



PROFILES IN FAITH Martin Luther (1483-1546)

by Dr. Art Lindsley
Scholar-in-Residence



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Historian John Todd notes, "In most big libraries books by and about Martin Luther occupy more shelf room than those concerned with any other historical figure except Jesus of Nazareth." There are many strong feelings about Luther that range from hate to love. He was once called "a demon in the appearance of a man." Another opponent called him "a wild boar in the vineyard." Psychologist Erik Erikson, in *Young Man Luther*, psychoanalyzes Luther, concluding that he was a severely disturbed young man arising from harsh treatment by his parents and teachers.

On the other hand, there are those that confer on Luther virtual sainthood. One writer says, "Thousands have recognized in Luther the greatest witness of the truth since the days of the apostles." Another scholar says, "A man may tell how far he has advanced in theology by the degree in which he is pleased by Luther's writings."

Other scholars are more measured in their evaluations. Historian Martin Marty, while pointing out Luther's faults, calls him a "titanic character" who has left his "stamp on history." Aland acknowledges his influence,

saying, "The intellectual life of the modern age would not have come into existence without Martin Luther and the Reformation."

Martin Luder (he later took the name Luther) was born November 10, 1483 (died February 18, 1546) in Eisleben, Germany. His father, Hans Luder, was a miner who rose to

ownership of several mines. Martin was brought up strictly. One early story has father Hans seeking Martin's forgiveness for a beating. Hans wanted Martin to become a lawyer and sent him to the University of Erfurt. He did well in all areas but especially at public debates, earning the nickname "The Philosopher." At age 22, while returning to the University after a visit to his family, Martin was caught in a severe thunderstorm. When a bolt of lightning struck the ground close by, he cried out, "Help me, St. Anne, I will become a monk." Coming safely through the storm, he spent several weeks discussing his vow

with friends, and finally decided to enter an Augustinian monastery.

There are strong feelings about Luther that range from love to hate.



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live
faith in Christ
through personal and
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KNOWING & DOING
by Thomas A. Tarrants, III, *President*

Dear Reader ,

I do not want to keep you from delving into the riches you will find in this issue, so let me be brief:

We deeply appreciate your prayers and support!

Despite the tragic events and economic pressures of this past year, the Institute was able to complete 2001 with all of its bills paid. This is, of course, by the grace of God and the generous help of many of you. So once again, please accept our thanks for keeping us in your prayers and giving.

Jesus once told his disciples to "work while it was yet day." As threats of more terrorist activity continue to come, we want to give our energies to the work of discipleship of heart and mind. There is no better time than the present!

As we have witnessed, one person can have an enormous impact—for good or ill—on others. The C.S. Lewis Institute is privileged to work with men and women in the Washington, DC area and beyond in helping them grow in Christ-likeness so that they, too, can be a light in an increasingly dark world.

And your help and prayers are essential!

In Christ,

P.S. Sign-up for regular support of the Institute, and we will send you a taped lecture each month. It will bless and strengthen you, I promise.



C.S. Lewis on Postmodernism

by Art Lindsley, Ph.D.

Scholar-in-Residence, C.S. Lewis Institute



Dr. Art Lindsley

Although C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) lived before the full flowering of postmodernism, some of its roots were already present in his day. While Lewis would certainly be an opponent of postmodernist's denial of objective truth and morality, at many points, he makes observations similar to postmodern philosophers. Perhaps, then, he can help us see both what is right and what is wrong with postmodernism.

What is Postmodernism?

Postmodernism has both philosophical and cultural aspects. I can only touch on the former here. Lyotard (a post-modernist himself) defines postmodernism as an "incredulity towards metanarratives." In other words, this school of thought is suspicious of any narrative, story, or account of the world that claims to be absolute or all-encompassing—a "meta"-narrative. Postmodernists are suspicious of such claims not only because of the limits of reason, but also because such perspectives have been oppressive. For instance, Nazism and Marxism give a comprehensive account of the world, and both have been extremely oppressive. Consider the atrocities committed by Hitler, Lenin, Stalin, Pol Pot, and Mao Tse-tung. Christianity also provides a comprehensive story that proceeds from eternity to creation, fall, redemption, the Second Coming of Christ, a new heaven and a new earth, and eternal life. Certainly, there have been times of oppression such as the Crusades and

Lyotard defines postmodernism as an "incredulity towards metanarratives."

the Inquisition. Could it be that all metanarratives necessarily lead to oppression? This is what postmodernists suggest. Note here that oppression is believed to be objectively evil. They are right. However, on what grounds can postmodernists claim that it is evil?

Other related claims held by a variety of postmodernists:

1. There is no objective view of reality. We are shaped by our culture.
2. Because we are so culturally determined, we cannot judge another culture.
3. There are no facts, only interpretations. (Nietzsche)
4. History is fiction. History is written from the perspective of the culture, race, and gender of the writer. What is "historic" is totally subjective. (Foucault)
5. Knowledge is Power. We ought to be suspicious of anyone who claims to give us truth. They are out to further their own (and their group's) vested interests. (Foucault)
6. Ethical claims are mere sentiment. There are no neutral grounds to condemn the Holocaust. (Rorty)
7. Deconstruction is Justice. We ought to explore and find the contradictions in every piece of literature so that we can uphold justice and avoid injustice. (Derrida)
8. Whoever "spins" best, wins. Since there is no objective truth, all we have is rhetoric. Whoever plays the game best, wins. Make sure it's you. (Fish)

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C.S. Lewis on Postmodernism

(continued from page 3)

If
any man
is safe from
the danger
of under-
estimating
this
adversary,
I am that
man.

In an excellent work, *Signs of the Times*, David Lehman gives a clever definition of Deconstructionism. You could eliminate the “con” and just call it Destructionism. It seeks to destroy any objective truth, morality, history, or even science. Or, you could put the emphasis on the “con” and call any attempt at objectivity a “con” job, which has as its goal the advancement of an individual, group, or cultural agenda. How would C.S. Lewis agree or disagree with the above assertions?

Lewis Agrees

C.S. Lewis would agree with some of these emphases, although not to the degree that present advocates contend. He might maintain that a partial truth taken as the whole truth becomes an untruth. Some points of agreement might go along these lines:

1. There are limits to knowledge. Reason cannot develop a comprehensive knowledge of reality. Lewis held that “reality is very odd” and that “ultimate truth must have the characteristic of strangeness.”
2. Your perspective does affect what you see. He would argue that what you see depends a lot on where you stand and the kind of person you are. In an essay titled “Meditation on a Toolshed,” he shares the experience of entering a tool shed and observing a shaft of sunlight coming through a hole in the roof. He could see the gradu-

ally widening beam of light with specks of dust floating downward. He calls that initial view “looking at” the beam. However, there is another perspective that involves “looking along” the beam. In order to do that, you would need to go to the crack and look outside, seeing the trees, clouds, and sun 90-odd-million miles away. “Looking at” or analyzing has become a preferred means of knowing which can be valid as far as it goes, but there is much more to life. In fact, sometimes it is impossible to do both at the same time. For instance, you cannot both be fully engaged in a romantic relationship and analyze it at the same time. The analysis involves a distancing from the intimate engagement. In any case, your perspective determines what you see, and one perspective does not necessarily exhaust the different ways of viewing something.

3. Our perspective affects the way we view history. In *The Discarded Image*, Lewis discusses the medieval worldview. In his conclusion, he maintains that it is splendid and coherent. The only problem is that it is not true. Historical models may help us to get at what reality is, but they don’t exhaustively describe it. Lewis says:

No model is a catalogue of ultimate realities, and none is mere fantasy. ...each reflects the prevalent psychology of an age almost as

much as it reflects the state of that age’s knowledge. It is not impossible that our own model will die a violent death ...a good cross-examiner can do wonders. He will not elicit falsehoods from an honest witness. But in relation to the total truth in the witness’s mind, the structure of examination is like a stencil. It determines how much of the total truth will appear and what pattern it will suggest.

In his Cambridge inaugural address, Lewis argued that the Renaissance didn’t happen, or if it did happen, it didn’t happen in England. Other categories were more helpful in getting at the historical shifts that happened. (This may be true with respect to the term Postmodernism as well.) Lewis said:

All lines of demarcation between what we call periods should be subject to constant revision Unlike dates, periods are not facts.... Change is never complete and change never ceases. Nothing is ever quite new.... All divisions will falsify material to some extent; the best one can do is to choose those which will falsify it least.

