not be crushed by them is very hard. Who wants to take on the wounds of the world?

And so Conrad takes up the Stoicism of Epictetus, whose words ring true, giving light to his path in a very dark place. He finds that through the Stoic virtue of *apatheia* he can hold onto his humanity in a very inhumane setting, the county jail.

When you see anyone weeping in sorrow... take care not to be overcome by the apparent evil; but discriminate, and be ready to say, 'What hurts this man is not this occurrence itself—for another man might not be hurt by it—but the view he chooses to take of it.' As far as conversation goes, however, do not hesitate to sympathize with him, and if need be, to groan with him. Take heed, however, not to groan inwardly too.
(*The Enchiridion*, 16)

It is *not* a cheap answer.

A year or so ago I had lunch with Wolfe on Capitol Hill. Several of us who had honest

interest in the thoughtfulness of his essays and novels sat and talked about wide-ranging topics. At one point I told him that I had read most of his work, enjoyed it very much, and regularly assigned it to my students. And then I told him of the week I spent reading *A Man in Full*. It is a long story, wonderfully imagined, setting forth a vision of what it means to be a complete human being, fully alive, a man in full.

But then I paused, telling him that I loved it all the way through—until the last 15 pages.... There was an ellipsis in the conversation. He looked across the table, and with remarkable candor said, "I don't finish my novels very well, do I?"

What could I say? One of the best writers we have, one of the best-selling novelists in history; he doesn't finish his stories well? But he was right. He had not finished it well; while showing the fundamental flaw of Stoicism at the point of greatest tension in the story, in the end he offers it as an honest answer. Wolfe then continued, "I thought of a Christian conversion, but that's been done." Against Epictetus, I groaned inwardly, and thought about *Crime and Punishment*, *Les Miserables*, and what might have been. When the lunch was over, he and I talked briefly, and I longed for more conversation—and told him so.

The God Who Knows and Loves at the Same Time Gibson has told a different story, one which has at its heart the God who sees and hears and feels and acts—and who asks us to be like him.

This is not the God who looks, and looks away, who knows but does not love. Abraham Heschel, the great Jewish scholar, in his penetrating study *The Prophets*, argues that the God of Israel is the God who sees and hears, and responds; he steps into history with mercy and justice. Pressing his point, he sets forth a Hebrew vision of knowing as the core of the character of God; that when God knows, he feels what he knows, he acts on the basis of what he knows. This God rejoices with those who rejoice, mourns with those who mourn.

(continued on page 10)

To look
unblinkingly
at the
complex
corruptions
in the
world—in
our own
hearts and
rippling out
into the
farthest
reaches of the
universe—
and not be
crushed by
them is very
hard. Who
wants to take
on the
wounds of
the world?

The Word Made Flesh

(continued from page 9)

If God is not angry at evil, at sin and its consequences, then, frankly, I am not interested. The very good news is that justice, mercy, compassion, and anger are made flesh in the passion of Christ.

Intriguingly Heschel also argues that the prophets were speaking into a Stoic world, where the vision of *apatheia* provided the path to happiness. How else could one bear the bruises of a broken world? With rare philosophical and theological insight, he reflects upon that question, offering the pathos of God as a more satisfying response.

But, it was into that Stoic world that the prophets spoke, calling the people of God to be like God: loving what God loved, hating what God hated, showing mercy where God requires mercy, justice where God requires justice. And all this profoundly because God sees and hears and feels and acts—and expects his people to be like him.

It is this God, and no other, who became incarnate in Jesus Christ. The justice of God, the mercy of God, are made flesh in his flesh; in his body the Word is made flesh.

One of the great theologians of the early twentieth century was Benjamin Warfield of Princeton Seminary. Given Heschel's claim about the prophets and Stoicism, it is fascinating that Warfield argued the same point with regard to the gospels, that they too are written into a Stoic world. In his book, *The Person and Work of Christ*, he sets forth a rich vision of the emotions of God; that in the incarnation we can see God's compassion, God's anger, made flesh in the God who is man, Christ.

As he opens windows into the character of God, he stops along the way to ponder the story of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11). With piercing insight he explains the text, allowing us to see God weeping and groaning at the death of his friend. But Warfield, while acknowledging the genuine grief of God, makes a critical, line-in-the-sand statement: God is angry at death. Twice the words "he groaned inwardly in spirit" are used. The Greek poets used the same word to describe a war-horse rearing on its hind legs, nostrils flared, charging into battle. Calvin offered the image of "a champion preparing for conflict," raging

against his enemy. Warfield simply says, "It is death that is the object of his wrath, and behind death him who has the power of death...."

For 30 years this has been for me a make-or-break chapter in the Bible. If God is not angry at evil, at sin and its consequences, then, frankly, I am not interested. The very good news is that justice, mercy, compassion, and anger are made flesh in the passion of Christ. And, it is in that passion that we come to understand the meaning of love, embodied as it is in the death and resurrection of Christ.

My good friend Denis Haack of Ransom Fellowship, editor of *Critique*, has an unusual ability to read the Word and the world at the same time. Several weeks ago he reviewed *The Passion* with his characteristic skill, noting both its aesthetic qualities and its theological dynamics. He then told about seeing the film last fall in Nashville at the Art House. Charlie and Andi Peacock had invited Gibson to show the film to their friends, many of whom work in the music industry there. Denis remembers these words of Gibson's, when asked why he had made the film:

I grew up in a religious home, a Catholic home, but I grew up wild and became a monster. When you are a monster you end up being deeply wounded. All I can tell you is that because of his wounds, my wounds have been healed—and if you think that sounds corny, you should know that I don't really give a damn.

Not many want to take on the wounds of the world. It is for that reason that on a certain level I respect Stoicism, whether it is the version of Epictetus, or the ways that it has influenced various forms of pantheism, or the very contemporary account that Tom Wolfe offers at the dawn of the twenty-first century. The world with its complex suffering is too much. It is easier to be detached, to hold onto one's

happiness, one's vision of virtue—and *apatheia* is the perennial path that makes that possible.

But, while I respect the Stoic vision, it leaves me at a loss too. There is something in making words flesh that draws me, that challenges me to a truer heroism, to a way of being human that allows me to enter into the complexity of the world, full of joys and sorrows, and to make them mine, to feel them fully. The hardest task in the whole world is to know and to love at the same time—from the most personal to the most public realms of my responsibility. That call stretches my soul, and yet it satisfies it too. There is something about that which is more human, more a man in full than Stoicism ever imagined.

Words, Words, and More Words

In the info-glut culture in which we live and move and have our being, words are everywhere. They wait for us in the morning paper, they drone on long after we have gone to bed. But, those who are the most perceptive observers note this strange irony: the more information we have, the less engaged by it we are. With clear exceptions, for most people most of the time, the more we know the less we care.

We feel that we cannot feel so much, because it hurts too much. Our age seems unique in that way, and of course it is. There has never been a moment like ours, with *so* much to know. But, other sensitive souls in other eras have felt the same pain, looking out at the world. Long before anyone imagined the possibility of the information age, the poet Byron wryly noted, "He who knows the most mourns the deepest."

The hard truth is that none of us are going to find a world that is different than this one, a world of real good and real evil, of true joy and true sorrow. No one has, no one will. The challenge then is to find a way to really be in it, to live in it fully aware and attentive, and yet not be so shaped by it that we find our capacity to care for it diminished.

The global reach of the first-world's technologies, our media and entertainment networks that literally cover the planet, make it virtually impossible to find a place undisturbed by the reach of the Internet and its windows onto the information superhighway—and that is both blessing and curse.

