

A Teaching Quarterly for Discipleship of Heart and Mind C·S· LEWIS INSTITUTE



PROFILES IN FAITH John Calvin (1509-1564)

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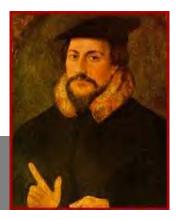
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history of

Christianity."

by Dr. Art Lindsley Scholar-in-Residence



he mere mention of John Calvin's name (born July 10, 1509 in Noyon,

France - died May 27, 1564 in Geneva, Switzerland) produces strong reactions both pro and con. Erich Fromm, 20th century German-born American psychoanalyst and social philosopher, says that Calvin "belonged to the ranks of the greatest haters in history." The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church maintains that Calvin was "cruel" and the "unopposed dictator of Geneva." On the other hand, Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor, says of Calvin, "I have been a witness of him for sixteen years and I think that I am fully entitled to say that in this man there was exhibited to all an example of the life and death of the Christian such as it will not be easy to depreciate, and it will be difficult to imitate." Philip Schaff, church historian, writes of Calvin, "Taking into account all his failings, he must be reckoned

as one of the greatest and best of men whom God raised up in the history of Christianity." William Cunningham, Scottish theologian, maintains, "Calvin is the man who, next to St. Paul, has done the most good to mankind."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, English preacher, asserts, "The longer I live the clearer does it appear that John Calvin's system is the nearest to perfection."

Basil Hall, Cambridge professor, once wrote an essay, "The Calvin Legend," in which he argues that formerly those who depreciated Calvin had at least read his works, whereas now the word "Calvin" or "Calvinism" is used as a word with negative connotations but with little or no content. Many stories float around about him that are utterly false. For instance, Aldous Huxley puts forward as fact an old and groundless legend, writing, "Our fathers took the fifth commandment seriously-how seriously may be judged from the fact that during the Great Calvin's theocratic rule of Geneva a child was publicly decapitated for having ven-

tured to strike its parents." There is no evidence whatsoever in the records of Geneva for this story and no legal grounds in

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the Institute

endeavors to develop

disciples who can

articulate, defend, and

live

faith in Christ

through personal and

public life.





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KNOWING & DOING by Thomas A. Tarrants, III, President

Dear Reader,

By the time you receive this issue, we will be in full swing preparing for our June 7-8 conference with Ravi Zacharias: "Lessons from War in a Battle of Ideas: Apologetics in the 21st Century." We are anticipating over 1,200 in attendance at this conference, and I am certain that each one will come away better prepared to speak to the challenging issues of our present culture.

If you are unable to join us, let me encourage you to order the conference tapes. (Even those at the conference will find it beneficial to have the tapes for review!) I know these tapes will be enriching and strengthening for you.

Educators will particularly want to take note of the Institute's first-ever Summer Colloquium featuring our Senior Fellows, Dr. Jim Houston and Dr. Steve Garber: "The Love of God & The Love of Learning." Held in charming Charlottesville, Virginia, this special three-day "conversation" will offer a rare opportunity to reflect together on the question of how, as believers, education ought to be. Pass the word, and sign up early!

And, finally, I would encourage you to take this coming summer season to invest in your own spiritual growth. There are great articles—as always—in this issue and suggestions of further books to read along with your Bible studies. So take some time to relax and to renew.

We are very grateful for your continued support which makes it possible to provide these resources for growth in discipleship.

Yours in Christ,

Jom

P.S. If you haven't already, sign up for regular support of the Institute, and we will send you a taped lecture each month. I know you will find it a blessing.



C.S. Lewis on Freud and Marx

by Art Lindsley, Ph.D. *Scholar-in-Residence, C.S. Lewis Institute*

ne of the questions that atheists have to address is: If atheism is true, then how do you account for the universality of religion in all cultures and throughout all ages? It would seem that religion is either a re-

sponse to something real or an invention of the human psyche fashioned in order to meet our psychological needs. Atheists choose the latter answer.

C.S. Lewis lays out these two options in *The Abolition of Man*, where he says:

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

The choice is to conform the soul to reality or to conform reality to our wishes. In other words, we can either conform desire to truth or truth to desire. C.S. Lewis suggests elsewhere that atheists have chosen the latter option. They desire that God not exist and create "truth" accordingly. This obviously turns the tables on atheists who suggest that religion is a "crutch" created by people for comfort in the face of a cold world. Lewis argues in effect

that atheism is "wish-fulfillment" (against Freud) or an "opiate" (against Marx). Let's look at the background of this debate and how C.S. Lewis argues against this psychological charge about belief in God.

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Background

German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) had a great influence on both Freud and Marx. Feuerbach argued in his book The Essence of Christianity (1841) that God is a projection of human consciousness and that "Theology is anthropology." According to Feuerbach, religion tells us a lot about mankind and tells us nothing about God. Karl Marx (1818-1883) was fascinated by this thesis and took it a step further, applying it to social reform. According to Marx, religion is invented by the ruling classes in order to keep the masses content with their unjust work situations. Only if they remain content with their plight and

not rock the boat are they promised a "pie in the sky" — heavenly reward. Marx believed that religion was the "opium of the people," dulling their pain so they could endure more pain. Religion thus needed to be smashed in order that workers would rebel against their oppressors.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) took Feuerbach's critique further in the psychological direction. He argued that belief in God was an illusion arising out of "wish-fulfillment."

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C.S. Lewis Feature Article



Dr. Art Lindsley

C.S. Lewis on Freud and Marx

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C.S. Lewis's Response

In his earlier life, C.S. Lewis

was an atheist. Not until age thirty-three-and already a tutor at Oxford-did he become a believer. His previous beliefs had certainly been influenced by Freud and Marx. In fact, Pilgrim's Regress, Lewis's first apologetic work written only two years after his conversion, repeatedly pokes holes in this psychological argument of "wish-fulfillment." Pilgrim's Regress, like John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, involves a quest or journey embarked on by a seeker, John. However, unlike Bunyan's main character, Christian, John does not encounter generic temptations that could divert him from life in Christ; rather, he is faced with the challenges of specific people common to the intellectual life of then-modern

In the story, John is seeking a beautiful island that he has seen in a vision. He has left his home in Puritania and has begun to reject his belief in the Landlord (God), his card of rules (Law), and the "black hole" (Hell). Along the way he encounters Sigismund Enlightenment (Freud's birth name, which he later changed to Sigmund).

culture.

Sigismund (S) speaks persuasively to John (J):

S—It may save you trouble if I tell you at once the best reason for not trying to escape: namely, that there is nowhere to escape to.

- *J How do you know that there is no such place as my island?*
- *S Do you wish very much that there was?*

I-I do.

- S Have you ever imagined anything to be true because you greatly wished for it?
- John thought for a while and then he said, "Yes."
- S And your island is like an imagination – isn't it?
- J-I suppose so.
- S It's just the sort of thing you would imagine merely through wanting it – the whole thing is very suspicious.

It is certainly the case that wishing for something does not make it real or true. On the other hand, wishing for something does not prove the unreality or falsity of that for which you wish. If you are hungry, you may wish for food; food is a reality that corresponds to your desire. If you are thirsty, you may desire drink; drink is a reality that corresponds to your desire. Similarly, there is sleep that corresponds to your desire for rest, and sex that corresponds to sexual desire. But what about other desires? Does a desire for meaning point toward a real satisfaction for this desire? What about a desire for dignity, or a desire for God? All these deeply human aspirations, Lewis argues, function as cosmic pointers to real satisfaction. (I will develop this further in a future article.)