So, the investigation of history is profoundly affected by the perspective of the historian, as has been rightly pointed out by Black history and feminists.

4. My ideas of God and reality sometimes need to be smashed so that I can gain a better view of reality. Often, *Your God is Too Small*, as J.B. Phillips maintained in his book by that title. Lewis says, "My idea of God is not a divine idea. It has to be shattered time after time. He shatters it Himself. He is the great Iconoclast" (idol-smasher).

In fact, Lewis maintains that "all reality is Iconoclastic." We sometimes need to smash our limiting concepts of things so we can think outside our previous box. What I need is not my idea of my wife, but my wife. What I need is not my idea of my boys, but my boys. We need to stretch or smash inadequate or outmoded concepts continually.

5. Culture can blind us to some aspects of who we are. Lewis maintained that we need old books to help correct this blindness. Often, we are guilty of "chronological snobbery," rejecting something because it is old—ancient, medieval, "Victorian," or "Modern." We need to ask, *Was it ever refuted? If so, by whom? Where, and how decisively?* Lewis recommends that we read three old books for every new book, or if that is too much, one old one for every new one. We need to let the "breezes of the centuries" blow through our minds, cleansing us of the culturally induced distortions in our perspective.

Lewis Disagrees

Certainly, C.S. Lewis would disagree with many of the positions postmodernists take, especially that there is no objective knowledge of truth or morality. Here are some things that he might say if he were alive today:

1. Many postmodern contentions are self-refuting. An ancient example of this was the Greek philosopher Gorgias, who maintained that "All statements are false." The problem is that if the statement that "All statements are false" is true, then *it* is false. Similarly, postmodernism maintains that it is (objectively) true to say that there are no objective truths. It uses reason to deny the validity of reason. If the statement, "all perspectives on reality are culturally determined" is true, then is this statement itself also culturally determined? If all metanarratives are suspect because they lead to oppression, then can it not be equally maintained that postmodernism is itself a metanarrative and equally suspect? If all knowledge claims are a grab for power, then are not postmodernism's contentions equally motivated by a will-to-power?

Lewis argued this kind of thing about Freud and Marx. They were merrily "sawing off the branch that they were sitting on." If, according to Marx, all philosophies are economically motivated, what about Marx's own philosophy? If all belief came out of

the non-rational unconscious (Freud), then is this not true of Freud's own views?

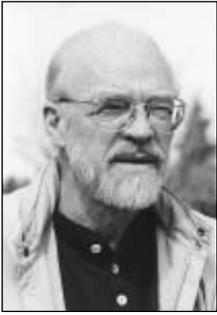
2. Suspicion can work both ways. Lewis argues in his essay "Bulverism" that the psychological charge that "Christianity is a crutch" might be answered by the counter-charge that atheism is a crutch. Atheism is an opiate of the conscience. Atheism is a giant Oedipus complex wishing the death of the Heavenly Father. So, we need to ask the postmodernists to suspect their own suspicions.

3. Lewis would point out that a view that maintains there is "no neutral ground" on which we can condemn the Holocaust deserves suspicion. Some radical feminists (not believers) maintain that this radical relativism actually perpetuates oppression and injustice to women because it makes the term "justice" only an emotive statement.

4. Perhaps Lewis would point out that all these claims are partial truths exaggerated into the whole truth. Postmodernists exaggerate the influence of culture, they exaggerate the problem of objectivity, they exaggerate the difficulty of interpretation, they exaggerate the difficulty of cross-cultural communication. He might say that while the claim to absolutes can be oppressive, the denial of absolutes could lead to even greater oppression. In

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Eugene Peterson

An Interview With: REV. EUGENE PETERSON

by Dr. Art Lindsley

Art Lindsley: How did you come to faith in Christ?

Eugene Peterson: I grew up in a Christian home and was immersed in a family of belief and obedience from the time I was born, and I made my own decision in early adolescence. But, it was more like saying *yes* to the *yes* that was already there. So, I was fortunate in that way.

Art Lindsley: What are the top three needs of the Church today?

Eugene Peterson: One is that the church must recover its identity as a unique people of God. We have become so acculturated to the American culture that we have virtually lost our baptismal identity; it's so important that we recover our distinctive identity as a people of God and not as a people of American religion.

Second would be—and it is related to the first—that we have to recover our sense of what leadership is. We have shaped our leadership ministries to a success-oriented culture obsessed with image and power and influence. We don't find any of these qualities in our Scriptures or the best parts of our history. We have let the culture define what it means to be a leader in a way that is diametrically opposed to everything that is revealed in Jesus and our Scriptures.

The third thing is—and these all hang together in a sense—that we have to be much more attentive to the *way* in which we do things. What we have been doing in

America, particularly in the last fifty to sixty years, is that we have kept the evangelical goals of the gospel, conversion, evangelism, mission, but we have used the means of our culture. Jesus is the *way* as well as the truth, but we have continuously given up the way Jesus did it; we have kept the goals and ends, but chosen our own means.

Art Lindsley: Which is the most important book you have written and why?

Eugene Peterson: That's like asking which of my children is most important. I think my book called *Working the Angles*, which was my attempt to recover pastoral identity—that our identity comes out of Scripture and not out of culture. One of the things that I have cared about a lot has been a recovery of pastoral identity that is organically developed out of the Scriptures. In *Working the Angles*, I think I did that as clearly as it is possible for me to do. I have written several books having to do with pastoral vocation, but that is probably the most central of the several books I have written on pastoral vocation.

Art Lindsley: What are the top five most influential books in your life other than the Bible?

Eugene Peterson: It would be better for me to answer with names of authors.

Alexander Whyte, a Scottish Presbyterian pastor, writer, and teacher, has more than anybody else given me a sense of what it means to live out this pastoral vocation.

Dostoyevsky in his novels explored for me the nature of the soul and salvation and shaped my imagination in relationship to my congregation.

Wendell Berry, for me, has been the most incisive Christian prophetic voice in America today.

Baron Frederich Von Hugel has influenced me more than anyone else in understanding spiritual formation and spiritual direction. He was a layman with an incredible focus and intuition of our formation in

Christ. I think you could almost say that he was the Jim Houston of a hundred years ago. But, I ran into Von Hugel long before I ran into Jim, so he is the one who influenced me the most.

And the fifth would be Charles Williams. Williams was one of the Oxford community that included Lewis, Tolkien, Sayers, and his imaginative grasp of the way good and evil are worked out in a Christian drama, or maybe I should say worked out in a world in which the gospel is the central reality, profoundly informed the way I live and work. Sharp little insights, not least from the Narnia books, would return and keep me clear-headed.

Art Lindsley: How do you shape your devotional life?

Eugene Peterson: I guess I would say that my life of prayer is shaped basically from the Psalms. The Psalms are my prayer book and trained me in the vocabulary and the rhythm of attentive responsiveness to God. The Psalms are coupled with Sabbath keeping, ordering the way I think about and live in time. So, Psalms and Sabbath together shape my life of prayer and spirituality.

Art Lindsley: What advice would you give to believers who want to impact the culture for Jesus Christ?

Eugene Peterson: I think I would question a little bit wanting to make an impact on the culture. I'm not sure that's what we should be trying to do. The temptation in trying to make an impact on the culture is that we pick our own ways to do it—the thing I was talking about earlier in terms of using the wrong way to do the right thing. The way to make an impact on the culture for the gospel is to follow Jesus, and that doesn't seem like it's making much of an impact. We make a gospel impact on the culture by living obedient lives of love and witness. Christians have a long track record of failure in this: We decide we want to make an impact, then we mount a crusade, set a course of action and kill a lot of people or bully pre-

cious souls made in the image of God and use propaganda and impersonal, manipulative means to achieve what we have decided is a Gospel goal. We try to do the work of Christ while ignoring the way of the cross.

So, we are back to living humbly and doing justice and there's nothing very dramatic about that. And, it doesn't look like it's making a big impact. As you can see, I am pretty skeptical of big answers or big solutions. ■■

Eugene Peterson was born in E. Stanwood, Washington, but soon after, his family moved to Kalispell, Montana where he grew up. He received his B.A. (Philosophy) from Seattle Pacific University, S.T.B. from New York Theological Seminary, and M.A. in Semitic Languages from Johns Hopkins University.

Ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA), he has served churches in White Plains, New York and Bel Air, Maryland, where he was organizing pastor of a new church, Christ Our King Presbyterian Church, serving as pastor for 29 years.

