



PROFILES IN FAITH Dorothy Sayers (1893-1957)

by Dr. Art Lindsley
Scholar-in-Residence



IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Profiles in Faith:
Dorothy Sayers
by Art Lindsley
- 3 C.S. Lewis Feature
Article: *C.S. Lewis
on Absolutes*
by Art Lindsley
- 6 *The Challenge of
Jesus* by N.T.
Wright
- 8 Review & Reflect:
*Stripping Away
Facades*: a review
of Gary Thomas's
book *Authentic
Faith*
by James Beavers
- 9 *Severe Gifts from a
Loving Father*
by Gary Thomas
- 10 Special Feature
Article:
*Being Good at
What We Do – or,
Being Good*
by Dennis
Hollinger
- 24 Upcoming Events

Dorothy Leigh Sayers was born at Oxford on June 13, 1893, and died December 17 (or 18), 1957, at Witham, Essex.

Her father, Rev. Henry Sayers, was an Anglican priest and, at the time of Dorothy's birth, headmaster of Christ Church Cathedral School. In 1898 her father moved to Bluntisham to serve as a rural parish priest. Dorothy was an only child and delighted to be often the center of attention. Her father jokingly called her "little humbug," and later she describes herself as a little "prig" playing one adult against another.

In recounting her own early education in *The Lost Tools of Learning*, she describes her development in three stages – Poll Parrot, Pert, and Poetic. From nine to eleven she liked to memorize lists and other amusing things (Poll Parrot). From twelve to fourteen she specialized in contradicting her elders (Pert). From fifteen on she was a rather moody but articulate adolescent (Poetic). In her early years, Dorothy was educated at home by her mother. When she was almost seven, her father decided to teach her Latin. She was pleased with the special atten-

tion from her father and with the opportunity to learn a language that her mother and nurse did not know. Quick to pick up her daily Latin lessons, she moved on to learn French and German.

C.S. Lewis described his home as having books everywhere, in the study, in the halls, and in the attic. Dorothy Sayers' home was similar, and she read everything she could find – children's books, classics, and novels. She especially loved *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and her favorite, *The Three Musketeers*. Whatever she read, she remembered, and she was fond of incorporating the stories and their characters into her play and games.

In 1905 her father hired a French governess to teach her French. She was expected to speak French almost all day. During these years, she demonstrated an outstanding aptitude for languages. With hopes of preparing Dorothy for further education at Oxford, her parents sent her away to boarding school at sixteen. Goldolphin School was not an easy adjustment. Dorothy had gone from being the center of attention to being one of many girls. It was not the happiest period of her life. However, she did excel in her studies.

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In the legacy of
C.S. Lewis,
the Institute
endeavors to develop
disciples who can
articulate, defend, and
live
faith in Christ
through personal and
public life.



KNOWING & DOING
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A Note to Our Readers

by Thomas A. Tarrants, III, President

Dear Reader ,

I hope you have enjoyed some refreshing vacation time this summer. More and more I realize how important times of rest and reflection are in our lives, yet it is not always easy to slow down and actually rest.

These past two months I have enjoyed a brief but much appreciated sabbatical. It has given me time to rest as well as to work on my doctoral dissertation and the Fellows Program. Somewhat unexpectedly I also found myself at my mother's bedside before she went to be with the Lord. Mercifully, her suffering is over.

"In this life you will have tribulation..." Jesus told us. And yet, it seems we are often surprised when suffering comes our way. This issue of *Knowing & Doing* will, I believe, be of help to us here, especially Gary Thomas's article "Severe Gifts from a Loving Father." Gary aptly points out some solid biblical truths that we like to overlook but that are essential to genuine discipleship.

And, please be sure to note the upcoming conferences and audio resources. We are honored to once again have Dr. N.T. Wright. He will speak to the modern-day confusion on the historical person of Jesus in the conference entitled "Finding and Following the True Jesus."

Later in the fall, Rev. David Prior offers a conference entitled "When Your Faith is Being Stretched," a very practical topic. In November, Dr. Dennis Hollinger will address the area of ethics—a topic of great concern in current news stories—in the conference entitled, "Choosing the Good: Ethics in a Complex World." Invite your office colleagues!

Both promise to be very practical, helpful conferences, so please plan to attend. If you cannot attend, conference tapes and CDs will be available for purchase.

And finally, we are always very grateful for your support. Your prayers and gifts make it possible to continue our work and provide these resources for discipleship.

Yours in Christ,

P.S. Gifts to the Institute have been quite low this summer and thus we would greatly appreciate your help at this time. Thank you.



C.S. Lewis on Absolutes

by Art Lindsley, Ph.D.

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

C.S. Lewis Feature Article



Dr. Art Lindsley

The most important issue for the culture and the church in the 21st century is the issue of truth. There has been a widespread abandoning of the idea of universal or absolute truth from numerous segments of the culture.

Secular relativists, New Age, neo-pagan, and postmodern thinkers all assault by argument or accusation those who claim any certainty about truth. The number of people in the United States who believe in the existence of God, the deity of Christ, and the resurrection of Christ is staggering. Yet, they do not believe in the same way they used to believe. Although more than ninety percent believe in God, the great majority of people refuse to believe in absolutes. Within the church there is an erosion of truth as well, with about half of those who describe themselves as born again believing there are no absolutes. Among people under thirty (in the church or out), even the mention of truth or absolutes often produces a negative reaction. It's not so much that they refuse to believe that what they hold to is "true," but they can only, with great difficulty, call another religious or ethical opinion "false."

C.S. Lewis can help us to speak to our own age. He confronted relativism in his own day. In fact, he felt that it was the issue that needed to be addressed prior to preaching the gospel. He says in his *Letters to Calabria*:

For my part, I believe that we ought to work not only at spreading the gospel (that certainly) but

also at a certain preparation for the gospel. It is necessary to recall many to the Law of Nature before we talk about God. Christ promises forgiveness of sins, but what is that to those who since they do not know the Law of Nature do not know

that they have sinned? Who will take the medicine unless he is in the grip of disease? Moral relativity is the enemy we have to overcome before we tackle atheism.

The most important issue for the culture and the church in the 21st century is the issue of truth.

If this was the case in Lewis's time, it is even more so in our own time. This issue of relativism and how we address it will profoundly influence our evangelism and discipleship. If we are to see any revival or reformation, we have to "tackle this enemy" as a precondition for proclaiming the gospel or living our lives for Christ.

In a way, C.S. Lewis approached this issue of moral absolutes through the back door. For many years prior to believing, Lewis had maintained that

the problem of evil prevented him from listening to the claims of Christ. "If a good God made the world, why has it gone wrong?" he would ask. He refused to listen to believers' replies, feeling that any such arguments were an attempt to avoid the obvious. Was not the universe cruel and unjust? Lucretius had stated the problem well: "Had God designed the world, it would not be a world so frail and faulty as we see." Lewis calls this the "Argument from Undesign."

However, gradually Lewis realized that his atheism had no basis for the idea of good or evil,

(continued on page 4)

C.S. Lewis on Absolutes

(continued from page 3)

justice or injustice. He says in *Mere Christianity*:

But how had I got this idea of *just* and *unjust*? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust? If the whole show was bad and senseless from A to Z, so to speak, why did I, who was supposed to be part of the show, find myself in such violent reaction against it? A man feels wet when he falls into water, because man is not a water animal: a fish would not feel wet. Of course I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too—for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my private fancies. Thus in the very act of trying to prove that God did not exist—in other words, that the whole of reality was senseless—I found I was forced to assume that one part of reality—namely my idea of justice—was full of sense.

So if evil exists, there must be a fixed, absolute, transcendent standard by which we can know it to be evil. If there is real evil, then we must have a fixed standard of good by which we judge it to be evil. This absolute standard points toward a God as a being who has this absolute standard in Himself.

Further, nowhere does there appear to be a totally different morality where in every case “good” is “evil” and “evil” is “good.” Lewis documents this in the appendix of *The Abolition of Man* using illustrations from ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Hindus, Chinese, Greeks, and Romans. What would a totally different morality mean? Lewis says:

Think of a country where people were admired for running away in battle, or where a man felt proud of double-crossing all the people who had been kindest to him. You might just as well try to imagine a country where two and two made five. Men have differed as regards what people you ought to be unselfish to—whether it was your own family, or your fellow countrymen, or everyone. But they have always agreed that you ought not to put yourself first. Selfishness has never been admired. Men have differed as to whether you should have one wife or four. But they have always agreed that you must not simply have any woman you liked.

In Lewis’s essay in *Christian Reflections*, “The Poison of Subjectivism,” he argues along similar lines. He maintains that the view that cultures differ so widely that there is no common moral ground is false. He says:

...this belief is a good sounding lie. If a man will go into a library and spend a few days with the *Encyclopedia of*

Religion and Ethics, he will soon discover the massive unanimity of the practical reason in man.

After providing a number of illustrations (as in the appendix of *The Abolition of Man*) he concludes:

...the pretence that we are presented with a mere chaos—though no outline of universally accepted value shows through—is simply false and should be contradicted in season and out of season wherever it is met.

Values Reduced to Sentiment
In light of what we have heard Lewis say so far, it is not surprising that he regarded *The Abolition of Man* as his most important book. He begins chapter one (Men without Chests) with an example taken from a sample textbook he had received. The authors of the textbook used an illustration in which they asserted that the statement, “the waterfall is sublime,” may “appear to be saying something very important” when in reality we are “only saying something about our own feelings.” Lewis points out that the textbook authors had reduced this value judgment to mere sentiment. The consequence of this kind of thinking, Lewis warns, may not bear fruit in the student’s mind until years later. He says:

It is not a theory they put into his mind, but an assumption, which ten years hence, its origin forgotten and its presence unconscious, will condition

Men have differed as regards what people you ought to be unselfish to.... But they have always agreed that you ought not to put yourself first. Selfishness has never been admired.

him to take one side in a controversy which he has never recognized as a controversy at all.

