



PROFILES IN FAITH

G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936)

Journalist, Author, Apologist, and Artist

by Elesha Coffman

former Editor, Christian History & Biography



Gilbert Keith Chesterton was, in a word, huge. Tall and weighing close to 400 pounds, he once told a chauffeur who suggested he attempt to exit a car sideways, "I have no sideways." But Chesterton loomed large in other ways as well. He commanded the attention of an enormous audience through his prolific production of newspaper columns, short stories, novels, plays, poetry, and non-fiction. He counted many of Britain's leading lights among his friends and enemies. And he exerted a powerful influence on the next generation of British Christian writers, a group that included J.R.R. Tolkien, T.S. Eliot, Dorothy Sayers, and C.S. Lewis.

Nothing in Chesterton's upbringing suggested such an important career. He was born to a conventionally liberal, middle-class family that fit comfortably into the secular culture of the late Victorian era. Within that culture, Chesterton later wrote in his wonderful *Autobiography*, "We might almost say that agnosticism was an established church." His education, at the Slade School of Art, was even more resolutely anti-religious, or at

least anti-Christian. A creative and restless mind such as Chesterton's might have been expected to explore anything other than orthodoxy.

Chesterton did try many byways before beginning the path of faith. Spiritualism, theosophy, and other occult pursuits enjoyed a heyday at the turn of the twentieth century, and young Gilbert dabbled in all of them. The nihilistic philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche also hung in the air, along with the dialectical materialism of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, while the psychological speculations of Sigmund Freud glimmered on the horizon. The ideas that affected Chesterton most, though, related to the style then dominating the art world, Impressionism. Many people today find the vague flowers and hazy haystacks of artists like Claude Monet soothing, but they drove Chesterton to the brink of insanity. He reflected in the *Autobiography*,

...he exerted a powerful influence on the next generation of British Christian writers, a group that included J.R.R. Tolkien, T.S. Eliot, Dorothy Sayers, and C.S. Lewis.

I think there was a spiritual significance in Impressionism, in connection with this age

(continued on page 16)

IN THIS ISSUE

3 C. S. Lewis
Institute Feature:
Commitment
by Art Lindsley

8 Special Feature:
Jefferson and Wilberforce: Leaders Who Shaped Their Times - Part II
by Ray Blunt

12 Guest Feature:
Crucifying Our Will
by Richard Foster

20 Growing in Christ
Series: *Unduly Protracted Infancy*
by J. Oswald Sanders

28 Upcoming Events



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Editor's Note



There are certain memories I have of our children that stand out in my mind, times when I suddenly became aware that they were growing up, that they had passed to another stage in maturity. More than marks on a door frame to measure their physical height, these were mental marks that told me a new height of character had been reached.

One summer our oldest son served as a youth counselor for young boys ages 8-10 at a Vacation Bible School. When he returned home one afternoon, we asked about how his day had gone. With frustration obvious in his voice he answered, "Have you ever told someone not to do something, and then they did the very thing you told them not to do?" My wife and I exchanged looks and then with mock surprise said, "No! We have never experienced that before."

I realized that our son had now gained a different perspective on behavior; he suddenly saw what every parent witnesses as children grow up and learn the lessons of right and wrong. He felt for the first time the weight of responsibility for the safety of other lives, and the frustration that comes when disobedience pushes against rules.

These are bittersweet moments for parents: it means that your child is growing up and something is being lost; at the same time, something is being gained, something that is more valuable and desirable. I think God watches our growth in Christian maturity with much the same reaction. What he doesn't want is to see little or no growth; this is a pain to any parent's heart, and to God's heart as well.

We invite you to delve into the articles in this issue and discover ways in which you are being called on to greater maturity in Christ. God bless you as you seek to gain new heights in your growth as a disciple.



Commitment

Giving assurance to love.

by Art Lindsley, Ph.D.

Senior Fellow, C. S. Lewis Institute

*Let us hold fast the
confession of our hope
without wavering.*

Hebrews 10:23

C. S. Lewis Institute Feature

Once read the story of some thieves that broke into a store. They did not steal anything, but they did switch the price tags so that a \$500 television was \$20 and imitation jewelry was \$500 and so on throughout the store. It was said that people paid those mistaken prices the next day. In the same way, we can switch the price tags on the things we value in life. Petty things can assume enormous importance and really important things can get little, if any, place in our lives. There is a constant need to check the price tags and make certain that first things are first, and second things are second, and third things are third, and so on. We need to place high price tags on the most important things and the lowest price tags on the least important things. We need to evaluate our lives to re-value our lives.

Placing A True Value On Everything

Jonathan Edwards, who some call America's greatest philosopher and theologian, argues in his book *The Nature of True Virtue* that true virtue is placing a true value on everything. In other words, it is not enough merely to say what our priorities are verbally but we must actually live in that way. It is one thing to use the acrostic JOY—Jesus, Others, Yourself—to indicate the priority that you desire; it is another thing to order your life in that way.

And, it is not just a matter of order but of proportionality. We can say we desire to put our Lord first, but we also need to ask in what degree He deserves to be first. We can decide what is second but we also need to ask to what degree it deserves to be second and so on. In other words, first things need to be first in the degree that they deserve to be first and second things second in the degree to which they deserve to be second. The nature

of our actual values is determined by the degree that we place our Lord in first place and so on down the line. We are always in a situation where we need to re-value what we are committed to.

In the passage Hebrews 10:19-25, the language of commitment is evident. We are to "have confidence to enter" (v. 19) the holy place; we are to "draw near with a sincere heart" (v. 22); we are to "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering" (v. 23). Notice particularly verse 23, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering." The Greek word for "hold fast" is *katecho*, meaning to hold to, keep, detain, retain, contain, occupy, or possess. I suppose the image would be to grasp tightly and not to let go. But what are we to grasp? It is interesting to note that this same word in extra-Biblical sources means to "retain" a body of teaching that might be summed up in the phrase "confession of our hope." The Greek word *akline* translated "without wavering" (or in the NIV "unswerving") means not to bend or that which is straight. So we are to be involved with an unyielding drive to focus our lives on Christ and live on the basis of what He has done for us and taught us in His own teaching or in that of His established agents, the apostles.

A decisive commitment is a precondition for having a clean conscience (v. 22), for stimulating one another to love and good deeds (v. 24), for encouraging one another (v. 25), and for not forsaking the assembly of believers (v. 25). If we are going to grow in the love of Christ, we need to be committed to Him.

Love Is Never Sure Apart From Commitment
Henry Scougal (Puritan writer) once said,

(continued on page 4)



Dr. Art Lindsley

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Commitment

(continued from page 3)

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“The worth of a soul is determined by the object of its loves.” The things we most passionately love shape the way we live and the kind of person we become. Love towards God or another person is never sustained apart from a conscious commitment to do so. Fullness of life comes not through the length of our lives, but through what we give our lives for. A life passionately lived for what is most worthy is the fullest kind of life possible. An anonymous poem states the issue powerfully:

We live in deeds,
not years
In thoughts, not breaths
In feelings, not on figures
on a dial
He lives most who thinks
most, feels most nobly
and acts the best.

This is especially the case when we think the most about the One who is most worthy, feel a white-hot passion for Him, and act decisively on what He commands.

We can see how commitment makes love sure and stable in a relational context. Particularly within marriages, the degree of commitment is directly related to the longevity of the marriage. All marriages have difficulties. One leading pastor said about his wife, “Sometimes I could eat her up, at others, I wish I had.” Another wise counselor was asked if he had ever contemplated divorce. His answer was, “Divorce – NO; murder

– YES!” What will enable us to sustain our commitments to love at the altar through times of strain? The answer is commitment. I have often said that my confidence in my wife’s love is not rooted in her relationship to me but in her relationship to Christ. At times, my only hope is that she loves Christ more than she loves me. In fact, a passionate love for our Lord is a precondition for sustaining our love for our spouses, friends, or neighbors.

We Easily Get Committed To The Wrong Things

At the root of our problems relationally and spiritually is a lack of commitment. It is so easy for our commitments to become altered and distorted. Romans 1:25 asserts that people have a tendency “to worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator.” Any time we make something or someone in God’s creation an object of ultimate concern, we give that person or thing the place that only God should have. In the case of a person, we give to them the position of ultimate worth in our lives. We worship them. That person becomes like an idol to us. In the case of things, money, sex, and power often dominate people’s values, but even concerns that seem more innocuous can take the place of worship. For instance, we can pursue the god of self-image, attempting to feel good about

ourselves even when pursuing ungodly patterns of life. Often people seek artificial means to feel better about themselves (drugs, alcohol, sex, etc.) when their other strategy fails. Another oft-worshipped idol is the god of conformity. It is easy to be afraid of being different, out of the mainstream, not in accordance with the mood of the community, nation, or age where we live. In Washington, D. C., the value often upheld is power. In Hollywood, the value, all too often, is fame. On New York’s Wall Street, money rules in many people’s lives. In other areas of the country, complacency, relativism and an all-inclusive tolerance is a powerful force. To go against the reigning value in these areas is to risk rejection. Some people pursue the god of affect, attempting to feel great all the time and disappointed when they feel low or in between. Again, artificial means can be used to attempt to attain the high we do not feel otherwise. Another god people worship is the extraordinary, being easily bored by the ordinariness of much of our lives. It is easy to forget that heroism in significant moments is forged in the little everyday choices we make. These idols need to be smashed and God placed again at the center of life. But this recovery is not always easy.