Eugene's teaching career has included New York Theological Seminary, New York, New York; St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, Maryland; Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, California; New College Berkeley, Berkeley, California; Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Regent College, Vancouver, B.C. He served as the James M. Houston Professor of Spiritual Theology at Regent and retains the position of Professor Emeritus of Spiritual Theology.

He has authored numerous books, including Run With the Horses, A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society, Subversive Spirituality, Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work, and, perhaps most well-known, The Message, a contemporary rendering of the Bible in everyday language. In June, The Message will be released in a single volume containing both Old and New Testaments.



Substantial Healing, One More Time

Reflections Upon Francis Schaeffer's True Spirituality and Ron Howard's A Beautiful Mind



Steven S. Garber

by Steven S. Garber, Ph.D.
Senior Fellow, C.S. Lewis Institute



Very few days go by that I am not involved with someone somewhere—a Capitol Hill café, a walk in the woods near my home—over the dilemma of the “all or nothing syndrome,” as Francis Schaeffer identified it. Getting to that place in the conversation always brings its own pains. But inevitably, the longer I listen the more sure I am that one more son of Adam, one more daughter of Eve, is being stretched taut, because it seems that “if it can’t be all that I want (or hope or desire, even for the best of reasons), then maybe I should just walk away and do something else.”

A difficult relationship, perhaps a marriage... a wearying work situation, perhaps working against some small or great injustice... a strained relationship in school, perhaps with a dissertation advisor—each story, full as it is of wondering and groaning, is of course

completely unique. Our histories as members of families which have shaped us and still shape us, our personalities as diverse as the sand on the seashore, our hopes and dreams, our griefs and sorrows, all together they provide an unending panorama of people among whom we live and move and have our being. The longer I live, the more sure I am of that.

And yet, at the very same time, we suffer and we desire in common; after all is said and done, we are each one image-bearers of the same God.

Thirty years ago, in certain kinds of settings—the kind of people who might find their way to a C.S. Lewis Institute lecture, for example—the language, “Well, Schaeffer says....” was often heard. Sometimes it began a debate, other times it ended one. Now almost two decades after his death, there is a natural sifting process going on: what is it that mattered most in his work? will it be his cultural critique? his vision of the arts? his practice of community? his understanding of spirituality? God alone knows. I do know that I learned some deep lessons—and am still learning—about following Christ in a fallen world.

I still remember buying my first Schaeffer book. In the fall of my sophomore year, I found *True Spirituality* in my college’s bookstore, and took it with me on a weekend trip. I also remember stumbling my way through, trying to understand, and sure that sometimes I was and sometimes I wasn’t! I didn’t give up, and though years later its cover is worn and taped over, its central themes are deeply embedded in my own vision of a distinctive Christian spirituality.

At the heart of his exploration of the Christian faith is his own honest question, wanting an honest answer: If God is there, what difference does it make in my life, moment-by-moment? As he tells the tale in the preface, the book grew out of his own wrestling with deep doubts. Ordained as a Presbyterian pastor, for years he had served congregations Word and sacrament, and for some time he and his wife had been missionaries in Europe—and yet, with all this history, he found himself up in the attic of his Swiss home, pacing back-and-forth, wondering whether it was all true, whether it really made any difference in the way he could and should live.

As the months passed, and his wife prayed downstairs for a great grace upstairs, he found his way into a deeper knowledge of God and of himself. Calvin was right: the two always go together, the one depends upon the other. True for Calvin, true for Schaeffer, and true for every one of us. For Schaeffer that deepened self-knowledge was rooted in a renewed understanding of the meaning of Christ's redemption, *viz.* that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus had transforming consequences for those who were the sons and daughters of God. He argued that the Bible in general, and the letter to the Romans in particular, set forth a vision of freedom from the bonds of sin, and from the consequences of the bonds of sin, and that that freedom was to be experienced in this life, moment by moment. This sorting and sifting of Schaeffer's soul developed over time into the amazingly fruitful ministry we now know, a half century later, as *L'Abri*.

As we move from modern to postmodern, with all that those terms mean and do not mean, I find myself thinking more and more about the meaning of the last century, wanting to understand where we have come from as we ponder where we are going. My reading and reflection goes far and wide, but it keeps coming back to Schaeffer. This much seems clear: He was writing not only for the Church, as a pastor, but he was also responding to the culture, as an apologist. His concern was to honestly account for human freedom, *viz.* what can it possibly mean in a universe where the weight of necessity bears down upon us so heavily? what does freedom mean, if we are also responsible? Those are deeply human questions that Christians have to answer too.

With his own through-a-glass-darkly lens, Schaeffer was writing as a Christian about the same ideas and issues which so plagued other thoughtful people in the mid-20th-century, people such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Sometimes we call them "existentialist" philosophers, as they were passionate to understand the meaning of human existence as it is lived day-by-day, moment-by-moment. Fifty years later it

is not possible to read them without hearing debates and discussions which continue to echo through the early days of the 21st-century. At the core, their worries and laments are perennial, their questions press upon us all, waiting for a response. Read Ecclesiastes again, and then watch the film "Magnolia." There is nothing new under the sun.

*At the heart
of [Schaeffer's]
exploration of the
Christian faith
is his own
honest question,
wanting an
honest answer:
If God is there,
what difference
does it make
in my life,
moment-by-
moment?*

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Substantial Healing, One More Time

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In the absence of present perfection, Christians are to help each other on to increasingly substantial healing on the basis of the finished work of Christ. This is our calling.

Schaeffer understood this, reading the human heart as sorely tempted by the “all or nothing” problem—not premodern, modern, or postmodern, so much as a *human* problem. We long for things to be as they ought to be, from the most personal areas of concern to the most public arenas of responsibility. We strain against our own weaknesses and frailties, even as we groan against those of others. We want sin and its consequences settled, once and for all. At our most faithful we are willing to work at it for a time, maybe even a long time; but sometime, we want it done with, we want it to be the way we want it to be. And many times, by grace that vision is passionately influenced by a vision of the holiness of God, of what we know of God’s heart. We know that God himself yearns for the doing of justice and the loving of mercy—and we want that too!

But when we don’t find it, when we see how horribly complex the political, economic, social, artistic brokenness is, we are tempted to give up. Simply, it seems too hard.

In *True Spirituality* Schaeffer introduced a theological motif that is both profoundly biblical and deeply sustaining, at least for those of us who struggle with “all or nothing.” Situating his vision within the scope of redemptive history, and so the grand story of God’s work from creation to consummation, he argued that we should pray for and labor towards substantial healing. I have been reading these words for years and years, and they continue to nourish me.

The alternatives are not between being perfect or being nothing. Just as people smash marriages because they are looking for what is romantically and sexually perfect and in this poor world do not find it, so human beings often smash what could have been possible in a true church or true Christian group. It is not just the “they” involved who are not yet perfect, but the “I” is not yet perfect either. In the absence of present perfection, Christians are to help each other on to increasingly substantial healing on the basis of the finished work of Christ. This is our calling.

Substantial healing allows one to navigate his way through the Scylla and Charybdis of life in this now-but-not-yet world, a world in which Jesus is Lord of the whole of life, all of reality, and yet where we do not see his Lordship fully acknowledged—not only in the lives of others but in our own, not only in other cultures but in our own. We do lament, we do grieve, because in every arena of human existence the world is not the way it ought to be—“everything is broken,” as Dylan once put it. We do cry, and yet because of the finished work of Christ not as those who have no hope.

Several weeks ago this all came home to me once more as I watched the film “A Beautiful Mind.” As they say, “loosely” based upon the life of the Nobel Prize-winning Princeton professor John Nash, the Ron Howard-directed film is a wonderfully-told tale of a man severely broken by schizophrenia. Amazingly gifted academically, Nash (played by Russell Crowe) is the incarnation of what the novelist Walker Percy warns us all about: it is possible to get all A’s and still flunk life. Even his first grade teacher saw it coming, as he remembers her saying, “John, you’ve been given a double portion of brain, but only a half portion of heart.” In the complexity of human life, the prognosis plays its way out with horrible pain over the next decades—even as he shows his genius to peers and professors from Pittsburgh to Princeton.