Take the capacity for "awe" that human beings experience. This desire to stand before that which inspires awe seems to be highest in poets, philosophers, novelists, and saints. In his book *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis says:

There seem to be only two views we can hold about awe. Either it is a mere twist in the human mind, corresponding to nothing objective and serving no biological function, yet showing no tendency to disappear from that mind at its fullest development in poet, philosopher, or saint; or else, it is a direct experience of the really supernatural, to which the name Revelation might properly be given.

Materialists such as Feuerbach, Freud, and Marx reduce what is often regarded as the highest aspirations of humanity to a mere twist. This makes human beings, of all beings, the most miserable. A rock can't contemplate the meaninglessness of life. If materialism is true, we must stare into the abyss, build our lives on the basis of "unyielding despair" (Bertrand Russell) or as full of

[Lewis's]

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sound and fury—signifying nothing. In any case, wishing for something does not prove that what is desired exists but certainly does not prove that what is desired does not exist. Natural desires have a corresponding fulfillment. If a desire for the supernatural is part of our human nature, might it be a cosmic pointer to a real God who exists to satisfy that desire?

In a later section of *Pilgrim's Regress*, Reason (R) and John (J) dialogue:

R – The Spirit of the Age wishes to allow argument and not allow argument.

I-How is that?

R – You heard what they said. If anyone argues with them they say that he is rationalizing his own desires, and therefore need not be answered. But if anyone listens to them, they will argue themselves to show that their own doctrines are true.

J – I see. And what is the cure for this?

R – You must ask them whether any reasoning is valid or not. If they say no, then their own doctrines, being reached by reasoning, fall to the ground. If they say yes, then they will have to examine your

arguments and refute them on their merits: for if some reasoning is valid, for all they know, your bit of reasoning may be one of the valid bits.

For instance, Marx claims that all ideas arise out of matter, particularly the economic realm of matter. He seems to except himself from this argument. How is he able to get above this economic determination in order to give an undetermined theory of how religious and cultural ideas are caused? In Lewis's terms, is all reasoning determined by matter or not? If all reason is so determined, then Marx's theories have arisen out of his own material economic interests. If some reasoning is valid (Marx's ideas), then some religious and cultural ideas may be true, too.

In Freud's case, if all belief came out of the non-rational unconscious, then is this not true of Freud's own view? Either his explanation of others' views applies to himself or not. If it applies to himself, his own views are suspect. If it doesn't apply to him, why not? Lewis argued that Freud and Marx were merrily "sawing off the branch they were sitting on." Their philosophies were self-refuting.

In Lewis's essay "Bulverism" (in *First and Second Things*), he points out that this "wish-fulfillment" or "opiate" explanation of reli-

gion is guilty of a logical fallacy (begging the question). He uses the analogy of a bank account:

If you think that my claim to have a large balance is due to wishful thinking, it might be a good idea first to find out whether I have such an account and determine what amount I have in it.

Lewis says:

In other words, you must show that a man is wrong before you start explaining why he is wrong. The modern method is to assume without discussion that he is wrong and then distract his attention from this (the only real issue) by busily explaining how he became so silly.

In other words, Feuerbach, Freud, and Marx have called religion a "projection," "wishfulfillment," and an "opiate" while neglecting the most important question of proving or disproving (in their case) whether God exists. They have assumed (begged the question) that God does not exist and then proceeded to call their opponents names or attach psychological labels to them. They reject rather than even attempt to refute their opponent's position. Lewis invents a name for this fallacy, which he uses as a title for his essay "Bulverism." The name

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Ravi Zacharias

A Conversation with: RAVI ZACHARIAS

Reprinted by permission from Decision magazine, March 2002

RECENT EVENTS HAVE FOCUSED A GREAT DEAL OF ATTENTION ON WORLD RELIGIONS. HOW DO ADHERENTS OF OTHER RELIGIONS VIEW CHRISTIANITY?

Every culture is basically an expression of its worldview and its religion. Theologian Paul Tillich said, "Religion is the substance of culture, culture is the form of religion." In most countries religion has worked itself into the fabric of the culture. Therefore, when people view Christianity, it is inescapable that they will view it within the framework of their historical experience.

In India, for example, many people find it impossible to separate Christianity from the days of the British rule. That was a national exposure to what they thought was the Christian faith. If you go to certain parts of the world where imperialism had its bad days, then Christianity is associated with imperialistic tendencies.

However, I think much change has occurred in recent times. Some of my good friends in India made a surprising comment to me on the heels of September 11. They said that they were watching America's reaction, and they recognized that they were witnessing a "nation with a Christian ethos" respond to a criminal act. I was impressed to hear how many of these friends asserted that they were

touched by America's patience and its measured response, as well as the number of Americans who attended church services. A prominent Islamic scholar in the United States commented that had such an attack happened in some Muslim countries, there would have been a vio-

lent reaction. When people of other faiths make comments such as these, I think it is a credit to the Christian faith.

HOW IS THE CROSS OF CHRIST PERCEIVED BY ADHERENTS OF OTHER RELIGIONS?

It varies. Muslims believe that Jesus did not actually die on the cross. They make that comment based on the Koran. It is strange because, also based on the Koran, they recognize that Jesus had the power to raise the dead, a power they do not attribute to Mohammed, so that's a conflicting response.

As a Christian apologist, I present a defense of the Christian faith in various settings around the globe. I have found that if you build a proper foundation for what the Christian faith is all about, as you lead up to the cross, the listeners sit in stunned silence. They immediately recognize that Christianity stands in stark contrast to everything that other worldviews affirm and assert. They know that true power is being expressed in the cross — restraint, mercy, forgiveness – all when the very One who is offering those things had the capacity to counter instead with force and with domination.

In contrast, consider the radicals in the Islamic movement, for whom power is always present, always political, always military and always violent. The cross will always be a stumbling block to them because it challenges the very core of their thinking. Jesus' way is completely different from theirs. In Jesus' way, winning comes through love and a change of heart.

So the way of the cross is in counterperspective to every other belief system. The cross seems the way of defeat, but it is the means to victory. It shows meekness, yet it is the ultimate expression of strength. It brings everything that is of eternal value into current perspective.

IN HEBREWS, JESUS "ENDURED THE CROSS, DESPISING THE SHAME." THE CROSS WAS AN OBJECT OF DERISION AND RIDICULE, YET WASN'T THIS WHERE CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED HIS MOST POWERFUL WORK?

The cross embodied a supreme moment of isolation and public humiliation. The ultimate isolation was the cross of Christ, when He was separated from His Father. But when He cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" at the very moment that was probably the loneliest in His earthly sojourn here, He was at the center of His Father's will. In the eyes of humanity, the cross symbolized isolation, separation, expulsion and shame, and yet, in that moment, Jesus was paying the price for our sin, an act that was in the center of His Father's will.

OTHER RELIGIONS EMPHASIZE MAN'S ATTEMPT TO REACH GOD. HOW DOES THE CROSS SPEAK OF GOD'S DIVINE INITIATIVE TOWARD MAN?

The Bible says that we are separated from God,⁴ and salvation does not depend only on my efforts to get back to Him. This is the classic difference between the Christian faith and others. In Buddhism, you work and work your way into Nirvana, an ultimate enlightenment. In the Islamic faith, it's always "In Sha' Allah," the will of Allah, if one reaches God. These systems of thought have no assured way of knowing where you stand with God.