Not so long ago, *Harper's* put it this way in a cover story: "The Numbing of the American Mind: Culture as Anesthesia." We might call it a sociological stoicism, as it is not because of the philosophers we have read so much as it is in the air we breathe. With a remarkable eye, the author walks through the post-9/11 world, arguing that a "numbing" of heart and mind takes place simply by taking part in contemporary culture. The ways we connect to the wider world are at the very same time *dis*-connecting us to it, making us numb to it. *We cannot feel so much, because it hurts too much.*

For Bono it is his persistent plea in the corridors of the Congress, of the White House and the World Bank, on behalf of those who groan and suffer in the global AIDS crisis—done so with insight, with patience, with courage, with grace—that gives weight to his words, "I want to feel it like you do!" But, it is the life he lives that makes his words honest, as they are words made flesh in imitation of the Word made flesh.

Gibson's *The Passion* presents all of us with questions to ask and answer: who are we? why are we here? what is it that matters most? how shall we live? Simply, straightforwardly, he offers us the imitation of Christ. And that has never ever been a cheap answer. ■

For more reading:

http://www.ransomfellowship.org/M_Passion.html
Epictetus, *The Discourses* and *The Enchiridion*
Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*
John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*
Thomas á Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*

The hardest task in the whole world is to know and to love at the same time—from the most personal to the most public realms of my responsibility. That call stretches my soul, and yet it satisfies it too.

True Tolerance

(continued from page 5)

Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not.... Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.... Never take your own revenge, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing, you will heap burning coals upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Jesus' call to love our enemies takes us beyond a passive tolerance to a proactive love. Again, this love needs to be demonstrated across religious, ethnic, cultural, racial, and moral divides. No matter how broad the chasm, Christ's love extends there. Love is both centripetal and centrifugal: it both attracts people towards those who love and thrusts us out to love people wherever they live and whatever their stance.⁷

Not Moral Equivalence

Tolerance does not mean religious and moral equivalence. It is in the making of this distinction that "false" tolerance and "true" tolerance diverge.

Some cultural forms of tolerance level the differences between views and minimize the divisions between them. If your religion is merely true for you and my religion true for me, then what we believe is merely a matter of arbitrary personal preference. Truth is not at issue here. Some fear that a rigorous debate about truth will lead to violence. This has, in fact, been the case at times.

Is it possible, though, to conduct a debate in a vigorous but civil manner? Of course. Chesterton once said, "The problem with a quarrel is that it spoils a good argument." The issue of truth has become inconvenient and potentially dangerous, and so it has been shoved aside or defined away by saying it is true that there are no truths. Consider the following illustration.

Teacher: Welcome students. Since this is the first day of class, I want to lay down some ground rules. First,

since no one has the truth, you should be open-minded to the opinions of your fellow students. Second...Elizabeth, do you have a question?

Elizabeth: Yes, I do. If nobody has the truth, isn't that the reason for me not to listen to my fellow students? After all, if nobody has the truth, why should I waste my time listening to other people and their opinions? What would be the point? Only if somebody has the truth does it make sense to be open-minded. Don't you agree?

Teacher: No, I don't. Are you claiming to know the truth? Isn't that a bit arrogant and dogmatic?

Elizabeth: Not at all. Rather, I think it is dogmatic as well as arrogant to assert that there is not one person on earth that knows the truth. After all, have you met every person in the world and quizzed him or her exhaustively? If not, how can you make such a claim? Also, I believe it is actually the opposite of arrogance to say that I will alter my opinions to fit the truth whenever and wherever I find it. And, I happen to think that I have good reason to believe I do know the truth and would like to share it with you. Why won't you listen to me? Why would you automatically discredit my opinion before it is even uttered? I thought we were supposed to listen to everyone's opinions.

Teacher: This should prove to be an interesting semester.

Another student: (blurts out) Ain't that the truth. (The students laugh.)⁸

Tolerance does not mean religious and moral equivalence. It is in the making of this distinction that "false" tolerance and "true" tolerance diverge.

As this dialogue suggests, holding to eternal truth does not necessarily make you arrogant. In fact, if I have carefully weighed Christ's claims and find that the mass of evidence points to His being the way, the truth, and the life, and if I have come to acknowledge that He is the Lord, then it would be arrogance for me to reject what my Lord says and indicate otherwise. If I were to say that Christ is the way because He is *my* way that would be arrogant. But if I have submitted myself to His claims, then I could humbly put forward what I have discovered. This is not to say that arrogant presentations of Christ are uncommon. Only that arrogance is not necessarily encouraged and, moreover, it is positively discouraged by such a discovery. Francis Schaeffer once argued that Christianity is the easiest and the hardest of religions. It is the easiest in that all you have to do is say, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Lk 18: 13). It is the hardest because humbling your pride is the very hardest thing to do. We have two choices: to be humble now or be humbled later. An arrogant Christian ought to be an oxymoron. Faith in Christ should be an antidote to arrogance, rather than a cause of it.

True tolerance is only needed if differences are significant. As we have seen, true tolerance presupposes deep differences between views. Tolerance is not needed if someone's views are the same, or virtually the same, or insignificant. The kind of tolerance that minimizes differences makes tolerance unnecessary.

Tolerance as Sloth

Dorothy Sayers saw the danger of a false understanding of tolerance in her day. In "The Pantheon Papers" she has a humorous note on "St. Luke of Laodicea, Martyr" (see Rev. 3:16):

St. Lukewarm was a magistrate in the city of Laodicea under Claudius (Emp. A.D. 41-54). He was broadminded as to offer asylum and patronage to every kind of religious cult, however unorthodox and repulsive, saying in answer to all remonstrance: There is always

some truth in everything. This liberality earned for him the surname of 'The Tolerator'.⁹

Later he fell into the hands of one of the groups he tolerated and was eaten, but his flesh was so "tough and tasteless" that he was spit out.

In another essay, "The Other Six Deadly Sins," Sayers equates Sloth and Tolerance:

The Church names the sixth Deadly Sin Acedia or Sloth. In the world it calls itself Tolerance; but in Hell it is called Despair. It is the accomplice of the other sins and their worst punishment. It is the sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, loves nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and only remains alive because there is nothing it would die for. We have known it far too well for many years.¹⁰

All inclusivists sooner or later become exclusivists. An inclusivist is one who wants to draw his circle so that everyone is tolerantly included. The inclusivist wants to embrace everyone yet the first group of people who are excluded by the inclusivists are the exclusivists. Inclusivists tend to accept only those who are willing to come under their umbrella or accept their terms of surrender. Appearing to give you a loving embrace, they strangle you. They give you a fatal hug. Have you ever had someone sneak up behind you, put their arms around you, pick you up, and squeeze you so that it felt like your ribs would break? Inclusivists want to do even more: you are squeezed until you die to your own individual (or corporate) assertion of truth. You are accepted only if you are assimilated. I think of the Borg on the television series "Star Trek: The New Generation" whose refrain was "We will assimilate you. Resistance is futile." As long as you are willing to be drawn inside their circle, assimilated or absorbed

(continued on page 16)

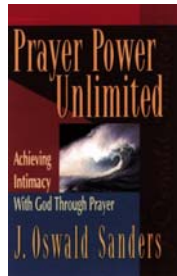
*All
inclusivists
sooner or
later become
exclusivists....
The
inclusivist
wants to
embrace
everyone yet
the first
group of
people who
are excluded
by the
inclusivists
are the
exclusivists.*



Prayer: Worship and Adoration

by J. Oswald Sanders

Reprinted by permission from his book *Prayer Power Unlimited*



A native of New Zealand, the late **J. Oswald Sanders** (1902-1992) was a consulting director for Overseas Missionary Fellowship, the organization founded by Hudson Taylor in 1865. He preached and taught in conferences in many coun-

tries and wrote over 40 books on the Christian life, including *The Incomparable Christ*, *Satan Is No Myth*, and *Enjoying Intimacy With God*. He received the Order of the British Empire for Christian service and theological writing.