The widespread relativism in our culture undermines any clarity about what to be committed to. This is because

it leaves us unsure as to what, if anything, is most worthy. It is difficult, if not impossible, to sustain loving relationships without a clear idea of what you are committing to and why you are doing it. And without commitment, love becomes unsure. This is also true on a national level. The culture wars show that people are committed to radically different views of life and what this nation should be. Let the debate continue! However, to the degree that people are dispensing with fixed moral norms, to that degree our personal, corporate and national commitments become unsure and unclear. Recovering our commitment to our Lord involves regaining a vision not only of the truth about God, but also a sense of His goodness and beauty. When we grasp the winsome attractiveness of our God, then we can rekindle a white-hot passion for the incomparable beauty of our Lord. How can we gain or regain such a commitment and sustain it?

Watch The Why

We need a sufficient reason why. In order to restore commitment, we must watch the "Why?" Unless you have a sufficient reason "why" you ought to do something difficult, the cost will always be too great. If you do not know why you want to get in shape, the pain will be too great. If you do not know why you want to lose weight, then saying "no" will be too difficult. The "why" needs to

be sufficiently motivating to sustain your commitment. It is not enough to have a reason why; it has got to be a compelling reason why. In Mark 8:34-38, Jesus does not merely command commitment, but He also gives you compelling reasons why you ought to act accordingly. Jesus says, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." If you claim to be a disciple, a follower of Christ, "to come after me," then that requires self-denial – saying "no" to yourself. This self-denial is not saying "no" to your being a "self," an individual person (as in the New Age spirituality). This self-denial is not saying "no" to the new self being created in the image of Christ (Colossians 3:10). The self-denial that Christ calls us to is saying no to our sinful desires – what the Bible sometimes calls the "old self." That is a tall order. How can we renounce our old self in such a decisive way?

One author says:

To deny oneself means in every moment of life to say no to self and yes to God. To deny oneself means once and for all to dethrone self and to enthrone God. To deny oneself means to obliterate self as the dominant principle of life and to make God the ruling principle, more the passion of life. The life of constant self-denial is a life of constant assent to God.

The word for "deny" in the Greek text is *aparneomai*, which means completely disown. It is the same word used with respect to Peter's denials of Christ. (Matt. 26:34, 70, 72, 74) Another commentator says:

That's exactly the kind of denial a believer is to make in regard to *himself*. He has either to disown himself or refuse to acknowledge the self of the old man. Jesus' words could be paraphrased, "Let him refuse to have any association or companionship with himself." Self denial not only characterizes a person when he comes in saving faith to Christ but also as he lives as a faithful disciple of Christ.

The metaphor that Christ uses next makes the difficulty even more overwhelming. We are called to "pick up our cross." In our day, a cross is often seen as a symbol. As you drive through any major city, look for how many times you see the shape of the cross. Sometimes the cross is a mere ornament worn on a necklace. But the cross, in Jesus' day, meant one of the most horrible forms of torture used exclusively by the Romans on foreigners. This form of speech would be shocking to those living at that time. It would be as if you were to say – in today's parlance – unless you pick up your electric chair or carry the rifle to be used in your firing squad or bring the noose to be used at your hanging, you

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Commitment

(continued from page 5)

cannot be my disciple. The only difference is that death on a cross took much longer and was more excruciating (a word drawn from crucifixion) than any of these other forms of execution.

The cross was reserved by Romans as a form of punishment for foreigners in occupied territories. Cicero said that the cross should not even be named by a Roman citizen. It was a graphic deterrent to rebellion against Rome.

Crucifixions were not uncommon in Jesus' day. Not many years before Jesus came to Caesarea Philippi—where He would say, "...deny yourself and take up your cross..."—one hundred men were crucified in that very area. About 100 B.C., 800 Jewish rebels were crucified in Jerusalem. After the revolt which followed the death of Herod the Great, 2,000 were crucified under the Roman proconsul Varas. There were many crucifixions on a smaller scale; some estimate that there were 30,000 crucifixions under Roman authority during the lifetime of Christ. So to take up the cross meant to be willing to start on a death march, to be willing to suffer the indignities, the pain, and even the death of a condemned criminal. How and why can we accept such a radical call to discipleship? Knowing all this, why would any disciple choose to answer Jesus' call, "Follow me"?

Jesus Gives A Sufficient Reason

Jesus gives us a sufficient reason why we ought to say "no" to self and endure the cross. He says "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it." (Mark 8:35) If you try to be your own savior, to pursue your own pleasure to do things your way, to pursue any of the "gods" mentioned earlier, you will lose your life. You will lose your life not only eternally, but lose the satisfaction of life here and now. Perhaps from Jesus' teaching, we are aware of the specter of eternal judgment that hangs over us, but we are less aware that choosing the way of self-salvation means losing life's fullness in the present. John Piper, in his writings, argues that "God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in Him." God's

glory and our own self-satisfaction meet in exactly the same place. Following God's glory is the way to eternal joy and present joy. You might argue (with Augustine, Pascal, Edwards, C. S. Lewis, and others) that all sin is exchanging a higher satisfaction for a lesser one. For instance, pride is saying "no" to God's joy in order to say "yes" to taking pleasure in yourself. Covetousness is saying "no" to God's joy, in order to take pleasure in things, and so on. There certainly is pleasure to be found in pursuing lesser things, but sooner or later that pleasure will be diminished and then lost. My favorite quote from C. S. Lewis says:

Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures fooling around with drink, sex, and ambition when infinite joy is offered us. Like an ignorant child, content to play with mud pies in a slum because he does not know what it means to have a holiday at the sea.

The problem with our desires is not that they are too strong, but that they are too weak. We do not even desire our own greatest happiness. Giving your all for second things such as "drink, sex, and ambition" is saying "no" to "infinite joy." On the other hand, by saying "yes" to first things like "the infinite joy offered us," we can rightly enjoy the second things in a way God has intended. You do not have to settle for mud pies rather than the holiday. You can be far too easily pleased. As we have seen, pursuing your own selfish ways can lead to pleasure, along with the law of diminishing returns, ultimately leading to despair, decay, and addiction.

Self-Denial Is In Your Self-Interest

On the other hand, if you "lose" your life for Christ's sake and the gospel's, you will save your life eternally and gain abundant life now. To put it in another way, self-denial is in your self-interest. Saying "yes" to Christ and the gospel is in your self-interest. But self-interest is not the same as selfishness, because the central choice is for Christ and the gospel,

If you try to be your own savior, to pursue your own pleasure to do things your way, to pursue any of the "gods" mentioned earlier, you will lose your life.

and we benefit as an effect. We are lost in wonder, awe, and praise as we behold Christ, yet we are assuredly happy. Beholding the awesome sight of the Grand Canyon and experiencing awe is not selfish. Enjoying a valued friendship, losing yourself in the conversation, yet being filled with joy is not selfish. When you are unselfconscious, you can be very joyful. You are not selfish or self-oriented, yet these experiences are in your self-interest.

Faith In Christ Leads To Life

Jesus says that "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Faith in Christ is not in opposition to life but to sin. Faith in Christ is not opposed to the Creation but the Fall. Our faith is life-affirming and creation affirming. Following Christ is the way to the fullness of life and rejecting Christ is to lose life in its fullness. All sin is life-taking in the sense that it drains life from us. To be sure, some Christians are so focused on the Fall or on the possibility of sin that they seem both life-denying and Creation-ignoring. The great task for the next generation is to show a kind of faith that is both life-affirming and Creation-enjoying without minimizing the Fall or the possibility of sin.

The Best Investment Is Christ

Jesus goes on to say, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul, for what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37). Jesus calls you to weigh your values. What kind of investment in life do you want to make? What if you gain everything—money, fame, power, sex—and lose your soul? Missionary martyr Jim Eliot put it this way: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose." Who would not make that kind of investment? Giving up everything temporal for that which is eternal; giving your time, money, and life for something of infinite value that you cannot lose. It would be foolish to choose otherwise.

It seems that people are making that kind of choice all the time and are over and over finding that the things they desire are not adequate

to satisfy them. So they get a new car, a new house, a new vacation, a new wife. Sooner or later, the newness wears off and they go from thing to thing, marriage to marriage, always seeking but never finding ultimate satisfaction. They want more from life but do not know where to find it. C. S. Lewis puts this powerfully.

This principle runs through all life from top to bottom. Give up yourself and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favorite wishes every day and the death of your whole body in the end; submit with every fiber of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will ever be yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.

In his classic book *Habits of the Heart*, Robert Bellah interviews people throughout the United States on their commitments to friendship, marriage, community life, and political life. The striking conclusion is that though people remain committed to people, community, and political life outside themselves, it is difficult for them to articulate why they should remain committed except in terms of their own (selfish) benefit. It is a haunting book and although written in 1985 it still deserves attention. The situation has hardly changed since then. John Kennedy made the famous speech in which he said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." We could similarly say, "Ask not what your spouse can do for you, ask what you can do for your spouse" or "Ask not what another can do for you, but ask what you can do for another." This last phrase is close to the Golden Rule "Do unto others what you would have them do for you" (Matthew 7:12). Where can we find an adequate basis for this kind of other-centered

(continued on page 10)

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Jefferson and Wilberforce: Leaders Who Shaped Their Times

by Ray Blunt

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He and his wife, B.J., live in Alexandria, and have two grown children and four grandchildren.

Leadership, even godly leadership, is not the sole province of the individual, but the outcomes are often shaped as much by those who advise, support, encourage, and come alongside a leader. It is within a network of relationships or of a like-minded community that the great movements of change occur. Those with whom leaders surround themselves, their choice of companions on the journey, help to make them who they are and determine what they can achieve. These colleagues also help to further shape and to sustain a transforming vision over time and bring it to reality. We have looked at the role of early mentors in shaping the commitments of Jefferson and Wilberforce; we now turn to examine how those around them later in life helped to sustain their purposes.