The cross is where God's work of justification occurred. We are made just, not of our own selves, but by the work of Jesus Christ. Christ, being made sin for us,⁵ has

redeemed us from the curse of the law.⁶ He who knew no sin would be made sin for us⁵ that we might be reconciled to God.⁷ We now have access to the Father because of the Son.⁸ In Ephesians we are reminded that those of us who were far off have now been brought near.⁹

The cross is all about the Person and work of Jesus Christ. He says to the onlookers, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" Pilate says, "I find no fault in this man." The thief on the cross says, "This man hath done nothing amiss." This is the pure, impeccable Son of God, without sin, without blemish. He carries the work of the cross in His life and in His death. No one except Jesus Christ could have died on the cross to pay the penalty of sin. It would not have worked. And if Jesus had just come and lived a pure life without facing the penalty, there would not be the sufficient sacrifice for sin.

WHAT IS THE PRINCIPLE OF SPIRITUAL UNION AND IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST ON THE CROSS? HOW SHOULD IT AFFECT OUR HABITS AND THOUGHTS?

The Apostle Paul talks in Galatians about the role of the Law and faith. It is only faith in the crucified Christ that saves us, not obedience to the Law. Paul goes on to say, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." 13

It is through the empowering of the Holy Spirit that we are able to see this change. Once I understand that the cross was a personal provision for the sin of every man and every woman, I can identify with Christ in the fact that this is *my* Savior taking *my* guilt and *my* penalty. Then, when I confess my sin, receive Him and trust Him, the Bible says that He comes and dwells with me.

We hear so little of this indwelling

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The Bible says that we are separated from God. and salvation does not depend only on my efforts to get back to Him. This is the classic difference between the Christian faith and others.

Review & Reflect



Two Giants and the Giant Question

THE QUESTION OF GOD:

C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud Debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life By Dr. Armand Nicholi, Jr. Published by The Free Press, New York

by James L. Beavers Executive Director, C.S. Lewis Institute



Armand Nicholi

early May, 2001, well over hundred people attending a C.S. Lewis Institute Conference sat enthralled listening to Harvard professor and psychiatrist Armand Nicholi describe the "conflicting

worldviews of

C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud." I, too, was among that number, utterly fascinated at Dr. Nicholi's careful, studied insights into the lives, writings, and deaths of these two 20th century giants. I recall thinking, "This should be put into a book."

Voilà!

DERATE GOD, LOVE, SEX, AND D_R . A_{RMAND} M. N_{ICHOLI} , J_R . As it turns out, Dr. Nicholi was already working on the final stages of the book at the time of the conference, and it was published in April 2002 by The Free Press, a division of Simon & Schuster.

Although only recently published, the book's content has been developed over a thirty-year period from a course taught by Dr. Nicholi to Harvard undergraduates (and, for the past ten years, to Harvard Medical School students), originally only about Freud. When more than a few students argued that "the other side" was not being represented against Freud's tirade against the spiritual worldview, the popular Oxford don, atheist-turned-Chris-

tian C.S. Lewis was added for contrast and balance. The course then became "much more engaging, and the discussions ignited," Dr. Nicholi reports.

At Harvard, the course is titled "Sigmund Freud & C.S. Lewis: Two Contrasting World Views." Con-

sistently, students the rate class among the best courses at Harvard, their comments peppered with words and phrases like "changed my life," "powerful, " "stimulating," and "the best class I've taken." The medical students, too, describe it as extraordinarily helpful in understanding patient care. In fact, Dr. Nicholi was nominated three times for the Harvard Medical School's Faculty Prize for Excellence in Teaching for this course.

Upon reading the book, I was immediately struck by the sense that the reader was being allowed to follow the probing analysis of two subject patients by a deft and astute psychiatrist. Nothing is overlooked. The patients' words are studied for their surface and underlying meanings. Inconsistencies between what is said and actual behaviors is noted and questioned with curiosity. Dr. Nicholi is careful, however, to avoid making his study a

S. LEWIS AND SIGMUND FREUD

clinical and esoteric exercise; rather, he takes great care to speak in a clear and readily understandable manner to his readers. The work is thorough and scholarly in its research yet

Their arguments

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avoids becoming a weighty volume. Dr. Nicholi told the Harvard Political Review, "I didn't want a huge tome that only academics would read." (Dr. Nicholi is, by the way, editor of the *Harvard Guide to Psychiatry*, 3rd Edition, arguably the leading guide to psychiatry in the world.)

In essence, this is a book which draws the distinct outlines of two opposing world views or, to use Freud's German, Weltanschauung, each one being championed by an intellectual titan: Freud arguing for the scientific or materialistic worldview and Lewis for the religious or spiritual worldview. Both men were prolific and persuasive writers, ably advocating their own views and attempting to demonstrate the falsity of the other view. While the two men never actually debated (Freud died when Lewis was 41), the book uses their own words to argue their points. To his credit, Dr. Nicholi is assiduously careful to allow

each writer to speak for himself, and so he weaves together copious quotes in answer to major points or questions and cites his sources.

Dr. Nicholi rightly states that, "Their arguments can never prove or disprove the existence of God." However, Dr. Nicholi also brings another "voice" to the debate: He draws on various sources to examine how each man actually lived his life, noting, "Their lives, however, offer sharp commentary on the truth, believability, and utility of their views."

In studying the writings of Freud, Dr. Nicholi is, of course, in familiar territory as a psychiatrist. Although still highly controversial in many areas, Freud has unquestionably

been the greatest shaper of the 20th century scientific understanding of the mind and human personality, and Dr. Nicholi gives Freud due credit. Yet to truly know the man behind

> the science, Freud's daughter Anna—the only child to carry on Freud's work—encouraged Dr. Nicholi to look beyond his biographies: "If you want to know my father, don't read his biographers, read his letters."

> C.S. Lewis, too, was a great letter writer—he is said to have answered every letter he ever received—and his letters reveal much about his views and his life. His letters added to his numerous books, essays, and sermons are the sources for Dr. Nicholi's staged "debate" between Lewis and Freud. And, as with Freud, Lewis's life is closely examined for any insight it offers to the words that he wrote.

Far from being fluffy, the book deals with the big, underlying questions of life: What should we believe and how should we live? Dr. Nicholi lets his combatants tackle the questions of an intelligence beyond the universe, the existence or absence of a universal moral law, the pursuit of happiness,

the meaning of love, sex, and pain, and the finality of death.

Back and forth, Nicholi allows Freud and Lewis to argue – but he is not a silent moderator. He listens and observes and probes with further questions, all in an effort to examine these opposing worldviews as well as their proponents. Does one or the other worldview make a difference in the way life is lived? Does it matter?

With the same care with which, I am sure, Dr. Nicholi interacts with his students, no

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C.S. Lewis on Freud and Marx

(continued from page 5)

comes from an imaginary character by the name of Ezekiel Bulver...

Freud and Marx tried to create their own reality and failed. They were suspicious of everybody else but not sufficiently suspicious of themselves and their own theories.

...whose destiny was determined at the age of five when he heard his mother say to his father – who had been maintaining that two sides of a triangle were together greater than that of the third – 'Oh, you say that because you are a man.' 'At that moment,' E. Bulver assures us, 'there flashed across my opening mind the great truth that refutation is no necessary part of an argument. Assume that your opponent is wrong, and then explain his error, and the world will be at your feet. Attempt to prove that he is wrong or (worse still) try to find out if he is wrong or right, and the rational dynamism of our age will thrust you to the wall.' That is how Bulver became one of the makers of the twentieth century.