Offering a 25-page dissertation that catapults him into the stratosphere of academic prominence, the rift within himself between heart and mind and body begins to overwhelm Nash. But even as this is breaking him, he finds himself growing in love with the most wonderful woman (played by Jennifer Connelly). In a film, of course, people can be paid and persuaded to say and do anything—for blessing and for curse. Director Ron Howard had many choices here, and he chose to portray a wife with an unusual steadfast love, what the Hebrews called *chesed*. Eyes wide open to the sorrows, she chooses time and again to love her husband. Through hospitalization and the horrors of shock treatments, to home stays full of contin-

ued pains, Nash's wife loves and loves again—even as she screams out into the night, full of grief for herself and her husband.

Cinematically, stories are hard to tell. For all the money that goes into a major film, it never ceases to surprise me how few are really artfully composed, with a compelling narrative that unfolds over time. *A Beautiful Mind* is an exception, and finds a way to keep us connected to the drama, even though no one gets shot in the face with blood splattered on the kitchen wall, and no one's bare bottom is offered for public perusal. There is an integrity to the story as Howard tells it that allows us to both feel the anguish of the Nashes, as well as to hope with them for healing.

And healing comes, a substantial healing, that is. Even as the love of his wife transforms his heart, and the collegiality of his academic peers provides him with necessary support and stimulation, it is his determination to get better that is the heart of his healing. He wants things to be different, longing for his heart and mind and body to be one. With unusual insight Howard offers us a window into the meaning of substantial healing. All the way through his Nobel Prize-moment of great glory, Nash still wrestles with his demons, his schizophrenic companions who have for years, as Sirens singing, called him into a nether world. By grace, by choice, in the mystery of their integral relationship, Nash finds a way to live redemptively, rather than destructively. He has formed habits of heart which allow him to say no, and he walks away. (In a fascinating article in *The Washington Post*, "Beautiful—But Not Rare—Recovery," playing off of the current interest in Nash's life, there are many similar stories told of people, against all clinical hopes, who found healing from schizophrenia. In and through them all, there are of course no cheap answers. February 12, 2002, F1)

The wisdom of Walker Percy, again: "Bad books always lie. They lie most of all about the human condition." It is true of films, too. The story is not a Christian one, in a superficial sense. It is truthful, and that matters more. With great clarity, it underscores the reality of our responsibility, our ability to respond. As

the great Czech playwright and politician Vaclav Havel sees it, "The secret of man is the secret of his responsibility." If one has ears to hear and eyes to see, the film tells the truth about the human condition. It does *not* tell about the central event in human history—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—but what it does tell is a story about someone straining between the now and the not yet, between all or nothing. And we, each one, know that story.

Schaeffer put it this way, in a chapter, "Substantial Healing of Psychological Problems."

This also does not mean that we will be perfect in this life psychologically any more than we are physically. But thank God, now I can move; I am no longer running on ice, that is the difference. It does not need to be the old, endless circle. It is not any longer the dog chasing his tail. The light is let in. Things are orientated, and I can move as a whole man, with all the rationality I possess utterly in place. I will not expect to be perfect. I will wait for the second coming of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the body, to be perfect morally, physically, and psychologically; but there now can be a substantive overcoming of this psychological division in the present life on the basis of Christ's finished work. It will not be perfect, but it can be real and substantial.

Let us be clear about this. All men since the fall have had some psychological problems. It is utter nonsense, a romanticism that has nothing to do with biblical Christianity, to say that a Christian never has a psychological problem. All men have psychological problems. They differ in degree and they differ in kind, but since the fall all men have more or less a problem psychologically. And dealing with this, too, is a part of the present aspect of the gospel and of the finished work of Christ on Calvary's cross.

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[*A Beautiful Mind*] does not tell about the central event in human history—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—but what it does tell is a story about someone straining between the now and the not yet, between all or nothing.



Wise Christians Clip Obituaries

by Gary Thomas

Founder & Director, Center for Evangelical Spirituality



Gary Thomas

*What message from heaven
speak[s] louder to us than
the daily dying and departure of
our fellow creature?*

William Law

I was puzzled by my reaction as I watched the sportscaster wave goodbye to the camera. I rarely watched his sportscast, but like many of the people in the Washington, D.C., area, I was moved by news of his death. I listened as radio talk-show hosts devoted entire mornings to the story. Local newspapers gave him a week's worth of obituaries. His station ran a half-hour memorial program—the show I was watching. He waved to the camera, walking, symbolically, into the shadows. It was ironic that in a city dubbed the murder capital of the nation, in which victims of violent crime die every day, the passing of one 44-year-old man would cause such a stir.

As people called talk shows to express their shock, I heard a refrain: "It was so unexpected. He was so young, in such good health, and then all of a sudden.... I just can't believe it."

Perhaps what affected us was not just who died, but death itself. It came as an unexpected intruder, reminding us that death does not always wait until people are in their nineties.

What bothered the city—what bothered *me*—was the rudeness of death's intrusion. Many people occasionally sneak a peek at the obituaries and look at the ages of those who have died. But when we see somebody our own age, or even younger, we wince. We are forced to admit that death does not have to ask our permission. Death is coming. Every day is somebody's last.

Some of us choose to confront such uncertainty by ignoring or denying this reality. The teaching of the ancients calls us to a different response. The classical spiritual-life writers found great spiritual benefit in looking death in the face, seizing its reality, and making it their servant. They used death to teach them how to live.

François Fenelon, a seventeenth-century French mystic who wrote the classic *Christian Perfection*, spoke eloquently of the denial of death:

We consider ourselves immortal, or at least as though [we are] going to live for centuries. Folly of the human spirit! Every day those who die soon follow those who are already dead. One about to leave on a journey ought not to think himself far from one who went only two days before. Life flows by like a flood.

Most of us recognize that we will eventually die, but this recognition is reserved for a distant event, decades from now, not today, this week, this month, this year. Death is a foreigner, not a close neighbor. Or so we live our lives, clutching fiercely to this illusion.

How else can we explain the fact that so many die without a will? We live without a will not because we believe we'll never die, but because we don't expect to die this week.

Thus, we have more important tasks to take care of, meetings to attend, things to buy, decorations to hang.

Remembrance of Things Future

Why do we deny death? Fenelon believed we avoid the thought of it so we are not saddened by it. But this, he says, is shortsighted: "It will only be sad for those who have not thought about it."

William Law, the eighteenth-century Anglican author of *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, wrote that the living world's brilliance blinds us from eternity and the reality of death. "The health of our bodies, the passions of our minds, the noise and hurry and pleasures and business of the world, lead us on with eyes that see not and ears that hear not."

Part of this denial comes from the company we keep. While going through college and seminary, I attended the same church for seven years. The congregation was predominantly young. During those seven years, one person died, and it was big news.

My first position after seminary was in a more historic church with a mostly older congregation. While my first church required two rooms to hold all the babies in nursery, this one was lucky to have a handful. During my first six months, there were three funerals.

Young people may forget that funerals are waiting on the other end of weddings and baby showers. When we segregate ourselves – when we don't know anyone who is suffering from arthritis or Alzheimer's – we can be lulled to sleep.

It is this unexpectedness of death that should encourage us to take a second look, to reconsider our pleasant denial, to admit that, yes, death might visit us as early as this week.

Gen. William Nelson, a Union general in the Civil War, was consumed with the battles in Kentucky when a brawl ended up in his being shot, mortally, in the chest. He had faced many battles, but the fatal blow came while he was relaxing with his men. As such, he was caught fully unprepared. As men ran up the

stairs to help him, the general had just one phrase, "Send for a clergyman; I wish to be baptized."

He never had time as an adolescent or young man. He never had time as a private or after he became a general. And his wound did not stop or slow down the war. Everything around him was left virtually unchanged – except for the general's priorities. With only minutes left before he entered eternity, the one thing he cared about was preparing for eternity. He wanted to be baptized. Thirty minutes later he was dead.

How was this general served by the remembrance of death? Hardly at all, because he remembered it too late.

To help us avoid such oversight, Thomas à Kempis urged, "Thou oughtest so to order thyself in all thy thoughts and actions, as if today thou wert about to die" (*The Imitation of Christ*).

As Vice President in the nineteen eighties, George H.W. Bush represented the United States at the funeral of former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. Bush was deeply moved by a silent protest carried out by Brezhnev's widow. She stood motionless by the coffin until seconds before it was closed. Then, just as the soldiers touched the lid, Brezhnev's wife performed an act of great courage and hope, a gesture that must surely rank as one of the most profound acts of civil disobedience ever committed: She reached down and made the sign of the cross on her husband's chest.