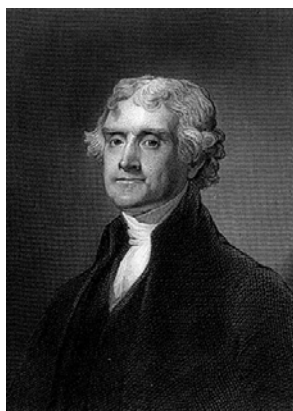
Leading Societal Change

Contemporary research on leading transformative change posits three key factors if societal and cultural change is to be successfully initiated: (1) a sense of urgency or great importance; (2) a compelling vision for change that captures the hearts and the minds of a wide group of people; and, (3) a guiding coalition which has the prestige and the capacity to help bring about the change envisioned.¹ How these factors played out in the lives of Jefferson and Wilberforce is yet another telling contrast of the results of their commitments to ending slavery.

Jefferson: Leading Behind the Scenes

Jefferson's powerful gift of written expression

together with his naturally introverted and scholarly personality shaped a somewhat unique approach to his political and collegial work and indicated where he would make his impact. Even from his earliest political years, Jefferson's superior writing talents were evident, and John Adams' choosing him to draft the terms of declaring independence from England would prove to be the key to Jefferson's spectacular rise. While Jefferson preferred to avoid public roles due to a thin and high-pitched voice and a reluctance to speak publicly, his seeming shyness belied his large personal ambitions. He had a deep aversion to any conflict and had a need to be loved – to a degree quite unusual for one in his profession. Thus, Jefferson tended to work behind the scenes in his political life, becoming known as a "committeeman." He trusted only a few men to carry his central themes of republicanism over federalism and freedom from the tyranny of religion and rulers. The man he trusted most throughout his life was James Madison. Madison's role as collaborator with Jefferson on matters great and small – and even nefarious – is one that is largely unsung.



Thomas Jefferson

But ironically, it was also this behind-the-scenes approach to leadership that became Jefferson's undoing with many, including not only his Federalist archenemy, Alexander Hamilton, but also his father figure, George Washington, and, most painfully, his sponsor and good friend, John Adams. This made the possibility of sustaining the cause of abolishing slavery more unlikely, because he had tarnished many of the key relationships he

¹ John Kotter, *Leading Change* and *The Heart of Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1997 and 2003).

would have needed—all in favor of his personal ambitions.

Key Relationships

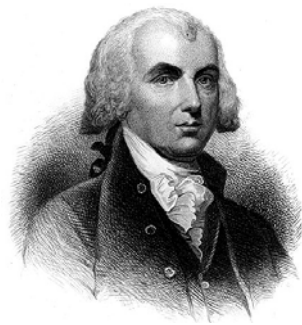
John Adams, Jefferson's champion in the Continental Congress, was not only a mentor to the young and gifted Jefferson but also a close friend along with his wife Abigail when they served in France and England as ambassadors. But it was a collegial relationship that was not to last long into the Washington administration as Jefferson became more and more disenchanted with the Federalist bent of the government he joined as Secretary of State with Adams as Vice President. Resigning his post early for a return to Monticello, Jefferson would later allow his name to stand for election in 1796 and again in 1800 in a quiet campaign against Adams, to succeed Washington.

The breaking point came for the two as Jefferson chose to have Adams falsely tarred by hiring a journalistic flack to tarnish Adams' image while Jefferson was ensconced in Monticello—a standard political “dirty trick” of the early years of campaigning. The subsequent split between Jefferson and John Adams and even more so, Abigail, would last until the men were in their last years.

Madison, on the other hand, was not only a neighbor in Virginia, but one who was the more public expression of the private Jefferson's ideas. An early example came in the bill for Religious Freedom that Jefferson authored in the Virginia legislature. After an inability to see it through on its first offering, Jefferson was about to give it up, much like his bill on abolishing slavery earlier in his career. It was Madison who shared Jefferson's passion to curb the role of the church in the affairs of government (and conscience) that would persist and carry it to completion while Jefferson was off in France as ambassador. It was also Madison who took a key part in the drafting of the Constitution and in writing much of the apologia for a Federal form of government (which we know today as *The Federalist Papers*). He also wrote regularly to Jefferson in France, keeping him apprised of the

proceedings and ensuring that Jefferson's advice played a role in the shaping of the Constitution in curbing the powers of the central government in favor of a balance toward the role of the states—a Jefferson tenet.

Over a lifetime, it becomes clear that Jefferson chose his colleagues for their agreement with him, their personal devotion, and their capacity to help him carry out his political ends. Madison was brilliant at it, and the two rarely differed, so much so that one commentator has said that without Madison there would have been no Jefferson. James Monroe was another colleague, and both would later benefit from Jefferson's sponsoring of their careers.



James Madison

Unfortunately for those colleagues and sponsors that he turned against, Jefferson was unable to bridge the gap. He never reconciled with the proud Washington who could not bear to bring up his “son's” perfidy in making public a comment denouncing Washington's meek captivity to the Federalists. And as for the Adamases, it was only by the tireless efforts of Dr. Benjamin Rush through a benign subterfuge,

that Jefferson and Adams were able to patch up the wounds of Jefferson's smear campaign and initiate a remarkable end-of-life correspondence.

Right up to the end of his life, Jefferson was a potential rallying point for those interested in seeing the full realization of the vision for equality of all. But not prior to his election as President in 1800 or during his presidency or even when he became more and more an icon in his latter years—all times when his influence might have been most effective—did he provide influence and agree to take up cause with those who would abolish slavery, including the lone “founding father” who did, Benjamin Franklin, and the long time groups campaigning against the ownership of human beings, particularly the

(continued on page 18)

Over a lifetime, it becomes clear that Jefferson chose his colleagues for their agreement with him, their personal devotion, and their capacity to help him carry out his political ends.

Commitment

(continued from page 7)

commitment except in Christ? We need to be called out of our self-orientation to love Christ and love others as ourselves.

No Reason To Be Ashamed

Jesus concludes His call to commitment by saying "For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38). There is no need to be ashamed of the gospel; it is the "power of God for salvation" (Romans 11:16). Moreover, God is not ashamed to be called our God (Hebrews 11:16), so how can we be ashamed to be identified with Him? Jesus says that if we are ashamed of Him, He will be ashamed of us.

We don't need to be ashamed of the Gospel intellectually. If believers cannot answer the hardest questions the culture can ask, it will be the first time in 2,000 years. Many of the foremost thinkers of all time (then and now) have been believers. People such as the apostle Paul, Augustine, Calvin, Edwards, C. S. Lewis, and others come to mind. We could add many others to this list. In-depth answers to all the classic objections have been given by the best minds the world has known. The Lord has given us enough of the top minds that we might not despair, but not so many that we might presume. The cross is still a stumbling block to our pride, and that humbling of ourselves is the hardest thing for many intellectuals to do. Many more believers need to be made aware of the solid intellectual foundations for their faith. Some are in the state of doubt, fearing that the next question might be an end to their faith. Many half-baked arguments floating around are used by non-believers to confuse believers. A little emphasis on the subject of apologetics by churches could go a long way towards strengthening and stabilizing believers' discipleship. Apologetics is needed as much for believers as for non-believers. It is hard for the heart to passionately embrace what the mind doubts.

Enough evidence can be found to make our commitment beyond a reasonable doubt. Only the Holy Spirit can give us absolute certainty. However, while apologetics cannot provide absolute certainty, it can make our commitment a leap into the direction set by the light rather than a leap into the dark.

Even if you establish a strong intellectual framework, this will not make you immune from doubt. Anything worthy of being wholeheartedly believed can and will be doubted. But how we deal with our doubts and those of others is important. It is said that 16-year old Bertrand Russell asked some hard questions and was told, "Don't doubt, just believe." That was the end of his professed faith. Intellectual doubts and questions need to be faced and given clear answers. If you do not know the answer, find someone who does. There are many Christian organizations devoted to giving such answers. Some provide phone counseling so you can ask a live person the question and get an answer plus written information that can help.

Our goal is not merely intellectual respectability but to find out what is true. In this relativistic culture, the widely held view of truth can be an obstacle to commitment. If whatever is true for you is true for you and whatever is true for me is true for me, then everybody's right. But nobody's really right. Does what Francis Schaeffer called "true truth" (truth that is true independent of your attitude towards it) exist? Today's relativistic culture says "no," and to the degree that we are infected by this view, it tends to lead to half-hearted commitment. Why should I be passionately committed to what is only my private view? Or why should I give my whole life in the way Christ asks if this is only my community's perspective? Am I going to lose my life if I fail to make this commitment or not? Does someone who attempts to save his/her life in a way other than through Christ succeed in saving it or not? Unless we are clear on the issue of truth, it is not clear who we are calling people to be committed to.

If believers cannot answer the hardest questions the culture can ask, it will be the first time in 2,000 years. Many of the foremost thinkers of all time (then and now) have been believers.

Commitment Distorted

Sometimes the commitment to which Christ calls us is distorted such that it becomes fanaticism. There are some kinds of zeal that the Bible commends and others that it condemns. There is a zeal that is “not in accordance with knowledge” (Rom. 10:2). There is also a call for zeal or commitment that some cultic groups use to strip their members of all their time, money, previous relationships, family, and identity. Often the language of commitment to Christ is used, but its meaning is shifted subtly to total submission to the authorities in the cult and utter willingness to give up themselves for the goals of the group. This kind of authoritarianism is not encouraged by the Bible (I Peter 5:1-7). Faith in Christ does not require (as some cults do) isolation from family and friends, a refusal to allow hard questions to be asked, hostility toward groups that have a different viewpoint, and a crushing of individual differences and personalities. Commitment to Christ encourages relationships to family, demonstrates a willingness to acknowledge truth wherever it is found, and cultivates honesty as to what commitment means. For a great study of these themes, see Chapter 9 of Ron Enroth’s book, *Youth Brainwashing and the Extremist Cults*, entitled “The Characteristics of Cultic Commitment.” Also see an excellent study by sociologist Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community*, which focuses on comparing contemporary communes and the more successful utopian communities of the nineteenth century. [For eleven questions that can be asked to distinguish between a cultic and legitimate group, see the chapter entitled “Evaluating Cults and New Religions” by LeVonne Neff in *A Guide to Cults and New Religions* by Ron Enroth and Others (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), pp. 196-197.] It is important to note that fanatical zeal “without knowledge” should not prevent zeal in accordance with knowledge. *An argument against abuse is not an argument against use.*

What Can We Do?