Such Statements Are Unimportant

Even more, this assumption (i.e., that values only seem to be saying something important but are merely about feelings) tends to trivialize emotion and desires. This is a problem because true education is not only one of the mind but also of the affections. Lewis says:

For every one pupil who needs to be guarded from a weak excess of sensibility there are three who need to be awakened from the slumber of cold vulgarity. The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts. The right defence against false sentiments is to inculcate just sentiments.

Education of Loves and Hates

Aristotle held that the aim of education was to make the pupil like and dislike what he or she ought. For Plato (*Republic*) the student is to be encouraged to hate the ugly and give praise to beauty. For Plato and Alanus the head is to rule the belly through the chest (spirited element or sentiment).

Men without Chests

Modern culture produces, in Lewis's words, "men without chests." They lack the depth of passion for truth, goodness, and beauty that ought to drive their actions and reactions. The absence of this educated passion results in a dire consequence:

In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.

Inconsistency

In the second chapter of *The Abolition of Man* ("The Way"), Lewis argues that the authors of the textbook, contrary to their assertions, do in fact have values. They reveal the presence of their values, among other ways, in the act of writing books on education in which they approve and disapprove of certain approaches, trying to communicate that which is good for society. While they may not use overt terms such as "good" or "evil" and make no claim that their values are absolute or universal, they nevertheless implicitly contradict themselves.

To abstain from calling it 'good' and to use, instead, such predicates as 'necessary' or 'progressive' or 'efficient,' would be a subterfuge. They could be forced by argument to answer the questions, 'necessary for what?', 'progressing towards what?', 'effecting what?'; in the last resort they would have to admit that some state of affairs was in their opinion good for its own sake.... Their scepticism about values is on the surface: it is for use on other people's values: about the values current in their own set they are not

nearly sceptical enough. And this phenomenon is very usual. A great many of those who 'debunk' traditional or (as they would say) 'sentimental' values have in the background values of their own which they believe to be immune from the debunking process.

A particularly egregious example of this position is demonstrated in the writing of postmodern philosopher Jacques Derrida, who wants to deconstruct texts to show the implicit contradictions in them. However, he says that the only thing that cannot be deconstructed is deconstruction itself, because: "Deconstruction is Justice." Why is deconstruction immune from being deconstructed? He just says that it is. What is justice? He has already denied that there is any "transcendental signified" that might provide a fixed standard for justice. Where do you get a standard for justice? Again, he doesn't say.

Cannot Get "Ought" from "Is"

People sometimes try to construct an ethic based upon that which they believe is good for society. Perhaps, some suggest, we can get a sufficient number of people to agree to a "categorical imperative" (Kant); that is, an agreement to only do that which we would will to become a universal standard. Others suggest we make it our goal to be impartial, to stand behind a "veil of ignorance" (Rawls) so that our biases do not distract

(continued on page 12)

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N.T. Wright

The Challenge of Jesus

N.T. WRIGHT

The following is an excerpt from "The Challenge of Studying Jesus," the first chapter in The Challenge of Jesus (InterVarsity Press, 1999). Used by permission of the author.

A friend of mine, lecturing in a theological college in Kenya, introduced his students to "The Quest for the Historical Jesus." This, he said, was a movement of thought and scholarship that in its earlier forms was carried on largely in Germany in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He had not gone far into his lecture explaining this search for Jesus when one of his students interrupted him. "Teacher," he said ("I knew I was in trouble," my friend commented, "as soon as he called me 'teacher'!"), "if the Germans have lost Jesus, that is their problem. We have not lost him. We know him. We love him."

Research into Jesus himself has long been controversial, not least among devout Christians. Several people in the wider Christian world wonder if there is anything new to say about Jesus and if the attempt to say something fresh is not a denial either of the church's traditional teaching or of the sufficiency of Scripture. I want to grasp this nettle right away and explain why I regard it, not just permissible but as vitally necessary that we grapple afresh with the question of who Jesus was and therefore who he is. In doing so I in no way want to deny or undermine the knowledge of Jesus of which the Kenyan student spoke and which is the common experience of the church down the centuries and across the widely differing cultures. I see the historical task, rather, as part of the appropriate activity of knowledge and love, to get to know even better the one whom we claim to know and follow. If even in a human relationship of knowledge and love there can be misunderstandings, false impressions, wrong assumptions, which need to be teased out and dealt with, how much more when the one to whom we are relating is Jesus himself.

I believe, in fact, that the historical quest for Jesus is a necessary and nonnegotiable aspect of Christian discipleship and that we in our generation have a chance to be renewed in discipleship and mission precisely by means of this quest. I want to explain and justify these beliefs from the outset. There are, however, huge problems and even dangers within the quest, as one would expect from anything that is heavy with potential for the kingdom of God, and I shall need to say something about these as well.

There are well-known pitfalls in even addressing the subject, and we may as well be clear about them. It is desperately easy when among like-minded friends to become complacent. We hear of wild new theories about Jesus. Every month or two some publisher comes up with a blockbuster saying that Jesus was a New Age guru, an Egyptian freemason or a hippie revolutionary. Every year or two some scholar or group of scholars comes up with a new book full of imposing footnotes to tell us that Jesus was a peasant Cynic, a wandering wordsmith or the preacher of liberal values born out of due time.

The day I was redrafting this chapter for publication, a newspaper article appeared about a new controversy, initiated by animal-rights activists, as to whether Jesus was a vegetarian.

We may well react to all this sort of thing by saying that it is all a waste of time, that we know all we need to know about Jesus, and there is no more to be said. Many devout Christians taking this line content themselves with an effortless superiority: we know the truth, these silly liberals have got it all wrong, and we have nothing new to learn. Sometimes people like me are wheeled out to demonstrate, supposedly, the truth of "traditional Christianity," with the implied corollary that we can now stop asking these unpleasant historical questions and get on with something else, perhaps something more profitable, instead.

Some, however, react by reaching for equally misleading alternative stereotypes. A defense of a would-be "supernatural" Jesus can easily degenerate into a portrayal of Jesus as a first-century version of Superman — not realizing that the Superman myth is itself ultimately a dualistic corruption of the Christian story. There are several Jesus-pictures on offer that appear very devout but that ignore what the New Testament

actually says about the human being Jesus of Nazareth or what it meant in its original context.

I do not intend to encourage any of these attitudes. I repeat: I regard the continuing historical quest for Jesus as a necessary part of ongoing Christian discipleship. I doubt very much if in the present age we shall ever get to the point where we know all there is to know and understand all there is to understand about Jesus, who he was, what he said and what he did, and what he meant by it all. But since orthodox Christianity has always held firm to the basic belief that it is by looking at Jesus himself that we discover who God is, it seems to me indisputable that we should expect always to be continuing in the quest for Jesus precisely as part of, indeed perhaps as the sharp edge of, our exploration into God himself.

This, of course, carries certain corollaries. If it is true that Christian faith cannot preempt the historical questions about Jesus, it is also true that historical study cannot be carried out in a vacuum. We have been taught by the Enlightenment to suppose that history and faith are antithetical, so that to appeal to the one is to appeal away from the other. As a result, historians have regularly been suspect in the community of faith, just as believers have always been suspect in the community of secular historiography. When Christianity is truest to itself, however, it denies precisely this dichotomy – uncomfortable though this may be for those of us who try to live in and to speak from and to both communities simultaneously. Actually, I believe this discomfort is itself one aspect of a contemporary Christian vocation: as our world goes through the deep pain of the death throes of the Enlightenment, the Christian is not called to stand apart from this pain but to share it. I shall say more about this in the concluding chapter. I am neither a secular historian who happens to believe in Jesus nor a Christian who happens to indulge a fancy for history. Rather, I am someone who believes that being a Christian necessarily entails doing business with history and that history done for all it's worth will challenge spurious versions of Christianity, including many that think of themselves as orthodox, while sustaining and regenerating a deep and true orthodoxy, surprising and challenging though this will always remain.

Let me then move to the positive side. What are the reasons that make it imperative for us to study Jesus?

The Necessity of the Quest

The most basic reason for grappling with the historical question of Jesus is that we are made for God: for God's glory, to worship God and reflect his likeness. That is our heart's deepest desire, the source of our deepest vocation. But Christianity has always said, with John 1:18, that nobody has ever seen God but that Jesus has revealed God. We shall only discover who the true and living God actually is if we take the risk of looking at Jesus himself. That is why the contemporary debates about Jesus are so important; they are also debates about God himself.

The second reason why I engage in serious historical study of Jesus is out of loyalty to Scripture. This may seem deeply ironic to some on both sides of the old liberal-conservative divide. Many Jesus scholars of the last two centuries have of course thrown Scripture out of the window and reconstructed a Jesus quite different from what we find in the New Testament. But the proper answer to that approach is not simply to reassert that because we believe in the Bible we do not need to ask fresh questions about Jesus. As with God so with the Bible; just because our tradition tells us that the Bible says and means one thing or another, that does not excuse us from the challenging task of studying it afresh in the light of the best knowledge we have about its world and context, to see whether these things are indeed so. For me the dynamic of a commitment to Scripture is not "we believe the Bible, so there is nothing more to be learned," but rather "we believe the Bible, so we had better discover all the things in it to which our traditions, including our 'protestant' or 'evangelical' traditions, which have supposed themselves to be 'biblical' but are sometimes demonstrably not, have made us blind." And this process of rethinking will include the hard and often threatening question of whether some things that our traditions have taken as "literal" should be seen as "metaphorical," and perhaps also vice versa – and, if so, which ones.