In his preface to *Prayer Power Unlimited*, Sanders writes:

The supreme importance of prayer is tacitly admitted by most evangelical Christians. It is accepted as an article of faith. And yet there are few areas of the Christian life in which there are more regretful confessions of failure and disappointment.

The author does not pose as an authority on the subject – only a fellow student in the school of prayer; he is very conscious of the heights yet to be scaled.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first in a series of reprinted chapters from this marvelous book which will be a regular feature in *Knowing & Doing* during 2004.

*Worship the LORD
in the splendor of holiness.*

I Chronicles 16:29

A notable lesson in prayer was learned by the author when he read that in prayer there are at least five elements that should be present in a well-balanced prayer life. In a sense, prayer cannot be analyzed, since it is a unity and the outpouring of the single life of the one who prays. Yet in another sense, it can be divided into its constituent elements.

"The fact that [prayer] is worship, and the further fact that worship may be expressed in various forms," wrote H. W. Frost, "makes analysis possible....Prayer is indeed one. But also it is multiform."¹

The five enumerated elements are: worship, or adoration; thanksgiving; confession; petition; and intercession. This concept opened a new world of prayer, for hitherto his prayers had been almost entirely petition. Now the prayer life embraces whole new areas of spiritual experience.

Our Lord's immediate answer to the request of His disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray," was, "When you pray, say: 'Father'" (Luke 11:2). In other words, prayer begins with God. The pattern prayer He gave them was halfway completed before He prayed for personal needs. The concerns and interests of God came first.

This is a supremely important lesson. If God is not given the chief place in our praying, our prayers will be anemic. When our thoughts begin with Him, love is kindled and faith stimulated. So our first lesson will be concerned with Him. We shall consider

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worship, or adoration, for this is involved in the petition "hallowed be Thy name" (v. 2).

Dr. R. A. Torrey, who was God's instrument to bring revival to many parts of the world, testified that an utter transformation came into his experience when he learned not only to pray and return thanks, but to worship—asking nothing from God, seeking nothing from Him, occupied with Himself, and satisfied with Himself.

The idea of worship is common to the whole human race. But as generally used, the word *worship* seldom conveys its full scriptural content. It means "to bow down or prostrate oneself." Worship is the adoring contemplation of God as He has revealed Himself in Christ and in the Scriptures. It is the act of paying honor and reverence to God. When we pray "hallowed be Thy name," we are worshipping Him.

F. W. Faber caught the sense of the word in these lines:

How wonderful, how beautiful, the sight of
Thee must be,
Thine endless wisdom, boundless power, and
awful purity.
O how I fear Thee, living God, with deepest,
tenderest fears,
And worship Thee with trembling hope, and
penitential tears.

The Old English form of the word, *worhtship*, gives an interesting sidelight on its meaning, implying worthiness on the part of the one who receives the honor. This is reflected in the apocalyptic ascription of praise to Christ: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive... honor and glory and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).

Worship flows from love, and where there is little love there will be little worship. But there can be an element of selfishness even in love. We can and should worship God in gratitude for what He has done for us, but it reaches a higher level when we worship Him simply for what He is, for the perfections and excellences of His own being.

"I have known men," said Thomas Goodwin, "who came to God for nothing else but just to come to Him, they so loved Him. They scorned to soil Him and themselves with any other errand than just purely to be alone with Him in His presence."²

Worship, then, is the loving ascription of praise to God for what He is, both in Himself and in His ways. It is the bowing of the innermost spirit in deep humility and reverence before Him.

When Scipio Africanus returned to Rome after a resounding victory, he rode in triumph, followed by his captives. As he went, he scattered the largess of the victor to the crowds that lined the way. Some were stirred to gratitude by his liberality; some because he had rolled away from their homes the fear of the invading army; still others, forgetful of their personal benefits, praised the qualities of the victor—his courage, resourcefulness, liberality. It was in this last group that the highest element of worship was present.

Worship can be wordless. "My soul, be thou silent unto God," said the psalmist (Psalm 62:5, ASV, marg.).

There are times when words are an intrusion, times when the worshipper is hushed into awed silence by the ineffable Presence and can only be silent to God. A single word can enshrine a wealth of worship, as when the word *Rabboni* fell from Mary's lips (John 20:16).

But worship must be "in truth" (John 4:24, KJV), that is, free from mere profession or pretense. Brother Lawrence, that saint of the kitchen, learned that to worship God in truth is to acknowledge Him to be what He is, and to acknowledge ourselves to be what we are.

How Worship is Stimulated

The scholar in the school of prayer may feel that God seems far away and unreal, so that attempts to worship Him seem a farce. The question arises, How can I know God better so that I can worship Him more worthily? God has granted a partial revelation of Himself in the wonders of nature. "The heavens

(continued on page 19)

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Himself.

True Tolerance

(continued from page 13)

into the collective, you are included. But if you choose to remain outside, asserting your individual beliefs, you are rejected.

Os Guinness talks about an instance of Buddhists complaining that the Hindus wanted to “strangle them by the fraternal embrace.”¹¹ False tolerance embraces but strangles any exclusive claim to truth. Another analogy might be drawn from the movie series “The Godfather.” When the Godfather kissed you, it might appear to be an act of affection to an unknowledgeable bystander; however, those who know what it means, call it the “kiss of death.”¹² On the surface, inclusivism appears very loving and embracing but in reality, it kills any exclusive, individual – or corporate – claim to truth.

Relativism is Western and Ethnocentric

This demand for assimilation or absorption also applies culturally. Once I was giving a talk at a liberal seminary on Eastern religion. A staff member there accused me of being “Western and ethnocentric” because I dared to critique the Eastern religious philosophy. I cannot claim that I responded this clearly then, but I would now respond, “You know, I think that pluralism and inclusivism put forward at this seminary is actually Western and ethnocentric.”

You can effectively argue that the inclusivism held by many in this culture has clearly Western roots. Many in the Western liberal theological tradition see all religions as basically the same. How could you prove that this is the case? Even more, it seems to be the imposition of Western pluralism on other cultures’ religious views. Alister McGrath argues particularly in reference to the pluralism of John Hick, but his point can apply to others as well:

Yet is not this approach shockingly imperialist? Hicks’ implication is that it is not; it is only the educated Western liberal academic who can understand all the religions. Their adherents may believe that they have access to the truth; in fact, only the Western liberal academic has such privileged access, which is denied to those who belong to and practice such a religion.¹³

Later, McGrath comments,

The belief that all religions are ultimately expressions of the same transcendent reality is at best illusory and at worst oppressive—illusory because it lacks any substantiating basis and oppressive because it involves the systematic imposition of the agenda of those in positions of intellectual power on the religions and those who adhere to them. The illiberal imposition of this pluralistic metanarrative on religions is ultimately a claim to mastery – both in the sense of having a Nietzschean authority and power to mold material according to one’s own will, and in the sense of being able to relativize all the religions by having access to a privileged standpoint.¹⁴

So this liberal, theological inclusivism has clearly Western roots and precedent. And its adherents are also arrogantly, imperialistically imposing their understanding of religion on all the world’s religions, whether they want it or not. It is not only Western, but ethnocentric because it does not allow the unique truth claims of different world religions to be heard and acknowledged. It does not take seriously the truth claims of world religions.