Bulverism is a very convenient and often used ploy. In fact, Lewis says that he sees Bulverism at work in "every political argument" and until "Bulverism is crushed, reason can play no effective part in human affairs." In any case, Freud and Marx are both guilty of rejecting (rather than refuting), name-calling, and logical fallacy, as well as being self-contradictory.

If you want to play the Bulverism game, you need to understand that it works both ways. Bulverism is a "truly democratic game." Lewis says:

...I see my religion dismissed on the grounds that 'the comfortable parson had every reason for assuring the nineteenth century worker that poverty would be rewarded in another world.' Well, no doubt he had. On the assumption that Christianity is an error, I can see easily enough that some people would have a reason for inculcating it. I see it so easily that I can, of course, play the game the other way around, by saying that 'the modern man has every reason for trying to convince himself that there are no eternal sanctions behind the morality he is rejecting.'

In fact, you might argue that atheism is a projection onto the cosmos of sinful, rebellious desires that God *not* exist. Atheism is an "opiate" of the conscience. Atheism is "wish-fulfillment," a giant Oedipus complex wishing the death of the heavenly Father. However, you could only argue this after the matter is settled on other grounds—philosophical, historical, experiential, pragmatic, etc.

Lewis sums up his argument against Freud and Marx in "Bulverism":

*The Freudians have discovered that we ex*ist as bundles of complexes. The Marxians have discovered that we exist as members of some economic class.... Their (our) thoughts are ideologically tainted at the source. Now this is obviously great fun; but it has not always been noticed that there is a bill to pay for it. There are two questions that people who say this kind of thing ought to be asked. The first is, Are all thoughts thus tainted at the source, or only some? The second is, Does the taint invalidate the tainted thought in the sense of making it untrue – or not?... If they say that all thoughts are thus tainted, then of course.... The Freudian and the Marxian are in the same boat with all the rest of us and cannot criticize us from the outside. They have sawn off the branch they are sitting on. If, on the other hand, they say that the taint need not invalidate their thinking, then neither need it invalidate ours. In which case, they have saved their own branch, but also saved ours along with it.

The problem with Marx, Freud, and a host of postmodernists is that if they succeed, then they fail. They are "trying to prove that all proofs are invalid. If you fail, you fail. If you succeed, then you fail even more—for the proof that all proofs are invalid must be invalid itself."

So, in the end, you have two choices. Either you can conform your desires to the truth, affirming that there is a God who is not silent and that reality was created with a place for you in it, or you can deny that there is such a

reality and attempt to create a "truth" in conformity with your desires. You can attempt to create your own reality. Freud and Marx tried to create their own reality and failed. They were suspicious of everybody else but not sufficiently suspicious of themselves and their own theories. Let's learn from the lessons of the past, especially as we face a similar postmodern suspicion surrounding us today.

There is truth – a God who exists and has revealed Himself in Christ. He has created a world that we can know and explore and enjoy. All truth is God's truth. Let us conform ourselves to it.

Two Giants and the Giant Question (continued from page 9)

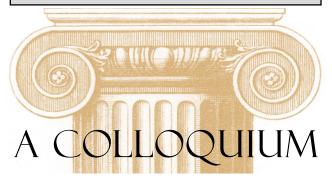
conclusions are drawn or answers given. The reader is left to draw his/her own conclusions. But, Dr. Nicholi does not leave us entirely guessing as to his own views.

In a phone conversation with Dr. Nicholi, he reported that the reviews of the book have generally been good; however, readers' reviews posted on Amazon.com have at times been caustic, saying the book is overly biased in Lewis's favor and that it fails to confront the deeper issues. "I think I struck a nerve," he quipped.

No doubt the reader with a firmly held worldview will find affirmation or else consternation when reading the book. But to say Dr. Nicholi was unfair in moderating the "debate" cannot be justified, simply for the fact that he largely allows the men, their writings, and their lives to speak for themselves. And, yes, there are more questions which could have been asked or other views which could have been discussed, but he confines the book to the primary questions and views addressed by two of the 20th century's giant intellects.

In addition to its fascinating subject matter, the book is well written, easy to read, and thoroughly engaging in style. And I, for one, highly recommend it. It may just change your worldview — and life. ■

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Special Feature



Conversational Apologetics





Michael Ramsden

Apologetics...is about communicating the profundity of the Gospel so that it removes the confusion surrounding it.

he trouble with most theologians," said one writer, "is that they go down deeper, stay down longer and come up murkier than anyone else I know." Maybe, as you read this, that sentiment expresses your own feelings about apologetics. However, apologetics is not about injecting a dose of confusion into the Christian Gospel to try and make it sound more profound. It is about communicating the profundity of the Gospel so that it removes the confusion surrounding it.

Apologetics is really about evangelism. The word apologetics comes from the Greek word apologia, which literally means a reasoned defense. The apostle Paul uses the word to describe his own ministry, when in Philippians he states that he is appointed for the defense and confirmation of the Gospel. We also find apologia used in 1 Peter, when a command is given that we should always be prepared to give an answer (apologia) for the reason for the hope that we have. Clearly, both Peter and Paul are thinking of evangelism in these contexts.

Unfortunately, however, apologetics has come to be defined in such a way that to most

people it means little more than engaging in abstract philosophical arguments, divorced from the reality of life. Yet apologetics is not about dry intellectualization of the Gospel. For others, the word seems to imply apologizing, as if Christians should say they were sorry for believing in Christ. Yet apologetics is not about that either.

The Truth About Apologetics

So what do we mean when we talk about apologetics? The letter of 1 Peter is addressed to the wider church, which is suffering under persecution. The letter is a passionate one. Its readers are exhorted to lead holy and obedient lives, an endeavour made possible because of the new birth that has occurred in their lives through the living word of God. (1 Pet 1:17-24). Every chapter contains practical instruction as to how we should live and what attitude we should adopt. In the midst of all of this instruction comes a very clear command – to set apart Christ as Lord of our hearts and to be prepared to give an apologetic for the hope that we have (chapter 3:15). What then can we learn from this brief text about apologetics?

Firstly, the lordship of Christ needs to be a settled factor in our lives. The term "heart" does not just refer to the seat of our feelings, but also of our thoughts. Every part of us needs to be under the authority of, and obedient to, Christ.

The book of James speaks of the doubleminded man. This turn of phrase does not mean to be two-faced, it means to try to look in two different directions, to be caught between two opinions and not have made a commitment either way. Such a person is simply swept along by the tide, tossed backward and forward by the ever-changing winds of public opinion. In contrast, the man who asks in faith is stable, and his prayers for wisdom are effective. The connotation is of someone who has been persuaded and has put his trust into that which is truthful.

The starting point for giving an apologetic, therefore, is not possessing a top-notch education or holding a proliferation of theological qualifications. It is accepting Christ's Lordship in all areas of our lives including our thinking. If we are still caught in two minds, if we are not convinced of the veracity of the Gospel, we will never be able to develop an effective apologetic for the hope that we have, because Christ is not Lord of all of our life.

Secondly, the context of the command is one of holiness. Our attitude, our actions, and how we treat other people is vitally important (1 Peter 3:8 ff). Even when faced with persecution, evil is not to be repaid with evil. The reason for the persecution is not because Christians are disobeying God's commands; it is because they *are* obeying his commands. Similarly, the assumption in 1 Peter 3:15 is that, because our lives and attitudes are different due to living in obedience to God's commands, people will ask questions as to why. We are told that some non-Christians will ask questions, and that we should therefore be prepared. In other words, there should actually be a demand for an apologetic because of the quality of our lives. How we live should be generating intrigue in the Gospel. How are we doing on this front?