There, in the citadel of secular, atheistic power, the wife of the man who had run it all hoped that her husband was wrong. She hoped that there was another life, and that that life was best represented by Jesus who died on the cross, and that the same Jesus might yet have mercy on her husband. Will our spouses make a similar, desperate act, signifying that everything we lived for was misguided, but offering hope that God might have mercy on us anyway?

(continued on page 14)

*Thou
oughtest
so to
order thyself
in all thy
thoughts
and
actions,
as if
today
thou wert
about
to die*

Wise Christians Clip Obituaries

(continued from page 13)

You
cannot
pass
a
day
devoutly
unless
you
think
of
it
as
your
last.

The thought of death came too late for an American Civil War general and a Soviet head of state — will it come too late for us?

John Climacus, a seventh-century ascetic who wrote *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, urged Christians to use the reality of death to their benefit: “You cannot pass a day devoutly unless you think of it as your last,” he wrote. He called the thought of death the “most essential of all works” and a gift from God. “The man who lives daily with the thought of death is to be admired, and the man who gives himself to it by the hour is surely a saint.”

Remembrance of death acts like a filter, helping us to hold on to the essential and let go of the trivial. John Climacus pointed out that a “man who has heard himself sentenced to death will not worry about the way theaters are run.”

Turning Everything Right-Side Up

Forgetting death tempts us to lose perspective. Thinking about eternity helps us retrieve it. I’m reminded of this every year when I figure my taxes. During the year, I rejoice at the paychecks and extra income, and sometimes I flinch when I write out the tithe and offering. I do my best to be a joyful giver, but I confess it is not always easy, especially when there are other perceived needs and wants.

At the end of the year, however, all of that changes. As I’m figuring my tax liability, I wince at every source of income and rejoice with every tithe and offering check — more income means more tax, but every offering and tithe means less tax. Everything is turned upside down, or perhaps, more appropriately, right-side up.

I suspect judgment day will be like that. Those things that bother us now, that force us out of our schedules — taking time out to encourage or help someone — will be the very things that we deem the most important. We may not remember the movie we skipped to paint that elderly person’s house, or the meeting we missed to visit that prisoner or sick person, but in eternity, we will remember the acts of kindness and love, and we will be glad we took the time to do them.

Death not only filters our priorities, it also filters our passions. In his *Pensées*, seventeenth-century French mathematician and theologian Blaise Pascal wrote, “To render passion harmless let us behave as though we had only a week to live.” All of us are captive to various passions, some good, some bad. Which ones will we follow?

William Law suggests we pick and choose according to how we will feel upon our death.

The best way for anyone to know how much he ought to aspire after holiness is to consider not how much will make his present life easy, but to ask himself how much he thinks will make him easy at the hour of death.

What men or women in their right mind would continue an affair if they really believed they might not wake up in the morning? What person would risk entering eternity in a drunken stupor? What fool would ignore his loved ones and God for one last night so that he could make another quick ten thousand just before he died?

Thomas à Kempis agreed with such reasoning, arguing that the remembrance of death is a powerful force for spiritual growth:

Didst thou oftener think of thy death than of thy living long, there is no question but thou wouldst be more zealous to improve. If also thou didst but consider within thyself the infernal pains in the other world, I believe thou wouldst willingly undergo any labor or sorrow in this world, and not be afraid of the greatest austerity. But because these things enter not to the heart, and we still love those things only that delight us, therefore we remain cold and very dull in religion.

When we schedule our priorities and follow our passions without regard to eternity, we are essentially looking into the wrong end of a telescope. Instead of seeing things more dearly, our vision becomes distorted. We miss the big picture. Law wrote:

Feasts and business and pleasures and enjoyments seem great things to us whilst we think of nothing else; but as soon as we add death to them, they all sink into an equal littleness; and the soul that is separated from the body no more laments the loss of business than the losing of a feast.

It is only the denial of death that allows us to continue rebelling against God. It is only because we are presuming on some future time to set things right that we ever even consider letting them go wrong. Some of us will be surprised in our presumption; eventually our spirits will be dulled until we forget we are presuming, and death will catch us by surprise, like all the rest.

That is why Thomas à Kempis urged, “Labor now to live so, that at the hour of death thou mayest rather rejoice than fear.” That hour is coming. If it comes tonight, will you be able to rejoice at your state? Or does the mere thought strike fear into your soul? More is involved than just our eternal destiny. God’s mercy may well pass us into his eternal presence, but do we want to enter heaven after faithfully serving God to the best of our ability, or rather after some desperate, last-minute confession, realizing that we have wasted our life?

I want to enter death tired. I want to have spent what energy God has apportioned me. The cross-country races that were most satisfying to me were not the ones I won most easily, but the ones that took everything I had to win. Weariness produced by hard, diligent labor is a reward, not a curse. An eternal rest awaits all who know Christ, so why are we preoccupied with rest now?

Death becomes our servant, then, when we use it to reorder our priorities and to grow in grace and holiness. There is yet one more way we can use death to our benefit.

Death Can Be a Comforter

Death can be a consoling thought for those who face particularly difficult losses or trials. The lost loved one that we miss so much is waiting for us on the other side of time. Our

broken-down body will not greet us in heaven. Instead, we will rejoice to meet a “new and improved” version without the aches and pains and propensity to sin.

And even more important, death ushers us face to face into the presence of the one our heart cries out for, the one, true God, and this is our greatest consolation. Any sincere Christian experiences at least a certain degree of loneliness, for we long for a more intimate walk with our God—a walk that will be realized beyond our dreams once we pass the threshold of eternity.

It is normal and healthy to experience the pain of death—Jesus, after all, cried at the death of Lazarus—but death can also bring hope, not for what it is, but for what God promises us on the other side. The Christian life does not make complete sense without the consoling thought of eternal life. Paul himself said we should be pitied above all if the Christian faith is only for this temporal world (1 Cor. 15:19).

Because of Christ, because of the Resurrection, because of the goodness and mercy of God, death, our enemy, can be a consoling thought. There will be an end to our struggle for righteousness; a limit has been placed on our pain; our loneliness will not go on forever. Another world is coming.

Keeping Death Alive

Back when I lived in Virginia, I occasionally attended weekday noon Communion services at The Falls Church Episcopal, which dates back to the eighteenth century. As is not uncommon with older churches, the building is surrounded by a graveyard. Whenever I attended those services, I walked through the grave markers on my way in, and past them on my way out.

That short walk did almost as much for me as the service. I was reminded as I faced the second half of the week that one day, my body, my bones, would be lying in the ground. My work on earth will be done. What will matter then? What should matter now in light of then?

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*Labor now
to live so,
that
at the
hour of death
thou
mayest rather
rejoice
than
fear.*

Profiles in Faith: Martin Luther

(continued from page 1)

Christ Alone

Martin pursued the monastic life with great vigor, especially in the ascetic practices. He would often go without sleep, endure cold without a blanket, and whip himself. He later wrote:

It's true. I was a good monk and kept my order so strictly that if ever a monk could get to heaven through monastic discipline, I should have entered in. All my companions in the monastery who knew me would bear me out in this. For if I had gone on much longer, I would have martyred myself to death, what with vigils, prayers, readings, and other works.

In an effort to find peace of mind while a monk, Luther used to confess his sins daily (up to five hours a day). Yet, despite all his efforts, he could not find peace for his conscience. After having done everything according to the precepts of his order, he remained a tormented man. He doubted whether he had performed his works correctly, whether he had repented enough, or whether he had omitted something from his confession.

One of his confessors, John Staupitz, pointed him to the Gospel, maintaining that there is no real repentance except that which begins with the love of God and righteousness. Yet, Luther, when reading the Gospel, would cry out, "It is not I, it is not I!" At another time, Luther cried out, "O my sin! my sin! my sin!" Staupitz responded that Jesus Christ is the Savior even of those who are great sinners and deserving of utmost condemnation.

Luther was directed by Staupitz and other superiors to study theology in order to be a teacher. He ended up teaching in Wittenberg. It was in preparing his lectures on the Psalms and later on Romans, that he had a major breakthrough that went to the heart of his struggles. During one period, he meditated day and night on Romans 1:17, which talks about the Gospel being "the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'" He came to see that by faith in Christ's death on the cross, we receive Christ's righteousness. He wrote:

*...if ever
a monk could
get to heaven
through
monastic
discipline,
I should
have
entered in.*

Learn to sing to Him and say: Lord Jesus you are my righteousness. I am your sin. You took on you what was mine; you set on me what was yours. You became what you were not that I might become what I was not.

