



PROFILES IN FAITH

Perpetua (circa 181–203)
High Society Believer & Martyr

by Mark Galli, *Managing Editor*, Christianity Today



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We have little idea what brought Perpetua to faith in Christ, or how long she had been a Christian, or how she lived her Christian life. Thanks to her diary, and that of another prisoner, we have some idea of her last days – an ordeal that so impressed the famous Augustine that he preached four sermons about her death.

Perpetua was a Christian noblewoman who, at the turn of the third century, lived with her husband, her son, and her slave, Felicitas, in Carthage (in modern Tunis). At this time, North Africa was the center of a vibrant Christian community. It is no surprise, then, that when Emperor Septimius Severus determined to cripple Christianity (he believed it undermined Roman patriotism), he focused his attention on North Africa. Among the first to be arrested were five new Christians taking classes to prepare for baptism, one of whom was Perpetua.

Her father immediately came to her in prison. He was a pagan, and he saw an easy way for Perpetua to save herself. He entreated her simply to deny she was a Christian.

“Father do you see this vase here?” she replied. “Could it be called by any other name than what it is?”

“No,” he replied.

“Well, neither can I be called anything other than what I am, a Christian.”

In the next days, Perpetua was moved to a better part of the prison and allowed to breast-feed her child. With her hearing approaching, her father visited again, this time, pleading more passionately:

Have pity on my gray head.
Have pity on me, your father,
if I deserve to be called your
father, if I have favored you
above all your brothers, if I
have raised you to reach this
prime of your life.

He threw himself down before her and kissed her hands.

Do not abandon me to be the reproach of men. Think of your brothers; think of your mother and your aunt; think of your child, who will not be able to live once you are gone. Give up your pride!

...we have some idea of her last days – an ordeal that so impressed the famous Augustine that he preached four sermons about her death.



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Editor's Note



As this issue of *Knowing & Doing* goes to press, a gentle spring rain is falling. The days are now warmer, and daylight lingers longer into the early evening hours. The dogwoods and azaleas are approaching the height of their glory, and everywhere the world is looking greener — especially my lawn.

It may sound strange to many, but I actually enjoy cutting grass. In my youth, our family lived on a two-acre parcel which was mostly grass, and so my spring, summer, and fall included many hours astride our large riding mower, cutting wide swaths through the ever-growing grass. The hours were long and the work was usually hot, but the end result was a delight to my eyes. At the end of the day, especially just after the sun dipped below the horizon, I could survey the green even cut patterns striping the slightly hilly terrain and enjoy the picturesque results of the day's labor.

While my lawn in suburban northern Virginia is much smaller, I enjoy seeing it turn a healthy green in the spring rains. Rain is the catalyst. Sun and heat are needed, but without rain, the grass withers and turns brown.

Our souls are like that, too; they need God's water: "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:10-11 NIV)

This summer, remember to water your soul as well as your lawn. Both need watering to grow and flourish.

We pray, too, that you will find the articles in this issue to be "fertilizer" for feeding your discipleship. The combination is a sure formula for a healthy growing heart and mind.

In Christ,



The Da Vinci Code – Decoded

from Art Lindsley's lecture at the C.S. Lewis Institute Seminar by the same title

by Art Lindsley, Ph.D.

Senior Fellow, C.S. Lewis Institute

I love a good novel, especially when it involves action, adventure, and mystery. *The Da Vinci Code* grabs your interest right at the start and doesn't let go. Except for a weak ending (we'll discuss that later), it doesn't disappoint as an action novel. What does disappoint is Dan Brown's attempt to turn a work of fiction into a "factual" attack on the foundations of Christianity.

Fact or Fiction?

This combination of readable fiction and "factual" claims contrary to Christianity has turned Brown's book into a surprise best-seller. It has sold over 6 million copies, been translated into over 40 languages, and will soon be made into a Hollywood movie directed by Ron Howard – a thrilling scenario for any author, but troubling for its problematic claims to so-called facts.

At the beginning of the book is a page labeled "Fact" claiming that certain secret documents were discovered in 1975 from the Priory of Sion (founded in 1099). At the bottom of the page is the statement: "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate." Presumably, this includes all the anti-Christian claims throughout the book. In interviews shortly after the book came out, Dan Brown seemed to indicate that he had come to believe that these various charges were true. It would be good to hear him answer questions about specific claims that he made, but, unfortunately, he is no longer granting interviews.

The "Fact" parts of the novel are mixtures of fascinating tidbits of esoteric knowledge, half-truths, and outright lies. When a novelist attempts to write history and theology, we can allow him some latitude. Rather than assuming he was consciously deceptive, I prefer to regard him as ignorant on some issues. Perhaps he listened to the wrong "experts" and

thus would be willing to change his views if shown otherwise.

The Plot

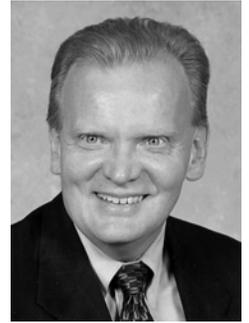
The Da Vinci Code starts in Paris with the dramatic murder of Louvre curator Jacques Sauniere by an albino assassin (Silas) from a Roman Catholic order, Opus Dei. Before he died, the curator left a trail of symbolic clues leading to a deep, dark secret. Harvard professor of religious symbology, Robert Langdon, is in town to meet with the curator and immediately becomes the prime suspect. Sophie Neveu, police cryptologist and granddaughter of the curator, comes into the case, quickly takes Langdon's side, and helps him escape. She joins him in a cross-country race to find the Holy Grail all the while fleeing the police.

Along the way, they meet an expert, Leigh Teabing (Chap. 55f) who gives them the great secret: The Grail is not a cup, but the body of Mary Magdalene, Jesus' wife and the mother of a child that is ancestor to the kings of France. Somehow this secret knowledge will destroy the Church. Along the way, various other claims are put forth:

- "...that almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false." (p. 235)
- The Bible has had "countless translations, additions, revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book." (p. 231)
- At the Council of Nicea (325 AD), the Church decided to make Jesus into God. "Until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by his followers as a mortal prophet." (p. 233)
- The vote on Jesus' divinity was "a relatively close vote." (p. 233)

(continued on page 4)

C.S. Lewis Institute Feature Article



Dr. Art Lindsley

Dr. Art Lindsley is a Senior Fellow with the C.S. Lewis Institute where he has served since 1987. Formerly, he was Director of Educational Ministries of the Ligonier Valley Study Center and Staff Specialist with Coalition for Christian Outreach, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He received his B.S. (Chemistry) from Seattle Pacific University, an M.Div. from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and his Ph.D. (Religious Studies) from the University of Pittsburgh. He is author of the recently published book, True Truth: Defending Absolute Truth in a Relativistic World (IVP, April 2004) and co-author with R.C. Sproul and John Gerstner of Classical Apologetics. Art, his wife, Connie, and their two boys, Trey and Jonathan, make their home in Arlington, Virginia.

The Da Vinci Code—Decoded

(continued from page 3)

Numerous little factual errors emerge as you look at Brown's book more closely. If small "facts" are inaccurate, what should that tell us about the larger claims the book makes?

- "More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament." (p. 231) Constantine made the choice.
- The Gnostic gospels discovered at Nag Hammadi in 1945 "highlight glaring discrepancies and fabrications... of the modern Bible." In these secret gospels we find the true original Jesus.

These and other contentions have shaken some people's faith and given fuel to those who don't believe. A recent visitor commented that *The Da Vinci Code* was the talk of dinner parties in educated circles in Europe. So, the impact is being felt in the U.S. and abroad.

What Are Brown's Sources?

I can locate at least four tributaries that flow into the river of information in *The Da Vinci Code*. First, and most importantly, is a book called *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* by Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln. Note that Leigh Teabing's name is drawn from one author (Leigh) and the anagram of another (Baigent: letters rearranged = Teabing). This book talks about secret papers revealing the Priory of Sion and Mary Magdalene being the Holy Grail. Second, the Jesus Seminars' advocacy of the Gospel of Thomas. Third, the Sacred Feminine, from neo-paganism, otherwise known as Wicca, the Craft or the Goddess movement. Fourth, *The Gnostic Gospels* (1971), by Elaine

Pagels, who reinterpreted the significance of the Nag Hammadi texts. Numerous recent books have picked up on this fad.

Separating Fact from Fiction

Numerous little factual errors emerge as you look at Brown's book more closely. If small "facts" are inaccurate, what should that tell us about the larger claims the book makes?

- Mona Lisa is likely not Leonardo in drag (p. 120), but a real woman, Madonna Lisa, wife of Francesco di Bartolomeo de Giocondo—as documents contemporary to Leonardo claim.
- Leonardo is called a "flagrant homosexual." In fact, the only piece of evidence for this claim was that in the politically-driven Renaissance he was charged with sodomy as a young man, but the case was dismissed. Hardly enough for this broad generalization.
- The vote at Nicea (325 AD) was not close at all (p. 235). It was 316 to 2.
- The Gnostic Gospel of Philip doesn't say Christ kissed Mary on the mouth, (p. 246) because the words "Christ" and "mouth" are missing due to a damaged manuscript.
- The word "companion" used of Mary in the Gospel of Philip 63:34 could be stretched to mean "wife"

(p. 246), but the Greek loan word (in the Coptic text) is *koinonos* (from which we get *koinonia* = fellowship). *Koinonos* means sharer, associate, companion, partner—more like fellow traveler, which is what Mary was. The specific word in Greek for wife is *gyne*.

- There was no smear campaign in the early church against Mary Magdalene (p. 244). Nobody said Mary was a prostitute till Pope Gregory the Great in 591 AD. Perhaps he confused the immoral woman of Luke 7 with Mary in Luke 8, out of whom is cast seven demons.
- The Dead Sea scrolls were discovered in 1947, not in the 1950s (p. 234).
- No gospels or Christian literature were found as part of the Dead Sea Scrolls (p. 234). There are definitely no gospels, and the few Greek fragments that have been claimed to be from Christian literature are extremely dubious according to one expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls.
- That Mary Magdalene was included by Da Vinci in *The Last Supper* (p. 243) is rejected by most art historians, including specialist Carmen C. Bambach, interviewed on *The Today Show*.
- Ancient Olympics were not held to honor

Aphrodite but to honor Zeus.