We must also remember that the letter of 1 Peter is addressed to the church. The command to give an apologetic is not one that is addressed to a handful of carefully selected specialists. The command to give an apologetic is one that is directed to every single member of the body of Christ. No one who is a Christian can excuse themselves.

It may be helpful here to draw a distinction between the process of evangelism and the gift of the evangelist. An evangelist is someone who has the gift of precipitating a decision in someone's life concerning their standing before Christ. Not everyone has this

gift. However, the process of evangelism is something in which every believer is engaged. Every time we talk to someone about Christ, every time we invite someone to an event or to church, every time we give someone something to read, we are involved in that process. It is precisely in that process that apologetics plays a role. As soon as you begin to answer someone's question, or tell someone why you are a Christian, you are giving an apologetic. It is not a question of whether we engage in apologetics or not, but what kind of apologetic we are giving when the opportunity comes by.

Fourthly, there is the need to be prepared. "There is no problem so big or so complicated," wrote one graffiti artist, "that it can't be run away from." This is, of course, perfectly true. The increasing complexity and diversity of the choices we face in life, coupled with a rapidly changing postmodern society, mean that the easiest course of action when faced with an apparently great problem is to run away. However, the Christian is called to an engagement with, not a retreat from, the world.

Engagement, however, is going to take effort. It is much harder to fight a battle than it is to excuse yourself from one. The word translated "prepared" in the NIV has its root in the idea of being fit. Getting prepared is going to involve us exercising the effort necessary to make sure that we are ready. Opportunities to share our faith should not be lost because we haven't taken the time to think through what we would say. The trouble is, we often don't know how we can say what we think we should.

That is why many Christians have already put their thoughts onto paper to help us in this task. In that sense, authors of books about apologetics should be regarded as personal trainers, to help us develop a spiritual fitness for the questions that will inevitably come our way. These people write books not to put weight on our bookshelves, but to lend weight to our thoughts and hence our

(continued on page 14)

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Conversational Apologetics

(continued from page 13)

...the mode
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conversations. Truly, we need to "stop thinking like children," being like infants in regard to evil while being like adults in our thinking (1 Corinthians 14:20).

Fifthly, the apostle talks of giving an answer for the *reason* for the hope that we have. People believe in all kinds of strange things. One of my colleagues in India loves to tell of the time he worked for the government there. One of the privileges he enjoyed was having a chauffeur-driven car to take him around on official business. In India, as over here, if a black cat crosses your path, it is considered to be bad luck. What was of interest was how each driver dealt with the problem when it occurred. One of his drivers would stop the car, reverse over the spot where the incident had taken place, and then drive off again, trying to undo what had happened. Another would open the window and spit out of it, trying to curse the curse, if you like, and somehow turn it into a blessing. The third was the most interesting. He would slow down, letting another car overtake him, and with it presumably taking away any bad luck that he had received as a result. You wonder if he was afraid to overtake anyone himself.

We would call these beliefs superstitions. There is no logic or reason behind them. The Apostle Peter, however, is quite clear. Believing that Christ died so that we might be saved is not a superstition. It is not like saying that black cats bring bad luck. Instead there is a reason for the hope that we have; there is a logic, if you like, behind the Gospel; there are reasons that can be communicated and explained concerning the atonement. We must be ready to give an explanation, a defense, of why the Gospel is true.

Given that the lordship of Christ in our own lives is the starting point for giving an apologetic, the Cross is where we are heading. The reason for the hope that we have is the Cross and resurrection. There is no other reason why the Christian has hope, and there is no other reason for our confidence. Any *apologia*, any answer aimed at giving the reason for the hope that we have must therefore lead to or flow from the Cross. We must never lose sight of this fact.

However, at the same time we must recognize that people may have other legitimate questions that need to be dealt with before they are prepared to give us a hearing. If someone believes that Christ was not an historical figure, for example, then we need to establish for them that he was. Such a task is not difficult. It may be that they are convinced that there is no such thing as truth, that it doesn't matter what you believe. Again, we need to help such a person understand why this point of view can't be sustained. Having done this, though, we must recognize that we haven't discharged the Great Commission. We have made a small step—an important and vital step—but still only a small step, in the right direction. And as important as these are, we must remember that the reason we need to deal with these issues is so that we can clear away false ideas so that Christ can be seen for who he is.

Finally, our attitude is vital (1 Peter 3:16). The Christian does not share the Gospel out of a sense of moral superiority. Nor do we treat other people and their convictions with contempt. Instead, what we share is to be shared with gentleness and respect. Arrogance has never been an attractive or admirable quality, and it is all the more offensive when the message that is brought claims to be one of grace and peace. This is not to imply that the Gospel is to be compromised in any way. However, the mode and method of communicating the Gospel must be consistent with—not an obstruction to—the content that we are presenting.

Our confidence does not arise from the fact that we believe that our minds are infallible, or that we know everything. Several years ago, while at a seaside resort, I saw a teatowel that read "Those of you who think that you know everything, are beginning to annoy those of us who do." The funny thing is, of course, that the only person who could make such a statement is God! The Christian is not claiming exhaustive knowledge on an infinite subject. Our confidence rests in the reality of the relationship we enjoy with Christ, the change he has brought into our lives and the

truthfulness of his claims. Our confidence is not in a system of thought. It is in the person of Christ. That is why the Apostle Paul says, "I know *whom* I have believed," [emphasis added] and not *what* I have believed.

I am convinced that this is why we are also told that we should keep a clear conscience as we talk to others. We are not called on to pretend we know something when we don't. Nor are we boasting of how great our own minds are, as if we had figured out everything by ourselves. With humility, the fear of God and honesty, we testify to the truth and reality of the Gospel message, that Christ is still alive.

The Gospel promises to change lives. It is no surprise, therefore, that people expect to see lives changed. If our attitude indicates that Christ makes no difference to how we live or how we treat others, we immediately undermine its credibility. Ultimately, our goal is not to win arguments, but to see people come to know Christ.

From Why to How

Having laid a biblical understanding concerning the command to give an apologetic, it then becomes important to consider how we go about fulfilling it. The temptation with apologetics is to offer set answers to set questions. Undoubtedly, it can be useful to have a structure in mind when dealing with certain issues. However, far more useful is to have an understanding of how we can effectively engage with people at a conversational level.

If we read through any of the Gospels, we see that Jesus spent a lot of time talking with people. In chapter one of John's Gospel, we find a record of Jesus' conversations with the first disciples. In chapter two, water is turned into wine at a wedding, and we read about Jesus' conversations with Mary. Chapter three contains Jesus' well-known conversation with Nicodemus, followed by his conversation with the woman at the well in chapter four. In chapter six, we have a series of conversations recorded between Jesus and his disciples, and in chapter seven Jesus goes to the Feast of the Tabernacles. Again, he is interacting with the groups of people he meets there. It is easy to go

on. Clearly Jesus did a lot of other things apart from talking to people. But whether he is talking to individuals, small groups, or large crowds, there is an immediacy and intimacy in what he does.