He came to believe that faith in Christ led to the imputation (transfer, declaring) of Christ's righteousness to us and our sin to Christ. It was a double transfer. We are now *simul justus et peccator* (at the same time just and a sinner). We are now clothed in the robe of Christ's righteousness; although under the robe we are still sinners. There is a sense in which we are as accepted by the Father as is the Son. The foundation for our lives is—Christ. Luther says:

This foundation is Christ alone before all good works, for he freely gives the foundation, peace to the conscience and trust to the heart ...this Christ Himself...gives us righteousness, peace, security of conscience, that we might build on this by acting well.

Controversy

In the area around Wittenberg, Johannes Tetzel was offering for sale plenary indulgences. An indulgence was a document given by the church that would release the buyer or deceased relative from a certain number of years of purgatory. A plenary indulgence released that person totally. The money from the sale of indulgences was to go to rebuild St. Peter's in Rome. One infamous phrase Tetzel used caught the public imagination: "As the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."

Luther objected to this practice of indulgences by posting his *95 Theses* on the door of the Wittenberg Church on October 31, 1517 (now known as Reformation Day). He wanted to stimulate an academic discussion of these issues, not cause a Reformation. Thesis #1 says, "that the entire life of the faithful should be a repentance." Thesis #27, "They preach human folly who pretend that as soon as money in the coffer rings a soul from purgatory springs." Thesis #36, "Every Christian who truly repents has plenary forgiveness both of punishment and guilt bestowed on him, even without letters of indulgence," etc.

Luther's 95 *Theses* were translated into the common language, and, using the relatively recent invention of the printing press, they were spread throughout Germany in two weeks. Rather than causing a discussion of this issue, the opposition response was to appeal to the necessity of obedience to the authority of the church. For instance, Tetzel responded with his own theses, saying among other things, "Christians should be taught that the Pope, by authority of his jurisdiction, is superior to the entire Catholic Church and its councils, and that they should humbly obey his statutes."

Rejection

This controversy led to a series of debates with leading theologians such as Eck and Cajetan and led to Luther's being released from his order by Staupitz. At Augsburg, Luther said,

I have sought after truth in my public disputations, and everything that I have said I still consider as right, true, and Christian. Yet I am but a man, and may be deceived. I am therefore willing to receive instruction and correction in those things wherein I may have erred.

At a meeting in Worms in 1521 with Emperor Charles V present, Luther was asked whether he would recant part or all of his books. He asked for a day to consider this. The next day when repeatedly pressed to recant, Luther finally responded with the words:

Unless convinced by Scripture or evident reason, I will not, I cannot recant. My conscience is captive to the Word of God. To go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other, God help me. Amen.

[Note: Luther's last sentence was included in the first printed version of the events, but not recorded on the spot.]

Translation of the Bible

Luther was excommunicated by the church and made an outlaw so that anyone could kill him without fear of the law. Luther was taken by friends to a castle at Wartburg where he stayed for ten months. During this period, he completed a rough translation of the New Tes-

tament into German. He completed this draft in eleven weeks, translating more than 1,500 words per day. The New Testament in German was published in 1522 and sold about 5,000 copies in two months. Luther then turned to the Old Testament. He gathered a committee to oversee the work. Luther said, "Translators must never work by themselves. When one is alone, the best and most suitable words do not always occur to him." Luther wanted the words to sound right as well as be accurately translated. Because of its rhetorical power, Luther's Bible had a tremendous influence on the German language. Some maintain that Luther's greatest achievement was the German Bible.

*Next after
theology,
I give to
music
the
highest place
and
the
greatest honor.*

Music

Luther placed a great value on music. He had a good voice, played the lute, and often would lead singing after dinner. He wrote: "I have no use for cranks who despise music, because it is the gift of God. Next after theology, I give to music the highest place and the greatest honor." He not only valued music in worship but wrote a number of hymns. Modern Lutheran hymnals may contain as many as twenty of Luther's hymns. The most famous is "A Mighty Fortress is our God" written in 1527 during one of the most difficult years of Luther's life. Luther is also noted for his memorable quote: "The devil should not be allowed to keep all the best tunes for himself."

Marriage

Luther was married in 1525 to a former nun, Katie von Bora. Although the marriage was not initially based on romance, a deep mutual love grew between them. Luther later called the book of Galatians, which he loved, his "Katie von Bora." Katie was a strong personality with many gifts. He once told an English visitor that if he wanted to learn German, Katie is "the most eloquent speaker of the German language." They had six children. Once, Luther, who had for 41 years been used to solitude, locked himself in his study for three days until Katie took the door off the hinges. She was quite direct with her criticism of Luther.

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Profiles in Faith: Martin Luther

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Luther is described by one scholar as “certainly complex, contradictory, ambiguous, and often offensive.”

Once he commented, “If I can survive the wrath of the devil in my sinful conscience, I can withstand the anger of Katherine von Bora.” On another occasion (in jest) he said, “If I should marry again, I would hew myself an obedient wife out of stone.”

Luther was once depressed for a couple weeks. Katie came to breakfast one morning in a funeral dress. Martin asked, “Who died?” Katie replied, “God died.” Martin proceeded to rebuke her for such an outrageous reply. She waited till he was done and said, “Well, Martin, the way you were acting, I thought he was dead.”

Katie was very active. Her day started at 4 a.m. She remodeled an old cloister so that they could house up to thirty guests. She was accomplished at business affairs. Katie was sometimes frustrated with how Martin would give away some of their cherished household items to those in need. Once, she hid a favorite silver cup lest Luther give it away.

Martin was quite realistic about marriage:

In the beginning of a relationship love is glowing hot; it intoxicates and blinds us, and we rush forth and embrace one another. But once married we grow tired of one another, as Ovid said, ‘We hate the things that are near us, and we love those that are far away.’

It is especially important to be patient with the other’s faults. Luther said:

It is impossible to keep peace between man and woman in family life if they do not condone and overlook each other’s faults but watch everything to the smallest point. For who does not at times offend.

Quotable

I have to admit that when I was working on my M.Div. and Ph.D., I would sometimes get discouraged. Often I would go to the library shelf and take an anthology of Luther quotes titled *What Luther Says* and read a few pages. I was always encouraged and came away with a renewed faith in Christ. Some helpful quotes (of many):

Human nature is like a drunk peasant. Lift him into the saddle on one side, over he topples on the other side.

Temptations, of course, cannot be avoided, but because we cannot prevent the birds from flying over our heads, there is no need that we should let them nest in our hair.

Farewell to those who want an entirely pure and purified church. This is plainly wanting no church at all.

Later Years

Luther often struggled with physical ailments, including headaches and insomnia. He also experienced what he called “night wars;” that is, nightmares, anxiety attacks, and “anfechtung” (temptation or spiritual attack). We know so much about Luther because he was an open book, speaking freely about himself and his faults. Other people, Luther said, “try to make me a fixed star but I am an irregular planet.” He also described himself as “God’s court jester.” A court jester was often dressed strangely, riding his donkey into the court and addressing political issues in a vulgar but humorous fashion. Luther is described by one scholar as “certainly complex, contradictory, ambiguous, and often offensive.”

He had a lifelong problem with anger. Once he said to his wife, Katie: “Wrath just won’t turn me loose. Why do I sometimes rage about a piddling thing not worthy of mention. Whoever crosses my path has to suffer for it—I won’t say a kind word to anyone. Isn’t that a shameful thing.” Luther’s friend Melancthon admitted that he could neither “deny, nor excuse, nor praise” some writings of Luther that were cross or harsh. Luther’s statements on the Jews fall into this category. His best friends begged him to stop his anti-Jewish raving. These writings were clearly wrong and without excuse.

Certainly, Luther was a complex personality. Martin Marty says:

Luther often showed signs of being troubled, and at times he himself all but said that. But my hunch is that all geniuses are psycho-

Profiles in Faith: Martin Luther

logically troubled in one way or another ... People who live in complete serenity with the world, who are completely balanced make wonderful citizens and good Christians, but they probably don't leave works of genius behind them.