We can commit ourselves to the Lord. Even though we are believers, we need to often restore the commitment we once had. In Revelation 2, the Ephesian church is called to repent and recapture their “first love.” We need to go back to where we once were, confess our sin, and refocus on Jesus again. In a marriage ceremony there is a great commitment made. In the older version of the Book of Common Prayer it says:

With my body I thee worship,
With all my worldly goods I thee endow,
For richer or for poorer,
For better or worse,
In sickness or in health,
Till death do us part.

Notice the degree of commitment made. The man (and later the woman) gives away their body and their money. What do you have left? Note, too, the terms of the commitment. “For better or for worse” — not knowing what that person would be like five, ten, twenty, or fifty years from then. “For richer or for poorer” — not knowing what their financial position would be. “In sickness or in health” — again, not knowing what physical illnesses they might have to face together. Yet many men and women are eager to make that kind of total commitment to another human being. But how many have made that kind of commitment to our Lord saying:

Lord, with my body I thee worship,
With all my worldly goods I thee endow,
For better or for worse,
For richer or poorer,
In sickness or in health,
I offer my body as a living sacrifice to You;
You alone are worthy to receive
my worship;
You are the One before whom the angels
bow (Is. 6:1ff) and say, “Holy, holy, holy
Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth
are full of your glory;”
You are the One before whom the elders fall

(continued on page 15)

*Commitment
to Christ
encourages
relationships
to family,
demonstrates
a
willingness
to
acknowledge
truth
wherever it
is found,
and
cultivates
honesty as
to what
commitment
means.*



Crucifying Our Will

Praying Through the Struggle to Let Go

by Richard J. Foster
Founder & Chair of RENOVARÉ



Richard Foster

Richard J. Foster is the founder and chair of Renovaré and author of six books including Celebration of Discipline, Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home, and Streams of Living Water, which effectively promote personal spiritual renewal. From his base in Denver, Colorado, where he and his wifeCarolynn live, Richard travels throughout the world, speaking and teaching on the spiritual life.

As we are learning to pray we discover an interesting progression. In the beginning our will is in struggle with God's will. We beg. We pout. We demand. We expect God to perform like a magician or shower us with blessings like Father Christmas. We major in instant solutions and manipulative prayers.

In time, however, we begin to enter into a grace-filled releasing of our will and a flowing into the will of the Father. It is the prayer of relinquishment that moves us from the struggling to the releasing.

The School of Gethsemane

We learn the prayer of relinquishment in the school of Gethsemane. Gaze in adoring wonder at the scene. The solitary figure etched against gnarled olive trees. The bloodlike sweat falling to the ground. The human longing: "Let this cup pass." The final relinquishment: "Not my will, but yours be done" (Lk. 22:39-46). We do well to meditate often on this unparalleled expression of relinquishment.

Here we have the incarnate Son praying through His tears and not receiving what He asks. Jesus knew the burden of unanswered prayer. He really did want the cup to pass, and He asked that it would pass. "If you are willing" was His questioning, His wondering. The Father's will was not yet absolutely clear to Him. "Is there any other way?" "Can people be redeemed by some different means?" The answer—no! Andrew Murray writes, "For our sins, He suffered beneath the burden of that unanswered prayer."

Here we have the complete laying down of human will. The battle cry for us is, "My will be done!" rather than, "Thy will be done." We have excellent reasons for the banner of self-will: "Better for me than them to be in control. Besides, I would use the power to such good

ends." But in the school of Gethsemane we learn to distrust whatever is of our own mind, thought, and will, even though it is not directly sinful. Jesus shows us a more excellent way. The way of helplessness. The way of abandonment. The way of relinquishment. "My will be done" is conquered by "not my will."

Here we have the perfect flowing into the will of the Father. "Your will be done" was Jesus' consuming concern. To applaud the will of God, to do the will of God, even to fight for the will of God is not difficult until it comes at cross-purposes with our will. Then the lines are drawn, the debate begins, and the self-deception takes over. But in the school of Gethsemane we learn that "my will, my way, my good" must yield to higher authority.

The Necessity of Struggle

We must not, however, get the notion that all of this comes to us effortlessly. That would not even be desirable. Struggle is an essential feature of the prayer of relinquishment. Did you notice that Jesus asked repeatedly for the cup to pass? Make no mistake about it: He could have avoided the cross if He had so chosen. He had a free will and a genuine choice, and He freely chose to submit His will to the will of the Father.

It was no simple choice or quick fix. Jesus' prayer struggle—replete with bloody sweat—lasted long into the night. Relinquishment is no easy task.

All of the luminaries in Scripture struggled as well: Abraham as he relinquished his son, Isaac; Moses as he relinquished his understanding of how the delivered of Israel should function; David as he relinquished the son given to him by Bathsheba; Mary as she relinquished control over her future; Paul as he relinquished his desire to be free of a debilitating "thorn in the flesh."

Struggle is important because the prayer of relinquishment is Christian prayer and not fatalism. We do not resign ourselves to fate. We are not locked into a preset, determinist future. Ours is an open, not a closed, universe. We are “co-laborers with God,” as the Apostle Paul put it—working with God to determine the outcome of events. Therefore our prayer efforts are a genuine give and take, a true dialogue with God—and a true struggle.

Severing Precious Roots

When I wrote these words, my wife, Carolynn, and I were personally experiencing the prayer of relinquishment. A prophetic utterance had been spoken over me, the first half of which related to our family and had been occurring in the most encouraging and faith-building ways. The second half of this message had to do with some deep trials we would go through that would result in our being catapulted into a new realm of effective ministry.

I did not know what to think of the last part of this message until I received an unusual revelation from God, the gist of which indicated that I would be severing some very precious roots in my life. At first I misunderstood these words, assuming that they referred to my relationship with a small group of writers I was with at the time. (The fact that God speaks to us is no guarantee that we hear or understand correctly!) In time I came to see that God was speaking about our deep roots in the city where we lived and the university where I taught. This was confirmed by numerous circumstances and the wise counsel of many from around the country.

But it was only the beginning of our experience of the prayer of relinquishment. We were releasing far more than the warm friendships of more than a dozen years, far more than the

base from which to operate our new renewal effort, *Renovaré*.

I was the executive director of a small fellowship of writers called The Milton Center. I founded this center in the 1980s, and I continued to have very high hopes for its future. I was having to relinquish it. For years Carolynn and I had dreamed of building a toxin-free home in hopes of gaining an upper hand over her rather severe allergies. Carolynn spent one entire year designing and overseeing the building of the house. We had moved in only recently. We were having to relinquish it. And so much more.

These decisions did not come easily. We prayed. We struggled. We wept. We went back and forth, back and forth, weighing option after option. We prayed again, struggled again, wept again. Believe me, we tangled with God plenty over that decision. At the time of this writing [1991] we did not know what all this would mean, but our relinquishment was a full and wholehearted agreement with God that His way is altogether right and good.

Release with Hope

The prayer of relinquishment is a bona fide letting go, but it is a release with hope. We have no fatalist resignation. We are buoyed up by a confident trust in the character of God. Even when all we see are the tangled threads on the backside of life’s tapestry, we know that God is good and is out to do us good always. That gives hope to believe that we are the winners, regardless of what we are being called upon to relinquish. God is inviting us deeper in and higher up. There is training in righteousness, transforming power, new joys, deeper intimacy.

Sometimes the very thing we relinquish is

(continued on page 14)

“*The prayer of relinquishment is a bona fide letting go, but it is a release with hope. We have no fatalist resignation. We are buoyed up by a confident trust in the character of God.*”

Crucifying Our Will

(continued from page 13)

Little by little, we are changed by this daily crucifixion of the will. Changed, not like a tornado changes things, but like a grain of sand in an oyster changes things.

given back to us. This does not always happen, of course. There are times when the release is permanent. At such times we are to trust in the wisdom of God and ask for the grace to rest in His peace. A settled peace, in fact, is the most frequent experience of those who have trod the path of relinquishment.

But, as I said, the very thing we release is sometimes returned to us. Why would God take us through such a roller-coaster process? Why, for example, did Jesus say, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn. 12:24, NRSV)? Why does God seemingly require relinquishment before bringing something into being?

Part of the answer lies in the fact that frequently we hold on so tightly to the good that we *do* know that we cannot receive the greater good that we *do not* know. God has to help us let go of our tiny vision in order to release the greater good He has in store for us.

A Priceless Treasure

But this is only a partial answer. The fuller answer lies in the purposes of God in transforming the human personality. Relinquishment brings to us a priceless treasure: *the crucifixion of the will*. Paul knew what a great gift this is. "I have been crucified with Christ," he joyfully announced. There

is relinquishment. There is crucifixion. There is death to the self-life. But there is also a releasing with hope: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:19-20, RSV).

John Woolman, the Quaker tailor who did so much to remove slavery from the American continent, once had a dramatic vision in which he "heard a soft, melodious voice, more pure and harmonious than any I had heard with my ears before: I believed it was the voice of an angel who spoke to other angels. The words were, John Woolman is dead." Woolman was very puzzled over these words and sought to "get so deep that I might understand this mystery." Finally he "felt divine power prepare my mouth," and he declared, "I am crucified with Christ....Then the mystery was opened, and I perceived...that the language John Woolman is dead meant no more than the death of my own will."

"The death of my own will" —strong language. But all of the great devotional masters have found it so. Soren Kierkegaard echoes Woolman's experience when he notes, "God creates everything out of nothing — and everything which God is to use He first reduces to nothing."