A while ago I was speaking at a conference on evangelism. An African Bishop was also there. Following his address, the question was raised as to why he thought so many people were becoming Christians in his part of the world, and so few in the West. He didn't even stop to think about his answer. "When you walk around my neighborhood," he replied, "you hear people talking to other people about Jesus—in restaurants, in shops, even in bus queues. While I have been here, however, very few people seem to be doing this."

Hesitating to Join In

Maybe one of the reasons we are uncertain about engaging with some people is that we feel we don't have all the answers. If you ever meet someone who does have all the answers, please let me know. I have some questions for that person myself. The truth is that none of us knows exactly what to say all the time. However, a good apologist does not only think about answers to be given to other people's questions. It also involves thinking about the questions that need to be raised to other people's answers, or even questions that need to be put to the questioners themselves.

Reading through the four Gospels reveals that Jesus asked well over one hundred questions of his critics and his questioners. Asking a question achieves many different things, but let me outline some things that are important here.

Getting People to Think

First, asking a question forces people to think. Thinking is not the enemy of the Christian faith. We consistently see that Jesus asked questions to make people think about what they were saying.

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The Gospel promises to change lives.
It is no surprise, therefore, that people expect to see lives changed.

Profiles in Faith: John Calvin

(continued from page 1)

Geneva for this action to have been justified. Likewise, the caricature of Calvin as "cruel" or a "dictator" or filled with "hatred" is either totally false or a distortion of the truth. Who is this Calvin who can be so praised or vilified?

Conversion

Calvin's parents, Gerard and Jeanne, had five sons. Antoine and François died in childhood. John was the

second son to grow to maturity. Gerard had become a successful lawyer and had prominent contacts. He had ambitions for his sons and provided a good education for them. Gerard wanted John to follow a career in the church, and thus he was sent to the University of Paris for his studies. Having completed his arts courses, he was prepared for doctoral theological study. However, Gerard changed his mind and decided that John should study law. John submitted to this request and spent the next several years at the University of Orleans studying law. While there, he was exposed to the classical writers such as Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, Plato, and Aristotle. In fact, his first published work (when he was only 22 years old) was Commentary on Seneca's 'De Clementia.'

Sometime during this period, he experienced a profound conversion, although the details of how it came about are not clear. Calvin speaks of this change in his *Commentary on the Psalms*:

God drew me from obscure and lowly beginnings and conferred on me that most honorable office of herald and minister of the Gospel.... What happened first was that by an unexpected conversion he tamed to teachableness a mind too stubborn for its years.... And so this mere taste of true godliness that I received set me on fire with such a desire to progress that I pursued the

rest of my studies more coolly, although I did not give them up altogether. Before a year had slipped by, anybody who longed for a purer doctrine kept on coming to learn from me, still a beginner and a raw recruit. Calling to Geneva

He eventually became known as a "Lutheran" and had to go into hiding, fearing for his life. Eventually, he made his way to Basel where, still a young man of twenty-seven, Calvin wrote the first edition of what became his classic work, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, published in 1536. (The final edition was completed in 1559.) This first edition was intended as a general introduction for those who had a hunger and

thirst for Christ but had little real knowledge of Him. This little book spread quickly and was read by a wide audience. Its appeal was that it showed the faith of the Reformation to be consistent with the great creeds, loyal to the political authorities, and desiring obedience to God's Law, contrary to opposition caricatures.

During a trip to Strasbourg, Calvin was forced to take a detour through Geneva and happened to spend the night at an inn. When William Farel, church leader in Geneva, heard that the author of the *Institutes* was in town, he went straight to the inn. Farel desperately desired a helper in his task and saw in Calvin an ideal assistant. He pleaded with Calvin to consider coming to work with him in Geneva. Calvin resisted Farel's pleas. Calvin saw himself as a scholar and writer and wanted to spend his days in quiet reading and writing, not as a pastor or administrator. Farel became desperate, and as Calvin later described it:

Farel detained me in Geneva, not so much by counsel and exhortation as by a dreadful curse, which I felt to be as if God had from heaven laid his mighty hand upon me to arrest me...he proceeded to utter the imprecation that God would curse my retirement and the tranquility of the studies which I sought, if I should withdraw and refuse to help, when the necessity was so urgent. By this imprecation, I was so terror struck,

that I gave up the journey I had undertaken; but sensible of my natural shyness and timidity, I would not tie myself to any particular office.

When Calvin and Farel were banished from Geneva over a year later, Calvin finally arrived at Strasbourg

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and had three enjoyable years of study and teaching. It was during this period that he met his wife, Idelette.

Idelette

When Calvin arrived in Strasbourg, he initially stayed with fellow Reformer Martin Bucer and his wife Elizabeth. Their home was known as an "inn of righteousness," and they had a very happy marriage. Martin would often say to John, "You ought to have a wife." John seems not to have been a romantic as we can see from his qualifications for a wife:

Always keep in mind what I seek to find in her, for I am none of those insane lovers who embrace also the vices of those with whom they are in love, where they are smitten at first with a fine figure. This is the only beauty that allures me: if she is chaste, if not too fussy or fastidious, if economical, if patient, if there is hope that she will be interested in my health.

Various people tried to arrange a marriage for him. First, a wealthy German woman was suggested, but she didn't seem eager to learn French. Another was suggested about fifteen years older than Calvin. Yet another young woman was brought to Strasbourg for an interview, and Calvin was so hopeful that he set a tentative marriage date. But again, it didn't work out. Finally, a young widow whom he already knew as part of his congregation, Idelette, was suggested to

him by Bucer. Idelette's husband, Jean Stordeur, had been an Anabaptist leader with whom Calvin debated, and eventually, they became members of Calvin's church in Strasbourg. Jean later died of the plague. Idelette was attractive, intelligent, and a woman of character. She also desired a good father for her children. John later described her as "the faithful helper of my ministry" and "the best companion of my life." They had three children: one died at two weeks old, another at birth, and a third, born prematurely, also died. Their marriage lasted nine years. Idelette became sick, probably with tuberculosis, and died at age forty. John wrote to his friend Viret:

You know how tender, or rather, soft my heart is. If I did not have strong self-control, I would not have been able to stand it this long. My grief is very heavy. My best life's companion is taken away from me. Whenever I faced serious difficulties, she was ever ready to share with me, not only banishment and poverty, but even death itself.

Although Calvin himself was only forty when Idelette died, he never remarried.

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Back to Geneva

After the three years in Strasbourg, Farel and Calvin were urged by leaders in Geneva to return. Reluctantly, they did. John and Idelette were given a house by the lake with room for a garden where Idelette grew vegetables, herbs, and flowers. Calvin remained in Geneva the rest of his life.

During his twenty-five year ministry in Geneva, he preached an average of five sermons a week. He preached twice every Sunday and every day of alternate weeks. In the weeks he was not preaching, he lectured three times as an Old Testament professor. He wrote a commentary on nearly every book of the Bible and on many theological topics. His letters alone fill eleven volumes or some 40,000 pages of his Works. He had many meetings in Geneva with pastors, deacons, and visitors. On top of it all, his health was characteristically poor. It is amazing, given his schedule and its constant interruptions, that he was able to accomplish so much.

Even in Strasbourg, his schedule was busy. He writes in a letter about one such day's work:

When the messenger came to collect the beginning of my book, I had to re-read twenty sheets of printer's proofs. I also had a lecture, a sermon, four letters to write, a certain dispute to settle, and more than ten visitors, all of whom required attention.