Probably the best way to evaluate Luther is to view him as a thinker rather than as a movement personality. A thinker you can accept or reject, praise or blame without feeling any guilt. A movement personality is someone who, if you criticize him or her, you might feel or be accused of being disloyal to the cause. Luther had magnificent strengths and great weaknesses. The best way to approach him is the way I believe he would want to be approached—that is, through the glasses of Scripture. He is one that had a passionate love for Christ and the Gospel. His chorus was “grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, to God alone the glory.” ■

In all Luther wrote about 60,000 pages, yet he wanted above all for the Bible to be read. He regarded Bondage of the Will as his most important work. Other books I recommend for reading on Luther are Here I Stand by Roland Bainton and What Luther Says compiled by Ewald M. Plass.

Substantial Healing, One More Time

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They are words we can live with, as they reflect the reality of human life under the sun—even for those whose deepest selves are one with Christ. Straining, longing, hoping, yearning, we struggle to find a way to live redemptively amidst the brokenness in this life—even as we pray for and labor towards the healing of all things, including our selves. Substantial healing is a vision that is both biblical and sustaining—true, honest, real, but never perfect or complete this side of the consummation. Good theologies, like good books and good films, tell the truth about the human condition. Thanks be to God. ■

Steven Garber has lived his life among students. The author of The Fabric of Faithfulness, for many years he has taught at the American Studies Program, an interdisciplinary semester on Capitol Hill. With his wife Meg, their five children and several chickens, he lives in Burke, Virginia. Some thirty years ago he traveled to L'Abri, and found a world of ideas and relationships that have sustained him ever since. His daughter Eden is currently a helper at the Swiss L'Abri, after having spent six months there as a student two years ago.

C.S. Lewis on Postmodernism

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fact, Lewis argues in *The Abolition of Man* that the fruit of history is already clear. He points out that no relativist has ever been given power and used it for “benevolent ends.”

5. Above all, Lewis would caution us about tying our methods or theology too closely to a passing mood or trend, like postmodernism. He says, “If you take your stand on the prevalent view, how long do you suppose it will prevail...all you can say about my taste is that it is old fashioned; yours will soon be the same.”

Perhaps in its most innocent form, postmodernism points us to the finitude of our knowledge and can point us to the complexity of reality itself. I think, though, that Lewis would keep reasoning firmly but gently with postmodernists, saying “Does this make sense?” or “How do you see this?” or “Don't you see where this leads?” Perhaps also he would tell stories. Lewis held that “Reason is the natural organ of truth and imagination is the organ of meaning.” Perhaps those that are not open to a direct approach of reason may be more open to the indirect approach of the imagination.

At the end of *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis says that those who want to debunk or “see through” normal traditional or conventional truth or morality should be cautious. It's good to have a window to see through in order to see the grass, trees, or sky outside. But if you can see through everything, there is nothing left to see.

■



God at Work

by Sam Walker

Senior Partner, Wiley Rein & Fielding
1999 C.S. Lewis Fellows Class



Sam Walker

I now begin to appreciate that God is not only at work in me, He is at work, period.

Maybe you've met him. A "Sunday Christian" with an uneasy sense that, somehow, the walk of faith must extend to the rest of the week. But how? The teachings of Jesus seem so impractical in the "real" world. At work he is hard-bitten, trained to attack problems and, if they are also in the way, people. Energized by a keen desire to win. Prone to righteous indignation. Keeps score of wrongs, real or perceived. "Kind" would not be a word frequently chosen to describe him; "driven" would.

I describe the early years of my work life, before God called me to a deeper, daily walk of faith. Along that path I have been forced to surrender an ingrained assumption that faith in Jesus Christ must give way to the hurly-burly of the everyday workplace. The journey – which is hardly over! – has been one of constant surprise. I have found God where I would not have expected, human needs where I would not have thought, capacities that I would not have imagined. As I have gone to work, God has been at work on my heart. I now begin to appreciate that God is not only at work in me, He is at work, *period*. My workplace, which happens to be a dis-

tinctly secular, multi-cultural professional firm, is as natural a spot for God to work as the narthex of a cathedral.

Part of my journey has been to realize work's source. Work is from God. God created our world by working. We can only imagine that His level of effort was infinite, toward an infinite outcome. I need not dwell on that. Have you looked up in the sky recently? Or read about the genome? There was, at man's outset, something special and good about work. The Book of Genesis tells us the first thing God did after breathing life into man was to "put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." (Gen. 2:7, 15 NIV)

Likewise, Jesus of Nazareth came to do His Father's work. (John 9:4). The work of Jesus' public ministry was accompanied by signs and miracles. But isn't it interesting that even before Jesus' public ministry – even before His temptation – the Father gave Him serious, basic work to do? And Jesus apparently performed that work for years longer than His public ministry. The work was not full-time attendance at seminary (although that is good work too). It was carpentry. Imagine that carpentry shop! No crosses on the wall. Probably not a lot of "religious" chatter. Just the very Son of God applying elbow grease to hard, knotted wood, His character shaped by the Father year in, year out. The wooden yokes fashioned by Jesus the carpenter apparently were not miraculous in the way of the man born blind, made to see (John 9:5). But that carpentry shop surely was sacred ground as the Father shaped and prepared the Son through a "routine" job (not even an *important* one!) performed day after day, month after month, year after year.

The wood Jesus worked surely was hard and caused splinters. This gets to an important part of the story of work. Owing to the fall, man's unregenerate work amounts to "toil." Adam's gardening was to "produce thorns and thistles." It also became a matter of life and death: "[b]y the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken." (Gen. 3:18-19) In modern times: the floor will not stay clean; our hard drives will be corrupted; our plans are prone to failure; we miscommunicate; it doesn't rain when it must; our investments fail. Taken in small snippets, what I describe passes as the frustration of "getting through the day" or getting to Friday. Taken as a whole, this amounts to something far more fundamental, evidence of a terrible brokenness in humankind. We know that God works, and that work is good. But we also know that work demonstrates our failures and our limits. It seems unredeemed and can seem unredeemable. For one, I have often had a problem even seeing God in work, much less striving to follow Him there.

Yet the problem I pose is answered in the person of Jesus Christ. We know that Christ redeemed us and so cured our heart-sick separation from the Father. Thank God for that! But this mighty work of the Cross has specific consequences for our work. In my experience, this redemption concretely reconnects followers of Jesus to the goodness and godliness of their work. The puzzling disconnection between faith and work that gnawed at me for years is solved, like so much else, through the path of the Cross.

Allow me to be very practical at this point by comparing my "then" with "now." As before, we still go to church on Sunday, and only on Sunday. On Monday the alarm still rings a lot earlier than the day before. I still show up to work and find out that my brilliant solution hatched the week before wasn't so brilliant, or someone else doesn't appreciate my brilliance. Just as before, in short, there are "weeds" in my "field." Over the weekend they grew taller.

But I start to understand that God is distinctively at work in the workplace. It is possible to be connected to my work, because I under-

stand that my master, Jesus Christ, created work as a process of fundamental goodness and dignity. He experienced the natural frustration of work but walked perfectly with the Father through a highly practical occupation. Following that example, it's possible and natural for us to see work and worship as part of a single fabric and, in some sense, to be the same thing. To lead an authentically Christ-centered life means to acknowledge that God is at work and to follow Him there. Such an acknowledgment is fundamentally a change of heart.

As my heart has changed, I have developed a heart for the people I work with. Before: they are a means to an end, a way to completion of the work. Now: they are fellow workers about the important but flawed process of performing work. Under this view of things, the process of work is important, but people matter most. Work is a place where people come in close contact with their own needs, and others either can help meet them or, negatively, make them worse. There seems to be something about hard, frustrating work that keenly focuses we humans on our need for redemption, and on spiritual realities. There is an extraordinary opportunity for community and ministry in the mere sharing of hardship.

Indeed, hard work can make our hearts ready for God. Elisha's heart was ready when Elijah came to him for the first time. Note the setting: Elisha was in the middle of back-breaking work, plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, driving the twelfth pair himself. (I Kings 19: 19). Peter's heart was ready when Jesus came to him for the first time. Again notice the setting: Simon Peter was cleaning his nets after working all night and catching nothing. (Luke 5:2, 5)

What I describe in my own life has not happened overnight and, like an unfinished narrative, is far from complete. In the meantime, God has blessed me with people, guideposts, and disciplines along the way to bring me along. I would like to share some thoughts about them with you.