This same kind of critique could be made of postmodernism. The imposition of the postmodern metanarrative on the world religions is not only Western but ethnocentric. We can see by its philosophical roots in people like Marx, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Freud, Derrida, Rorty, Fish, Foucault, and others that it is Western. That it is ethnocentric, despite claiming to be “multicultural,” can be shown by its denial that any culture’s religious views can be “true truth” for us. To the Chinese, postmodernists might say, “Your views are true for you given your cultural setting and context but they have no universal applicability to us.” In other words, the Chinese cannot teach us truth where we are in error, nor can we show them errors where we have the truth. That is ethnocentric, an imposition of a Western cultural postmodern mindset that smashes any other culture’s claim to universal, eternal truth. Postmodernism is an oppressive imposition of Western ethnocentrism on the world religions. They are strangled by the “fraternal

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embrace” and have received the “kiss of death.” They have been given the fatal hug.

True Tolerance

We need to recover a defense of tolerance.

We have the grounds to defend the virtue of tolerance and condemn the vice of intolerance. We can defend legal tolerance and have a strong mandate for social tolerance. We can be strong defenders of tolerance without holding to religious or moral equivalence. In fact, it is only by maintaining objective moral values that advocating tolerance and opposing intolerance makes moral sense. ■

Footnotes:

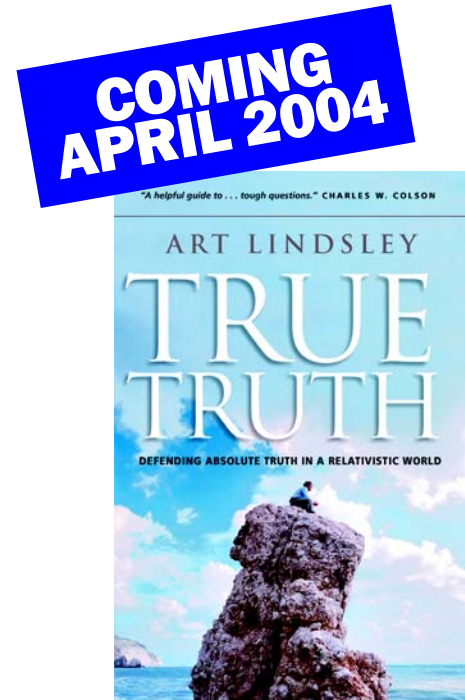
1. I am indebted for this last thought and the previous paragraph to the work of Os Guinness. He expressed these ideas in lectures at Cedar Point Farm, “The Williamsburg Charter,” and in his book *The American Hour: A Time of Reckoning and the Once and Future Role of Faith* (New York: Free Press, 1993).
2. Leslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 124.
3. T. W. Manson, *Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1937), p. 261.
4. Quoted in Kenneth Bailey, *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 40.
5. Sirach 12:1-7, (RSV translation) in *The Apocrypha of the Old Testament* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1957), pp. 122-123.
6. See the discussion of the multicultural nature of Christianity in John Piper’s book *Let The Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003).
7. Some helpful books on tolerance are: Stan Gaede, *When Tolerance Is No Virtue* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993); Josh McDowell, *The New Tolerance* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1998).
8. Francis Beckwith, “Liberal Tolerance” in *Christian Research Journal*, 22, no. 3, p. 46.
9. Dorothy L. Sayers, “The Pantheon Papers,” in *The Whimsical Christian: 18 Essays* (New York: Collier, 1987), p. 4.
10. Dorothy L. Sayers, “The Other Six Deadly Sins,” in *The Whimsical Christian*, p. 176.
11. Lectures at Cedar Point Farm. This theme is also found in Os Guinness, *The East, No Exit* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1974), p. 50.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

13. Alister E. McGrath, *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), p. 219.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

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True Truth: Defending Absolute Truth in a Relativistic World

- 180 pages
- InterVarsity Press
- April 2004

Description:

Conventional wisdom holds that any belief in absolutes, especially of a religious nature, leads inevitably to the oppressive absolutism of such movements as the Inquisition, the Crusades and even Nazism. As a result, Christian apologists have been hard-pressed to make a case for the rational absolutes that are a necessary part of belief in Jesus.

Art Lindsley takes up the task in *True Truth*. While maintaining the indispensability of absolutes, he ably demonstrates that faith in Christ is necessarily opposed to and incompatible with the abuses of oppression, arrogance, intolerance, self-righteousness, closed-mindedness and defensiveness.

Surprisingly, Lindsley shows, it is relativism that often harbors dangerous, inflexible absolutisms. Threatening not only belief in Christ, relativism goes so far as to promote suspicion of those who would assert moral values or rational argumentation of any kind.

Here is a book that actively challenges relativism, preparing the way for more effectively proclaiming the gospel and living Christianly in a postmodern world.

Profiles in Faith: Francis of Assisi

(continued from page 1)



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Father who art in heaven." He walked out of the cathedral to become a hermit – to "be alone in solitude and silence," a biographer noted, "to hear the secrets which God could reveal to him."

Other inspirations followed. One day in church he heard from the Gospel of Matthew, "Take no gold or silver or copper in your wallet, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics or sandals or a staff." He took it literally and began an itinerant life: he intended to live in utter simplicity and to preach a gospel that usually entailed strong injunctions to repent. "He denounced evil whenever he found it," wrote one early biographer, "and made no effort to palliate it; from him a life of sin met with outspoken rebuke, not support."

Francis was more rigorous than popular imagination allows. In winter, he sometimes hurled himself in a ditch full of ice and stayed there until every vestige of sinful temptation departed. To avoid lust, he fixed his gaze on the sky or ground whenever he spoke with a woman.

Though known for his infectious joy, Francis abhorred laughing or idle words. "Not only did he wish that he should not laugh, but that he should not even afford to others the slightest occasion for laughing."

By 1209 he had gathered a small band of "brothers" (12 men who wished to share in his life and ministry). He wrote a Rule and set off to Rome to gain the church's approval for his work. This became the First Order of Franciscans, and Francis was elected superior.

Women also were fascinated by Francis's message, and when Francis received a rich young woman of Assisi named Clare, the Second Order of Franciscans was founded, also known as Poor Clares. (The Third Order of Franciscans, which Francis founded in 1221, is for those who lead their secular lives, while trying to live by a modified Franciscan rule.)

Francis wandered all over Italy and at one point crossed the Mediterranean, visited a Crusader expedition in Egypt, crossed enemy lines, and attempted to convert the

Muslim sultan. The sultan was unconvinced by the message but so impressed by the messenger that he afforded him safe passage back.

Embracing Death

Soon his brothers (called friars, and growing rapidly in numbers) were making trips to France, Spain, Germany, England, Hungary, and Turkey, preaching the message of repentance, gospel simplicity, and radical obedience to Christ's teaching.

It was an era, like many, in which corruption infected ecclesiastical circles and indifference permeated the laity. But as one contemporary noted, as a result of the preaching of the Franciscan brothers and sisters, "persons of both sexes, rich and worldly, have renounced possessions and, for the love of Christ, turned their backs on the world." In short, Francis had begun a religious revival that spread over Europe.