This leads to the third reason, which is the Christian imperative to truth. Christians must not be afraid of truth. Of course, that is what many reductionists have said, as with apparent boldness they have whittled down the meaning

(continued on page 20)

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Stripping Away Facades

AUTHENTIC FAITH

The Power of a Fire-Tested Life

By Gary L. Thomas

Published by Zondervan (2002)

by James L. Beavers

Executive Director, C.S. Lewis Institute

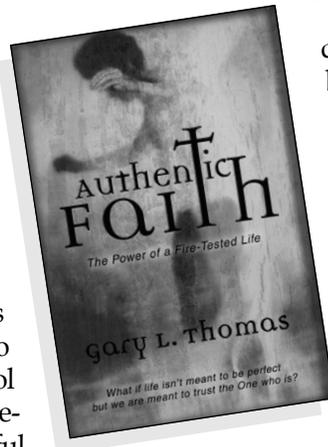
In their younger years, my parents enjoyed refinishing old pieces of furniture. They would go to flea markets and other purveyors of cast-off furniture and search through dimly lit, dusty spaces examining various pieces. I would tag along – not enthusiastically – and watch with amazement as a great “treasure” would be identified. Usually I had a hard time believing that there was any real value to this new-found prize with its loose joints and sometimes garish, cracking paint.

Once home, my father would begin the tedious task of removing the old finish. He would apply a thick, smelly solvent to the painted surfaces and, after waiting a bit, would set to work with a putty knife and steel wool to unveil the underlying wood. Sometimes we almost gasped at the beautiful grain pattern that appeared.

While every analogy falls short of precisely conveying its intended comparison, this picture of stripping away surface layers – facades – and revealing the original substance continued to come to mind as I read Gary Thomas’s latest offering, *Authentic Faith*. Chapter after chapter, Gary brings to light the genuine, unadorned realities of life in Christ, realities which have sadly been hidden beneath false notions gained through inaccurate or incomplete teaching.

I asked Gary what had prompted him to write the book. He paused and said, “I began to grow concerned at the number of believers who, in the face of trials and suffering, were disillusioned by

What if
life isn’t meant to be perfect,
but we are to trust the One who is?



false expectations.” They had somehow believed that coming to faith in Christ meant only blessing and not troubles. When tragedy struck, the questions started: Where is God’s blessing? his protection? his care for his children? What about all of the Bible promises? Have we been sold a bill of goods?

It was this anguished cry that drew Thomas’s attention – and brought to his mind writers from across the centuries who had addressed these very questions and offered timeless truths, more often than not, learned in the midst of their own crucibles of suffering: Augustine, Paul, John Calvin, Francis De Sales, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, C.S. Lewis, and others.

This is not a new twist on an old story; rather, it is the genuine traditional faith which was, in Thomas’s words, “taught by Jesus, passed on by the ancients, and practiced throughout two thousand years of church history.” It is a faith submitted to God’s will, not one that seeks to manipulate him for its own wishes and desires.

Authentic Faith needs to be read by every believer, young and old. For some it will be a refreshing return to familiar contours; for most, I suspect, it will bring the surprising discovery of the richly grained substance of genuine faith.

The following excerpt will give you a sample of this marvelous and much-needed book. ■

Severe Gifts from a Loving Father

by Gary Thomas

Director, Center for Evangelical Spirituality



Gary Thomas

“Did you hear about Mike?”
“No,” I said. “What happened?”
When I arrived on Western Washington University’s campus in 1980, Mike Dittman was one of the most dynamic Christians I had ever met. He was several years older than I was, and already a leader in the college ministry I attended. Mike had everything: a charismatic personality, great athletic ability, a walk of integrity, great skill as a worship leader, and wisdom beyond his age. I often sought him out at lunchtime to talk, and was later thrilled to end up being in a small group that he led.

Following his time at Western, Mike served as a campus pastor, and then enrolled in graduate studies to become a counselor. He worked with a church for a number of years, until finally an “intervention” of sorts took place. Men that Mike respected and loved confronted him and said, “Mike, you’re very competent, a dynamic leader, and you inspire admiration and respect, but you’re too blunt. You hurt people with your words. You lack compassion and empathy.”

Mike realized that every one of the positive traits mentioned by these men was a human characteristic, not a fruit of the spirit, and he found himself praying, “God, I wish I was a little less ‘dynamic’ and a little more compassionate.”

Be careful what you pray for. A couple years later, after a morning workout, Mike’s body dropped to the locker room floor. A brain hemorrhage almost took his life, but while doctors were able to keep Mike in this world, a very different Mike was wheeled out of the hospital than the one who had walked onto the basketball court.

His Hollywood-handsome appearance was gone. Half of Mike’s face now looks “fallen,” pulled over to one side, and one eye is sewn almost completely shut. He can’t sing or play his guitar, so there’s no more leading worship. For a while, his speech was slurred, so he couldn’t teach. He was humbled in just about every way that it’s possible for an ambitious man to be humbled.

Yet, in God’s way, the devastating effect on Mike’s body was paralleled by an equally powerful yet wonderful change in his spirit. Years later, Mike’s ministry has never been more productive. People fly in to Philadelphia from all over the country to meet with Mike. Whereas before his focus was on the masses, Mike now specializes in healing hurting hearts, one at a time.

“The brain hemorrhage took a lot away from me,” Mike confessed, “but it gave me even more.” Mike is now the type of guy whose spirit invites you to quiet your heart, get rid of all pretenses, and revel in God’s presence. I explained the difference when I called my wife the first night I talked to Mike after he had had his brain hemorrhage.

“When I was in college, I wanted to be like Mike,” I confessed, “but I don’t get that impression anymore. Now, after spending time with Mike, I want to be more like Jesus.”

There’s something about going through such a difficult time that rips through the preening veil of human accomplishment and achievement, and ushers in the unadulterated presence of Christ himself. Suddenly, you’re not impressed with a person’s abilities or charisma, but instead are humbled by a very real sense of God’s presence. There are hundreds of persuasive speakers and communicators for every one person who has this ministry. This isn’t a transformation that can be manufactured; it is a severe gift from a loving heavenly Father.

Going Deeper

These fire-testing seasons are necessary because we do not walk easily into maturity. At first, Christianity can be an intoxicating blend of freedom, joy, exuberance, and newfound discovery. Longtime sins drop off us with relatively little effort. Bible study is rich; we may feel like archaeologists finally coming across an

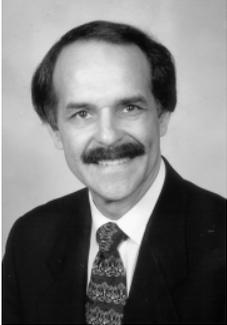
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...fire-testing
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Being Good at What We Do — or, Being Good

by Dennis Hollinger, Ph.D.
*Vice Provost and Professor of Christian Ethics
Messiah College*



Dennis Hollinger

The recent scandals in the corporate world remind us that there is a difference between being good at what we do, and being good. Enron, Adelphia, WorldCom, Global Crossing, Arthur Andersen, and others certainly had competent CEOs, executives, managers, and accountants. Most were no doubt quite good at what they did. But, the growing evidence shows a crisis in ethics and moral character. Technical competence is one thing; moral trustworthiness is quite another.

Throughout much of human history it was assumed that leadership and moral character went hand in hand. Of course there were continual failures in various spheres of leadership, and thus the current malaise is nothing new. Due to human sin, leaders in government, business, education, science, and even the church have often failed to steward their power with integrity, justice, and care for human beings. What has perhaps changed is that today the norms for morality seem up for grabs. Ask anyone on the street what ethical goodness is all about and you will get a myriad of conflicting answers. So while we have developed managerial and technical sophistication in carrying out our work, as a culture we are in a blur about morality and ethics. We are good at what we do, but are we good?

The Ultimate Source of Moral Goodness

In the Bible, moral goodness does not reside within human nature, but rather is rooted in the nature and actions of our Creator. While God created a very good world, even that created goodness is not self-defined — although we do get a glimpse of God's moral designs through his creation, even in its fallen state. We only know goodness in the fullest sense when we

look beyond our own nature and actions to the God who made us and offers redemption in Jesus Christ. Thus, in the Bible righteousness is not attained by human moral efforts, but it comes through God's own initiative, rooted in his own being and actions. To put it simply, we become good through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, appropriating his work on our behalf through faith and commitment to him as Savior and Lord. Theologians sometimes speak of a forensic righteousness, meaning that God declares us to be righteous through Christ's work on the cross. We are justified before a holy God, not because of our own actions and character, but because we accept God's provision for goodness.

But the biblical story doesn't stop there. Moral goodness is never just a forensic, declared righteousness. God's own goodness comes to transform our character and moral actions by his grace and through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit who comes to reside within us.

Paul put it this way in Ephesians 2: "By grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God — not the result of works, so that no one may boast" (vs. 8-9). Though salvation and moral goodness do not come from our own best efforts, the very next verse reminds us that we are "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life" (v. 10). Paul then goes on to give an example of ethical action that ought to be demonstrated as a result of God's justifying grace, as he deals with one of the significant social ethic issues facing Christians in the first century — the racial and ethnic divide between Jews and Gentiles. Being good by virtue of God's initiating grace and empowerment means reconciliation between "both

groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it" (v. 16). Justification overflows into moral goodness, personal and social.