- Knights Templar had nothing to do with building cathedrals.
- Silas is portrayed as the murderous “monk” of Opus Dei. The organization has no “monks.”
- The Louvre Pyramid is said to have 666 panes; in fact, it has 673.

What are Brown's Major Claims?

We turn now to examine a few of Brown's major claims:

1. Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and had a child.
2. Jesus' divinity was invented at Nicea (325 AD).
3. Eighty gospels were excluded to focus on four.
4. The Gnostic Gospels show us the true Jesus.
5. Christianity hurt the dignity, worth, and value of women.
6. The Priory of Sion was the keeper of the secret of the Holy Grail since 1099.

Let's examine them one at a time:

1. What is the historical evidence that Jesus was married?
Answer: NONE.

Jesus Seminar scholar John Dominic Crossan—by no means a partisan of tradi-

tional Christianity—said:

There is an ancient venerable principle of biblical exegesis (interpretation) which states that if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, it must be a camel in disguise. There is no evidence that Jesus was married (looks like a duck), multiple indications that he was not (walks like a duck), and no early texts suggesting a wife or children (quacks like a duck) ... so he must be an incognito bridegroom (camel in disguise). (See *Breaking the DaVinci Code*, p. 31-32)

Almost everyone maintains that Jesus chose to be single in order to focus on his ministry. But, what about Brown's claim that it was un-Jewish not to be married—that “the social decorum during that time virtually forbade a Jewish man to be unmarried” and that “celibacy was condemned” (p. 245). It is true that Jewish rabbis advocated being married, but exceptions were allowed to the general norm. Consider these facts:

- A respected group in Judaism of Jesus' day, the Essenes at Qumran (from which we got the Dead Sea Scrolls), were strong advocates of celibacy.
- Jesus taught that some (like himself) were called to be eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom (Matt 19:10-12).
- Paul, trained in the

rabbinical school of Gamaliel, advocated a similar view of celibacy in I Corinthians 7. Some can choose to be single to give themselves to the work of ministry.

- Rabbinic opinion was not always absolute law.
- Even rabbis allowed postponing marriage in order to concentrate on study of the Law.
- Rabbi Simeon be'Assai never married—He taught that men should be married, but when asked why he was not married, he said: “What shall I do? My soul is enamored of the Law; the population of the world can be kept up by others.”
- Wilderness prophets like John the Baptist and Banus (see Josephus Life 2:11) seem to have been unmarried.

Finally, even if Jesus was married and had children, that would be NO intrinsic obstacle to his divinity. Sex is good. Marriage is good. Family is good. Jesus was fully human and fully divine. There is no intrinsic problem with Jesus being married. The only problem is that there is no evidence that he was.

My biggest problem with *The DaVinci Code* as a novel is its weak ending. It ends with a whimper and a sigh. I would rather that the “secret” be revealed in the end and see what would happen.

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There is no intrinsic problem with Jesus being married. The only problem is that there is no evidence that he was.



General Revelation & Guilt

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

by J.I. Packer

Retired Professor of Theology, Regent College



J.I. Packer

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

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GENERAL REVELATION *God's Reality Is Known to All*

*The heavens declare the glory of God,
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

PSALM 19:1

God's world is not a shield hiding the Creator's power and majesty. From the natural order it is evident that a mighty and majestic Creator is there. Paul says this in Romans 1:19-21, and in Acts 17:28 he calls a Greek poet as witness that humans are divinely created. Paul also affirms that the goodness of this Creator becomes evident from kindly providences (Acts 14:17; cf. Rom. 2:4), and that some at least of the demands of his holy law are known to every human conscience (Rom. 2:14-15), along with the uncomfortable certainty of eventual retributive judgment (Rom. 1:32). These evident certainties constitute the content of general revelation.

General revelation is so called because everyone receives it, just by virtue of being alive in God's world. This has been so from the start of human history. God actively discloses these aspects of himself to all human beings, so that in every case failure to thank and serve the Creator in righteousness is sin against knowledge, and denials of having received this knowledge should not be taken seriously. God's universal revelation of his power, praiseworthiness, and moral claim is

the basis of Paul's indictment of the whole human race as sinful and guilty before God for failing to serve him as we should (Rom. 1:18-3:19).

God has now supplemented general revelation with the further revelation of himself as Savior of sinners through Jesus Christ. This revelation, given in history and embodied in Scripture, and opening the door of salvation to the lost, is usually called special or specific revelation. It includes explicit verbal statement of all that general revelation tells us about God, and teaches us to recognize that revelation in the natural order, in the events of history, and in the makeup of human beings, so that we learn to see the entire world as, in Calvin's phrase, a theatre of the glory of God.

GUILT *The Effect of General Revelation*

*...what may be known about God
is plain to them,
because God has made it plain to them.*

ROMANS 1:19

Scripture assumes, and experience confirms, that human beings are naturally inclined to some form of religion, yet they fail to worship their Creator, whose general revelation of himself makes him universally known. Both theoretical atheism and moral monotheism are natural to no one: atheism

is always a reaction against a pre-existing belief in God or gods, and moral monotheism has only ever appeared in the wake of special revelation.

Scripture explains this state of affairs by telling us that sinful egoism and aversion to our Creator's claims drive humankind into idolatry, which means transferring worship and homage to some power or object other than God the Creator (Isa. 44:9-20; Rom. 1:21-23; Col. 3:5). In this way, apostate humans "suppress the truth" and have "exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles" (Rom. 1:18, 23). They smother and quench, as far as they can, the awareness that general revelation gives them of the transcendent Creator Judge, and attach their ineradicable sense of deity to unworthy objects. This in turn leads to drastic moral decline, with consequent misery, as a first manifestation of God's wrath against human apostasy (Rom. 1:18, 24-32).

Nowadays in the West people idolize and, in effect, worship secular objects such as the firm, the family, football, and pleasant feelings of various kinds. But moral decline still results, just as it did when pagans worshipped literal idols in Bible times.

Human beings cannot entirely suppress their sense of God and his present and future judgment; God himself will not let them do that. Some sense of right and wrong, as well as of being accountable to a holy divine judge, always remains. In our fallen world all whose minds are not in some way impaired have a conscience that at some points directs them and from time to time condemns them, telling them that they ought to suffer for wrongs they have done (Rom. 2:14ff); and when conscience speaks in these terms it is in truth the voice of God.

Fallen humankind is in one sense ignorant of God, since what people like to believe, and do in fact believe, about the objects of their worship falsifies and distorts the revelation of God they cannot escape. In another sense, however, all human beings remain aware of God, guiltily, with uncomfortable inklings of

coming judgment that they wish they did not have. Only the gospel of Christ can speak peace to this distressful aspect of the human condition. ■



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Don't Leave Your Brains at the Box Office

— On Nurturing Prudence, Not Prudishness.



Steven Garber

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

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

I am often in the position of arguing for the truthfulness of the Christian view of life and the world. My teaching and my writing seem to focus on the questions: Is it really true? What difference does it make?

Recently I gave a lecture where I tried to weave together the meaning of several films, always making the matter of truthfulness the central issue. In the question time that followed, a thoughtful adult said, "I have watched a lot of films over the years, but I have never thought of asking the question: 'Is it true?'"

As I work with that question and its relevance for Christian discipleship in our generation, I come back again and again to an essay by Harry Stein which first appeared in *Esquire* in 1980. Teasingly titled, "The Big A: Like to sneak around, tell lies, feel guilty? Try adultery," it is now one of many such delights in *Ethics (and other liabilities)*. Stein is one of the best writers doing "street-level" ethics, in large part because he is characteristically honest about what he sees and hears. "The Big A" acknowledges that the image is not the reality. The films, the music, and the advertisements simply do not portray the meaning of adultery and assorted other unfaithful relationships.

I thought about this again this last spring when I spent an evening with my twelve year-old daughter looking for a swimming suit. My wife had taken her to the local mall, and they had come back empty-handed and frustrated. There just didn't seem to be many good choices for girls who wanted something pretty but not promiscuous. So I offered an evening at the regional "mega mall."

After walking through the five huge anchor department stores, we concluded that French-cut and phosphorescent was all there was. At the last store I protested to the manager, asking "Do you expect us to be happy with these choices?" With a shrug of the shoulders, she said a thousand words about her lack of responsibility.

We eventually found a sporting-goods store with a splendid supply of Speedos, the classic racing suit. My daughter was very happy with the styles and colors, and she made a choice which pleased both of us.

As we walked out of the mall, she and I talked about "the search for the swimming suit" and what it meant about growing up in America. We ranged over the music, the billboards, the magazine, and TV advertisements... all of which have one message on this subject: there is a direct link between promiscuity and happiness. As the bumper sticker baldly puts it, "Sworn to fun! Loyal to none!"

In a hundred ways our culture teaches our young a big lie about the meaning of marriage. Nowhere on the billboards driving home did we see the reality of the "The Big A" and the sneaking and lying and guilt which are always and everywhere a part of unfaithful relationships. In fact, where in our consumer culture do we ever see the presupposition of promiscuity followed to its own logic? Instead it is one subtle lie after another. When all is said and done, the message is clear: being sexually faithful is no fun!

Films are a fascinating expression of this, as they both reflect and promote a society's understanding of life and the world, i.e., its assumptions and postulates. Every film does both, though not because the directors are propagandists, usually. Rather it is inherent in the very meaning of art: painting, sculpture,

"Don't Leave Your Brains at the Box Office" originally appeared in *Critique*, a publication of Ransom Fellowship, and a shorter version also appeared in *Christian Home and School* (May/June 1992).

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music, and film. So, an important question for us is, "What vision of human sexuality and marital responsibility is reflected and promoted in the films of our day?"

Sometimes it is not so much what is said, but what is not said. Take *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* for example.