Do you know what a great freedom this crucifixion of the will is? It means freedom from

what A. W. Tozer called "the fine threads of the self-life, the hyphenated sins of the human spirit." It means freedom from the self-sins: self-sufficiency, self-pity, self-absorption, self-abuse, self-aggrandizement, self-castigation, self-deception, self-exaltation, self-depreciation, self-indulgence, self-hatred, and a host of others just like them. It means freedom from the everlasting burden of always having to get our own way. It means freedom to care for others, to genuinely put their needs first, to give joyfully and freely.

Little by little, we are changed by this daily crucifixion of the will. Changed, not like a tornado changes things, but like a grain of sand in an oyster changes things. New graces emerge: new ability to cast all our cares upon God, a new joy at the success of others, new hope in a God who is good.

Please remember, we are dealing with the crucifixion of the will, not the obliteration of the will. Crucifixion always has resurrection tied to it. God is not destroying the will but transforming it so that over a process of time and experience we can freely will what God wills. In the crucifixion of the will we are enabled to let go of our tightfisted hold on life and follow our best prayers.

The Practice of Prayer

Only through the specifics of

Commitment

(continued from page 11)

daily life can you be led into the prayer of relinquishment. The will is surrendered moment by moment as you face the ordinary decisions of home, family, and job. I cannot prescribe for you how this is done. In fact, you will not know the shape of relinquishment until specific issues arise. So the practice will come through lived experience. I am able, however, to give you some practiced prayers that you then can interpret into your individual situation.

First, learn the prayer of self-emptying. Meditatively pray through Philippians 2, which describes the *kenosis*, the self-emptying of Christ, who was in the form of God but who voluntarily took on the form of a servant and became obedient to the point of death. Bid the brooding Spirit of God to apply your prayer to the specifics of your day. Wait quietly. Listen carefully. Obey immediately.

Second, learn the prayer of surrender. Using any of the synoptic Gospels, go with Jesus into the Garden. Stay awake and watch. See His sorrowing soul. Let your heart be saddened too. Struggle with Him in seeking other options, hoping to avoid the cup. Now, speak His words as your own: "Not my will, but yours be done." Invite the resurrected One to interpret the words into your life, your family, your vocation.

Third, learn the prayer of abandonment. De Caussade's

(Rev. 5:) and say,
"Worthy is the Lamb
to receive honor,
dominion, power, and
glory."

It is because we too often lack this kind of commitment that we lack leadership in the church and the world today.

I heard a story about Bill Pannell, a teacher at Fuller Theological Seminary. One time in the '70s he was talking to fellow African American students. At that time some were contemplating a violent revolution. One of them said to Bill, "When's the revolution going to be?"

Bill said, "There's not going to be any revolution."

They asked, "Why not?"

Bill replied, "Because of the weekend."

I had to think about that story a little while before I understood the point. For five days a week they were energetically for their cause. But when it came to Friday and Saturday night, they went out and partied. The problem was that they got so wiped out on the weekend that it took until Wednesday to get the revolution going again. You can't accomplish a large goal unless you are totally committed to it. When we take "weekends" from our faith, we lose the momentum that we had and it's difficult to get up to speed again.

I recently watched the Tour de France and noticed that at the beginning of the individual time trials, the

competitors begin on a downward ramp to get up to speed quickly. When riders fell during the race, someone often helped them up and gave them an initial push to get going again. When our spiritual momentum has stopped, we similarly need a boost. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit's help is what we need most, but it doesn't hurt to have brothers and sisters praying for us and pushing us to get going again.

We need to determine what is most worthy—our Lord—and with passion commit ourselves to Him again and again. We need to say "no" to selfishness and say "yes" to our own best "self-interest" and the One who is alone worthy of worship. We need to "ask not what our Lord can do for us, but what we can do for our Lord." There are many issues that we have to face in this nation and throughout the world, and we need passionately committed believers who have the courage to follow the divine call and utilize God-given gifts to build up the kingdom and love people in the name of Christ.

Lord give us a white hot passion to commit ourselves to the immense attractiveness of our Lord. ■

There are many issues that we have to face in this nation and throughout the world, and we need passionately committed believers who have the courage to follow the divine call and utilize God-given gifts to build up the kingdom and love people in the name of Christ.

(continued on page 27)

Profiles in Faith: G.K. Chesterton

(continued from page 1)

as the age of scepticism. I mean that it illustrated scepticism in the sense of subjectivism. Its principal was that if all that could be seen of a cow was a white line and a purple shadow, we should only render the line and the shadow; in a sense we should only believe in the line and the shadow, rather than in the cow. ... The philosophy of Impressionism is necessarily close to the philosophy of Illusion. And this atmosphere also tended to contribute, however indirectly, to a certain mood of unreality and sterile isolation that settled at this time upon me; and I think upon many others.

The Impressionist, in Chesterton's view, played too much the role of God, imagining himself to be creating the world entirely from his own perspective. Chesterton could not handle that kind of responsibility, and it sent him into depression. Fortunately, he found his way to the writings of Robert Browning, Robert Louis Stevenson, Walt Whitman, and other authors who affirmed the positive existence of the outside world. Relieved of the burden of creating reality by himself, Chesterton emerged from his depression, left art school, and headed to London's Fleet Street to turn his considerable writing skills toward a career in journalism. In the back of his mind, another quest had begun as well: the search for someone to thank for the beauty of the world he had rediscovered.

Finding Faith

Chesterton's slow journey toward Christian faith involved many pushes and pulls. The jaded Fleet Street milieu and personal doubts about organized religion, especially Catholicism, held him back. Meanwhile a growing attraction to Frances Blogg, a devout Anglican whom he met at a London debating salon, drew him forward. By the time he married Frances, in 1901, he considered himself a Christian, but his theology was far from mature. He honed his beliefs through spirited printed debates.

Even before he adopted Christianity, Chesterton was certain of what he disliked in modern thought. The radical subjectivity of Impressionism led the mind to a dead end. Enchantment with human potential, as expressed in Nietzsche's Superman ideal or in the milder optimism of average liberals, ignored too much

evidence of frailty and corruption. Materialism proclaimed that the visible world constituted the whole of reality but failed to offer proof of this soul-numbing assertion. In short, the trendy philosophers who urged people to question everything could not themselves answer the most basic question, "And why should I listen to you?"

Chesterton first articulated a Christian response to modern skepticism in the pages of a socialist London newspaper called the *Clarion*. Its editor, Robert Blatchford, was a staunch atheist, but he nonetheless felt that faith deserved a fair hearing. For six months in 1903-4, he invited Chesterton and other Christians to defend their beliefs in weekly columns. Chesterton's three contributions argued that the Christian worldview was much more rational than anything so-called rationalists had proposed.

Chesterton lodged additional complaints against the day's leading thinkers in his regular columns for London's *Daily News* and in the 1905 book *Heretics*. These writings attracted the interest of Christians and critics alike, but they raised more questions than they answered. One critical reviewer announced, "I shall not begin to worry about my philosophy of life until Mr. Chesterton discloses his." Chesterton responded in 1908 with his celebrated book *Orthodoxy*, which he called "unavoidably affirmative and therefore unavoidably autobiographical."

Orthodoxy traced the author's descent into despair, recovery of wonder through literature (especially children's fantasy literature), and eventual discovery that every "new" truth he encountered had in fact been taught by Christianity for centuries. Chesterton laid special emphasis on the paradoxes of Christianity, those teachings that seem foolish or self-contradictory on the surface but resonate deeply with what the soul knows to be true. For example, while ancient pagans and modern rationalists defined modesty as "the balance between mere pride and mere prostration," Christianity insisted that people embrace both extremes: "In so far as I am Man I am the chief of creatures. In so far as I am *a* man I am the chief of sinners." Similarly, pagans and rationalists practiced charity as reasonable goodwill toward reasonably deserving debtors. According to these schools of

Chesterton first articulated a Christian response to modern skepticism in the pages of a socialist London newspaper called the Clarion.

thought, “there were some people one could forgive, and some one couldn’t: a slave who stole wine could be laughed at; a slave who betrayed his benefactor could be killed, and cursed even after he was killed.” Christianity, by contrast, “divided the crime from the criminal. The criminal we must forgive unto seventy times seven. The crime we must not forgive at all.”

In *Orthodoxy*, Chesterton displayed a mature and nuanced, albeit unconventional, faith, but his spiritual journey was not complete. He wondered which church best embodied the fullness of the Christian tradition. First Chesterton joined the Church of England—an obvious choice as the national church and the church of his wife, Frances. He was concerned, though, that modernism seemed to be creeping into Anglican theology, undermining the supernatural claims that had drawn Chesterton to Christianity. Around 1911, he began to believe that only one church could withstand the onslaught of modernism, the Roman Catholic Church.

Several factors weighed in Chesterton’s decision to become a Catholic. Frances and his family opposed the move. Many people in England still saw Catholicism as the mysterious, foreign, and despotic religion that had provoked so much pain during the Reformation. On the other side, Chesterton’s brother Cecil showed interest in Catholicism, and Chesterton had developed immense respect for a Catholic priest, John O’Connor, who would later become the inspiration for Chesterton’s fictional sleuth Father Brown. A trip to Italy, which included Easter morning worship at a Catholic church in Brindisi, tipped the balance. Chesterton joined the Roman Catholic Church in 1922 and was overjoyed when Frances joined, too, in 1926.

A Sharp Pen

Chesterton never assumed the quiet life of a writer. He lectured and participated in public debates. He traveled. He threw wild parties at which guests had to don costumes and act out sketches. He even appeared, along with George Bernard Shaw and other literary figures, in a western film made during World War I by *Peter Pan* author J.M. Barrie. Nonetheless, it is for his many published pieces that he is chiefly remembered.