With the order's growth came complications. The Rule that had served a small band of the Franciscans were becoming. Francis himself sensed his own inadequacy to continue leading a large organization, so after penning a new Rule and his Testament (in a sense, last wishes), urging his brothers to retain the primitive standards used from the beginning, he resigned as head of the order.

In his last years, Francis popularized the living creche to highlight the poverty into which Christ was born. In 1224, on a mountaintop retreat, Francis had a mystical encounter that left him with bleeding wounds in his feet, hands, and side – the first recorded instance of stigmata.

As he entered his mid-forties, illness racked his body, finally taking his eyesight completely.

In his last years, he composed his famous *Canticle of Brother Sun*. From this poem Francis gets his deserved reputation as one who reveled in God's creation:

Praised be You, my Lord, with all your
creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day and through whom You
give us light...

In the poem Francis also praised “Brother Wind” and “Brother Fire” and “Sister Mother Earth.” What many forget is that near the end of the poem, he wrote this:

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister
Bodily Death, from whom no man can
escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will find in
Your most holy will

Such was the death of Francis, whose life was so clearly committed to God’s “holy will” that he was canonized within two years—exceedingly fast by Roman Catholic standards.

After Francis’s death the Franciscans continued to grow and—ironic for an order once told by their founder “to appropriate nothing for themselves, neither a house, nor a place, nor anything else”—soon became quite rich. A stunning basilica was built in Assisi, and Francis’s relics were moved there in 1230. ■

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pp. 208-210.*

Prayer: *Worship and Adoration*

(continued from page 15)

declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1, KJV). We learn there of His almighty power, His transcendent beauty, His unsearchable wisdom. But nature does not reveal Him as a God of love and mercy.

Only “in the face of Jesus Christ” will we see the full blaze of the divine glory (2 Cor. 4:6, KJV). All the fullness of God dwells in Him in bodily form (Col. 1:19), and no worship that ignores Christ is acceptable to God, for it is through Christ alone that we have access to the Father.

In Thee, most perfectly expressed,
The Father’s glories shine,

Of the full deity possessed, Eternally Divine!
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou,
That ev’ry knee to Thee should bow.

Josiah Condor

This raises a second question: How can I know Christ, who alone reveals God?

The answer is, of course, that we know Christ primarily through the Scriptures, which are the only tangible means of knowing Him. “You search the Scriptures...and it is these that bear witness of Me” (John 5:39). In them is to be found the complete and satisfying interpretation of God in Christ.

The Scriptures are rich in material to feed and stimulate worship and adoration—especially the Psalms, which are God’s inspired prayer book. As you read them, turn them into prayer. Vast tracts of truth await our exploration. Great themes abound—God’s holiness, sovereignty, truth, wisdom, faithfulness, patience, love, mercy—all of which will call forth our worship.

The use of a good hymnbook in private devotions can be a great aid to worship. Not all of us find it easy to express our deepest feelings or to utter the love of our hearts to God. We are very conscious of the poverty of our thoughts of God and the inadequacy of the words in which we express them. But we can appropriate the outpouring of worship and praise of men and women whom the Spirit has gifted to express these thoughts in verse. Try using a hymnbook regularly.

We should guard against the idea that worship is confined to the realm of thought, for Scripture links worship with service. During the temptation in the wilderness, our Lord quoted the Old Testament: “You shall *worship* the Lord your God, and *serve* Him only” (Matt 4:10, italics added; cf. Deut 6:13, marg.). We should not separate what God has joined. Worship is no substitute for service, nor is service a substitute for worship. True worship will inevitably find expression in loving, sacrificial service.

PRAYER

*Worthy of praise from every mouth,
of confession from every tongue,
of worship from every creature
Is Thy glorious Name, O Father, Son and Holy Ghost;
Who didst create the world in Thy grace
and by Thy compassion didst save the world.
To Thy majesty, O God, ten thousand times ten thousand
bow down and adore,
Singing and praising without ceasing, and saying,
Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts;
Heaven and earth are full of Thy praises;
Hosanna in the highest.*

Nestorian Liturgy

■



A Great Awakening Stirs the Colonies

From America's Great Revivals, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Originally published in CHRISTIAN LIFE Magazine.



In the 2004 issues of *Knowing & Doing*, the account of one of America's great revivals will be featured, drawn from the republished accounts included in Bethany House's *America's Great Revivals*.

In the Massachusetts village of Northampton, a black-gowned Congregational minister of God knelt in prayer. He was burdened for the 1,100 souls of the little town who, he was convinced, were afflicted with the deadly spiritual disease of the day.

In a very few minutes he would be mounting the pulpit. Should he mouth the cushioning assurances of "election" that they wanted to hear? Or should he tell them what he really believed—that unless they had definitely experienced the new birth through faith in Jesus Christ, they were heading straight for Hell!

The decision was made. The tall, thin-faced man arose, adjusted his periwig and entered the little meetinghouse.

That day in 1734 marked the birth of what in many respects was the most notable revival of religion America has ever experienced. Nothing like it had happened before. Nothing quite like it has happened since.

The conditions that pressed Jonathan Edwards to his knees that Sunday seemed black indeed. Gone was the God-fearing generation that had settled the land. The new generation had forgotten God. Immorality, debauchery, self-interest ruled. Few worried about the next world. Even those who held to the externals of religion had lost the heart of it.

Church rolls were shriveling. Conditions had become so bad that in 1662 leading ministers of Massachusetts colony did something they thought would help, but actually made things worse. They adopted what was called the "Halfway Covenant." People who could make no profession of regeneration still could

get their children baptized—so long as they could assent to the doctrine of faith and were not "scandalous in life." When the children grew up, if *they* couldn't testify to conversion,

only one privilege was denied—they could not partake of the Lord's Supper.

These halfway members soon outstripped the members in full communion. Halfway membership was socially acceptable. Why bother about going all the way?

Eventually the bar to the Lord's Supper dropped away. And soon halfway covenanters filtered into the ministry.

There was a remnant of the godly left. They soon realized that the Halfway Covenant

was a terrible mistake. Something cataclysmic was needed to prevent the flickering flame of vital Christianity from being wholly snuffed out.

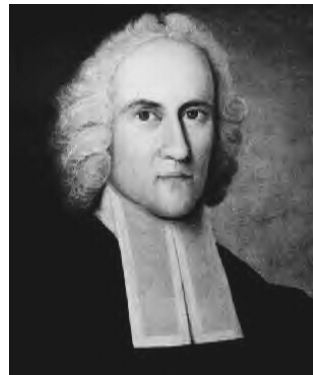
As He so often does, God chose a man to unlatch the windows of darkened churches to let in the light. That man was Jonathan Edwards.

The son of a minister, Edwards had a religious bent early in life. He spent hours in the woods observing nature. (His essay on the flying spider is still highly regarded.) He built a tree house where he went to pray with his friends.

Edwards Asks Questions

But in his adolescence he began to ask questions. What kind of God is the God of Creation? He found it hard to accept the stern doctrines of predestination and the sovereignty of God.

The struggle continued during his student years at Yale. It nearly ruined his health.



Jonathan Edwards
(1703–1758)

Agonizingly, he searched for assurance of salvation. Day after day, he besought God. It seemed he was getting nowhere. Then, finally, he came upon this passage in Paul's Epistle to Timothy: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

Through that one sentence Edwards was brought "to a new sense of things" — a sense of the glory and presence of God different from anything he had ever experienced. He longed to be "rapt up to Him in Heaven, and be as it were swallowed up in Him forever!"