Based on the 13th-century *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, this final Indiana Jones film takes us back to his childhood in the early decades of this century, and explains the origins of his archaeological interests, e.g., his archaeologist father (Sean Connery) has spent his life in pursuit of the Holy Grail. Very loosely, the film is an adventure-filled account of Indiana and his father finding the ancient cup.

At a certain point in the story, father and son end up in an Austrian castle which is overrun with Nazis. One in particular, a beautiful, blonde double agent, causes their downfall. The audience knows something that the Joneses don't: she has slept with both father and son. At a critical moment, the unsuspecting son is suckered; but surprisingly, the father knows better.

When they have time to reflect on what happened, Indiana asks his father how he knew that she was a Nazi? Without a blink, he acknowledges, "She talks in her sleep." The next few seconds communicate volumes about the meaning of sexual faithfulness, in and out of marriage. There is no dialogue. What passes between father and son is a simple smile. Period. No comment. No judgment. Only a smile.

Spielberg and company want us to smile too. Do we? If we do, we give up too much, as we betray our deepest commitments about reality, and the meaning of marriage. And why is that? Because we really do live in God's world, after all. Even Harry Stein knows that. Like to sneak around, tell lies, feel guilty? Try adultery. In other words, break God's laws... and they will break you.

The Last Crusade is a poor imitation of the original, and a universe away from its moral vision. For seven centuries, its unknown author has inspired countless others who have tried to retell the incredible adventure of King

Arthur's Knights of the Round Table, and their pursuit of the Holy Grail. Originally written as a guide to discipleship (see the Penguin Classics version), it told the tale of Lancelot, Galahad, and others, who in the name of Christ free maidens in distress, fight vicious knights, and keep themselves from sexual sin.

Did you get that?

Once again, slowly. They keep themselves from sexual sin. Simply, plainly, on the basis of the cross of Christ, they remember to remember the power of the resurrection to deliver them from temptation. This happens on a number of occasions. And there are no punches pulled; the sexual pressure is on! Perceval provides an incredible example of this, when he finds himself lured into the arms of a seductress who has planned long and hard for his fall. At the critical moment, he sees the hilt of his sword—which resembles a cross—and "he came to his senses.... Gracious Lord Jesus Christ, let me not perish here but succor me by Thy grace or I am lost!"

Lancelot's adultery with Queen Guinevere adds another and deeper dimension to this study in the moral meaning of marriage. The most virtuous of all the knights—brave and kind in every way—he has compromised himself with Arthur's queen, and no one knows. But then, along the quest, he falls flat on his face for the first time in his life. As he tries to recover, he meets a holy man who asks question after question, and finally uncovers Lancelot's sin.

His final question is this: what are you going to do about it, Lancelot? Penitence won't take you very far; a true repentance is required. Will you be faithful to Christ, or not? It is a critical question for people in every generation, young and old alike.

I would guess that our children, like most American children, are more familiar with Indiana Jones than they are with Lancelot. And yet if they are to grow into people whose characters are marked by real courage—not the hollowed-out version of Indiana Jones—then we will need to

(continued on page 10)

Originally written as a guide to discipleship, [The Quest of the Holy Grail] told the tale of Lancelot, Galahad, and others, who in the name of Christ free maidens in distress, fight vicious knights, and keep themselves from sexual sin.

Don't Leave Your Brains at the Box Office

(continued from page 9)

nurture in them a moral imagination which can distinguish between prudence and prudishness.

The one is a virtue shaped by a biblical way of life, the wisdom and discipline of Proverbs 1, and therefore is integrally bound up with truth. The proverbs are given "for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair" (1:3). Throughout we are taught that there is a profound relation between prudence and doing good: "A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it" (22:3). Because his moral imagination is so shaped by the Scriptures, he is not taken in—he sees the world as it really is—in contrast, the fool walks right on in to a moral mess, probably taking others with him in his suffering.

The portrait of a life rooted in the truth is told in a way that none can miss, in the story of the young man out for an evening walk (chapter 7). He was not planning on adultery that night, but of course that is in the very nature of seduction. His lack of prudence and discipline, though, made him an easy mark for the adulteress, whose invitation—"Come, let's drink deep of love till morning; let's enjoy ourselves with love!"—he takes all too seriously, as if love was what was really being offered. He is compared to an ox going to the slaughter, a deer stepping into a noose, and a bird darting into a snare.

Perhaps the most respected scholar of "the ethic of virtue" is Josef Pieper. In his monograph, *Prudence*, he maintains that "Prudence means that realization of the good presupposes knowledge of reality. He alone can do good who knows what things are like and what their situation is." So, again, prudence—seeing the world truthfully, as it really is—gives us the possibility of doing good. The morally naive young man of Proverbs 7 was more like Indiana Jones than Perceval.

But prudence is not prudishness. It is not

easy, but we must teach our children the difference and the difference it makes. We are not shamed by God's good gifts of sexuality. Of all people on the face of the earth, we should be the first to celebrate them. Nakedness is a wonderful gift of a good God, but like all of God's gifts, it has a time and place.

Prudence is seeing the world in a truthful way. It is seeing the world the way it really is, understanding the meaning of sexual faithfulness and unfaithfulness. We know that "The Big A" always includes sneaking around, telling lies, and feeling guilty—and so we are not taken in.

A few summers ago, I was teaching in a residential study program, and mentioned that the film *Dangerous Liaisons* was a more truthful film than most I had seen. Some eyebrows raised. What could he possibly mean? Weren't there bottoms bared? I make no defense of the rawness, and as a film I commend it to no one for precisely that reason. And yet...the marrow of its message is that people live in God's world after all. Sexual unfaithfulness finally breaks the heroine (Glenn Close), and she comes to see a little bit of her humanness as a woman made in the image of God.

The very same point is made in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* which is based on the novel by Milan Kundera. Can sex be divorced from love? Can love be nourished without fidelity? Never in God's world, the film maintains. All is bared, once again, which is sad, for many reasons. And yet...the movie tells the truth about the meaning of marriage. That is not a small thing in a world like ours.

There are few with so keen an understanding of life and love and lies as the British (and Christian) poet Steve Turner, who put it like this in "The Lying Blues:"

*Looking at the adverts
They were lies all dressed to kill
Looked at the adverts*

*Prudence
is seeing the
world in a
truthful way.
It is seeing
the world
the way it
really is,
understanding
the meaning
of sexual
faithfulness
and
unfaithfulness.*

*They were lies all dressed to kill
I dropped my guard to give
a laugh out loud
And they came in and took my will*

Sometimes the lies are so subtle, that we don't see them until it's too late. Remember Indiana Jones. But we lose too much—our very selves, actually—when we leave our brains at the box office.

What kind of questions do we ask, as we listen and read and watch? The next time you see a film, carry a note pad in with your popcorn. On it, write the words, "Is it true?" And then take notes as you watch. I have taken three groups of friends recently to see *Howard's End*, the E.M. Forster novel-made-film. Its large themes of responsibility and grace are shaped by a moral universe where human beings make real choices which have real consequences. Each time we have gone for ice cream, and "a good discussion was had by all..." Central to the conversations was the question, "Is it True?"

What questions are our children learning to ask? A few months ago I invited about fifteen 5th-7th grade friends of my children to go to the recently released French film *My Father's Glory*. It is a wonderful reminiscence of childhood, by Marcel Pagnol, who became France's best-known film director. Afterwards we all came back to our house for pizza and a conversation. I asked two questions: what in the film was true to how God made the world? What in the film was not true to how God made the world? We had a rousing discussion for a half hour. The questions, in themselves, are shaped by beliefs about the meaning of life and the world, and that is very intentional. The children are being trained to think Christianly...about music and books and films.

In a profound way, good questions are rooted in good character. They are habits of heart and mind... characteristic questions flowing out of characteristic belief and behavior. As people and parents, we need to care about both. Sometime, someday, our

children will be on their own, trying to live in but not of the world. Will they have the tools they need? Are we helping them to discern between wisdom and foolishness, between truth and lies?

Good questions and good character. Together they give our children the skills to negotiate a world where the lies are all dressed to kill. ■

"Don't Leave Your Brains at the Box Office" originally appeared in Critique, a publication of Ransom Fellowship, and a shorter version also appeared in Christian Home and School (May/June 1992).

Ransom Fellowship is a writing and speaking ministry designed to help Christians develop skill in discernment—by which we mean skill in studying the Scriptures and applying the truth of God's Word to all of life and culture.

For more information or to receive a sample copy of Ransom's newsletters, *Critique* and *Notes from Toad Hall*, please log on to our website at:

www.RansomFellowship.org

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The Da Vinci Code—Decoded

(continued from page 5)

I'm sure Brown considered this type of ending. The problem (maybe Dan Brown realized this) is that the Church would have said, "So what?"

2. Was Jesus' divinity invented at Nicea? Was he "until that moment" thought to be "a mortal prophet" (p. 233)?
Answer: Absolutely not.

In my files I have four typewritten pages of verses that all point directly to Jesus' deity. Just a couple New Testament verses: Paul, writing in the 50s AD: Phil 2:6—Jesus is the very "nature of God" (*morphe Theou*); Col 1:15-16—He (Christ) is the "image of the invisible God ... by him all things were created." The classic verse is John 1:1—"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God."

Also note quotes from various Church fathers before the Council at Nicea in 325 AD:

- "God Himself was manifested in human form." (Ignatius, 105 AD)
- "It is fitting that you should think of Jesus Christ as God." (Clement, 150 AD)
- "The Father of the universe has a Son. And He...is even God." (Justin Martyr, 160 AD)
- "He is God." (Irenaeus, 180 AD)
- "Christ our God." (Tertullian, 200 AD)
- "No one should be offended that the Savior is also God." (Origen, 225 AD)
- "He is not only man but God also." (Novatian, 235 AD)
- "Jesus Christ our Lord and God." (Cyprian, 250 AD)

(Above quotes from *Cracking DaVinci's Code*, p. 94)

Jesus' divinity was proposed from the beginning of Christianity, and Brown's claim that "until that moment in history (325 AD) Jesus

was viewed as a mortal prophet" (p. 233) is clearly false. Whether he was deity or not is one kind of question. Whether he was believed to be deity (before 325 AD) is another. That he was believed to be God prior to Nicea is not in doubt.