The Moral Life

Being good in the moral life through God's work means two things: moral character and moral actions. Both are integral to each other. Throughout much of the modern world, the focus of philosophers and theologians was on moral actions and the decisions we must make in the complex world in which we live. Moral character was hardly on the radar screen. In recent years there has been a recovery of character or virtue ethics, an emphasis that goes way back in history to philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, and certainly to the Bible. Unfortunately, some recent advocates of character/virtue ethics play down the need for an ethic of decision making. Both, I believe, are needed.

Character ethics refers to the more inward side of the ethical life. It embodies those habits and virtues that come to form the core of who we are. Embedded character then flows almost spontaneously into the tough ethical decisions we must make. Character ethics is well reflected in the statement by philosopher Iris Murdoch, "At crucial moments of choice, most of the business of choosing is already over." Had the corporate leaders involved in recent scandals had deep moral character, they would have been more prone to choose the right path when faced with enticements to fudge the numbers or pad their pockets. Character ethics in the Christian perspective is rooted in the biblical idea of the heart, the core inner self that reflects who we really are, for as Jesus put it, "The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good" (Luke 6:45).

But the moral life is not only about character. It is also about wise and good decisions. Sometimes those decisions are straightforward and without difficulty in their discernment and course of action. At other times decisions are complex, and we are not always immediately clear as to the right, just, and good path. In politics, business, education, the sciences, the arts, and spheres of everyday living, we are often

faced with dilemmas that embody multiple ethical principles, competing moral responsibilities, or situations the Bible does not clearly address.

While moral character is certainly important for predisposing us in a certain direction in these tough decisions, we need more. We need to develop, through broad biblical directions, a Christian worldview and solid thinking, the ability to discern the good, wise, and just. In other words, we have to learn to make the right choices through reflection on the dilemmas themselves, and through discernment from the foundations of our biblical faith. It is important to realize that the great crisis at Enron, Adelphia, WorldCom, Global Crossing, and Arthur Andersen is far more than just lack of knowledge in business ethics. Most likely the culprits in the scandals have had such seminars and courses. The fundamental issue is the need for a clear foundation on which to build.

Facing a Secular, Pluralistic World

If being good in character and action is ultimately the work of God, what do we do in a world that is largely characterized by unbelief? What can we expect from those who lack a moral foundation rooted in God? How do we operate in a secular, pluralistic society?

Obviously one answer is to share with our fellow humans the good news of Christ in whom true and ultimate goodness is found. The gospel is the most solid foundation for ethics, and we have a responsibility to share it with others. Therein is true knowledge of the good and supernatural empowerment to put it into practice.

But the Bible is also clear that human beings apart from Christ do have some natural moral knowledge and sensitivity. Romans 1 teaches that "ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse" (v. 20). The very next chapter then speaks of Gentiles, who had not received the law of God, doing instinctively what the law requires, showing "that what the

(continued on page 13)

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C.S. Lewis on Absolutes

(continued from page 5)

You cannot
get
"ought"
out of
"is."
You cannot
get
the
imperative
out of
the
indicative.

us, then we can construct a basis for social ethics.

The reason that such attempts can never work is the principle of "ought" and "is." *You cannot get "ought" out of "is."* *You cannot get the imperative out of the indicative.* Take murder, for example. You might argue that outlawing murder would be in the interest of preserving society. This is undoubtedly true: outlawing murder will preserve society. However, some might question whether a particular society ought to be preserved. Is, then, the prohibition of murder in place only because of the pragmatic intent to preserve society? Is murder not intrinsically wrong?

We could certainly get a large group, a majority, to make a law prohibiting murder, but what do we say to those (like terrorists or others) who might question this law? We could respond, "We are the majority. We say murder is wrong. If you murder, we will arrest you." In other words, might makes right. In this view, murder is wrong only because the majority says so. C.S. Lewis argues:

From propositions about fact alone no practical conclusion can ever be drawn. 'This will preserve' society cannot lead to 'do this' except by the mediation of 'society ought to be preserved.' 'This will cost you your life' cannot lead directly to 'do not do this:' it can lead to it only through a felt desire or an acknowledged duty of self-preservation. The Innovator is trying to get a conclusion in the imperative mood out of premises in the indicative mood: and though he continues trying to all eternity he cannot succeed, for the thing is impossible.

The only ultimate answer the "Innovator" can give to the question, "Why ought society be preserved?" is, "Says us." To which you might respond, "Who are you (majority) to impose your morality on me?"

There Is No Evil

In the final chapter (*The Abolition of Man*) Lewis says that this relativistic view that there is no duty or no ultimate good allows those in the society he calls the "conditioners" to create the conscience. We have had an awful lesson in the consequences of this nihilistic Nietzschean phi-

losophy in Nazism where, in a speech given in Nuremburg to the Nazi youth, Hitler stated, "I desire to create a generation without conscience, imperious, relentless, and cruel." Not that all relativists would want to create such a society, but what would prevent such a society from being created? Lewis points out that the fruits of history are already clear:

I am very doubtful whether history shows us one example of a man who, having stepped outside traditional morality and attained power, has used that power benevolently.

If you want to document this assertion, read the massive volume by Paul Johnson, *Modern Times*, wherein he time and again points out the consequences of relativism in the world's cultures.

Two Choices

When it comes down to it, there are only two choices: to conform desire to truth or truth to desire, to conform our soul to reality or conform reality to our wishes:

There is something which unites magic and applied science while separating both from the 'wisdom' of earlier ages. For the wise men of old the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue. For magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men: the solution is a technique...

Truth or a technique for altering reality – that is the choice.

Danger of "Seeing Through Things"

In this postmodern era, everything is being (to use Lewis's term) "debunked." Everything is "explained away." Everything is "seen through." The problem is:

...you cannot go on 'explaining away' forever: you will find that you have explained explanation itself away. You cannot go on 'seeing through' things forever. The whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it. It is good that the window should be

transparent, because the street or garden beyond it is opaque. How if you saw through the garden too? It is no use trying to 'see through' first principles. If you see through everything then everything is transparent. But a wholly transparent world is an invisible world. To 'see through' all things is the same as not to see.

Do relativists really want to see through everything? Perhaps in some cases they do, but most selectively choose their own absolutes. They are absolutists in disguise. For example, many postmodernists want to fight metanarratives that oppress. Do they think oppression is wrong or "evil?" I think they do. In some cases, they hope that their relativism will create a utopian world. As we have seen, however, the "fruits of history" are woefully clear. When the end justifies the means, there is no way to stop the worst atrocities from happening. Relativism is a slippery slope—a toboggan without brakes. We need to recover a defense of absolutes combined with the demonstration of the demeanor of Christ if we are going to regain effectiveness in the public arena. Standing on C.S. Lewis's shoulders can enable us to see further and more clearly what needs to be done. As Lewis says in *The Magician's Nephew*, "...what you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing: it also depends on what sort of person you are." ■

Note: For further reading, start with Book I of Mere Christianity and The Abolition of Man. A secondary work that might be helpful is one by Michael Aeschelmann, The Restitution of Man. Dr. Lindsley is currently working on a book for InterVarsity Press on the topic of "True Truth: Absolutes without Absolutism."

Being Good at What We Do

(continued from page 11)

law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness" (2:16).

It is this kind of natural law embedded in human hearts that engenders the moral outrage that we have seen in the midst of the corporate scandals. It is this conscience of the heart that often leads people who do not acknowledge Christ to nonetheless evidence forms of natural love, justice, and goodness. Thus, even when people do not

operate from a Christian worldview foundation, we can still appeal to their consciences and natural understandings. Though the ultimate foundational depth of moral goodness, righteousness, and justice may be absent from their lives, there remains a sense of moral obligations and character.

We must acknowledge, however, that the task becomes increasingly difficult in a world where that natural understanding and proclivity is questioned and denigrated. In a culture in which the very notions of goodness and truth are maligned, the natural law appeal becomes much more tenuous. As the Bible acknowledges, humans can reject even the natural perceptions of God and harden their minds and consciences to the moral good. Today we see plenty of that hardening, and the moral relativism and rejection of the very notion of truth add to the challenge.

Conclusion

Hopefully, the recent corporate scandals can remind all human beings of what should be clear to anyone—namely, that there is a difference between being good at what we do, and being good. Out of the current moral failure comes the opportunity to remind our friends and colleagues of the true source of moral good, the living God of the universe, who makes us good through Jesus Christ. In a world where most struggle for any clear moral foundation, God presents before us an opportune moment. For the Christian worldview with its story of creation, fall, and redemption affords the most adequate story for making sense of the Enrons of this world, and doing something about it. ■

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Over the years Dennis has served in both pastoral and teaching ministries, including seven years as a professor of Church and Society at Alliance Theological Seminary in Nyack, New York. He has served as an adjunct or visiting professor at several seminaries internationally, including Moscow Theological Seminary in Russia, Union Biblical Seminary in India, and the Alliance Theological Seminary extension program in Ukraine.

Dennis received his B.A. from Elizabethtown College, M.Div. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, M.Phil. and Ph.D. from Drew University, and did post-doctoral studies at Oxford University. He and his wife Mary Ann live in Camp Hill, PA, and have two daughters.

Severe Gifts from a Loving Father

(continued from page 9)

To embrace
God's love
and Kingdom
is
to embrace
his broken,
passionate
heart.

unexplored cave, astonished by the insights that pour out of the paper book in front of us. Intimacy, tears, and the assurance of God's voice and guidance mark our times of prayer.

This "spiritual infatuation" phase is well-known and well-documented amongst spiritual directors and those familiar with spiritual formation. Just like romantic infatuation is self-centered, so spiritual infatuation tends to be "all about me." It *seems* like it's all about God, but the focus of new believers' lives is still mostly taken up with how they're doing overcoming sins, as well as cultivating the new joy and spiritual depth that comes from walking with God.