He was at peace. It was the beginning of a new life of submission to God — both as a God of love and a God of justice.

Five years after he had completed his theological studies he accepted the pastorate of the Congregational Church of Northampton, Massachusetts. His predecessor was Samuel Stoddard, his grandfather.

It was Stoddard who first opened the way to the Communion Table for the unregenerates, provided only that they were not "scandalous" in their way of life. Let the unregenerate come to the Lord's Table, he argued. It may help him. "Stoddard's Way" was soon accepted by most New England churches.

Edwards grew increasingly concerned about the state of affairs in his parish.

In 1734 he began a series of sermons on "Justification by Faith Alone." He swept away the hopes of Heaven upon which so many of his congregation had been resting. Their morality, their membership in the church through the Halfway Covenant, their partaking of the Lord's Supper — all this availed nothing. They were made to see that God had not appointed anything for them to do before coming to Christ by faith; that all their previous works were unacceptable in His sight.

With no let-up Edwards hammered home an awe-inspiring concept of God's sovereignty. As sinners they deserved instant damnation, but for the mercy of God. There was nothing but to throw themselves on the mercy of God, who showed His overflowing

goodness in giving His Son to die for them.

He did not stop with a general theological discourse. He relentlessly called the toll of the town sins. "How many kinds of wickedness are there?" he asked, and then answered: irreverence in God's house, disregard of the Sabbath, neglect of family prayer, disobedience to parents, quarreling, greediness, sensuality, hatred of one's neighbor. Every secret sin was held up for all to see.

The Holy Spirit used sharp edges of the sermons to cut deep. People couldn't sleep on Sunday nights. Next day they could talk of nothing but the amazing upheaval in the pulpit.

First Conversions

It was in December that the first conversions came. There were five or six "savingsly converted" — among them a young woman notorious as a "company keeper." The news of her conversion "seemed to be like a flash of lightning upon the hearts of the young people, all over the town, and upon many others."

"Presently upon this," Edwards wrote in his *Narrative of Surprising Conversions*, "a great and earnest concern about the great things of religion and the eternal world became universal in all parts of the town, and among persons of all degrees and all ages; the noise among the dry bones waxed louder and louder; all other talk but about spiritual and eternal things was soon thrown by."

People gathered in their homes to pray. Shops closed up business. The public assemblies were "beautiful, the congregation was alive in God's service, everyone earnestly intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister."

Tears flowed — some weeping in sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors. Day and night people came to the parsonage to bring news of their conversion or to seek the pastor's help.

Soon the revival spilled over into other towns. Before long 100 communities were affected.

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Life Was All About Me

by Thomas W. Simmons

2003 Senior Professional Fellows Class



Tom Simmons

Having completed four years as an officer in the U.S. Air Force, I began my business career in the early 1970s as a young Wall Street executive. I was highly motivated and well trained to pursue the world of finance. Although I was married with two young children, my work consumed much of my time and energy and was very important to me—too important.

Success came quickly. I was considered a leader with a bright future and so was placed on a fast track and given increased responsibilities, which of course required more of my time and attention. The financial rewards were intoxicating, and, although we have never lived extravagantly, money and income became the measuring stick of success in the competitive business world in which I was thriving. Recognition and accolades can easily deceive, and I believed that my success was a product of my own capabilities. I had grown up being told that I could accomplish anything that I chose to undertake through hard work. Life was all about me.

Growing up, my family had regularly attended church, because it was the acceptable thing to do, but I remember no real spiritual dimension and certainly no genuine faith either in church or at home. My wife, too, had been raised going to church, so as young parents we had our children baptized and took them to church from time to time.

In 1984, our daughter, then a sophomore in high school, started attending Young Life with her friends. She became more active and enjoyed the fellowship and the teaching. Then, after a week at Young Life Summer Camp, she came to a saving knowledge of Christ.

As she grew in her faith, she brought home several books written by Bill Bright.

My wife, Blair, started reading the Bright material. Soon she, too, was convicted of her need for Christ and committed her life to Him a short time later. While they attended church together, occasionally accompanied by our son, I joined my buddies for our weekly racquetball session. When either of them talked with me about matters of faith, I would reply, "It's fine for you, but I'm not interested."

During this time, I could feel myself growing increasingly distant from my family.

In 1985, when our son Tom went off to college, he was a decided atheist. But amazingly, among his group of new friends were a couple of guys who were active in Campus Crusade at his university. He enjoyed the gatherings he attended with them, but especially relished the stimulating debates about what they believed to be true.

One of these young men spent part of the Christmas holidays in our home one year, and the following summer invited Tom to attend La Vida, a two-week program in the Adirondack Mountains sponsored by Young Life. When we picked Tom up at the airport after La Vida, the first thing he said to us was, "My life will never be the same." We indeed could actually see a change in him that day, and we watched his new faith continue to alter his whole life from that time.

While my wife and daughter embraced and encouraged Tom's new-found faith with joy, I was unable to share in their joy and just could not connect. Although I wasn't disdainful of their faith, it didn't make sense to me and certainly did not fit into my lifestyle. My family was going in one direction and I in another.

By 1988, both kids were in college. The estrangement between Blair and me, although beneath the surface, was unbearable to me. Finally, I announced to her that I

was moving out of our home. But, living in a one-bedroom apartment with rented furniture in Rosslyn, my life was not improving. Our son would regularly tell me, "I'm praying for you, Man!" My usual response was a curt, "Don't bother!"

While my work continued to go well, it no longer provided the thrill and the adrenaline that it had in the past; it no longer occupied the prominent place in my life that it had for so long. During this period, I was sinking into a state of despair. I could see no way out of my misery.

Mercifully, it was at this lowest point that the Lord showed me that I had been wrong all of those years. I had a painfully clear picture of the mistakes I had made and the people I had hurt. I realized that incorrect assumptions and wrong focus had controlled my life.

Reading Josh McDowell's *More Than A Carpenter*, I began to understand what had been such a mystery to me before: it wasn't all about me. Life, in fact, was all about the Word made Flesh. By God's grace to me in Christ and through my family, my sins were forgiven and our relationships mended. A bright new hope lay ahead.

Believing there was much ground to make up, I quickly immersed myself in the audio tapes of several highly regarded teachers. John Howe's recorded preaching and teaching at Truro Church, Fairfax, Virginia, made a big impact on me early on, as did the book *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis. R.C. Sproul's books, tapes, and conferences have also provided a strong theological foundation over the years.

I first became aware of the C.S. Lewis Institute when I went to hear John Stott speak at a conference. The Institute's appeal to thoughtful believers resonated with me, and over the years I regularly attended the programs sponsored by the Institute.

Later, I had the opportunity to become good friends with Institute staff members, Tom Tarrants and Jim Beavers. Through them I became familiar with the Fellows Program and its study materials. When a group for Senior Professional Men began in

September 2003, I eagerly enrolled. The goal of "Finishing Well" sounded right to me.

Because ministries for youth have impacted our family so powerfully, Blair and I have maintained a lively interest and involvement in Young Life, Campus Crusade, and, more recently, Trinity Christian School of Fairfax. Our children have continued to grow in their faith. Our daughter worked for Prison Fellowship for two years before becoming a full-time mom for two little boys. Our son went to seminary after college and was ordained. Today, he is Rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Purcellville, Virginia. Both are blessed with godly spouses and are raising their children to know and love the Lord. We have many reasons to thank and praise God.