3. Were eighty gospels excluded to focus on four?
Answer: Darrell Bock, in his helpful book, *Breaking the DaVinci Code*, says that this may be the most misleading statement of all (p. 62).

In the Gnostic Gospels found at Nag Hammadi, there are only five gospels—Truth, Thomas, Philip, Egyptians, and Mary. In Bentley Layton's *Gnostic Scriptures*, there are only three gospels. Harvard professor Helmut Koester lists a total of 60 extra-biblical documents—most are not gospels.

With respect to the four gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they seem to have been accepted and circulated together from the earliest of times. Martin Hengel, German scholar, says that the Gospels first circulated between 69 AD and 100 AD. The case can be made [come to the C.S. Lewis Institute Conference, "Can You Trust the Bible?," May 21-22, 2004 or order the conference recordings; see the back page of this issue] that the New Testament books were accepted as authoritative from the beginning. The Church didn't create the canon (it only acknowledged those already accepted), but the canon created the Church.

Four-fifths of the New Testament books (the *prolegomena*) were universally accepted by all (including the four gospels). There were, to be sure, some like Marcion (90 AD-160 AD) who very early objected to the accepted books and attempted to alter the list. He put forth a truncated version of Luke and ten of Paul's letters, all cleansed of Old Testament influences. The immediacy of the acceptance of Paul's writings as authoritative is indicated in Peter's referring to Paul's writings as Scripture (II Peter 3:16). Paul, writing very early, refers to a passage from the Gospel of Luke as Scripture (I Tim 5:18; Luke 10:7). In Galatians 6:16 Paul talks about the rule to

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be followed—the *Kanon* [Gr.]—being the teachings of the apostles.

The Muratorian Canon, from 200 AD (or earlier) lists the books accepted everywhere including all our present New Testament books except for Hebrews, James, and I and II Peter. All the early Church fathers accepted the four gospels. There is no record of these other Gnostic gospels being accepted in the early church. (For a more detailed account, see F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, as well as the books on *The Da Vinci Code* at the end of this article.)

4. Do the Gnostic Gospels show us the true Jesus? Does the Nag Hammadi discovery of Gnostic texts “highlight discrepancies and fabrications ... [of] the modern Bible”? (p. 234). Are these scrolls the “earliest Christian records”? (p. 245).

Answer: NO.

First, Gnosticism and Christianity are totally incompatible (See Bock, *Breaking the DaVinci Code*, chapter 4). Second, the argument for a pre-Christian Gnosticism tried by Bultmann in the last generation and by the Jesus Seminar and Elaine Pagels in this generation is very thin. For instance, the Gospel of Thomas found in full Coptic manuscript dated 350 AD (we have earlier Greek fragments) is argued to be as early or earlier than the four gospels. Why? Because it is similar to Q (from the German *quelle*, meaning “source”), the hypothetical—we don’t know whether it ever existed—document containing the material, primarily sayings, that is common to Matthew and Luke but not in Mark. Since the Gospel of Thomas has only sayings, it is suggested, therefore, that the Gospel of Thomas is Q. The argument is a little more complex than that—but not much more so. (See *Thomas Gospel Tizzy* by J.P. Holding, found in the resources of <http://frontline.to>)

Consider that:

- (1) No one has ever seen Q—there is no early church evidence that it existed.
- (2) There is no need for Q to exist, because Luke could have used Mark and Matthew as sources (See Luke 1:1-4).
- (3) There is no reason to think that the Gospel of Thomas is Q or related to

Q—except that it has sayings.

- (4) All the New Testament books, according to liberal scholar J.A.T. Robinson, can reasonably be dated earlier than 70 AD (*Redating the New Testament*).
- (5) The Gospel of Thomas in full manuscript in Coptic is dated 305 AD. Earlier Greek fragments may point to a date as early as 150 AD (but not earlier).

If you make the original Jesus a Gnostic and the Gospel of Thomas the earliest Gospel, then you have to explain the “invention” of a Jewish Jesus with such excellent early credentials:

- Paul had his gospel blessed by the first apostles in Jerusalem in the 30s AD. He wrote in the late 40s and 50s without any direct reference to Gnosticism.
- The early apostolic tradition goes from the apostle John to Polycarp to Irenaeus—without a hint of an “original” Gnostic Jesus.

It seems that the Jewish Jesus came first and then the Gnostic aberration came later, not the other way round. Proponents of Dan Brown’s position have to date the four Gospels as late as possible—against the evidence—and date the Gospel of Thomas—with no evidence—far earlier than seems justifiable.

Does the Gospel of Thomas exalt the sacred feminine? See Gospel of Thomas (Saying 114): “Simon Peter said to them ‘Mary should leave us, for females are not worthy of life.’ Jesus said, ‘See I am going to attract her to make her male so that she might become a living spirit that resembles you males. For every female that makes itself male will enter the Kingdom of heaven.’” It seems that this Gnostic was a sexist and was far from the superior view of the four gospels—and far from the Sacred Feminine Brown desires.

When Robinson wrote his book arguing that the whole New Testament can reasonably be dated earlier than 70 AD, he took a lot of heat from fellow liberal scholars. C.H.

(continued on page 16)

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Prayer: Thanksgiving

by J. Oswald Sanders

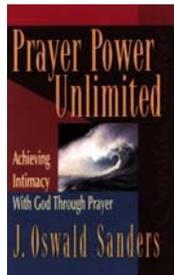
Reprinted by permission from his book *Prayer Power Unlimited*



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

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

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



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

of failure and disappointment.

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

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

*Give thanks
unto the LORD...*

Psalm 118:1 KJV

The second element in prayer is thanksgiving, which is the glad and appreciative acknowledgment of the benefits and blessings God gives, either to ourselves or to others. It is an integral part of prayer, not an addendum to it.

Thanksgiving is to be distinguished from worship, for thanksgiving is not so much occupation with the perfections of God as it is the grateful acknowledgment of the love and kindness He has lavished on us. Worship easily and naturally leads us to thanksgiving, for God's perfections find expression in the daily gifts and blessings He gives.

Even if Scripture did not exhort us to give thanks always and for all things, common courtesy would accord a prominent place to thanksgiving in our prayer life, for we are constantly at the receiving end of God's generosity. Appreciation is the basis of healthy human relationships, and it is surely no less important in our relationship with God.

Aristotle called Memory the scribe of the soul, and it is good for us to let her do her work.

The Psalms abound in thanksgiving. "O give thanks unto the LORD" (Psalm 118:1, KJV). "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits" (Psalm 103:2). "Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; for His lovingkindness is everlasting" (Psalm 118:1).

The prayers of our Lord were not lacking in this element. The occasions on which it is recorded that He gave thanks are significant

but rather unexpected: At the grave of Lazarus (John 11:41); when He fed the five thousand (John 6:11); when the seventy returned with shouts of victory (Luke 10:21, KJV); when He instituted the Lord's Supper, giving thanks for the bitter cup He was to drink (Luke 22:19).

We too should call to mind the Lord's dealings with us—His mercies, which are new every morning (Lam 3:22-23), and the temporal gifts that recur with such regularity. We are unconscious of a great many of our blessings; they therefore go unacknowledged. "I have experienced today the most exquisite pleasure that I have ever had in my life," said a young invalid; "I was able to breathe freely for about five minutes."

Psalms 103 is a classic of worship blended with thanksgiving. A paraphrase by Dr. A. B. Bruce provides a model for our emulation.

God is a beneficent Being. He delights to bestow penitence, He forgives sin, heals diseases, saves life, crowning His worshippers with garlands of love and mercy, and making their hearts young with gladness. He is a righteous God who espouses the cause of the oppressed and shields them from wrong; a magnanimous God, who bears patiently our shortcomings with a Father's heart, full of pity towards frail men, subject to infirmity and pain. He is mighty as well as merciful, sitting in majesty on His heavenly throne, and ruling as King over all, receiving perfect obedience from the manifold powers of His universe, which do His will and show His glory.

The psalmist's heart overflowed in thanksgiving and praise as he meditated on these themes, but he was conscious of the tendency that we know only too well—failure to give thanks for blessings received and prayers answered. So he apostrophizes his soul: "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and *forget none of His benefits*" (Psalm 103:2, italics added). We should have a definite time every day when we remember these with gratitude.

Thankful For Everything?

Thanksgiving is not difficult when it flows from our recognition of the temporal and spiritual blessings that we consider desirable. But what of the burdens and disciplines, the sufferings and sorrows of life? Surely we cannot be expected to give thanks for those! But this is exactly what God does expect us to do. We are left with no option if we are His obedient children. "In *everything* give thanks" (1 Thess 5:18, italics added). "*Always* giving thanks for *all things*" (Eph 5:20, italics added). These commands are devastatingly inclusive.

No one would suggest that this is always easy, but it is always possible, or God would not expect it of us. There is an Arab proverb that says, "All sunshine makes a desert," and it is true that if life were all joy and prosperity, unmixed with sorrow and adversity, our characters would be immeasurably the poorer. Our loving Father knows the exact proportions in which to mix these ingredients, and we should thankfully and without question accept His dealings with us as the very best for us.

The correct response of the heart is expressed in The Scottish Prayer Book: "We praise Thee for the grace by which Thou dost enable us so to bear the ills of the present world, that our souls are enriched by a fuller experience of Thy love, a more child-like dependence on Thy will, and a deeper sympathy with the suffering and the sad."

On His way to exile, Chrysostom exclaimed, "Thank God for everything!" Thanking God in one of his matchless letters, Samuel Rutherford wrote, "O, what I owe to the furnace, the file and the hammer of my Lord Jesus!"

A missionary was greatly discouraged. He knew that his work was not progressing as it should. One day, while visiting another missionary, he saw a motto card on the wall: TRY THANKSGIVING! It was an arrow to his soul. He suddenly realized that this element had been largely missing from his prayers.