The Father Brown mysteries are among Chesterton’s most treasured works. They follow the whodunit format established by Sherlock Holmes creator Arthur Conan Doyle, but Chesterton added spiritual depth. Like Holmes, Brown keenly observes crime scene details and human behavior, but he also diagnoses the heresies that drive people to sin. The Father Brown collection includes 51 tales that are considered by mystery enthusiasts to be some of the best examples of the genre. Chesterton’s rules for mystery writing, including transparency regarding clues and a solution simple enough to be shouted in one sentence, were codified by London’s Detection Club, an elite group that claimed Dorothy Sayers and Agatha Christie as members.

Chesterton also gained distinction in the genre of biography, even though his method was far from scholarly. For his famous biography of Thomas Aquinas, he reportedly collected a stack of books on the man, glanced through the first one, shut it, and proceeded to dictate his account *ex tempore*. Yet Chesterton understood Aquinas, and for this reason scholar Etienne Gilson called the biography “the best book ever written on St. Thomas.” Chesterton’s book on Francis of Assisi rested on no more historical research but has been similarly praised for its charm and insight.

Between work on these and dozens of other books, Chesterton continued to churn out essays on subjects ranging from bits of string and potent cheeses to women’s suffrage, World War I, and America’s experiment with Prohibition. (He liked the first two and disapproved of the others.) Many of these occasional pieces strike contemporary readers as trivial or time-bound, but others still hit their marks. For example, Chesterton correctly predicted that “the war to end all wars” would actually lead to a more horrible conflict—what we know as World War II. He also foresaw that the entrance of women into politics and commerce would inevitably invite the greater influence of the state over home life. Frequently quirky or cranky, Chesterton was also frequently right.

Though certainly famous in his day, Chesterton gained even more recognition after his death in 1936.

Though certainly famous in his day, Chesterton gained even more recognition after his death in 1936. Much of this acclaim stems from the praise of C.S. Lewis....

(continued on page 25)

Jefferson and Wilberforce

(continued from page 9)

Quakers. While he realized that “we have the wolf by the ears” in the dilemma of when and how slavery would end, he voiced a reluctance to publicly act, even while giving those who sought his leadership verbal encouragement.

A good example of this reluctance—as well as the fullest explanation of his reasons for not offering to lead emancipation efforts—came in a letter he sent in reply to Edward Coles. Coles had solicited the former President’s support in the cause of abolition, appealing to him as an Albemarle County neighbor and also as private secretary to James Madison. Coles was no dreamy young idealist but was to become Governor of the new state of Illinois where he moved with his freed slaves and pursued the course of abolition for the remainder of his life.

Jefferson’s reply is essentially a long apology for his early championing of the cause as a young legislator but doing little thereafter. Astonishingly, he maintained that from the time he was in France as ambassador in 1787 until he returned to Monticello for good in 1809 when his two terms as President ended, he had “little opportunity of knowing the progress of public sentiment here on this subject.”² His hopes, he concluded, had been placed in the younger generation who would see the importance of extending liberty in emancipating the slaves as of first import. Such was not the case, he lamented. Jefferson also failed to note to Coles the debates he took part in from afar in his latter years, favoring the extension of slavery to the western states as balancing the interests of northern manufacturing and southern plantation economies.

He ends his letter with an apt expression of his enlightened worldview—“Yet the hour of emancipation is advancing, in the march of time”³ There is no reply to the call to help rally the younger generation to the cause and take league with Coles and others of that generation. Ironically however, he does extol the example of Wilberforce to Coles as one to follow in his quest.

The real cause for such reluctance to lead the abolition effort? One explanation may

well be that the colleagues and supporters that mattered most to Jefferson in his rise to power and in his latter years, were those of his own planter class in Virginia and the south. Roger Kennedy perhaps best sums up this view:

Jefferson was driven by an insatiable hunger for approval of his fellow planters. Such a need for the affirmation of peers is common among political persons. In Jefferson’s case, it was so intense as to overwhelm his commitment to concepts distasteful either to his contemporaries among the planter class or thereafter to their sons. He sought brothers while attacking the authority of fathers.⁴

The Saints

Wilberforce, were he alive today, would have been the first to say that the end of slavery in all of Britain was not his accomplishment alone. While this would not be false modesty, he nevertheless was the engine for change whose persistence in what he believed to be right, his good humor and patience under vicious personal and even physical attack, and his creative talent for making a moral cause a popular one, clearly marked the non-partisan coalition in Parliament that was given the nickname, “The Saints.”

Many of “The Saints” chose to live in a community called Clapham Common. Later generations would refer to them as the Clapham circle or sect. They were in and out of each other’s homes, worshipped in the same Anglican church, and were willing to submit their political careers and egos to the cause they all shared, operating, as one contemporary described, like “a meeting which never adjourned.” Begun as a small group in 1792 by Wilberforce and his second cousin, Henry Thornton, it was to continue until Wilberforce’s death in 1833. It was this group that not only allied with him, but also helped to encourage him and sustain his commitment in the darkest times. He was clear that the network of support he enjoyed was “indispensable in enabling him to serve effectively in politics.”⁵

Among the Clapham circle were leaders of

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2 Adrienne Koch and William Peden, eds., *The Life and Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Random House, 1944), p. 642.

3 Ibid.

4 Roger Kennedy, *Mr. Jefferson’s Lost Cause: Land, Farmers, Slavery and the Louisiana Purchase* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 30.

British society and, given that Wilberforce's strategy to transform thinking was to influence its leaders, this group proved invaluable. They numbered not only political leaders like Sir William Smith, but also the jurist, James Stephen, Master of Chancery; the poet, educator, and playwright Hannah More; clergyman and author Gisbourn Thomas; prominent businessman Charles Grant; colonial governor Zachary Macaulay; Henry Thornton, a wealthy banker; John Venn, the Rector of Clapham parish; Lord Teignmouth, Governor General of India; and the abolitionist thinker Granville Sharp whose campaign to eliminate slavery in England was already well known in a series of trials in English courts.

All shared not only a common purpose but also a common Christian belief. What they needed was a leader, a voice that would be taken seriously in the public eye. The choice fell to Wilberforce whose faith and belief in eradicating slavery were by now well known. It was this group that would sustain Wilberforce and each other again and again through prayer and personal relationships as, each year, defeats in Parliament piled up the mound of discouragement.

It was not only the toll of defeats but also the virulence of the opposition in the early years that was daunting. The crown opposed them. The greatest hero of Britain, Admiral Lord Nelson, not only opposed their cause but also declared Wilberforce a traitor. And the opposition became so intense that Wilberforce was twice publicly attacked and began to have an armed guard travel with him where he went. But Wilberforce continued without returning the rancor.

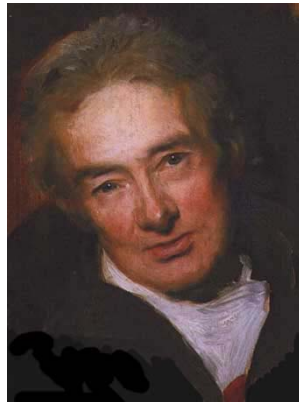
After his conversion, Wilberforce would declare to his friend and Prime Minister, Pitt, that now his "party was humanity." Pitt was the political leader who advocated that Wilberforce introduce his first bill on abolition in 1787, and was a staunch ally in the fight for the next several years. But when war

broke out with France in 1793, the fear of the French revolution spreading to England and the possible rebellion of British slaves gave Pitt cause to back away from his commitment in the name of the greater cause. Wilberforce, despite tremendous pressure, would not follow his party's lead. Political convenience, even in the name of party unity and national interest would not be put ahead of the greater cause of human freedom.

Another key to the ultimate success of Wilberforce lay not only with his close friends in Clapham and other fellow Christians but also with those who may have opposed him at the outset or who

did not share his beliefs. He became known for being able to work with those whose ideology or religious beliefs differed from his own. One of his biographers describes this quality as that of "being a bridge-builder in public life – persuading those with whom he disagreed, and commending his views through civil discourse."⁶ He had a view that embraced all of humanity and which held out hope that opponents might find areas in which to work in concert.

His personal respect for others, even those who vigorously opposed his views on faith or the changes needed in society, was the character quality that allowed even his opponents to rise and applaud him when the bill ending the slave trade eventually passed in 1807. This was one central characteristic that saw many over his lifetime won to his side. Had he employed vigorous denunciation and vilification, they would have only hardened their stance; had he plied the subtle use of power to undermine his opponents, he would have alienated potential allies as was seen in some of Jefferson's dealings. While he would not compromise his beliefs, Wilberforce was very ready to adopt differing tactics when necessary. He would not, however, yield to pragmatism



William Wilberforce

(continued on page 24)

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5 Kevin Belmonte, *Hero for Humanity* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), p. 139.

6 Ibid.



Unduly Protracted Infancy

by J. Oswald Sanders

Reprinted by permission from his book *In Pursuit of Maturity*



A native of New Zealand, the late **J. Oswald Sanders** (1902-1992) was a consulting director for Overseas Missionary Fellowship, the organization founded by Hudson Taylor in 1865. He preached and taught in conferences in many countries and wrote over 40

books on the Christian life, including *The Incomparable Christ*, *Satan Is No Myth*, and *Enjoying Intimacy With God*.

This is the third in a series of reprinted chapters from his book *In Pursuit of Maturity* which will be featured in *Knowing & Doing* during 2005.

Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly – mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.

1 Corinthians 3:1-2

Until we all...become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will be no longer infants...blown here and there by every wind of teaching.

Ephesians 4:13-14

Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature.

Hebrews 5:13-14

“If I were called on to put my finger on the most pressing need of our age, I would unhesitatingly say – maturity.” These words of an old preacher of the past are no less relevant in the wonder-world of the space age. It almost seems that as technology and knowledge advance, maturity recedes.