Eventually, God asks us to discard this infatuation and move on to a mature friendship with him. In a true friendship, it's no longer all about "me." It's about partnering with God to build his kingdom. That means first, being "fire-tested," and second, growing in ways that we naturally wouldn't be inclined to grow. Instead of focusing on God answering our prayers, spiritual maturity leads us to yearn for faithfulness, Christlike-ness, and others-centeredness. This is a painful process, a very real spiritual death that some have described as being "born again" *again*, except for the fact that it is never a one-time event.

The new groundwork that needs to be laid is an authentic faith that is based on a God-centered life. Rather than the believer being the sun around whom God, the church, and the world revolve to create a happy, easy, and prosperous life, God becomes the sun around which the believer revolves, a believer who is willing to suffer, even to be persecuted, and lay down his life to build God's Kingdom and to serve God's church. In the old way of thinking, Christianity is all about the blessings it brings into the life of the believer. Accept Christ, we say, and you'll find new joy, inner peace, power over addictions, restored families, even prosperity and health. In fact, if a non-believer were to stand up in many a Christian church and cry out, "Why should I become a Christian?" it is likely that more than eighty percent of the responses he would receive would be focused on his personal advancement—what his faith will do for him, how it will make his life easier, secure his eternal destiny, and so on.

What this does is spawn a faith belief that goes something like this: "Because God loves me, he'll soften the corners. He'll let me follow the easy path. I might have a few problems, but nothing major. Everything God asks me to give up will be for my own good, as he ultimately leads me into relative affluence, well-being, and a happy family."

Thus, when cancer strikes, or we're faced with persecution, hatred, or even God's silence, and we're asked to care for someone who can never pay us back, we think we've been cheated, or at least treated unfairly. We might even assume that God hasn't kept up his end of the bargain. After all, we've given up our sins, haven't we? Then why am I being asked to give away money that I'm not sure I have? Why do I have to watch a loved one die of a terrible disease? How come everything I ask for isn't falling into place?

If we enter the faith for selfish reasons, we stand an almost certain chance of becoming radically disillusioned when God takes us at our word that we are accepting him as *Lord* and Savior. Because this world is broken, as God's ambassadors and representatives we are given certain *responsibilities* and *duties* that will impinge upon our time and comfort. There is no getting around this. It is deep denial to try to live as if all that Christianity involves is avoiding a few choice sins while we build the best and most comfortable life possible.

God's word couldn't be clearer. His Son clearly taught us that faith in Him entails being hated by all men; persecution; an increased sensitivity leading to mourning and sorrow; new difficulties and struggles; a life of giving instead of acquisition; and a life of service instead of amassing power.

Friendship with God

To embrace God's love and Kingdom is to embrace his broken, passionate heart. It is to expose ourselves to the assaults brought on by the world's hatred toward God. The active Christian life is a life full of risks, heartache, and responsibility. God does indeed bear our burdens. Certainly, he blesses us in many ways, but this initial relief is in order that He might assign to us more important concerns than our own. Only

this time, we weep not because our house is too small or we have over-extended our credit, but because we are taxed to the limit reaching out to a hurting world. Yes, we experience peace, joy, and hope, but it is a peace in the midst of turmoil; joy marked with empathy; and hope refined by suffering.

Ultimately, spiritual maturity is not about memorizing the Bible, mastering the spiritual disciplines, or growing calluses on our knees from lengthy times of prayer. These are all healthy things to do, but they are still means to a greater end, which in itself is *learning to love with God's love* and *learning to serve with God's power*. In a fallen world where suffering and difficulty are certain, friendship with God frees us from being limited by what we don't have, by what we are suffering, or by what we are enduring. God doesn't offer us freedom *from* a broken world; instead, he offers us friendship with himself as we walk *through* a fallen world—and those who persevere will find that this friendship is worth more than anything this fallen world can offer.

Ironically, we are missing out when we insist on self-absorption, affluence, and ease over pursuing a deeper walk with God. We miss out on an intimacy that has been talked about by previous generations, a fellowship of labor, suffering, persecution, and selflessness. It doesn't sound like much of an invitation initially, but those who have walked these roads have left behind a witness that they have reached an invigorating, soul-satisfying land. These women and men testify to being radically satisfied in God, even though others may scratch their heads trying to figure out how someone who walks such a difficult road could possibly be happy!

Authentic faith penetrates the most unlikely of places. This faith is found, for instance, when we die to ourselves and put others first. Such a faith is nurtured when we cultivate contentment instead of spending our best energy and efforts to improve our lot in life. Classical faith is strengthened in suffering, persecution, waiting, and even mourning. These "authentic disciplines," as I call them, differ from the traditional spiritual disciplines in that the authentic disciplines are, for the most part, initiated outside of us. Mike didn't *choose* to have a brain hemorrhage, but God in his

providence allowed it. God brings these disciplines into our life when he wills and as he wills. Just reading about suffering doesn't bring you through suffering. You can't *make* these disciplines happen, as you can make fasting or meditation take place. This is a God-ordained spirituality, dependent on his sovereignty.

The traditional disciplines—fasting, meditation, study, prayer—are all crucial elements of building our faith, but let's be honest: they can also foster pride, arrogance, self-sufficiency, religiosity, and worse. Their benefit is clearly worth the risk, but that's why the authentic disciplines are such a helpful and even vital addition; they turn us away from human effort—from men and women seeking the face of God—and turn us back toward God seeking the face of men and women.

There's no pride left when God takes me through a time of suffering. There's no self-righteousness when I am called to wait. There is no religiosity when I am truly mourning. This is a spirituality I can't control or initiate. It is a radical dependence on God's husbandry. All we can do is try to appreciate it and learn from it. The rest—the duration of the trial, the intensity of the trial, the ultimate cessation of the trial—is almost always up to him.

Seasoned by Suffering

During the height of his writing years, C.S. Lewis cared for a very sick woman who had varicose veins, so whenever she called, Lewis had to go to her—and she called him many times a day. Added to this burden was the constant irritation of his brother Warren's alcoholism, and Lewis's constant fears that he was about to go bankrupt.

As one who writes for a living, I can empathize with the difficulty of continuing work amidst so many interruptions; yet, it was precisely under these conditions that Lewis wrote *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. George Sayer suggests, "That the Narnia stories are full of laughter and the fact that they breathe forth joy does not mean that the years of their writing were happy for Jack. What it does mean is that

(continued on page 19)

God doesn't offer us freedom from a broken world; instead, he offers us friendship with himself as we walk through a fallen world—and those who persevere will find that this friendship is worth more than anything this fallen world can offer.

Profiles in Faith: Dorothy Sayers

(continued from page 1)

In 1910, after taking national examinations, she did better than any candidate in England who took both the French and German exams. Finally, she went to Oxford to take the entrance exams offered there and won the Gilchrist Scholarship to Somerville College—one of the highest scholarships in England. In the exam, she demonstrated her passion for translating poetry from one language into poetry in another language. She took a French sonnet and translated it into strict Petrarchean poetic form.

Dorothy loved life at the university, especially discussing ideas late into the night at one of Oxford's many pubs. She would talk about many subjects but particularly, through reading the works of G.K. Chesterton, became a defender of orthodoxy. She later wrote:

To the young people of my generation, G.K.C. was a ... Christian liberator. Like a beneficent bomb, he blew out of the Church the quality of stained glass of a very poor period and let in gusts of fresh air in which the dead leaves of doctrine danced. ... It was stimulating to be told that Christianity was not a dull thing, but a gay thing ... an adventurous thing ... not an unintelligent thing, but a wise thing ... Above all, it was refreshing to see Christian polemic conducted with offensive rather than defensive weapons.

Dorothy had a good musical voice and joined Oxford's Bach Choir. She also participated in plays that she and her friends wrote and produced. The friendships she made during these years lasted throughout her lifetime. In 1912 Dorothy and her friends started a literary club called the Mutual Admiration Society (or M.A.S.). Much like Lewis and Tolkien's Inklings, they met once a week in a member's room to read things they had written for fun and for criticism. At the end of her time at Oxford, she excelled in her written and oral exams, taking First Class Honors in Modern Languages.

There were not many positions available for women at Oxford during this period. Having decided that she was going to be a writer, Dorothy worked at one point for Basil Blackwell at Oxford, publishing a book of poems called *Op I* and another called *Catholic Tales and Christian Songs*. She also read all kinds of detective stories. Once she commented that she was going to make detective stories fashionable reading for intelligent people and make money as well. She proceeded to work on *Whose Body*, involving the character Lord Peter Whimsey, who is a regular throughout her novels. While employed by the advertising agency

S.H. Bensons, Dorothy continued to work at her detective fiction. She remained at Bensons for nine years until she was able to write full time. She is said to have invented the slogan, "It pays to advertise," and helped develop a very successful ad campaign for Colemans Mustard.

While in London, she met another writer, John Cournos, who became the great love of her life. Unfortunately, her affections were not reciprocated. Although he insisted to her that he did not want to get married and have children, when he left to go to America, he soon married another woman with children. Dorothy was miserable and bitter as her letters from this period clearly show.

Perhaps it was this emotionally devastating relationship that set her up for personal crisis. She had an affair with a young car salesman (name unknown) that left her unexpectedly pregnant. At that time, society made it hard (culturally and legally) for unwed mothers. Dorothy especially wanted to keep this pregnancy from her parents. The baby's father would do nothing to help her, so she asked her cousin, Ivy Shrimpton, who cared for foster children, to keep the baby. She agreed. Dorothy took a leave from Bensons supposedly to finish her second novel, *Clouds of Witnesses*, and had the baby. Amazingly, she managed to keep her pregnancy a secret. This fact was not revealed publicly until after she died and left almost all of her estate to her son, John Anthony Fleming. John Anthony was born in 1924, and in 1926, she married Oswald Arthur Fleming. Later, Dorothy and Oswald adopted John Anthony and paid his way through boarding school and Oxford University.