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The Da Vinci Code – Decoded

(continued from page 13)

Dodd (fellow scholar) wrote to J.A.T. Robinson, sympathizing with him:

You are certainly justified in questioning the whole structure of critical chronology of the New Testament writings, which avoids putting anything earlier than 70 AD so that none of them are available for anything like first generation testimony. I should quite agree that much of this late dating is quite arbitrary, even wanton, the offspring not of any argument that can be presented, but rather the position of the critics' prejudice that if he appears to assent to the traditional position of the early church he will be thought no better than a stick in the mud.

This same "quite arbitrary, even wanton prejudice" can be applied to those that date the Gospel of Thomas and other Gnostic gospels earlier than the Four Gospels. N.T. Wright says that the Gnostic writings disappeared from view because their writings have no narrative power. In other words, they are boring. In fact, if these were of the original Jesus, he would have disappeared from historical view in the first century.

5. Did Christianity hurt the dignity, worth, and value of women?

Answer: Yes and no.

There are to be sure tragic examples of sexism throughout the Church's history. If you look at these injustices, wrongs, and evils, the answer to the above question is "yes." However, if you look at the biblical teaching – that both male and female are made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-28), you will find a basis for the equal worth, value, and dignity of men and women. The apostle Paul maintains that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). It is because of these and other biblical teachings that some in the Church have had a prophetic role in speaking against and reversing injustices to women. For instance:

- abolition of wife burning at funerals in India.
- abolition of foot binding in China.
- The feminist movement started in a Wesleyan Church in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 – hosted by Christians.

- Believers are at the forefront of the effort to stop sexual slavery in our time.

Mardi Keyes from the Boston L'Abri has sometimes spoken on a Christian view of feminism on secular college campuses. In such talks, her approach goes something like this: Your feminism is fueled by your view – rightly so – that injustice, oppression, and evil things have been done to women. However, feminism has often chosen spiritualities that have no solid basis to call anything good or evil, just or unjust, right or wrong. Atheism has no basis for absolute moral values. Hinduism and Buddhism deny the ultimate distinction between good and evil. Even the most popular spirituality for radical feminism – neo-paganism, otherwise known as Wicca, the Craft, the Goddess movement (Dan Brown's Sacred Feminine) – strongly repudiates any absolute distinction between good and evil. It's only if you have a God who reveals a fixed standard for justice, good, and right that you have an adequate basis for injustice, evil, and wrong.

Mardi's argument is true and profound. Dan Brown's chosen spirituality, the Goddess movement or the Sacred Feminine, views good and evil as different sides of the same coin. At a meeting of neo-pagans, thirteen principles were agreed upon. One was "We do not accept any concept of absolute evil." Neo-pagan Erica Jong says,

"Satanists...accept the duality between good and evil; pagans do not....Pagans see good and evil as allied, in fact, indivisible."

Starhawk, one of the best known advocates of the Goddess movement, says: "In Witchcraft, the dark waning aspect of the God is not evil – it is a vital part of the natural structure." Philip Davis, in his recent book *Goddess Unmasked*, says that neo-paganism's "denial of the transcendent essentially eliminates any foundation for absolute moral evil....In the goddess movement, consequently, the neo-pagan rejection of moral limits is most fully articulated in the realm of sex." It is this kind of relativism, the smashing of traditional moral boundaries, that is behind Brown's view of sex. However, once you pull the rug from under clear, fixed moral limits, you also have no clear basis whatsoever for the many moral judgments Brown has his characters make about Christianity, and other issues, including wrong treatment of women.

*Dan Brown's
chosen
spirituality, the
Goddess
movement or the
Sacred Feminine,
views good and
evil as different
sides of the
same coin.*

6. Was the Priory of Sion a keeper of the secret of the Holy Grail since 1099 as maintained on Dan Brown's "Fact" page?

Answer: It's all a hoax.

Supposedly, Knights Templar discovered a long lost document showing the history of this movement of which Leonardo DaVinci was said to be Grand Master from 1510-1519, and revealing the true nature of the "Holy Grail." Brown relies on the 1982 book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, and its authors relied on documents provided by Frenchman Pierre Plantard (who had spent time in jail for fraud in 1953). In 1954, Plantard and five other men started a small social club called the "Priory of Sion." (The club's first public notice was in 1956.) Its main goal initially was advocating low-cost housing in France. However, in the 1960s and 1970s, Plantard forged a series of documents "proving" the existence of a bloodline from Mary Magdalene to the Kings of France. As early as 1971, one of Plantard's club members, Philippe de Cherisey, publicly admitted that the parchments were forgeries. Plantard confirmed this fraud to French author Jean-Luc Chaumeil but later tried to redeem himself by saying that the forgeries were copies of original documents. Even later, he invented other documents with a whole new scheme, but Plantard made a fatal mistake—he listed one of the friends of the French president as a Grand Master of the Priory of Sion. In 1993, eleven years after *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, in a legal proceeding:

...Plantard forged
a series of
documents
"proving" the
existence of a
bloodline from
Mary Magdalene
to the Kings of
France.

- Plantard testified under oath that he had made up the whole "Priory of Sion" scheme.
- The court ordered a search of Plantard's house and found other documents "proving" that Pierre Plantard was the true King of France. The judge gave Plantard a stern warning and dismissed him as a harmless crank.
- Numerous books and articles (many French books and articles are untranslated) reveal Plantard's hoax. Yet, millions of readers believe it to be fact. (For further information, go to Peter Jones and James Garlow's excellent book *Cracking DaVinci's Code* (pp. 112-113) or a helpful web site: priory-of-sion.com).

Conclusion

What about the central contentions of Brown's book:

1. What evidence is there that Jesus was married to Mary? – *None.*
2. Was Jesus' deity first thought up at the Council of Nicea, 325 AD? – *Absolutely not.*
3. Were 80 gospels excluded in order to keep four? – *This is a serious distortion of facts.*
4. Were the Gnostic Gospels about the true original Jesus? – *There is plenty of evidence against this idea and nothing of substance for it.*
5. Did Christianity help or hurt the dignity, worth, and value of women? – *Certainly, many Christians have hurt women in words and deeds. But, the revelation given in the Bible provides a solid basis to prophetically challenge such injustice, wrong words, or evil deeds. This solid moral ground is lacking in relativist views such as atheism, New Age, and above all in Dan Brown's preferred Goddess spirituality.*
6. Was the Priory of Sion a keeper of the Secret of the Holy Grail since 1099? – *No – this is Plantard's hoax, which he admitted under oath in 1993 and documented in many articles and books since that time.*

This is not the end of the discussion or even the beginning of the end (we still have a movie to endure), but it is perhaps the end of the beginning. ■

Recommended Resources:

BOOKS:

- Breaking the DaVinci Code*, by Darrell Bock (Thomas Nelson, 2004).
Excellent work documenting the evidence that Jesus was never married and giving a thorough discussion of the Gnostic Gospels.
- Cracking DaVinci's Code*, by Peter Jones and James Garlow (Victor, 2004). *Another excellent work; looks at aspects of the Goddess movement, the nature of our sexuality, the canon, the Priory of Sion, and other relevant subjects. Very readable.*

RECORDINGS:

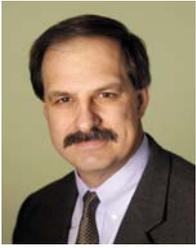
- The Da Vinci Code Decoded*, a C.S. Lewis Institute Seminar, March 27, 2004 with speakers Art Lindsley and Catherine Sanders. Go to www.cslewisinstitute.org to order.

WEB SITES:

- priory-of-sion.com
- frontline.to See especially "Resources."

Profiles in Faith: Perpetua

(continued from page 1)



Mark Galli is managing editor of Christianity Today. He has also been an editor with Christian History and Leadership. He has written a number of books, the most recent being *Francis of Assisi and His World* (Lion/InterVarsity, 2001). He is married with three children, and is a member of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Glen Ellyn, Illinois. He enjoys fly fishing, when he can find the time.

Perpetua was touched but remained unshaken. She tried to comfort her father—"It will all happen in the prisoner's dock as God wills, for you may be sure that we are not left to ourselves but are all in his power"—but he walked out of the prison dejected.

The day of the hearing arrived, and Perpetua and her friends were marched before the governor, Hilarianus. Perpetua's friends were questioned first, and each in turn admitted to being a Christian, and each in turn refused to make a sacrifice (an act of emperor worship). Then the governor turned to question Perpetua.

At that moment, her father, carrying Perpetua's son in his arms, burst into the room. He grabbed Perpetua and pleaded, "Perform the sacrifice. Have pity on your baby!"

Hilarianus, probably wishing to avoid the unpleasantness of executing a mother who still suckled a child, added, "Have pity on your father's gray head; have pity on your infant son. Offer the sacrifice for the welfare of the emperor."

Perpetua replied simply: "I will not."

"Are you a Christian then?" asked the governor.

"Yes I am," Perpetua replied.

Her father interrupted again, begging her to sacrifice, but Hilarianus had heard enough: he ordered soldiers to beat him into silence. He then condemned Perpetua and her friends to die in the arena.

Perpetua, her friends, and her slave, Felicitas (who had subsequently been arrested), were dressed in belted tunics. When they entered the stadium, wild beasts and gladiators roamed the arena floor, and in the stands, crowds roared to see blood. They didn't have to wait long.

Immediately a wild heifer charged the group. Perpetua was tossed into the air and onto her back. She sat up, adjusted her ripped tunic, and walked over to help Felicitas. Then a leopard was let loose, and it wasn't long before the tunics of the Christians were stained with blood.

This was too deliberate for the impatient crowd, which began calling for death for

the Christians. So Perpetua, Felicitas, and friends were lined up, and one by one, were slain by the sword. ■

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Prayer: Thanksgiving

(continued from page 15)

There had been plenty of asking God for things he desired and needed; he had asked desperately at times, but had forgotten to thank Him for what he received. He began to count his blessings and to pour out his heart in thanksgiving.

At once the power of the Spirit began to surge through him, and the work at his missionary center began to prosper. His lack of thanksgiving had been quenching the working of the Holy Spirit. Have we been guilty of the same sin?