The low level of spiritual life in the Corinthian church occasioned acute distress for Paul. Their underlying problem was neither heresy nor apostasy but worldliness and spiritual immaturity. For the length of time they had been in possession of the truth, they should have been mature Christians. But to his dismay Paul discovered that they were still plagued with carnality. As a church they had been endowed not only with spiritual blessings but also with every spiritual gift. “You do not lack any spiritual gift,” he told them (1 Cor. 1:7).

The Corinthian believers seemed to have a penchant for the spectacular and flamboyant, but they failed to evidence a maturity matching their gifts and claims. They majored in the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit, but they were sadly deficient in the fruit of the Spirit. Consequently the apostle had to tell them, “I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly – mere infants in Christ” (1 Cor. 3:1). In some way their spiritual growth had been arrested, and their legitimate spiritual infancy had become unduly protracted.

This problem is by no means confined to the early church; it is a major concern in many churches in our own day. There are too many adult-infants in our church rolls.

Should the pastor venture to launch into teaching some of the deeper truths of Scripture, a section of his congregation will complain that he is preaching over their heads.

So he is on the horns of a dilemma. If he continues to feed them on little else than the milk of the Word, he leaves behind the more mature section of his congregation, while the others remain spiritual infants.

Paul stated the final objective of preaching in an exceedingly important verse that epitomizes the goal of the ministry of the Word: "We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, *so that we may present everyone perfect [mature] in Christ.* To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works within me" (Col. 1:28, italics mine). It will be the aim of the wise pastor to give teaching that will be relevant to people of all stages of spiritual development, and this is no easy task.

A Legitimate Spiritual Infancy

The new life enters the new Christian in embryo form, and it must grow and develop as does an infant. For this desirable development to take place, congenial conditions for spiritual growth must be provided, and this is the responsibility of the one who disciples the new Christian. The environment and nourishment should be provided in the fellowship of the local church.

We often unintentionally discourage young Christians by entertaining unrealistic expectations. Every mother expects her baby to act and react like a baby. She does not look for adult behavior. Similarly we should be understanding and sympathetic with the early falls and struggles of a spiritual babe. In Hosea's prophecy, God is represented as acting in that way: "It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms" (Hos. 11:3).

Within the right limits, babyhood is magic, but when it is unduly prolonged, it becomes tragic. It is wonderful to be a baby, but it is disastrous to remain one. It is to believers in this condition that Paul refers in the passages at the head of this chapter.

The Greek term used to describe this immature state is *sarchikos*, variously

translated as "carnal," "men of flesh," and "worldly." Each rendering throws light on the meaning of the word, but the combination of the three makes an unhappy picture of the person in this state.

In Israel's memorable trek from the bondage of Egypt to the freedom of Canaan, we are given a divinely authorized illustration that is quite contemporary. Referring to this journey, Paul wrote, "Now these things occurred as examples, to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.... *These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come*" (1 Cor. 10:6, 11, italics mine). So we have biblical warrant for drawing spiritual lessons from Israel's history.

An Illegitimate Infancy

Once the Israelites had crossed the miraculously divided Red Sea, the journey into Canaan was only an eleven-day trek (Deut. 1:2). For wise reasons, however, God directed them to take a route that lengthened their travels by several months. This gave them time to adjust to their new and unaccustomed role as free people.

To reach Canaan, the Israelites had to cross the desert, and during the whole of this journey, they were walking in obedience to the will of God. This part of their trek was God-directed and therefore legitimate.

But once they reached Kadesh-Barnea, it was different. They rebelled against God and their leaders by despising and refusing to enter the Promised Land. This meant that the remainder of their desert wandering was contrary to the will of God and therefore illegitimate. The results were disastrous.

Israel's experience is duplicated in the lives of worldly Christians who do not go on to maturity. In a word, Paul's problem with the Corinthian church was worldliness. Their attitudes and reactions were worldly and not spiritual. They were fascinated by the more flamboyant spiritual gifts, while at the same time they tolerated grave abuses

(continued on page 22)

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Unduly Protracted Infancy

(continued from page 21)

and open sin in their midst and allowed it to go unchecked. Envy, strife, party spirit, division, immorality, lawsuits between believers, and disorders at the Lord's table were all evidences of their carnal condition. They were "men of flesh," controlled not by the Spirit, but the self-life. Their spiritual immaturity was manifested in their reactions as well as their actions.

Our actions do not necessarily reveal our true motivation, for they can be insincere, superficial, even hypocritical. Our reactions to the unexpected, when we have had no time to prepare ourselves beforehand, are much more revealing and much more likely to be accurate. Spiritual immaturity is most clearly visible in our unrehearsed, unconscious reactions.

Diagnosis of Spiritual Immaturity

The condition of the Corinthian church illustrates some of the traits of people who have failed to go on to maturity.

Arrested Growth

The Corinthians had stopped growing and were static in their Christian experience—"mere infants in Christ," spiritual dwarfs. The main cause of their stunted condition was their feeble digestion. They could assimilate only the milk of the Word of God. Milk and meat are both divine provisions, but they are appropriate to different stages of the Christian life. Milk is the food suited to the infant, but "strong meat is for the mature."

Milk is predigested food that the babe receives secondhand from his or her mother, and the baby thrives on it. But the time comes when the child must be weaned and introduced to solids. The spiritually immature believer is one who has not been weaned from the "milk"—the elementary truths of the Word of God—but is still largely dependent for spiritual sustenance on the result of another's heart exercise and study of the Scriptures. The immature believer has never learned the art of drawing spiritual nourishment directly from his or her own

study of Scripture and prayer. The spiritual babe has a poor digestion for unadorned Bible study and craves condiments to spice it up.

Unfortunately this craving is too often catered to, with the result that the spiritually immature person never progresses beyond a secondhand Christian experience. The spiritual infant is not able to stand on his or her own feet, but is unwilling to pay the price of serious Bible study in order to gain a firsthand knowledge of God and His Word.

It is possible for even an immature Christian to make rapid growth once such a purpose is formed and the motivation is sufficiently strong. Princess Diana of Britain confessed that she had to grow up quickly to deal with the pressures demanded by her new role as wife to the heir of the British throne. "I have learned a lot in the last few months," she said. "I have matured a lot recently and have got used to coping with things."¹ The motivation provided the rapid growth in maturity. A similar change has to take place in the life of one whose infancy has been unduly prolonged.

Emotional Instability

Instability is shared by both an infant and an immature Christian. Paul describes the infantile stage as, "tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching..." (Eph. 4:14). The immature Christian never reaches settled personal convictions so strong that he or she is willing to suffer for them.

The spiritually immature person tends to live in the realm of fickle emotions, and these can be both capricious and tyrannical. Instead of being motivated by the spiritual principles enunciated in the Scriptures, the spiritual infant is moved by transient feelings. In facing a decision, the question is not, "Will this please God?" but "Does this please me?" The person's actions are dictated more by how he or she feels about it than by what ought to be done. Like an infant, the spiritually immature person is a slave to feelings and thus lacks emotional stability. The spiritual infant should live more in the realm of

Instead of being motivated by the spiritual principles enunciated in the Scriptures, the spiritual infant is moved by transient feelings. In facing a decision, the question is not, "Will this please God?" but "Does this please me?"

¹ New Zealand Herald, June 29, 1981.

the will, for we are what we choose, not what we feel.

Before Peter's transforming experience on the Day of Pentecost, he was a classic example of this emotional instability. One moment he was walking on the water, the next he was sinking beneath the waves. First he made his glorious confession of Christ's deity, then shortly afterward the Master had to rebuke him for his rash, Satan-inspired statement. Peter sincerely promised to lay down his life for his Lord, but a short time later he denied Christ three times.

After Pentecost, however, all this was changed. The marks of spiritual immaturity disappeared, and he became Peter the rock; he was no longer volatile but the stable, strong leader of the apostolic band.

Contentiousness

Most infants are very touchy, and their feelings are easily hurt. They have strong likes and dislikes and tend to be quarrelsome. These were qualities that came to the surface in the church at Corinth. "You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?" (1 Cor. 3:3).

They had formed parties and cliques around their leaders instead of being united around Christ. "For when one says, 'I follow Paul,' and another, 'I follow Apollos,' are you not mere men?" (1 Cor. 3:4).

However competent the spiritually immature person may be in academic attainment or business acumen, it is usually this person who engages in contentious ecclesiastical politics and lobbying. The immature Christian will quarrel over minor matters or practice and procedure while important major spiritual issues are screaming for attention.

It is always Satan's strategy to polarize and divide believers and churches, and it is usually the immature Christian he enlists as his agent. The immature person creates problems; the mature person solves them.

Worldly-mindedness

"Are you not worldly?" Paul asked. "Are you not acting like ordinary men?" In other words, there was nothing in their behavior to distinguish them from others or to identify them as Christ's disciples. They appeared to be living on the same plane as those around them—conforming to the same standards, actuated by the same motives, dominated by the same desires. They were married to Christ yet flirting with the world. They were married to Christ yet not satisfied with Christ.

Insensitivity To Evil

Inability to discriminate between good and evil is another mark of immaturity. The mature Christian is one who "by constant use has trained himself to distinguish good from evil" — that is, by constant consultation with the Word of God and obedience to its precepts.

The watchword of the immature person about doubtful things is, "What's the harm in it?" The mature Christian will ask rather, "What is the good in it?" The worldly person sees no harm in borderline things and usually acts according to desire rather than by principle. Because the thing the immature Christian desires to do is not specifically prohibited in Scripture, he or she is likely to engage in questionable practices. This lack of sensitivity to evil makes the spiritual infant an easy prey to the permissiveness that pervades society today.

Self-centeredness

An infant is self-centered and so is an immature believer. The current emphasis on loving oneself sounds rather strange when placed alongside our Lord's emphasis on denying oneself. The emphasis on loving oneself tends to be just another manifestation of spiritual infantilism. The mature person is self forgetful and spends love on others. The prayer of the mature Christian is:

Higher than the highest heaven,
Deeper than the deepest sea,

(continued on page 26)

The
watchword
of the
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"What's the
harm in it?"
The mature
Christian
will ask
rather,
"What is the
good in it?"