The adoption was publicly known but not the fact that John Anthony was Dorothy's biological son. Dorothy lived all her life knowing that this "skeleton in the closet" could be revealed in a very public manner. It is conjectured that guilt over her past made it impossible for her to accept Archbishop Temple's offer of an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree later in her life.

Dorothy wrote to Anthony (as he chose to be called), met him when in London, visited him during holidays, and had him visit her at various times throughout her life. It is very possible that she desired to bring Anthony to live with her and her husband. However, "Mac" (as her husband was called) had fought in the First World War, had been exposed to poison gas, and suffered from depression, ill health, and a bad temper. He did not work regularly after the war and in his later years spent a lot of time

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at the local pub. In any case, although Mac and Dorothy adopted Anthony, he never came to live with them permanently.

During her early life, Dorothy wrote fourteen detective novels (with Lord Peter Whimsey as the hero), four other novels, and several short stories for broadcasting. By the time she was thirty-five, she was a popular, successful writer. Dorothy participated in the founding of the Detection Club in 1928. G.K. Chesterton served as the club's first president until his death in 1936. E.C. Bentley took over until 1949 when Dorothy became president until her death in 1957. Her successor in that office was Agatha Christie.

In 1930 Dorothy read her own episode of a combined detective story (written by several writers including Chesterton and Christie) on the B.B.C. This was the first of many times her voice was heard on the radio. In 1937 her novel version of *Busman's Honeymoon*—which was first written as a play—came out. This was her last novel about the Whimseys (Lord Peter married Harriet Vane in this last volume.). She began *Thrones, Dominations*, but never finished it. Jill Paton Walsh later completed the novel in 1998.

Dorothy had come to have various doubts about the overall value of her detective stories, and she was given the opportunity to embark on a new stage of life as religious playwright, essayist, and translator. She had become friends with Charles Williams (and later with C.S. Lewis), and he recommended her to the Canterbury Festival, suggesting she write a play. *The Zeal of Thy House*, first performed in Canterbury and later in London's West End, was a great success. She wrote six more plays, including her best known, *The Man Born to be King*. She wrote many religious essays and a book, *The Mind of the Maker*, examining the relationship between the doctrine of the Trinity and the creative process.

In the last stage of her life, Dorothy's long fascination with Dante's writings prompted her to learn old Italian in order to translate *The Divine Comedy*. She died from heart failure in 1957 while working on Dante's third volume, *Paradiso* (which was later completed by her friend Barbara Reynolds).

During the Second World War, Dorothy traveled to Oxford a number of times to see Charles Williams and to speak at the Socratic Club (presided over by C.S. Lewis) for the purpose of encouraging intellectual exchanges between believers and nonbelievers at Oxford. Both Dorothy and C.S. Lewis delivered talks on the B.B.C. defending Christianity. In 1945, her friend Charles Williams died,

leaving Dorothy grief stricken. Soon after Williams' death, C.S. Lewis wrote to ask Dorothy to contribute to a collection of essays written in Williams' honor by Lewis and other Inklings.

Among her other writings, I have found Dorothy Sayers' religious essays very helpful. There are various collections published, but two titles are, *The Whimsical Christian* and *Creed or Chaos*.

Dorothy pursues many themes in her essays. A few illustrations might be helpful:

1. *Sayers was profoundly aware of how people evaded confronting the truth of Christ.* In "Selections from The Pantheon Papers," she writes a satirical piece on some newly discovered papers about a strange society devoted to unbelief (similar to *The Screwtape Letters* by Lewis). Some of the cynical advice given in these papers include:

Remember when cultivating your coldbed of Polemic, never define, never expound, never discuss or assert and assume. Where there is dogma there is always a possible basis for agreement; where there is explanation, there is always the peril of mutual understanding; where there is argument, there may be victory and the dreadful prospect of peace. Again, it is often unwise, and always unnecessary, to invite examination into the merits of your case ... Strive earnestly to confuse every issue ... Any effort to oppose a new idea on the specious pretext that it is nasty, false, dangerous, or wrong should be promptly stigmatized as heresy-hunting, medieval obscurantism, or suburban prejudice.

2. *One of Sayers' consistent themes was that the "dogma is the drama."* She argues in "The Greatest Drama Ever Staged" that, far from dull dogma causing churches to be empty, it is the neglect of dogma that produces dullness. Faith in Christ is the most "exciting dogma that ever staggered the imagination of man—and the dogma is the drama."

[The gospel is] the tale of the time when God was the underdog and got beaten, when he submitted to the conditions he laid down and became a man like the men he had made, and the men he had made broke and killed him. This is the dogma we find so dull—the terrifying drama of which God is the victim and hero.... Now, we may call that doctrine exhilarating or we may call it devastating; we may call it rev-

(continued on page 18)

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Profiles in Faith: Dorothy Sayers

(continued from page 17)

...if my play
was
dramatic
it was so,
not in spite
of the
dogma,
but
because
of it –
that,
in short,
the dogma
was the
drama.

elation or we may call it rubbish; but if we call it dull then words have no meaning at all.

In another essay titled more directly “The Dogma is the Drama,” she says that several people came up to her and asked her questions about her Canterbury play, *The Zeal of Thy House*, which presents in dramatic form some of the dogmas of the faith, particularly the Incarnation. The questioners thought that the ideas contained in the play were “astonishing and revolutionary novelties.” She argued on the contrary against “this flattering tribute to my powers of invention” and pointed them to the Scriptures and the creeds of the church. She insisted that, “if my play was dramatic it was so, not in spite of the dogma, but because of it – that, in short, the dogma was the drama.” She closes this essay by asserting:

It is the dogma that is the drama – not beautiful phrases, nor comforting sentiments, nor vague aspirations to loving-kindness and uplift, nor the promise of something nice after death – but the terrifying assertion that the same God who made the world lived in the world and passed through the grave and gate of death. Show that to the heathen, and they may not believe it; but at least they may realize that here is something that a man might be glad to believe.

3. *Sayers always pondered the relationship between the image of God in mankind, creativity, and our work.* One aspect of this theme is seen in her essay on “Why Work?” She argues that, “work is the natural exercise and function of man – the creature who is made in the image of his Creator.” In other words, “work is not primarily a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do.” Or, put another way, it is more true to say that we *live to work* than it is to say that we *work to live*. We too seldom wrestle with the issue of finding a work to which we are “fitted by nature.” We fail often enough to ask, “What type of worker is suited to this type of work?”

[This results in the fact that] right men and women are still persistently thrust into the wrong jobs, through sheer inability on everybody’s part to imagine a purely vocational approach to the business of fitting together the worker and his work.

Another consequence of the biblical view of work is:

...we should not think of work as something that we hastened to get through in order to enjoy our leisure; we should look on our leisure as a period of changed rhythm that refreshed us for the delightful purpose of getting on with our work.

Differently stated, it is more true to say that we *play to work* than it is to say we *work to play*. Of course, in a fallen world, it is more complex than this, and we often encounter less than ideal circumstances – but these principles are nevertheless to be kept in the forefront.

Yet another implication is that we need to “recognize that the secular vocation, as such, is sacred.” Sayers says:

In nothing has the Church so lost Her hold on reality as Her failure to understand and respect the secular vocation. She has allowed work and religion to become separate departments, and is astonished to find that, as a result, the secular work of the world is turned to purely selfish and destructive ends, and that the greater part of the world’s intelligent workers have become irreligious or at least uninterested in religion. . . . But is it astonishing? How can any one remain interested in a religion which seems to have no concern with nine-tenths of his life?

The quality of work is an important thing to emphasize. This is more than telling someone to “not be drunk and disorderly in his leisure hours, and to come to church on Sundays.” It is important to say, “work must be good work before it can call itself God’s work.” Sayers says, “No crooked table legs or ill-fitting drawers ever, I dare swear, came out of the carpenter’s shop at Nazareth.”

4. *Sayers saw the danger of a false understanding of tolerance in her day.* In the “Pantheon Papers” mentioned earlier, 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 so broadminded as to offer asylum and patronage to every kind of religious cult, however unorthodox and repulsive, saying in answer to all remonstrances: There is always some truth in everything. This liberality earned for him the surname of ‘The Tolerator.’

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 which 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.

Many more great quotes and insights could be explored, but perhaps this gives you a taste that makes you long for more. Author P.D. James says in the preface to *The Letters of Dorothy Sayers*, “Dorothy L. Sayers, novelist, poet, dramatist, amateur theologian, and Christian apologist, is one of the most versatile writers of her generation.” She had “most of the qualities necessary for a good correspondent: command of language, honesty, self-confidence, a lively interest in other people, humour, strong opinions and a pugnacious appetite for a fight in a good cause.”

Catherine Kennedy, in her biography, *The Remarkable Case of Dorothy L. Sayers*, says that she must be called by the title “few women have earned: woman of letters.” Alzina Stone Dale says, in her biography, *Maker and Craftsman*:

As she wrote, all her talents and interests came together to make her real calling clear to her. Her skill in languages, her ability as a storyteller, her talent as a popularizer of difficult ideas, and her Christian convictions all came together in her work on the life of Christ and her translation of Dante. She had always thought that man is like God in his ability to create, and to her, creation is another word for work. ■

Further reading recommendations: biography: Maker and Craftsman: The Story of Dorothy L. Sayers, by Alzina Stone Dale; essay compilations: Creed or Chaos or The Whimsical Christian; play: The Man Born to be King; non-fiction: The Mind of the Maker (with an introduction by Madeline L'Engle); detective stories: The Nine Tailors (1934) was regarded by mystery writer H.R.F. Keating (1987) as among the 100 best crime and mystery books ever published. There is a Dorothy Sayers Society in England (www.sayers.org.uk), and the Marion Wade Center at Wheaton College has many of her papers and letters.