The old couplet runs, "Prayers and praises go in pairs, they have praises who have prayers," and this should be true of us. John Newton, the converted slave-trader, used to give thanksgiving a practical twist by saying that true thanksgiving is thanksgiving.

When we reach heaven and are in the immediate presence of God, other aspects of prayer will cease, as being no longer necessary or appropriate; but thanksgiving and worship will continue throughout eternity.

Prayer

Father, with thankful and humble hearts we appear before Thee. We would thank Thee for all the benefits that we have received from Thy goodness. It is to Thy blessing that we owe what success we have found. Every opportunity for doing good, each victory we have gained over ourselves, every thought of Thy presence, are alike Thy gifts to us. The best thanksgiving we can offer Thee is to live according to Thy holy will.

Michael Sailer ■

Revival Transforms the Frontier

(continued from page 27)

century. Presbyterians started the revival, but it was Baptists and especially the Methodists—men like Francis Asbury and Peter Cartwright—who carried it forward.

During the main revival period the Methodists could boast an average yearly increase of 2,000 members. The Methodist Western Conference had a membership of 2,700 before the revival; after the revival the number had leaped to 12,000.

In Kentucky from 1799 to 1803 an estimated 10,000 were added to the Baptist churches. The Presbyterians also gained, though later schisms were responsible for that church losing ground in the West.

New Denominations Formed

The Cumberland Presbyterian Church was formed by Barton W. Stone and others. This split was the result of a softening of their ideas on the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. In contrast to the emphasis on divine sovereignty in the Great Awakening, the central doctrine of the Revival of 1800 was human responsibility and duty.

Another new group coming out of the revival was the Campbellites (now called the Disciples of Christ). They formed as a protest against organized religion, professing to pattern their assemblies on the New Testament standard. That is why they called themselves simply “Christians.”

Aside from the numerical additions to the churches, what were the results of the revival? There were many. The Revival of 1800 put the toddling baby nation solidly on its feet. It stabilized the West. During the revival travelers in Kentucky found the people “as remarkable for sobriety as they had formerly been for dissolution and immorality.” Kentucky, one traveler said, was “the most moral place I had ever seen.”

As pioneers moved farther westward, they were heavily leavened with sound Christians. The church became a major factor in the fight against lawlessness. And eventually it triumphed.

One of the proudest achievements of the Revival of 1800 was the impetus it gave to missions. In the shelter of a haystack during a storm a number of students at Williams College (which underwent a great revival) pledged themselves to lives of work for the

Kingdom of God. The outcome was the formation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. For twenty-seven years this was the agency that backed all Congregational, Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, and German Reformed missionaries. Another result of the haystack meetings was the formation of the American Bible Society.

The Sunday school movement in the United States got a tremendous push from the revival. The first Sunday School Union was formed in Philadelphia in 1791. It was the forerunner of the American Sunday School Union, started in 1824.

Antislavery sentiment sprouted during the revival. Barton W. Stone emancipated his slaves during the period. In 1818 the General Association of the Presbyterian Church indicted slavery.

The revival came at a time when the churches were just getting used to the idea of the disestablishment—separation from the state. The preaching of the freedom of the Gospel and the healthy influence of the revival put starch into their backs and made them able to stand alone.

Like the Great Awakening, this revival demonstrated that a revival cannot be pushed, pulled, and molded into any prearranged shape. Men were the instruments, but any time they tried to strait-jacket the revival they found themselves swept aside. In 1800 as in 1735 those who opposed the revival eventually came around to accepting its fruits as readily as those who backed it.

By the 1830s and '40s vocal resistance among Christians had all but died out. In fact, when by 1845 the revival fire had been doused by the rise of a national crisis, it was a matter of great concern among all church people.

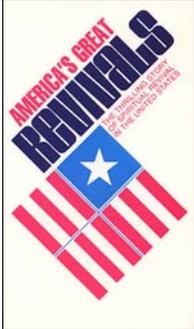
The Great Awakening of 1735 had successfully coped with the disease of spiritual indifference. The Revival of 1800 had triumphed over infidelity and skepticism. In 1845 an adolescent nation bitterly divided on the issue of slavery desperately needed a renewal of spiritual strength to carry it through the conflict soon to come.

In 1857—a little more than 100 years ago—God met that need through another mighty moving of the Holy Spirit. ■



Revival Transforms the Frontier

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



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

On a bleak and wintry day in 1794 twenty-three New England ministers sat down together to consider a problem that was pressing heavily upon them. They were disturbed about the spiritual condition of their country.

Here was the situation: The effects of the Great Awakening of 1735 had worn off. The seeds of infidelity, imported from revolutionary France and watered by such men as Thomas Paine, were yielding their poisonous fruit.

Eastern colleges were rife with the skepticism of the age. Lawlessness ruled on the Western frontier. People were floundering in the bog of confusion created by the French and Indian War and the Revolution. There were few churches, few praying people. The established churches, most of whom had sided with England in the struggle for independence, had lost their influence.

The ministers were agreed on one thing—a revival was desperately needed.

"What shall we do about it?" they asked themselves. The only answer: pray.

They issued a "circular letter" calling on church people to pray for revival. They were specific. Let there be "public prayer and praise, accompanied with such instruction from God's Word, as might be judged proper, on every first Tuesday, of the four quarters of the year, beginning with the first Tuesday of January, 1795, at two o'clock in the afternoon ... and so continuing from quarter to quarter, and from year to year, until, the good providence of God prospering our endeavors, we shall obtain the blessing for which we pray."

Apparently hearts were hungry, for there was an enthusiastic response.

All over the country little praying bands sprang up. In the West (Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee) "Covenants" were entered into by Christian people to spend a whole day each month in prayer plus a half-hour every Saturday night and every Sunday morning.

Seminary students met to study the history of revivals. Church members formed "Aaron and Hur Societies" to "hold up the hands" of their ministers through intercession. Groups of young men went to their knees to pray for other young men. Parents prayed for their children's conversion.

The stage was set. What happened as a result of this concerted prayer effort has gone down as the most far-reaching revival in American history.

Sparks Become Flames

Of course it didn't happen all at once. As far back as 1790 towns here and there were ignited by the spark of revival. But it wasn't until people began praying determinedly that the sparks became white-hot flames.

How did these revivals start? Dr. Edward O. Griffin, later president of Williams College, tells the story of revival in New Hartford, Connecticut.

"On the fourth of November [1795]," he wrote, "I went to the house of God saying, 'My soul, wait thou only, only, *only* upon God, for my expectation is from Him.' During the morning I scarcely looked at the audience and cared not whether they were asleep or awake, feeling that the question of a revival did not lie between me and them, but was to be settled in Heaven."

The gist of Griffin's message: the awful prospect for sinners in the middle life if another revival should not come in twelve or fifteen years.

"I seemed to take eternal leave of families out of Christ," said he. "I came near falling. I thought I should be obliged to stop, but I was carried through."

The next day it was apparent that a revival had come. A dozen families were under conviction. In the course of the winter and the next year about 100 were "hopefully added to the Lord."

Griffin wrote in 1839: "Revivals have

never ceased since then."

In Granville, Massachusetts, in 1799 two young men were seized violently ill at a dance and had to be carried out. One of them died—but not before he had told his weeping mother, "Oh, I cannot die; I am unprepared." A woman who had attended the same affair took cold and in a short time she too was near death.

Dancing Turns to Tears

The young people of the town were naturally sobered by these events. When the minister, Timothy M. Cooley, invited them to his study, they went willingly and listened attentively when he told them the "one thing needful." Later at a social gathering someone took out a violin and began to play it. This was usually the signal for an evening of fun and dancing. But instead, many broke down in tears. It wasn't long until conversions came—and a revival.

The revival in New England was solemn and orderly. There were tears and repentance and joy, but no spectacular events.

For instance, a pastor in Andover, Massachusetts, decided to hold classes for the young people of the town. They were given theological questions to answer. Afterward their papers were read without anyone knowing who wrote what.

The students began to think seriously of their souls. It was not long before several were converted, touching off a revival which lasted for eighteen months. A strange way for a revival to begin, perhaps—but that was the way it was.

There was no single man towering head and shoulders above others as did Jonathan Edwards in the Great Awakening. Instead, there were many leaders. To be sure, they were not big men in the sense that their names were on everyone's lips. Sometimes their influence was cradled in a single village. But they were big men in the sight of God.

Take Jeremiah Hallock. As a boy he "neither saw nor heard of awakenings," and "conviction, conversion and revivals were terms with which I was unacquainted."

But in 1779, when he was twenty-one, something happened to him. While he was

at work alone he was "impressed with a sense of his dependence on God" and "of the sinfulness of his heart." He afterward wrote, "The law of God appeared just, and I saw myself a sinner, and Christ and the way of salvation by Him looked pleasant."

Soon he was called to military duty in the Revolutionary War. He entered a barn with his fellow soldiers and "found myself surrounded by my young companions, exhorting them on the subject of religion."

Hallock was surprised to find himself in the middle of revival. Since there was no clergyman, Hallock was often called upon to lead the meetings. In a few months he entered ministerial training and in 1785 became pastor at West Simsbury, Connecticut, not far from New Hartford, where Edward Griffin was pastor. The two met together often to pray for a lasting revival.

In 1798 it came. But after a few weeks it showed signs of dying out as meeting attendance fell off. Hallock said: "We were greatly afraid that all was about to decline and die. This was indeed a trying hour. No fond parent ever watched the fever of his child at the hour of its crisis with more anxious and interested feelings, than numbers of God's praying friends watched the work of the Spirit at this critical moment. The thoughts of its going off were more dreadful than the grave."

His concern was rewarded. The meeting-house was filled night after night. In a few days Hallock counted sixty or seventy converts.

Not only were towns turned upside down in the Revival of 1800, but the colleges—where America's future leaders were being trained—did an about face.

Yale Shaken

At Yale College a revival "shook the institution to its center." God's instrument here was Timothy Dwight, grandson of Jonathan Edwards. Yale was such a hot-bed of infidelity that the students called each other by the names of Voltaire, Rousseau, and other French intellectuals.