In a letter to Bucer, he wrote, "I cannot recall two consecutive hours without interruption." At Geneva, it was even worse; he wrote: "I do not even have one hour

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Profiles in Faith: John Calvin

(continued from page 17)

Calvin had
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free." In another letter, he wrote, "The difficulty is the vexations and brain racking interruptions which occur twenty or more times while I am writing one letter." Yet Calvin continued to work hard. He did not like to waste time. Even on his deathbed he continued to work. When his friends told him to take it easy, he said, "What! Would you have the Lord find me idle when He comes?"

Calvin had a real love and sensitivity for people. Once when he was sending a letter to his friend Viret using a student as messenger, he noticed another student looking somewhat jealous. Immediately, he wrote another note to Viret telling him to pretend that the note was important and sent it using the second student as messenger.

We particularly see this sensitivity in his letters to his friends. For instance, he was sensitive to any criticism from Bucer, whom he regarded as a father figure. He wrote to Bucer, "If at any point I do not come up to your expectations, you know that I am in your power. Warn or punish. Do whatever is the right of a father toward his son." Bucer responded, "You are my heart and soul."

In a letter to Melanchthon, Luther's lieutenant and a frequent recipient of letters from Calvin, he wrote:

Can we not, as you say, talk more often, if only by letter? The gain would not be yours, but mine, for nothing in the world is more precious than the pleasure I find in reading your charming letters.

Of his friendships with men such as Farel and Viret, he wrote in his dedication to his *Commentary on Titus*:

I am sure that nowhere have friends ever lived in such close fellowship and companionship as we have done in our ministry... It seems as if you and I are just one person.

That does not mean that Calvin was unable or unwilling to rebuke his friends. For instance, once he wrote to Farel:

I am given to understand that your very full sermons are giving some ground for complaint. I beg you earnestly to restrict yourself, even forcibly if necessary, rather than offer Satan any handle which he will be quick to seize. We do not speak for our own benefit but for that of our people. We must remember proportion in teaching, so that boredom does not give rise to disrespect.... Do not think that you can expect from everyone an enthusiasm equal to your own.

Or to Melanchthon—who seems to have been somewhat timid like the New Testament's Timothy—he writes:

Let us follow our course with unswerving mind ... Hesitation in the general or standard bearer is far more shameful than is the flight of simple soldiers... In giving way a little you have given rise to more complaints and groans than would have done the open desertion of a hundred ordinary men.

Calvin's Theology

Many books have been written about Calvin's theology. It is impossible to do justice to the subject in this article, except to mention a few things that Calvin's theology was *not*.

First, Calvin's sole or primary emphasis was not predestination. Basically, he inherited and passed on this doctrine from earlier writers: Augustine (whom he quotes more often in the *Institutes* than any other non-biblical writer), Thomas Aquinas, and Martin Luther (Bondage of the Will). In his 1559 edition of Institutes, he devotes only ninety pages of more than 1,500 pages to predestination and covers this doctrine in Book III under the doctrine of salvation and not in Book I under the doctrine of God. In fact, if it were not for a couple of critics, Pigius and Bolsec, to whom Calvin responded with a treatise, we would have very little on this subject in Calvin's writing. He was particularly concerned with this doctrine (as with others) to go as far as Scripture goes and no further. B.B. Warfield calls Augustine the theologian of grace, Luther the theologian of justification, and Calvin the theologian of the Holy Spirit because of his emphasis and unique development of this Biblical teaching.

Second, Calvin was *not* a cold, dry theologian. At Pittsburgh Theological Seminary I studied with Ford Lewis Battles, who was a Calvin scholar and translator of his *Institutes*. I remember him telling me that Romans 1:21 was Calvin's life verse, particularly the phrase, "they knew God, (but) they did not honor Him or give thanks." Calvin believed that we live to honor God and to give Him thanks. The section entitled "Prayer" in *Institutes*, Book III, is classic. Calvin maintained that the "principal work of the Spirit" is faith and the "principal exercise of faith is prayer." Summing up life in Christ, he says:

The sum total comes back to this: Since the Scripture teaches us that it's a principal part of the service of God to invoke him ... he values this homage we do him more than all sacrifices.

Karl Barth, in his *The Christian Life*, understands that he is standing in the heritage of the Reformers when he argues that the central virtue of spiritual life is invocation—calling on His name in prayer. Barth then structures the whole of "the Christian life" around the Lord's Prayer. Calvin, too, saw prayer as the primary thing in our lives.

Third, Calvin was *not* a narrow parochial thinker. He was openly appreciative of truth wherever he found it. His emphases were later called the doctrine of "common grace." In his *Institutes* II.ii 15, Calvin writes:

What then? Shall we deny that the truth shone upon the ancient jurists who established civic order and discipline with such great equity? Shall we say that the philosophers were blind in their fine observation and artful description of nature? Shall we say that those men were devoid of understanding who conceived

the art of disputation and taught us to speak reasonably? Shall we say that they are insane who developed medicine, devoting their labor to our benefit? What shall we say of all the mathematical sciences? Shall we consider them the ravings of madmen? No, we cannot read the writings of the ancients on these subjects without great admiration. We marvel at them because we are compelled to recognize how preeminent they are. But shall we count anything praiseworthy or noble without recognizing at the same time that it comes from God? Let us be ashamed of such ingratitude. Those men whom Scripture calls "natural men" were indeed sharp and penetrating in their investigation of things below. Let us accordingly learn by their example how many gifts the Lord left to human nature even after it was despoiled of its true good.

In his commentary on Genesis, Calvin ascribes many human actions and advances to the work of the Holy Spirit:

For the invention of the arts, and of other things which serve to the common use and convenience of life, is a gift from God by no means to be despised, and a faculty worthy of commendation...as the experience of all ages teaches us how widely the rays of divine light have shone on unbelieving nations, for the benefit of the present life; and we see at the present time that the excellent gifts of the Spirit are diffused through the whole human race.

So, far from being narrow in his perspective and unappreciative of pagan thought, he was willing to value all truth as God's truth.

Servetus

The first historical essay I wrote in college was about the episode in Geneva with

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A Conversation with Ravi Zacharias (continued from page 7)

In Islam, Allah is seen as distant and totallu transcendent. In Buddhism. there is no god. In the core of Hindu thinking, you are, in effect, made to become god. But in the Christian faith, there is the nearness of

today, so little of "Christ in you, the hope of glory." We have talked so much of accepting and receiving that we have forgotten the intimacy with which He comes and dwells within us. There is no other world religion or worldview that talks in those terms.

In Islam, Allah is seen as distant and totally transcendent. In Buddhism, there is no god. In the core of Hindu thinking, you are, in effect, made to become god. But in the Christian faith, there is the nearness of God. We do not go to the Temple anymore to worship; we take the temple with us. This body is the temple of the living God. There is communion, there is intimacy. We understand that this body is where God wishes to make His residence, and we see the sacredness of the human body.

You cannot take planes and ram them into buildings to kill people. People are individual temples in which God wishes to dwell. Osama bin Laden talks about bombs dropping into mosques, attempting to evoke the anger of the radicals. The teaching of Christ is very different from the philosophy of Mr. bin Laden. It is not the building that is sacred; it is the individual who is sacred. In every life he has killed, he has killed a temple of God.

HOW DID YOU COME TO KNOW CHRIST AS YOUR SAVIOR?

I came to know Christ at the age of 17 while living in New Delhi, India, where I was reared. My father worked for the Indian government. Growing up in India, I faced many struggles, not the least of which was academic competition in a highly stratified culture. One day I realized that I really didn't have any meaning in life. So, at the age of 17, I attempted to take my own life by poisoning myself.