During a conversation in June 2001, a family friend, the Rev. David Prior, asked if I had ever considered full-time work in a ministry. At the time I was a Managing Director of a venture capital firm and flatly told David that the thought of full-time ministry had never crossed my mind. He nodded and suggested that I pray and listen for the Lord's direction.

Two years later in the summer of 2003, my friend Tom Tarrants invited me to breakfast. At that meeting he described a new long-term strategic plan being adopted by the Institute. The changes in view were quite substantial, and he told me that he and others thought my gifts and experience would be invaluable in helping the Institute turn that vision into reality. After a lengthy process of discernment, I finally joined the Institute in January of this year as Executive Vice President.

Like so many of us, I look back in wonder and gratitude at what God in His mercy has done in my life. I am humbled and thankful that He has given me the privilege of being part of such important work in building His kingdom at this time in history, and I am relying on His promise to complete the good work He has begun in me. ■

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A Great Awakening Stirs the Colonies

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In six months 300 were converted in Northampton (population 1,100). One hundred were received in membership before the next Communion.

In May 1735, the revival began to cool off, but it was only a flicker of greater things to come when twenty-five-year-old George Whitefield, colleague of the Wesleys in England, burst upon the scene.

Edwards had touched off the revival fire. George Whitefield swept the white-hot flames through all of New England and into the South.

Edwards was the flint, Whitefield the tinder.

Edwards was tall, spare, deliberate. Whitefield, only of average height, jumped about like a jack-in-the-box. Edwards spoke with quiet intensity, his thin tones reaching the dim corners of the galleries. Whitefield hurled Gospel truths like thunderbolts, his eyes flashing (one eye squinted, a memento of measles).

Edwards' sermons were masterpieces of theological thought. He built truth upon truth until the weight of them bore down on his listeners like a pile driver. Whitefield's orations, unremarkable from a theological standpoint, had the effect of a red-hot pitchfork thrust into a tub of butter.

But they had one thing in common: the conviction that the Gospel compels a personal decision that will change an ordinary man into a new being.

Powerful Preaching

Edwards' peculiar power lay in his ability to paint pictures. His aim was to make Heaven and Hell, their joys and terrors, as real as if you could point them out in an atlas.

In his most famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," he compared the sinner with some spider or loathsome insect suspended over the flames.

You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe and burn it asunder; and you have nothing to lay hold

of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you have ever done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.

Unconsciously people grasped the pillars and pews to keep from sliding into the pit.

A minister who was in the pulpit plucked Edwards' gown, exclaiming, "Mr. Edwards, Mr. Edwards, is not God a God of mercy?"

To be sure, it was not all Hell-fire and brimstone. He could create equally as vivid pictures of the love and mercy of God and the beauty of Heaven.

Whitefield believed in using his voice. "I love those who thunder out the word," he once said. "The Christian world is in a dead sleep. Nothing but a loud voice can awaken them out of it."

His enunciation was faultless. David Garrick, the actor, once remarked that if Whitefield were on the stage he could make an audience weep or tremble by his utterance of the one word, "Oh."

Benjamin Franklin, who often heard him preach, stated that "every accent, every emphasis, every modulation of voice was so perfectly tuned and well placed, that without being interested in the subject one could not help being pleased with the discourse."

Whitefield too could paint pictures. One time he compared the sinner with a helpless blind beggar wandering on the edge of a precipice. As he stumbles forward, his staff slips from his hands and falls into the abyss. Unconscious of his danger, he stoops down to recover it. Carried away by the vividness, someone exclaimed, "He's gone! He's gone!"

Whitefield Arrives

When New England heard that Whitefield was coming, it trembled in anticipation. Sporadic revivals were still in progress, but it seemed that the people were holding their breath for the advent of the young man who had shaken England.

At Philadelphia, his first stop after founding an orphanage in Georgia, he spoke to

thousands from the gallery of the courthouse on Market Street. Every word was distinctly heard, it is said, by seamen on board a sloop anchored at the wharf, 400 feet away.

From 1738 to 1770 he made seven journeys to America, preaching from Georgia to New Hampshire and Maine. In one seventy-five day period he preached 175 times and traveled 800 miles.

He preached in meeting-houses, in barns, in fields, from wagons. Everywhere it was the same—people convicted of sin, driven to the foot of the cross.

At none of the meetings was there an “invitation.” Whitefield merely preached and then waited for the Spirit to move. There were no counselors, no decision cards. When people were converted they leaped up to tell about it or made it known later.

At Whiteclay Creek, N. J., several thousand gathered. Whitefield felt moved to sing “with unspeakable comfort” the Twenty-third Psalm. When he got to the line, “In presence of my spiteful foes, He does my table spread,” “the melting soon began and the power increased more and more, till the greatest part of the congregation was exceedingly moved.”

While preaching from a wagon in Basking Ridge, N. J., Whitefield noticed a little boy weeping “as though his little heart would break.” Whitefield broke off his discourse, had the boy picked up and put in the wagon. He announced that since old professors would not cry after Christ, the boy would preach to them. God, he said, was displaying His sovereignty, “out of an infant’s mouth perfecting praise.”

“God so blessed this,” Whitefield testified, “that a universal concern fell on the congregation again. Fresh persons dropped down here and there, and the cry increased more and more.”

Ministers were among the converts. At dinner with fellow ministers in Stamford, Connecticut, Whitefield spoke vigorously against the practice of sending unconverted persons in the ministry. Two ministers, with

tears in their eyes, publicly confessed they laid hands on young men without so much as asking them whether they were born again of God or not.

After dinner one old minister called Whitefield aside. Speaking with difficulty through his tears, he said, “I have been a scholar and have preached the doctrines of grace for a long time. But I believe I have never felt the power of them in my own soul.”



George Whitefield
(1714–1770)

Others Take Up Revival Torch

Other New England ministers took up the revival torch. Notable among them: Theodore Frelinghuysen, Samuel Blair, Presbyterian William Tennent and his four sons. (Tennent in 1730 founded a ministerial school in Neshaminy, Pa., known as the “Log College.” It was the forerunner of Princeton Seminary.) Local ministers were also awakening their parishes.

A dramatic incident occurred at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. As an evening meeting was going on, the chimney of the house next door caught fire. The flames flashed on the windows of the meeting-house. The cry went up: “Christ is coming to judge us!” People fell down in fear.

Even when the cause of the flash was explained, they continued to be alarmed. “If we’re so unprepared for judgment that the light of a burning chimney throws us into consternation,” they said, “how much in need we are of repentance!”

Afterward the minister visited their homes. He found “there was hardly any such thing as entering into a house in which there was not some poor, wounded and distressed soul.” He was called into one house

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A Great Awakening Stirs the Colonies

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after another. The people begged him not to leave them until prayer had solemnly been offered in their behalf.

As the revival burned on, strange things began to happen. People went into trances, saw visions. They were seized by violent muscular contractions called "the jerks." Laymen began to preach on the spur of the moment, motivated, they said, by "impulses" from the Holy Spirit.

After a sermon in Lyme, Connecticut, "many had their countenances changed; their thoughts seemed to trouble them, so that the joints of their loins were loosed, and their knees smote one against another. Great numbers cried out aloud in the anguish of their souls. Several stout men fell as though a cannon had been discharged, and a ball had made its way through their hearts."

People had to be carried from the meetinghouse.

At first ministers hesitated to do anything about the disorders. They feared it might hinder the revival. But eventually it became clear that something would have to be done.