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God at Work

(continued from page 21)

As my
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Jesus was brilliantly right about life. The workplace, and the reality of the Savior's work there, demands a conclusion that Jesus was much more than a great moral teacher. The Sermon on the Mount was not a pious lecture about impossible moral standards. Jesus was describing normal life as God meant it to be lived. He was talking about where we live, where we shop, and where we work. He constantly talked about the Kingdom of Heaven, here and now. To aspire to follow Jesus thus does not make one fruity or religious, it makes one normal. Let me be the first to say that it also makes one different. And if the state of the world is fallen and the natural state of the workplace is fallen, being normal will be different. As my high school math teacher, a believer, used to say: sometimes there is a difference between normal and average. Followers of Jesus are not called to be average. They are called to be normal. One should not be ashamed to be normal, even if it is different than average. (On the other hand, how killingly sanctimonious to claim to be different and normal in our own strength! It is a brand of pomposity on which people, and especially colleagues, pick up in a New York minute. Jesus' grace alone makes it possible for us to be normal, and absent that we are absolutely average and very much in the same boat.)

Bathe the day in prayer. The practical working out of these issues in my life has corresponded closely to a renewed commitment to a quiet time of morning prayer and meditation. My natural inclination is to begin planning and plotting from my first waking moment. Solitude is a way of putting God ahead of my own plans. It plugs me into God before I plug myself into work. This simple discipline also stimulates the heart to prayer during the day. Our Orthodox brothers and sisters in faith have a rich tradition of prayer during the day. *The Way of the Pilgrim* is an extraordinary example of that tradition

Invite God into my work. Hard work, especially when it involves other people, requires wisdom. Wisdom comes from God, and He gives it to us when we ask for it. (James 1:5) I also have found that routinely going to God

during the course of the day about my work starts to make the work itself an act of worship. This is not to lay down my professional skills or the pursuit of excellence. Quite to the contrary, I am talking about positively harnessing them and offering them as an act of worship to the Father. Brother Lawrence—the “Lord of Pots and Pans”—made a mighty contribution to our faith when he brought acts of prayer and worship out of the sanctuary and into the workplace. What a joy it is to write the best possible paper, craft the best possible proposal, run the best possible meeting, for the glory of God! Hopefully this is far greater motivation than any human boss, or human ambition.

Look for God at work. My experience is that God works constantly in people through the processes of work—especially hard, frustrating work. There are endless opportunities to serve and help and encourage others, especially when work *isn't* going well. This is an important way to join God in His work. Being close to our brokenness, starkly illustrated by work's hardships, can illustrate our need for redemption unlike just about anything. This work of God in our hearts, and those of our co-workers, is of perpetual importance. But it takes place in routine places and in the routine and frustration of our work.

More math examples. The difference between average and normal merits an example from my experience. I'm ambitious. I think God made me that way, but my nature is to use ambition in a most average way. For me, “average” means harnessing that ambition for a personal temple where I am inclined by nature to worship money and power. “Normal” means having a singular ambition to love and serve God. Going from “average” to normal in this area, breaking down the temple, is a daily struggle. I know the temple is a shabby place but it's so...*comfortable*.

This gets to a second point about math and life. What I describe as an authentically God-centered life at work is very hard. The workplace for me is an almost non-stop opportunity to mess up, both individually

God at Work

and relationally. I take fairly ample advantage of those opportunities – but that is not an excuse to quit and take the easier road. I take some comfort in the reality of baseball batting averages. In baseball you can miss six times out of ten and still be in the Hall of Fame. But you can't be in the Hall of Fame, or in the game at all, unless you step up to the plate and *start swinging*. Thus the scriptures repeatedly call us to persevere.

Be prepared to be under a microscope. There will come a time at work when one is generally known to be “at the plate,” striving to lead an authentic life of faith. When that happens, be prepared for extraordinary scrutiny from others, a sensation (and reality) of being watched. This can be terribly off-putting, especially during times of stress or failure. Prayer is especially critical at these moments. In my experience, times like these also call for less talk and more work, as well as you can do it. The Apostle Paul admonishes us in exactly this situation to “mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.” (1 Thess. 4:11) Authenticity will be apparent not from our words but from our work. ■

Sam Walker chairs the employment and labor practice group at a large Washington, D.C. law firm. He was part of the “alpha” class of C.S. Lewis Fellows and serves on the Institute’s board. He is a graduate of the Stony Brook School, Duke University, and Harvard Law School. He has been married to Cynthia Nardini Walker for nearly twenty years. They have two sons.

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For more information on admission to the program, write the Institute at staff@cslewisinstitute.org.

Wise Christians Clip Obituaries

(continued from page 21)

I am fond of old graveyards – not out of morbid preoccupation, but because they inspire me as few other things can. I want to use death the way Thomas à Kempis used death:

Happy is he that always hath the hour of his death before his eyes, and daily prepareth himself to die.... When it is morning, think thou mayest die before night; and when evening comes, dare not to promise thyself the next morning. Be thou therefore always in a readiness, and so lead thy life that death may never take thee unprepared.

Another way that I keep death alive is by living in the communion of saints. I will post a picture or a quotation here or there of someone whose faith and life has encouraged me, as a reminder that work has an end. If the world can get by without a Dietrich Bonhoeffer or a Blaise Pascal, it can get by without me, and one day it will. I have a limited time to use that may be much shorter than I realize – neither Bonhoeffer nor Pascal made it into his forties.

When a contemporary saint dies, I live with their death for weeks. I admire them for what they have done, and I thank the God who conquered their rebellion and blessed them with the call to become his servants. Wise shoppers clip coupons. Wise Christians clip obituaries.

But the supreme way for a Christian to keep the thought of death alive is to remember the crucifixion of our Lord. Every time we take Communion we should do so with the awareness that just as Christ’s work on earth had a beginning and an end (as he ministered in a human body), so the mission he has given us has a beginning and an end. “Death is the destiny of every man,” said the writer of Ecclesiastes, “the living should take this to heart” (7:2, NIV).

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Gary Thomas is a writer and the founder and director of the Center for Evangelical Spirituality, a writing and speaking ministry that integrates Scripture, church history, and the Christian classics. His books include Authentic Faith, Sacred Marriage, The Glorious Pursuit, Sacred Pathways, and Seeking the Face of God.

Gary has also written with Chuck Colson, Franklin Graham, Michael W. Smith, and Senator John Ashcroft. He has had over 95 articles published by numerous national magazines, including Christianity Today, Decision, and Discipleship Journal.

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Gary is married, has three children, and lives in Bellingham, Washington.

COMING IN 2002

- ◆ **Dr. Art Lindsley**, "The Apologetics of C.S. Lewis: Communicating Unchanging Truths in a Changing World," March 15-16 at McLean Presbyterian Church, McLean, VA

UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◆ **Dr. Ravi Zacharias**, "Lessons From War in a Battle of Ideas," June 7-8 at McLean Bible Church, Vienna, VA
- ◆ **Dr. N.T. Wright Conference**, September 27-28 at The Falls Church Episcopal, Falls Church, VA
- ◆ **Summer Study Conference featuring Dr. Jim Houston and Dr. Steve Garber**, "The Love of God and the Love of Learning," June 19-22, at the Center for Christian Study, Charlottesville, VA
- ◆ **Dr. Dennis Hollinger**, "Choosing the Good: Ethics in a Complex World," November 8-9, National Presbyterian Church, Washington, DC

COMING IN 2003

- ◆ **Dallas Willard & Richard Foster**, May 2-3, at McLean Bible Church, Vienna, VA

Ravi Zacharias Conference: June 7-8, 2002



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The C.S. Lewis Institute is very pleased to offer a conference June 7-8, 2002 at McLean Bible Church with internationally-known author, apologist, and speaker Ravi Zacharias.

Ravi has spoken in over fifty countries, including the Middle East, Vietnam and Cambodia (during the military conflict) and in numerous universities worldwide, notably Harvard, Princeton and Oxford. He has addressed writers of the peace accord in South Africa, President Fujimori's cabinet and parliament in Peru, and military officers at the Lenin Military Academy and the Center for Geopolitical Strategy in Moscow. He is well-versed in the disciplines of comparative religions, cults and philosophy and held the chair of evangelism and contemporary thought at Alliance Theological Seminary for three and a half years.

Born in India in 1946, Mr. Zacharias immigrated to Canada with his family twenty years later. He received his Masters of Divinity from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and honorary doctorates from Houghton College, Asbury College, and Tyndale College and Seminary.

Conference Registration & Tape Orders: 703/620-4056

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