Dwight became president in 1795. He met the situation head on. The students handed him a list of subjects for class disputation,

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There was no single man towering head and shoulders above others as...in the Great Awakening. Instead, there were many leaders. To be sure, they were not big men in the sense that their names were on everyone's lips....But they were big men in the sight of God.



Transitions That Have Shaped My Journey

by James Eckert

2003 Senior Professional Fellows Class



Jim Eckert

A native of Tyrone, Pennsylvania, Jim Eckert graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1963. He served 20 years in the Navy's Civil Engineer Corps, along the way earning his B.S.C.E. and M.S.C.E. from University of Michigan and taking post-graduate work at M.I.T. His service included posts in Thailand, Vietnam, and teaching at the Naval Academy.

In 1983, he retired from active duty and pursued his career in geotechnical engineering. In 1988, Jim and two others founded a new firm, Engineering Consulting Services, Ltd. (ECS). Jim retired in 2002 as Senior Vice President and Chief Engineer.

Jim and his wife, Cynthia, have four grown children and five grandchildren. They have been members of Reston Presbyterian Church for 24 years where they have served in various leadership roles. Jim also serves on the C.S. Lewis Institute Board of Directors and the boards of other non-profit organizations.

This has been a very good year, as was the previous year. This is certainly not a remarkable statement—except that in these two years I have been retiring from my second career as a partner in a consulting engineering firm that I helped to found in 1988.

The articles I read and the “pop wisdom” I heard warned that entering retirement was supposed to be traumatic. Instead, I have experienced an easy transition, because, once again, I have seen that the Lord has been preparing me for this new season of life. Looking back over the forty-two years since I trusted my heart to Christ, I can point to numerous times when discouragements and failures have been but a part of transitions that God has worked into my journey to prepare me for new directions and opportunities to serve Him. For me, calling has not been a single discovery, but a gradual uncovering along the way.

The Early Years

I grew up in a small Pennsylvania town with a big dream of going to the Naval Academy. Coming from a family where college was not the norm, this was considered a long shot. But God provided the opportunity, and I entered the Academy in July 1959.

My passion was submarines, and I took extra courses in nuclear engineering to better prepare for my career goal. However, on returning from my first class submarine cruise, I failed my commissioning physical due to poor vision. This not only disqualified me for submarine service, but also for the line, the main stream of the Navy. This was a time of great discouragement; my plans and four years of effort were scuttled simply by poor vision.

After reconciling myself to this new reality, I began to look at other options and discovered a small number of commissions into the Navy's Civil Engineer Corps. I soon realized that this was a natural fit for my academic strengths and would open new opportunities for a Navy career.

The challenges and experiences of the next

twenty years were very different than I had planned, but God was shaping me for His plans as I realized that I was more drawn to engineering than the military officer aspects of my career.

Early in my career I completed my bachelor's and master's degrees in civil engineering, and went on to serve as resident engineer in Sattahip, Thailand, with the “Seabees” in Vietnam, and as an engineering instructor at the Naval Academy. I then pursued an engineering doctorate at M.I.T.; however, after finishing my course work, a change in my educational goals coupled with the Navy's urgent need for an officer of my rank and background in Boston ended that time of study. This again was a great discouragement, but now I was learning to trust God's hand in my life.

After a year of duty in Boston, I was sent to Washington, D.C., and ultimately to an exchange duty with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This duty assignment was extended twice, so that the last six years of my Navy career were providing consulting geotechnical engineering support for coastal engineering projects around the country. Thus when I retired in 1983, I was very well prepared for my next transition, a career in consulting engineering with specialities in geotechnical and coastal engineering—God was again engineering my transitions..

Looking back over my career in the Navy, there were many rich opportunities to serve God, to be mentored by mature Christians, and to learn to mentor younger believers. I helped establish a regular worship service for the American community in Thailand, served three years as Officer Representative for Officers Christian Fellowship (O.C.F.) at the Naval Academy, and led Bible studies in many settings. One of the greatest joys in my 63 years has been the role I have been privileged to play in the lives of young men first at the Naval Academy, through O.C.F., and among the young engineers in the Navy and then in our consulting firm.

These were treasured opportunities in which God allowed me to be Christ's witness simply by being willing to talk when and where He prompted me.

My latest—but not last—transition is to retirement from engineering and a new season of my journey. This transition actually began in 1998 when I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. During those weeks of tests, surgery, and recovery, I spent a lot of time reflecting on my life and realized that many of the things I had striven to achieve did not satisfy the deeper needs of my heart. A second bout with cancer in 2000 took that reflection a great deal deeper.

So, when my wife, Cynthia, and I went with C.S. Lewis Institute to Oxford in 2001, I had been prepared for a new transition in life. My present return to health was clearly a gift from God; I found myself pondering on His purposes and plans for extending my years on earth. I was especially challenged by Oswald Chambers' writings on what it means to "finish well" life's journey.

In July 2001, at Oxford and some quiet dinners with Tom Tarrants, we explored what God had been teaching us, and where we were in our spiritual journey. Two realizations came from that time: First, being a "left brained" engineer, I have naturally gravitated towards a more intellectual faith and have lagged in allowing the Holy Spirit to develop a vital biblical spirituality in my own heart. Second, I received a quiet affirmation that God was leading me to be more involved in mentoring men.

Having served for several years on our church's session, I have watched up close men struggle in their walk of faith and have felt a continuing burden to mentor, equip, and disciple men in applying Christian principles to their lives. Many men in churches today are not from Christian families and came to Christ during their college years or later. Thus the mentoring that a Christian father would have provided must now be provided by Christian men around them.

As a mentor, I have learned that I do not have to have all the answers—I haven't even found all the questions. Instead, I just encourage, prompt with questions, support with prayer (an area which is a work in progress), and stay out of the Holy Spirit's way. Jim Houston's book, *The Mentored Life*, says

mentoring is not a formula but a heart attitude. It just takes a heart that is willing to be inconvenienced for others—another work God is doing in my heart. God has also used the mentoring of others to deepen me spiritually in my walk with Him.

One verse that has impressed itself on my heart is Paul's statement in Acts 13:36, "For when David had served God's purposes in his own generation, he fell asleep...." This passage speaks of David's death, but it says even more about his life and how he had faithfully served God. It brings me to ask, "What would it look like for me to 'serve God's purposes in my own time?'"

Recently when asked to work with this year's C.S. Lewis Senior Professional Fellows Men, I was pleased to sign up. When we laid out the syllabus for the year, we shaped it intentionally to challenge a group of men already steeped in life, strong in their faith, successful in their professional careers, and soon facing transitions in their lives and careers. We wanted to ask the question, "What does it mean to finish well?" In other words, "What do you want to do with the rest of your life?" For these men this is one of life's crucial questions. It is the reason many men struggle with retirement; they have not yet found a satisfying meaning to their lives, or the prizes that they have grasped for are fleeting. I recently read an article on Sam Ericsson, founder of Advocates International. It ends with the quote, "If I died today, I would die the most fulfilled man on the planet." His satisfaction isn't defined by the distance he has traveled or the accolades earned, but by how faithfully he has followed the Lord.

Years ago, a former mentor in my life sent me a postcard; it was his last communication to me before he went home. On it he wrote a question that has regularly challenged me in the intervening years: "Jim, are you still in God's hands a good instrument?" I believe that "finishing well" is to be able to answer "yes" to that question.

His question reflects the theme of II Corinthians that our sufficiency for any task is a gift from God. Paul says it well in 3:5 (ESV) "Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God who has made us competent..." I marvel at how He has shaped and equipped me by the transitions of my life, and I look forward to what is next. ■

"...are you still in God's hands a good instrument?" I believe that "finishing well" is to be able to answer "yes" to that question.

Revival Transforms the Frontier

(continued from page 21)

thinking to prove that free discussion was limited at Yale. To their surprise, Dwight chose the subject, "Is the Bible the Word of God?" He told the students to do their best.

Most of the students took the side of infidelity. But when the debate was over, Dwight's appraisal of their arguments convinced them they really didn't know what they were talking about.

Dwight then preached a famous series of sermons in the college chapel. Most devastating was his 1796 baccalaureate sermon on "The Nature and Danger of Infidel Philosophy."

The effect was immediate. "From that moment infidelity was not only without a stronghold," wrote a student, "but without a lurking place. To espouse her cause was now as unpopular as before it had been to profess a belief in Christianity."

That same year twenty-six Yale students founded the Moral Society of Yale College. It discouraged profanity, immorality, and intemperance. By 1800 it included "between one-third and one-half of all the students in its membership." Its influence laid the foundation for four revivals at Yale in the opening decades of the nineteenth century.

While New England society was being revolutionized through revival, the settlements of the West were being awakened by a revival totally different in nature. The newly developing American character molded the revival into a new shape. With its boisterous, demonstrative, almost primitive spirit, it was uniquely American.

The story of the revival in the West is the story of the camp-meeting and of the itinerant, semi-educated backwoods circuit rider associated with it.

Among the band of earnest young men who set out to reclaim the backwoods for God was James McGready.

McGready was born in Pennsylvania about 1760 of Scotch-Irish parents. He was such a good little boy that he caught his uncle's eye. His uncle knew just the place

for him—the seminary. So McGready was trained as a Presbyterian minister.

Then one day he got a rude awakening. He accidentally overheard two friends talking about him. The gist of what they said was this: though he was a minister in the Presbyterian church, he was merely following the rules; he was a stranger to regenerating grace.

McGready was stunned and hurt at first. Then he looked into his heart and found the answer there. He had had no experience of the inward work of God's grace on his life.

Night after night McGready prayed for the experience of the new birth. An examination of Scripture convinced him that he must have it.

He found that for which he was seeking at a sacramental meeting near the Monongahela River. He decided that his mission thenceforward would be to awaken others and lead them to the new spiritual life he had found.

McGready set out to preach in the Carolinas in 1788. But he stirred up the people so much that he was said to be "running people distracted." His life was threatened in a letter written in blood. His pulpit was burned down.

Revival Takes Root

Because of opposition he went west to Kentucky in 1796, becoming pastor of three churches in Logan County. This section was known as Rogue's Harbor, because of the fugitives from justice who hid out there. It was in those churches that the revival took root.