Jefferson and Wilberforce

(continued from page 19)

over virtue and give up the steady fight for ending slavery in order to advance his career. He almost certainly gave up a likely opportunity to be Prime Minister and succeed Pitt because of his devotion to his two purposes.

Wilberforce and the Clapham circle also made cause with a wider circle of influential people who would help carry the message to the leaders and the grassroots. One of the best stories is the recruitment of Josiah Wedgwood, the maker of fine china. He designed a special Wedgwood pattern with the distinctive pale blue and white colors but with an imprint of a slave in chains on the center with the inscription, "Am I not a man and a brother?" These were considered conversation "launchers" by Wilberforce, objects providing an opening for dialogue after the finished meal uncovered the message of the evening.

There are some lessons here that would be well worth noting. First, Wilberforce did not act alone; although he took the lead thrust upon him by his call and by his Clapham colleagues — many whom had been laboring for those in need for years before — they worked together as a virtuous coalition. Other practices worth noting are:

- They did their homework with excellence, not basing their positions on "right" or on rhetorical passion alone.
- They built a wider support community around them.
- They had a clear sense of a purpose to accomplish.
- They would not accept setbacks as final defeats, even in the name of pragmatism.
- They stayed the course for the long haul.

- They refused to allow their opponents' virulent personal attacks to be answered in kind — they stuck with the issues and did not retaliate.
- They sought to understand their opponents and to engage in meaningful dialogue.
- They accepted small gains on the road to the larger prize.
- They transcended a single-issue climate by addressing many issues within a need for a moral climate in all of society.
- They had a sense of God's providential leading and a faith that He would guide them if they acted faithfully.

As another of Wilberforce's biographers has concluded, Wilberforce:

...gives an example of how to create the momentum that leads to positive change. His life is proof that a Christian statesman. . . can change the times in which he lives; though he cannot do so alone.⁷

The Contrast

It is a tantalizing question to consider: if Jefferson had been surrounded by a Clapham-like group, would he have taken up the cause of slavery while President or even afterward when the union was more secure? In my own estimation, I think not.

First, his nature, unlike Wilberforce's, was not one to try and take cause with those who did not adhere to his own beliefs. Thus, he could undermine his longtime friend and sponsor, Adams, privately vilify his "father" and advocate, Washington, and be comfortable doing so as long as he was behind the façade of retirement at Monticello. It is also apparent from many biographers that he was

...Wilberforce did not act alone; although he took the lead thrust upon him by his call and by his Clapham colleagues — many who had been laboring for those in need for years before — they worked together as a virtuous coalition.

7 John Pollock as cited in Belmonte, *Hero for Humanity*, p. 180.

Profiles in Faith: G.K. Chesterton

(continued from page 17)

a man with huge personal ambition, even though he denied it. He could not subordinate his political ambitions to a greater purpose as much of the Clapham circle and Wilberforce were able to do. Political pragmatism was far more important in the long run to Jefferson than the lofty vision of the Declaration. And, finally, Jefferson did not have either the personality or possibly the strength of character to persevere against opposition and certainly against widespread personal vilification. He once almost quit public life entirely after being driven from the governor's house by the British, and the cries of "coward" wounded him for life.

Without Wilberforce's sense of a call from God and thus His present help to provide strength for the long battle, Jefferson saw himself as essentially on his own with a few trusted allies. He would not have been able to take the kind of slings and arrows that were the lot of the Clapham group and Wilberforce.

As for those who later became the Claphamites, until Wilberforce took up the lead at God's behest and theirs, their passion could not gain traction in a culture where as Wilberforce observed, "selfishness" was the reigning quality of its leaders. The unique coalescence of the times, the man, and the community along with the preparation of the culture's soil over the years made for an outcome in British society few would have dared to prophesy. Can it ever be replicated? It remains for some to make the attempt. Until then, it stands as a singular lesson.

Next time we will conclude with a look at the contending worldviews evidenced in the lives of Wilberforce and Jefferson and at the legacy of their lives. What did they leave behind them to attest to the enduring quality of their leadership and why? ■

Much of this acclaim stems from the praise of C.S. Lewis, who hailed Chesterton as a model and credited Chesterton's religious history *The Everlasting Man* with influencing his conversion to Christianity. Chesterton also lives on through countless pithy quotes that pop up in all sorts of books and articles and swirl around the Internet. (Just try searching for "Chesterton quotes" on Google.)

Though Chesterton could not have imagined this development, he would be gratified to learn that twenty-first century society continues to find value in links to the past. He would be even more gratified if encounters with his words enticed people to join the community founded on the Word. As he wrote in *Orthodoxy*,

Plato has told you a truth; but Plato is dead. Shakespeare has startled you with an image; but Shakespeare will not startle you with any more. But imagine what it would be to live with such men still living, to know that Plato might break out with an original lecture tomorrow, or that at any moment Shakespeare might shatter everything with a single song. The man who lives in contact with what he believes to be a living Church is a man always expecting to meet Plato and Shakespeare tomorrow at breakfast. ■



Elesha Coffman is former managing editor of *Christian History & Biography* magazine. She is pursuing a doctorate in American religious history at Duke University.

“The man who lives in contact with what he believes to be a living Church is a man always expecting to meet Plato and Shakespeare tomorrow at breakfast.”

Unduly Protracted Infancy

(continued from page 23)

Lord Thy love at last has conquered;
Grant me now my heart's petition
None of self, and all of Thee.

Theodore Monod, "None of Self"

The story is told that when Mahmoud, with his all-victorious armies, laid siege to Guzurat in India, he forced his way into the costliest shrine of the Brahmins. They prostrated themselves before him, offering vast ransom if only he would spare their god, for, they claimed, the fortunes of their city depended on him.

After a pause, Mahmoud replied that he would rather be known as the breaker than the seller of idols, and he struck the image with his battleaxe. It proved to be hollow and had been used as the receptacle for thousands of precious gems that, as the image was shattered, showered down at the conqueror's feet.

Such an idol is self. For Mahmoud to have spared the idol would have meant the sacrifice of untold wealth. To spare self spells spiritual penury. If we deliver the idol self to utter destruction at the hand of Christ, there will be showered upon us spiritual enrichment beyond our power to conceive.

But how can this tyrant—self—be ousted from the throne it has usurped? We are powerless to do it ourselves, for self cannot dethrone self. There is a more excellent way illustrated in the Old Testament story of a usurper, as recorded in 1 Kings 1:5-38.

How was Adonijah, the usurper of Solomon's crown, dethroned? By the enthronement of Solomon—which automatically achieved the dethronement of Adonijah. So the enthronement of Christ in

the heart secures the dethronement of self, for two cannot occupy the throne at the same time.

"Let him deny himself," was our Lord's injunction to His hearers, by which He meant, "Let him remove self from the center of authority." The verb is in the aorist tense, implying a crisis. It can take place in a moment of time. It will take place when, by an act of the will, we renounce the dominance of self, and with the Spirit's aid, place Christ on the throne of the heart.

For example, self-centeredness and selfishness are among the most prolific causes of marital disharmony. An experienced marriage counselor maintained that at the center of most marital problems is immaturity in either husband or wife—or in both. Where either partner is immature, their love is preponderantly physical and self-centered because they have failed to grow up emotionally and spiritually. Demanding love is immature love. Mature love is sacrificial and undemanding.

Destructive Criticism

Destructive criticism is the mark of a carnal Christian. Its true character is seen in the fact that such criticism is always launched from a position of superiority. Very often the person who is overly ready to criticize others for their real or

supposed faults and deficiencies is only seeking to compensate for his or her own very real faults. Such criticism is just the rebound of the person's own wrong attitudes.

It remains to be said that spiritual immaturity can coexist with great spiritual gifts. It is the fruit of the Spirit, not the gifts of the Spirit, that is the true evidence of spiritual maturity. ■

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spells spiritual
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beyond our
power to
conceive.*

Crucifying Our Will

(continued from page 15)

book *Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence* may be helpful. You might want to use the words of Charles de Foucauld: "Father, I abandon myself into Your hands; do with me what You will. Whatever You may do, I thank You: I am ready for all, I accept all. Let only Your will be done in me, and in all Your creatures—I wish no more than this, O Lord." Allow the Sovereign of your heart to specify what needs to be laid at His feet.

Fourth, learn the prayer of release. First, lift up into His arms your children, your spouse, your friends. Next, place into His loving care your future, your hopes, your dreams. Finally, hold up to Him your enemies, your angers, your desire for retaliation. Give it all into His hands and then turn around and walk away. He will care for everything as He sees fit.

Fifth, learn the prayer of resurrection. "Lord," you may pray, "bring back to life what will please You and advance Your kingdom. Let it come in whatever form You desire. Let it be in Your time and Your way. Thank You, Lord, for resurrection." Some things will remain dead—it is better for you that they do. Others will burst forth into new life in such a way that you will hardly recognize them. In either case, rest in the confidence that God is better than you are at resurrection.

Just the Beginning

Our sojourn into the prayer of relinquishment has only begun. We have so much to learn, so far to go. Relinquishment takes us into rugged terrain. The climb is steep, the rocks are sharp, and the trail passes by precarious ridges. From every human viewpoint, at times it looks like we have fallen over the precipice to our death. But we know better. We know that we are only falling into the arms of Jesus, fully satisfied, fully at rest. ■

“

...learn the prayer of resurrection. "Lord," you may pray, "bring back to life what will please You and advance Your kingdom. Let it come in whatever form You desire. Let it be in Your time and Your way. Thank You, Lord, for resurrection." Some things will remain dead—it is better for you that they do. Others will burst forth into new life....

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C.S. LEWIS
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