Severe Gifts from a Loving Father

(continued from page 15)

his faith had taught him how to cope with difficulties and to rise above miseries that would have overwhelmed most men.”

Yet, Sayer goes a step further, suggesting that the brilliance of the Narnia series was not achieved *in spite of* being written under such stress, but *because* it was written in a situation of human suffering. “If [Lewis] had lived the cloistered existence of a bachelor don, his writing would have suffered from a loss of warmth, humanity, and the understanding of pain and suffering.”

A life with no difficulty was not an ideal life in Lewis’s mind, precisely because it tempted him to become what he despised: overly comfortable, complacent, and apathetic. In fact, when war was just breaking out between Britain and Germany in 1939, Lewis wrote to his friend Arthur Greves, “I daresay, for me, personally, [the war] has come in the nick of time; I was just beginning to get too well settled in my profession, too successful, and probably self complacent.”

Lewis’s work was seasoned with pain, real suffering, heartache, and tremendous difficulty. Yet out of this seemingly bitter stew emerged the honey of a proven character, a seasoned soul, a stalwart defender of the faith. This is Christianity in its truest and finest form, the extension of Christ’s own work as he suffered and died that we might live. Though these soul-shaping “gifts” may *seem* severe, they are God’s primary way of creating eternally productive lives. ■

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His books include: Sacred Marriage, Sacred Pathways, The Glorious Pursuit, Seeking the Face of God, and most recently, Authentic Faith. He has collaborated on books with Franklin Graham, Michael W. Smith, Norma McCorvey, (a.k.a. Jane Roe of Roe v. Wade), and Attorney General John Ashcroft. His book with then-Senator Ashcroft, Lessons from a Father to His Son, was a finalist for the Gold Medallion Award.

Gary, Lisa, and their three children live in Bellingham, Washington.

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The Challenge of Jesus

(continued from page 7)

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of the gospel to a few bland platitudes, leaving the sharp and craggy message of Jesus far behind. That is not my agenda. My agenda is to go deeper into the meaning than we have before and to come back to a restatement of the gospel that grounds the things we have believed about Jesus, about the cross, about the resurrection, about the incarnation, more deeply within their original setting. When I say the great Christian creeds—as I do day by day in worship—I mean them from the heart, but I find that after twenty years of historical study I mean something much deeper, much more challenging, than I meant when I started. I cannot compel my readers to follow me in this particular pilgrimage, but I can and do hold out an invitation to see Jesus, the Gospels, ourselves, the world and, above all, God in what may well be a new and perhaps disturbing light.

The fourth reason for undertaking the study of Jesus is because of the Christian commitment to mission. The mission of most Christians likely to read this book takes place in a world where Jesus has been a hot topic for several years now. In America particularly, Jesus—and the quest for him—has been featured in *Time* magazine, on television and elsewhere in the media. And the people whom ordinary Christians meet, to whom they must address the gospel, have been told over and over by the media, on the basis of some recent book or other, that the Jesus of the Gospels is historically incredible and that Christianity is therefore based on a mistake. It simply will not do to declare this question out-of-bounds, to say that the church's teaching will do for us, thank you very much, so we do not need to ask historical questions. You cannot say that to a serious and enquiring person who engages you in conversation on a train or to someone who wanders into a church one Sunday and asks what it is all about. If Christianity is not rooted in things that actually happened in first-century Palestine, we might as well be Buddhists, Marxists, or almost anything else. And if Jesus never existed, or if he was quite different from what the Gospels and the church's worship affirms him to have been, then we are indeed living in cloud-cuckoo-land. The skeptics can and must be answered, and when we do so we will not merely reaffirm the traditions of the church, whether Protestant, Catholic, evangelical or whatever. We will be driven to reinterpret them,

discovering depths of meaning within them that we had never imagined.

One of the reasons why we had not imagined some of the depths that, I believe, are actually there to be found lies in our own historical and cultural setting. I am a first-century historian, not a Reformation or eighteenth-century specialist. Nevertheless, from what little I know of the last five hundred years of European and American history, I believe that we can categorize the challenge of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment to historic Christianity in terms of its *asking a necessary question in a misleading fashion*. The divide in contemporary Christianity between liberals and conservatives has tended to be between those who, because they saw the necessity of asking the historical question, assumed that it had to be asked in the Enlightenment's fashion and those on the other hand who, because they saw the misleadingness of the Enlightenment's way of asking the question, assumed that the historical question was itself unnecessary. Let me speak first of the necessity of the Enlightenment's question and then of the misleading way it has been addressed.

To understand why the Enlightenment's historical question was necessary we need to take a further step back to the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. The protest of the Reformation against the medieval church was not least a protest in favor of a *historical* and *eschatological* reading of Christianity against a timeless system. Getting at the literal *historical* meaning of the texts, as the Reformers insisted we must, meant historical reading: the question of what Jesus or Paul really meant, as opposed to what the much-later church said they meant, became dramatically important. Go back to the beginning, they said, and you will discover that the developed system of Roman Catholicism is based on a mistake. This supported the Reformers' *eschatological* emphasis: the cross was God's once-for-all achievement, never to be repeated, as the Reformers saw their Catholic opponents doing in the Mass. But, arguably, the Reformers never allowed this basic insight to drive them beyond a halfway house when it came to Jesus himself. The Gospels were still treated as the repositories of true doctrine and ethics. Insofar as they were history, they were the history of the moment when the timeless truth of God was grounded in space and time, when the action that accomplished the timeless atonement just happened to take place. This, I know, is a gross oversimplification, but I believe it is borne out by

the sequel. Post-Reformation theology grasped the insights of the reformers as a new set of timeless truths and used them to set up new systems of dogma, ethics, and church order in which, once again, vested interests were served and fresh thought was stifled.

The Enlightenment was, among many other things, a protest against a system that, since it was itself based on a protest, could not see that it was itself in need of further reform. (The extent to which the Enlightenment was a secularized version of the Reformation is a fascinating question, one for brave Ph.D. candidates to undertake rather than the subject for a book like this. But we have to do business at least with these possibilities if we are to grasp where we have come from and hence where we may be being called to go.) In particular, the Enlightenment, in the person of Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768), challenged unthinking would-be Christian dogma about the eternal son of God and his establishment of the oppressive system called "Christianity." Reimarus challenged it in the name of history – the same weapon that the reformers had used against Roman Catholicism. Go back to the beginning, he said, and you will discover that Christianity is based on a mistake. Jesus was, after all, another in a long line of failed Jewish revolutionaries. Christianity as we know it was the invention of the early disciples.

I believe that Reimarus's question was necessary. *Necessary* to shake European Christianity out of its dogmatism and to face a new challenge – to grow in understanding of who Jesus actually was and what he actually accomplished. *Necessary* to challenge bland dogma with a living reality; *necessary* to challenge idolatrous distortions of who Jesus actually was and hence who God actually was and is, with a fresh grasp of truth. The fact that Reimarus gave his own question an answer that is historically unsustainable does not mean he did not ask the right questions. Who was Jesus, and what did he accomplish?

This necessity has been underlined in our own century, as Ernst Käsemann saw all too clearly. Look what happens, he said in a famous lecture in 1953, when the church abandons the quest for Jesus. The nonquesting years between the wars created a vacuum in which nonhistorical Jesuses were offered, legitimating the Nazi ideology. I would go so far as to suggest that whenever the church forgets its call to engage in the task of understanding more and more fully who Jesus actually was, idolatry and

ideology lie close at hand. To renounce the quest because you do not like what the historians have so far come up with is not a solution.

But the Enlightenment's raising of the question of Jesus was done in a radically misleading manner, which still has profound effects on the research of today. The Enlightenment notoriously insisted on splitting apart history and faith, facts and values, religion and politics, nature and supernature, in a way whose consequences are written into the history of the last two hundred years – one of the consequences being, indeed, that each of those categories now carries with it in the minds of millions of people around the world an implicit opposition to its twin, so that we are left with the great difficulty of even conceiving of a world in which they belong to one another as part of a single, indivisible whole. Again, so much debate between *liberals* and *conservatives* has taken place down this fault line (history *or* faith, religion *or* politics, and so on), while the real battle – the challenge to rearticulate a reintegrated worldview – has not even been attempted. But there is a deeper problem with the Enlightenment than its radically split worldview. The real problem is that it offered a rival *eschatology* to the Christian one. This needs a little explanation.

Christianity, as we shall see, began with the thoroughly Jewish belief that world history was focused on a single geographical place and a single moment in time. The Jews assumed that their country and their capital city was the place in question, and that the time, though they did not know quite when it would be, would be soon. The living God would defeat evil once and for all and create a new world of peace and justice. The early Christians believed that this had in principle happened in and through Jesus of Nazareth; as we shall see, they believed this (a) because Jesus himself had believed it and (b) because he had been vindicated by God after his execution. This is what early Christian eschatology was all about: not the expectation of the literal end of the space-time universe but the sense that world history was reaching, or indeed had reached, its single intended climax.

This, as we saw, was grasped in principle by the Reformers. Martin Luther, it is true, used the

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The Challenge of Jesus

(continued from page 21)

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captivity and exile of Israel in Babylon as a controlling metaphor for his understanding of church history, in which the church, like Israel, had been suffering a “Babylonian captivity” for many centuries until his own day. But his strong focus on Jesus himself prevented this from becoming a new rival eschatology divorced from its first-century roots. Even though Luther saw his own day as a special time in which God was doing a new thing, this remained for him strictly derivative: the real new day had dawned, once and for all, with Jesus himself. His own new “great light” did not upstage the Light of the World himself.