In 1797, a woman in one of McGready's churches became convicted of her unregeneracy and was soon after "filled with joy and peace believing." Her change sparked a revival that saw "men under deep conviction spending days alone in the woods weeping and praying."

In July, 1799, Communion was administered at McGready's church at Red River, Kentucky. While McGready preached, some of the most "bold, daring" sinners of the region



Timothy Dwight, grandson of Jonathan Edwards (1752-1817)

broke down like babies. After the meeting was over people lingered on, praying.

A meeting was held at Red River in June of 1800 with perhaps 500 people attending. It was a harbinger of things to come. Two fellow churchmen, William Hodges and John Bankin, aided McGready. John and William McGee, visitors from Tennessee, were on hand as observers.

The meetings began on a Friday and were scheduled to continue through Monday. During the first two days the congregation melted into tears several times. On Sunday when the Lord's Supper was observed, William Hodges' sermon caused one woman to scream loudly. Others dropped to the floor crying, "What shall I do to be saved?"

The official meeting over, three of the ministers left the church. But no one in the congregation moved. They sat rapt in silence.

The McGee brothers had remained behind. Suddenly William McGee sank down on the floor of the pulpit. At the same time John was seized by a violent trembling but, pulling himself together, managed to make one final appeal. He exhorted the people to "let the Lord Omnipotent reign in their hearts and submit to Him."

The woman who had screamed under Hodges' preaching earlier "shouted tremendously." John McGee left the pulpit to go to her. Several by-standers told him, "You know, these Presbyterians are much for order. They'll not bear this confusion. Go back and be quiet." McGee started to turn back. Then something stopped him. Feeling he was witnessing the work of God, he went through the house shouting and exhorting with "all possible ecstasy and energy." In no time at all "the floor was covered with the slain."

The news spread like an atomic reaction. Some people were disgusted. Most were impressed. When they heard that McGready was planning another Communion service at Gasper River, most people couldn't wait to get there. This famous meeting was probably the first planned camp-meeting.

Woodsmen set about clearing away underbrush and building a preaching stand outside the tiny church. Simple log seats were arranged. Thirteen wagons were brought to

the meetinghouse loaded with people and provisions. Some people traveled 100 miles to get there. The meeting began on Saturday evening and lasted until Tuesday morning.

Ready to Faint or Die

After the formal indoor services were over on the first night, groups of "seriously exercised Christians" clustered around the grounds. Most of the ministers and several hundred worshipers remained at the meetinghouse all night. People struggled in the pangs of the new birth, "ready to faint or die for Christ, almost upon the brink of desperation." Others began to tell of "the sweet wonders" they saw in Christ. Everywhere ministers and experienced Christians prayed with inquiring souls. The meeting continued until daybreak.

At the close of John McGee's sermon on Sunday, "the power of God seemed to shake the whole assembly."

This was the beginning of encampment after encampment. In August of the same year a meeting was held at Muddy River. There were twenty-two wagons loaded with people and their provisions. People came expecting to camp out for four to six days.

One of those who was impressed by the Logan County meetings was Barton W. Stone. He was serving two congregations in Concord and Cane Ridge in Bourbon County, clear across the state of Kentucky. He returned home and told his people what he had seen. Soon after—in August, 1801—Cane Ridge was the scene of what many people regard as the most spectacular of the revival meetings of the 1800 revival.

It was probably the largest revival meeting ever held in early-day America and the most disorderly and hysterical. Attendance estimates range from 10,000 to 25,000. People of all denominations came.

An eyewitness described the scene: "The roads were crowded with wagons, carriages, horses and footmen moving to the solemn camp....It was judged by military men on the ground that between twenty and thirty thousand persons were assembled. Four or five preachers spoke at the same time in different parts of the encampment without confusion.

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Revival Transforms the Frontier

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The Methodist and Baptist preachers aided in the work and all appeared cordially united in it. They were of one mind and soul; the salvation of sinners was the one object. They all engaged in singing the same songs, all united in prayer, all preached the same things."

One eyewitness reported that some 800 persons "were struck down," lying insensible from fifteen minutes to six, eight, or ten hours.

James Finley, later a circuit rider, dated his conversion from this meeting. He described the sound as "like the roar of Niagara." At one time he saw at least 500 swept down in a moment with shrieks and shouts "as if a battery of a thousand guns had been opened upon them."

"Stand Still and See"

At a Presbyterian meeting held at Cross Roads Church in Orange County, the pastor rose to dismiss the service. He was disappointed that there had been no evidence of revival. He tried to speak, but, overcome by emotion, sat down without saying a word. He got up again, but still was unable to go on. Suddenly a young man visiting from Tennessee, where the revival was already making headway, raised both hands and with a loud voice exclaimed, "Stand still and see the salvation of God." The congregation was electrified. Many people fell to the ground.

Of course some people opposed the revival, as they always will. But many of the most violently opposed came under its influence.

A deist in the neighborhood of Cane Ridge at the beginning of the revival told Barton Stone, "I always thought before, you were an honest man; but now I am convinced you are deceiving the people."

Stone reported, "I viewed him with pity and mildly spoke a few words to him. Immediately he fell as a dead man and rose no more until he confessed the error of his ways."

The revival preaching was spectacular. The lot of the sinner was painted in vivid colors. One of James McGready's sermons was

on the text, "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." He spoke of the "black, flaming vultures of hell encircling the fool at death, the fiends dragging him into the eternal gulf as he roars and screams and yells while accursed sinners of Tyre and Sidon and Sodom and Gomorrah" spring to the right and left and make way for him to pass. Finally he sinks to the deepest cavern in the flaming abyss where "his consciousness like a never-dying worm stings him and forever gnaws his soul."

It was the hardened sinner indeed who could ignore such preaching.



Peter Cartwright
(1785-1873)

On one occasion Peter Cartwright, the famed Methodist circuit rider, who had a sense of humor, spent some forty minutes on "waggish talk" in which "shafts of ridicule, bon mots, puns and side-splitting anecdotes sparkled, flashed and flew like hail, till the vast auditory was convulsed with laughter."

Then his manner changed.

His face grew serious, his voice earnest. Soon "tears came to his eyes and he descanted on the horrors of hell till every shuddering face was turned downward, as if expecting to see the solid globe rent asunder."

A feature of the revival in the West—though not in New England—were the physical manifestations. These were seen at the time of the Great Awakening, but they reached a higher pitch in the Revival of 1800. The "falling exercise" was the most common.

Overwhelmed in Tears

According to one chronicler, this is what usually happened: "When a person begins to be affected, he generally sinks down in the place where he stood, and is for a few minutes overwhelmed in tears. He then makes a weeping noise.

"Then his voice becomes feeble, his features composed. Finally, he is motionless and speechless. During this time his pulse is slow, his hands and feet are cold, the skin 'fresh and clear,' the eyes partly closed.

Speech and motion return gradually. When 'faith is obtained' the person rises up and shouts 'glory to God,' remaining in a state of ecstasy..."

A person with "the jerks" was also a familiar sight at the camp-meetings. Sometimes just the head would jerk—back and forth, from side to side; sometimes the whole body. Peter Cartwright recollected that he had seen more than 500 persons jerking at one time.

Then there were the "rolling exercises" (people would roll over and over like a wheel), the "dancing exercise" (when the jerking of legs looked like dancing) and the "running exercises" (merely an attempt to "run away" from the physical manifestations).

Perhaps the most peculiar of all was the "barking exercise." Men "went down on all fours and barked until they grew hoarse." Actually the barks probably were grunts resulting from the suddenness of the jerks. The name originated when an old Presbyterian clergyman got the jerks and grasped a tree for support. Some punster saw him and reported he had found the minister barking up a tree.

Naturally the curious and scornful were attracted by such goings on. One man brought a pole with a sharp needle in the end to poke those who fell. To his surprise, he fell down himself and was speechless for an hour. When he recovered he confessed the trick he had intended playing.

Certainly the Revival of 1800 displayed more physical manifestations than any other revival in history. They seemed to be an integral part of the awakening.

Almost weird to twentieth-century Americans, these physical reactions have been criticized more often than any other phase of the Revival of 1800.

Evangelicals can draw three general conclusions:

1. When God moves the spirit of man, He also touches his emotions. Some men are moved more violently than others. Certainly, King Saul prophesied, David danced, and Saul

(later Paul) fell blinded when the Spirit of God came upon them. No doubt, many of the physical manifestations of the Revival of 1800 were of God.

2. Satan is a master-counterfeiter. Even as he tries to counterfeit conversion, he tries to counterfeit its emotional reaction. And he was busy during the camp-meetings of 1800 to degrade them by emotional excesses.
3. Modern psychology explains many such reactions in terms of group behavior. Probably some of the manifestations were natural in the highly emotional surroundings. In fact, God may have used some of these natural reactions to attract the attention of the spiritually hardened pioneer.

Probably a combination of these three explanations would best describe the physical reactions of the Revival of 1800.

Certainly it is clear that Christians afraid of emotion, afraid of revealing their hidden sins and pride in public, are not those whom God will choose to start a revival. And the Revival of 1800 was definitely a revival of Christians. The conversion of people outside the church came only after the churches were revitalized.

The core of the camp-meeting revivals was the altar service. Usually the "mourners' bench" was directly in front of the pulpit. To the godly this structure was known as the "altar." To scoffers, it was "the pen." By the 1820s, the term "anxious seat" came into use.

Sometimes the altar was merely a row of seats. Or it could be a spacious enclosed area, often twenty or thirty feet square, down the center of which ran a rail fence segregating men from women. It was here that sinners who wished to be instructed came to pray.

Preachers Join Hands

"Praying circles" or "prayer rings" materialized when a group of respected laymen and preachers joined hands to form a circle and asked all who felt themselves in need of prayer to enter it.

The revival lasted well into the nineteenth

(continued on page 19)



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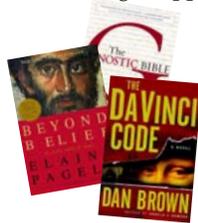
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