In a sermon called, "Needful Caution in a Critical Day," the minister at Lyme told his people to "watch against everything in principle and practice that has a tendency to bring any blemishes upon the work of divine grace." He pointed out that bodily agitations might in themselves come to be counted valuable. People would seek after them and produce them at will, degrading religion into "mere nervous excitement."

Because of these disorders, which the leaders of the revival were not able to keep in bounds, opposition to the whole awakening arose. Then, too, evangelists who took to preaching without permission in others' parishes made themselves unpopular to the local ministers.

One evangelist, James Davenport, went from place to place denouncing the New England ministers. They were all unconverted men, he said, leading their flocks blindfold to Hell. He called on the converted to separate themselves from their unconverted brethren.

Many did. The separatists denounced the churches as being made up of hypocrites, believed the Gospel could best be preached by uneducated—but converted—lay exhorters. Some held that bodily manifestation *must* accompany true conversions. Some laid down rules as to what feelings and experiences a professing Christian must describe to be regarded as converted.

Whitefield and Lukewarm Clergy

Whitefield did not actively encourage the separatists. However, he and others did accuse the clergy of lukewarmness and lack of spirituality. On his second visit to New England in 1744 Harvard and Yale colleges published "testimonies" against him. They accused him of approving of the disorders, causing divisions and deluding people about the orphanage for which he was collecting funds. (The last charge was proved unfounded.) In June 1745, the General Association of Connecticut voted that it was not "advisable for any of our ministers to admit him to their pulpits or for any of our people to attend his ministrations."

Edwards rose up to defend the revival.

In two treatises, *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*, and *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England*, he spoke his mind on the emotional displays. He took a middle ground. Though he viewed them with deep concern, at the same time he insisted there might well be a connection between such manifestations and the unusual presence of divine power.

Anyway, he argued, we should not judge the revival by these. We should look at the work as a whole, which he was ready to declare was of God. If those who criticize, he said, "wait to see a work of God without difficulties and stumbling blocks, it will be like the fool's waiting at the river side to have the water all run by."

Later on he had more to say on the subject of religious experience. In his *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, he reaffirmed his

belief that conversion is undeniably an emotional affair. Though the intellect enters in, feeling, not thought, is the gateway to knowing God. He was not concerned by the nature of the outward displays. What counts, he argued, is whether or not they indicate an inner change which will not evaporate when the first flush of emotional upheaval wears away.

So well did he reason that his treatise has gone down as the chief factor in making sudden religious conversion intellectually respectable as well as scripturally sound.

If the separatists hoped for support from Edwards, they were mistaken. He took the wind out of their sails with his treatise on *Qualifications of Full Communion*. It bowled over the Halfway Covenant like a ten pin.

The point of the treatise: the Scriptures do not recognize two kinds of saints. There is but one class—those who profess a “renovation of heart” in addition to knowledge of the doctrine and decent living.

He did not, as the separatists did, say specifically what “inward experiences” must be related. Neither did he say the converted person must necessarily know the time and place of his conversion. Edwards’ view was eventually accepted almost without exception by the New England churches.

The controversies did not bog down the revival. In fact, it almost can be said that they were an evidence of it. For they showed that people were stirred. Revival upset the status quo. Things no longer ran smoothly. Satan opposed. And even those used of God were in danger of becoming proud, arrogant, rash. But Satan could not stop the revival.

The last embers of the Great Awakening did not die out until 1760; the revival had gone on for twenty years. What were the results?

Most obvious result was the ingathering of souls. Estimates run from 25,000 to 50,000 converts. Since the population of the entire New England colonies at that time was no more than 340,000, this had the impact 25 million converts would make on the Church

today. It is a matter of record that from 1740 to 1760, 150 new Congregational churches were founded. Separatist churches multiplied. So did Baptist and Presbyterian bodies.

Other immediate results: the awakening killed the idea (at least for a century) that an unconverted ministry might be tolerated. It gave an impetus to ministerial education. It advanced the cause of missions among the Indians. It struck a blow in the cause of religious liberty (the Great Awakening undoubtedly spurred First Amendment support for religious liberty). It made the ministries of traveling evangelists not only respectable but desirable.

The Verdict of History

What is the verdict after two centuries have gone by?

A current, objective biographer of Jonathan Edwards terms the Great Awakening “the most potent, constructive force in American life during the mid-century.”

By it God undoubtedly fortified the Church against the onslaught of skepticism and rationalism soon to come from Europe. No one knows what effect it had on stabilizing the Colonies so that they could present a united front to Great Britain. But it is certain that the Awakening had a part to play in cementing Christian principles into the foundation of American government.

Most important, the Great Awakening revitalized the spiritual experience of the average man. Christianity once again became personal and important to him. With a clarity that staggered him, he saw that a man cannot be saved without experiencing new birth through Jesus Christ.

The Great Awakening defeated the enemies of spiritual indifference and theological fuzziness which threatened Christianity in the New World. But after the Revolution, Christianity was challenged by an entirely different enemy. How God moved to quell this adversary is the story of the next great American revival, “The Revival of 1800.” ■



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2004 EVENTS

- ◆ **The DaVinci Code Decoded:** A seminar with Dr. Art Lindsley and Catherine Sanders addressing issues raised by Dan Brown's bestseller; Saturday morning, March 27, Cherrydale Baptist Church, Arlington, Virginia.
- ◆ **Can You Trust the Bible?** A conference on the reliability of Scripture with Dr. Doug Gropp, Dr. Bill Kynes, and Dr. Art Lindsley; May 21-22, Columbia Baptist Church, Falls Church, Virginia.
- ◆ **Dr. Os Guinness** will be the keynote speaker at the C.S. Lewis Institute's Annual Fundraising Banquet, June 1, 2004, at the Fairview Park Marriott, Falls Church, Virginia.
- ◆ **Lee Strobel & Mark Mittleberg Conference:** *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, October 8-9, Location TBA.
- ◆ **Alistair Begg Conference:** *Rediscovering The Lord's Prayer*, November 12-13, McLean Presbyterian Church, McLean, Virginia.

2005 EVENTS

- ◆ **Ravi Zacharias Conference**, April 29-30, 2005, *Theme and Location TBA.*
- ◆ **Henry Blackaby Conference**, September 23-24, 2005, *Theme and Location TBA.*
- ◆ **John Polkinghorne Conference**, *Date, Theme, and Location TBA.*

Other events are in development, so check the Institute's website for updates.

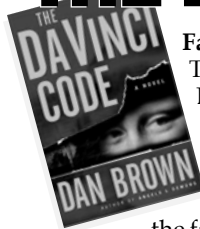
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C·S· LEWIS INSTITUTE Seminar

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These are the questions that Art Lindsley, Ph.D., Senior Fellow at C.S. Lewis Institute, and Catherine Sanders, journalist, will address in the upcoming C.S. Lewis Institute Seminar: *The Da Vinci Code Decoded*. Multiple months on best-seller lists across the country and translated into over 40 languages, Dan Brown's fictional work has captivated the attention of millions of readers – and unsettled the faith of not a few. In this seminar, Art Lindsley and Catherine Sanders will reveal the historical inaccuracies and implausible contentions posed in the author's very engaging and skillful writing.



Art Lindsley



Catherine Sanders

Saturday Morning, March 27, 2004; 9 a.m. - 12 noon
Cherrydale Baptist Church, 3910 Lorcom Lane, Arlington, Virginia

- ▶ No pre-registration; register at the door: Registration opens 8 a.m.
- ▶ \$20 admission, cash or check only
- ▶ Recordings of the seminar will be available, CDs only, \$17 + tax (VA residents) and S&H

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