With the Enlightenment, however, this further step was taken. All that had gone before was a form of captivity, of darkness; now, at last, light and freedom had dawned. World history was finally brought to its climax, its real new beginning, not in Jerusalem, but in Western Europe and America, not in the first century but in the eighteenth. (We may perhaps be allowed a wry smile at the way in which post-Enlightenment thinkers to this day heap scorn upon the apparently ridiculous idea that world history reached its climax in Jerusalem two thousand years ago, while themselves holding a view we already know to be at least equally ridiculous.) Thus, as long as the necessary question of the Enlightenment (the question of the historical Jesus) was addressed within the Enlightenment’s own terms, it was inevitable not only that Christology would collapse into warring camps of naturalist and supernaturalist—in other words, that Jesus-pictures would be produced in which the central character was either an unexceptional first-century Jew or an inhuman and improbable superman-figure—but also that liberal and conservative alike would find it hugely difficult to reconceive the first-century Jewish eschatological world within which alone the truly historical Jesus belongs. Jesus was almost bound to appear as the teacher of either liberal timeless truths or conservative timeless truths. The thought that he might have been the turning point of history was, to many on both sides of the divide, almost literally unthinkable. Even Albert Schweitzer, who brought the eschatological perspective back with a bang to the study of Jesus, radically misunderstood it.

Schweitzer did, however, alert Christian thinkers to something that has taken almost a

century to assimilate: that the world in which Jesus lived, and which he addressed with his message about the kingdom, was a world in which the Jewish expectation of God’s climactic and decisive action within history was uppermost. It is this, I believe, that has given fresh impetus to the study of Jesus and makes it imperative that we engage in this study. Properly conceived, Schweitzer’s answer to Reimarus’s question—that Jesus belongs within the world of this first-century Jewish expectation—enables us to see that by engaging in the study of Jesus himself we can understand much better—better indeed than the Reformers—what it meant within Jesus’ own world that God would act in a one-off, unique way, generating a response that would not be a repetition of that initial act but rather the appropriation and implementation of it.

I believe then, that within the multiple tasks to which God is calling the church in our own generation, there remains the necessary task of addressing the Enlightenment’s question as to who precisely Jesus was and what precisely he accomplished. And I believe that there are ways of addressing this question that do not fall into the trap of merely rearranging the Enlightenment’s own categories. We have a new opportunity in our generation to move forward in our thinking, our praying, our whole Christian living, no doubt by many means, but not least by addressing the question of the historical Jesus in fresh and creative ways.

All of this drives me to explore the human, historical, cultural, and political setting and meaning of what the Gospels say about Jesus. This ought not to be seen by orthodox Christians as a threat. Granted, the contemporary orthodox Christian tradition to which I and many of my readers have fallen heir was conceived and stated against a background of modernist and secularist reductionism. In that setting it was vital to affirm, as orthodox Christians have regularly done in the last two centuries or so, the God-giveness of Scripture, the divinity of Jesus, and so on. But our earlier forebears in the faith were well aware that there were errors in the opposite direction as well—patterns of belief and behavior that saw Jesus as a demigod, not really human at all, striding through the world as a divine, heroic figure, untroubled by human questions, never wrestling with vocation, aware of himself as someone from outside the whole system, telling people how they might escape the wicked world and live forever in a different realm altogether. This is the worldview out of which there grew—and still grows—gnosticism,

that many-sided system of thought and spirituality in which a secret knowledge (*gnosis*) can be attained that will enable humans to rediscover their lost secret identity and thereby, escaping the present world, enjoy bliss in an entirely different sphere of reality.

Gnosticism in one or other of its many forms has been making a huge comeback in our day. Sometimes this has been explicit, as for instance in the New Age movements and similar spiritualities that encourage people to discover who they *really* are. Just as often, though, gnosticism of a different sort has been on offer within would-be mainstream traditional orthodoxy, as many Christians have embraced a Jesus who only *seemed* to be human, have read a Bible that only *seemed* to have human authors, have looked for a salvation in which God's created order became quite irrelevant, a salvation thought of in almost entirely dualist fashion. Woe betide us if, in our commitment to winning yesterday's battles against reductionist versions of Christianity, we fail to engage in tomorrow's, which might be quite different.

New Opportunities in the Quest

But why then should we suppose that there is anything new to say about Jesus? This is a question I am often asked, not least by journalists on the one hand and by puzzled, nonacademically inclined Christians on the other. The answer, actually, is that there both is and is not. Mere novelty is almost bound to be wrong: if you try to say that Jesus did not announce the kingdom of God or that he was in fact a twentieth-century thinker born out of due time, you will rightly be rejected. But what did Jesus mean by the kingdom of God? That and a thousand other cognate questions are far harder than often supposed, and the place to go to find new light is the history of Jesus' own time. And that means first-century Judaism, in all its complexity and with all the ambiguities of our attempts to reconstruct it.

There are, of course, all sorts of new tools available to help us to do this. We have the Dead Sea Scrolls, all of them at last in the public domain. We have good new editions of dozens of hitherto hard-to-find Jewish texts, and a burgeoning secondary literature about them. We have all kinds of archaeological finds, however complex they may be to interpret. Of course, there is always the danger both of oversimplification and overcomplication. Our sources do not enable us to draw a complete sociological map of Galilee and Judaea in Jesus' day. But we

know enough to be able to say quite a lot, for instance, about the agenda of the Pharisees; quite a lot, too, about what sort of aspirations came to be enshrined in what we call apocalyptic literature and why; quite a lot, too, about Roman agendas in Palestine and the agendas of the chief priests and the Herodian dynasty in their insecure struggles for a compromised power. Quite a lot, in other words, about the necessary contexts for understanding Jesus.

We can perhaps say something, too, about Galilean peasants. Not, I think, everything that some current writers would like us to. There are those who see the peasant culture of ancient Mediterranean society as the dominant influence in the Galilee of Jesus' day, with the Jewish apocalyptic coloring decidedly muted; so that Jesus' announcement of the kingdom has less to do with specifically Jewish aspirations and more to do with the kind of social protest that might arise in any culture. Let me stress *both* that this is a mistake *and* that showing it to be so does not lessen the element of social protest that is still to be found within the much wider-ranging and more theologically grounded kingdom-announcement that we can properly attribute to Jesus. Equally, I emphasize that one of the things we can know about peasant societies like that of Jesus is that they were heavily dependent upon oral traditions, not least traditions of instant storytelling. When we get this right, we avoid at a stroke some of the extraordinary reductionism that has characterized the so-called Jesus Seminar, with its attempt to rule out the authenticity of most Jesus-stories on the grounds that people would only have remembered isolated sayings, not complete stories. But my overall point is simply this: there is a great deal of history writing still waiting to be attempted and accomplished, and we have more tools to do it with than most of us can keep up with. If we really believe in any sense in the incarnation of the Word, we are bound to take seriously the flesh that the Word became. And since that flesh was first-century Jewish flesh, we should rejoice in any and every advance in our understanding of first-century Judaism and seek to apply those insights to our reading of the Gospels. ■

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COMING IN 2002

- ◆ **Dr. N.T. Wright Conference**, "Finding and Following the True Jesus," September 27-28 at The Falls Church (Episcopal), Falls Church, VA

UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◆ **Rev. David Prior Conference**, "When Your Faith is Being Stretched," October 25-26 at The Falls Church (Episcopal), Falls Church, VA

- ◆ **Dr. Dennis Hollinger Conference**, "Choosing the Good: Ethics in a Complex World," November 8-9, National Presbyterian Church, Washington, DC

COMING IN 2003

- ◆ **Susan Yates Conference**, "My God is Too Small: A Fresh Perspective Toward a Deeper Walk," February 28-March 1, McLean Presbyterian Church, McLean, VA
- ◆ **Dallas Willard & Richard Foster**, May 2-3, McLean Bible Church, Vienna, VA
- ◆ **Dr. Alister McGrath**, October 3-4, The Falls Church (Episcopal), Falls Church, VA
- ◆ **Dr. Lyle Dorsett**, November 14-15, *Location TBA*

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with Dr. N.T. Wright



These lectures will provide fresh understanding about the controversies surrounding Jesus and the confusions that many are struggling with today, particularly those brought about through the so-called 'Jesus Seminar.' They will reinforce and also reinvigorate Christian faith, suggesting new ways in which the genuine historical Jesus can be known, served and spoken of in our own day and context.

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- *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*
- *Jesus, Israel and the Cross*
- *Jesus and the Kingdom – Today and Tomorrow*

- Friday evening, September 27 & Saturday morning, September 28
- Location: The Falls Church (Episcopal), Falls Church, Virginia

Choosing the Good: Ethics in a Complex World

with Dr. Dennis Hollinger



In the midst of business scandals, complex political challenges, new sexual patterns and values, and constantly emerging bioethical issues, how can followers of Jesus find moral sanity for their own lives and character? And if we do find a moral framework for our own lives, how can we possibly bring that commitment to a pluralistic, secular society? This conference will attempt to provide guidance for choosing the good in a highly complex world.

Lecture Titles:

- *Foundations: What makes our actions and character good or bad?*
- *Contexts: Can our ethics survive modernity and postmodernity?*
- *Decisions: Is the Bible relevant in a complex world?*
- *Applications: Is our ethic applicable for a secular, pluralistic society?*

- Friday evening, November 8 & Saturday morning, November 9
- Location: National Presbyterian Church; Washington, DC

Conference Registration & Tape Orders: 703/620-4056

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