Then, when I was recovering in a hospital, a friend brought me a New Testa-

ment. Because my body was dehydrated and I was receiving fluids, I could not hold the New Testament in my hands. The Scripture read to me was John 14, where Jesus said to his apostles, "Because I live, ye shall live also." ¹⁶

I knew that whatever else that Scripture meant, it meant more than physical life. I said, "This is the life that I have yearned for." I made my commitment to Jesus Christ and have never looked back, except to remember how He rescued me and put a new song in my heart—new hungers, new desires, new life. He put a new hunger into my heart, a hunger for God Himself. Prior to that, I was more concerned about success, good grades, good jobs. I was constantly thinking about what others thought about me. God refocused my attention on Himself.

I knew that this was not some kind of motivational therapy but a new kind of relationship. There is a difference between a person who hungers for love and one who has found love. God put in my heart that great hunger for Him, even as I knew that in Him I had already begun the process of being filled. Before I heard those Scriptures I was completely empty. Now I had found through the Person of Christ how I could be filled.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE GOSPEL THAT EXCITES YOU AS YOU PROCLAIM THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AROUND THE WORLD?

The more I read and understand about other worldviews and other world religions, the more magnificent Christ appears. I have a return invitation from a leading Muslim cleric in a strongly Muslim country to do two open forums at a university. Absolutely nothing compares to the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So I go there with a thrill in my heart that the Christian message stands so magnificently and so beautifully before a world in need.

I pray for God to open the eyes and hearts of people in all cultures. Among former Muslims who are now Christians, more than 90 percent of those with whom I have talked have come to know Christ through a dream or a vision. God used their own worldview through which to reveal Christ. We must be men and women of prayer, to pray for the salvation of people all over the world. As we wisely and gently present the Person and the work of Jesus Christ, many people will find Him irresistible.

(1) From "Theology of Culture" by Paul Tillich, edited by Robert C. Kimball, © 1959 Oxford University Press, Inc., New York, New York. (2) Hebrews 12:2, KJV. (3) Matthew 27:46, NIV. (4) Isaiah 59:2. (5) 2 Corinthians 5:21. (6) Galatians 3:13. (7) 2 Corinthians 5:18. (8) Ephesians 2:13, 18. (9) Ephesians 2:13. (10) Cf. John 8:46. (11) Luke 23:4, KJV. (12) Luke 23:41, KJV. (13) Galatians 2:20, NIV. (14) Colossians 1:27, NIV. (15) 1 Corinthians 6:19. (16) John 14:19, KJV. Bible verses marked NIV are taken by permission from The Holy Bible, New International Version, copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, International Bible Society, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

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Profiles in Faith: John Calvin

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Michael Servetus, Spanish physician and self-styled theologian, and the controversy over toleration and religious liberty it caused. Servetus was judged by civil authorities as a heretic for vehemently denying the Trinity and other central doctrines of faith. He was burned in Geneva with Calvin's approval.

Many excuses for this action have been made, such as: death for heretics was part of the spirit of the age; Servetus was foolish in his provoking action by the state; Calvin

sought on numerous occasions to persuade Servetus of his errors; Calvin sought a less painful death for Servetus; and the Swiss cities agreed to his punishment. None of these qualifications excuse Calvin. Perhaps the unintended but beneficial consequence was that the reaction by Castellio and others to Servetus' death had an influence on the belief in religious liberty today.

Last Days

Calvin's last days were spent working as much as he could, writing, preaching, and teaching. Sometimes he was carried to a chair in the pulpit to preach. When the end was near, "Lord, how long!" was the cry on his lips. In a final meeting with Geneva's ministers, he confessed his faults and asked for forgiveness for anything he had done to offend them. Calvin gave instructions that he be buried in an ordinary cemetery with no gravestone so that no one would make it a shrine. As a result, his gravesite is unknown.

J.I. Packer sums up this complex personality. Calvin was:

Bible-centered in his method, God-centered in his outlook, Christ-centered in his message; he was controlled throughout by a vision of God on the throne and a passion that God should be glorified... He lived as he preached and wrote, for the glory of God. Good theologians are not always good men, nor vice versa, but Calvin's life and theology were all of a piece. Consistency was his hallmark, both as a thinker and as a writer.

NOTE: If you wish to do further reading on Calvin, Alister McGrath's biography, A Life of John Calvin, would be a good place to start. If you are really ambitious, try reading the Institutes, which Wesley (despite some disagreements) claimed was the most valuable book next to the Bible. Or, try any of Calvin's commentaries on the Bible. His goal of clarity and brevity mixed with much practical application make these works some of the most helpful guides to Scripture anywhere.

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writer.

Conversational Apologetics

In Luke 18, Jesus is asked the question,

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"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" The question is a good one. On the face of it, this is a perfect question for Jesus to jump straight in and tell him what he should ...one believe. Instead, Jesus decides to ask a questhinker tion of his own. "Why do you call me good?" he replies. I don't know if you have stopped to consider what went through the man's mind when this reply came back. I am certain it was not a reply that he was expecting; I am equally certain that it caused him to begin thinking. "No one is good but God alone," Jesus continues. However, if no one is good but God alone, and Jesus is good, then it must also follow that Jesus is God. Immediately, Jesus has taken this man to the logical conclusion that must follow from his own admisstarting sion. It is done quickly and incisively, and there can be no doubt as to the implications that Jesus has spelled out. throw **Exposing Contradictions**

defined logic as going wrong with confidence. A faulty point will everything else out of kilter.

Asking questions can also be a gentler way of exposing contradictions, and this is certainly the case when dealing with relativism. When I was an undergraduate, I was involved in a student support service. We were not allowed to give advice, only to listen and ask people questions. One evening, two young girls arrived at the center, one of whom had slashed her wrists with a razor blade in an attempt to take her own life. As they sat opposite me, the girl whose wrists were beginning to heal over looked at me and said, "There is no such thing as truth. If there was, then I would have a reason to live."

My immediate reaction was to offer my resignation from the service there and then, so that I could proceed to tell her why I thought that this position was philosophically untenable. Instead, I asked her a simple question that I had been asked myself a few years earlier: "You say that there is no such thing as truth-tell me, is that statement true?" It was as if someone turned the lights on in her life. It is correct to conclude that life must be meaningless if there is no such thing as truth. However, the conclusion depends on

the assumption made, and in this case, it is what is assumed that must be challenged. Failure to do this will always result in disaster - which is why one thinker defined logic as going wrong with confidence. A faulty starting point will throw everything else out of kilter.

The faulty assumption made is the belief that the claim "everything is relative" can be meaningfully stated. To state that everything is relative is to make an absolute claim. If it is absolute, then it follows that not everything is relative. Literally, nothing has been said. You run into a similar problem if you try to deny that there is such a thing as truth. The statement "There is no such thing as truth" assumes that there is such a thing. What you are in effect saying is "The truth is, there is no such thing as truth." However, if the statement is true, then there is such a thing as truth. If there is no such thing as truth, then the statement is not true. If it is not true, why believe it? The statement is literally nonsensical, and "nonsense remains nonsense," said C. S. Lewis, "even if you talk it about God!"

Defining the Issue

Frequently as Christians, we want to jump in with answers to questions without really thinking about the assumptions in people's minds concerning the issue at hand. In Matthew 22, Jesus is asked whether it is right to pay taxes to Caesar or not. If someone asked you today whether you thought Christians should pay their taxes or not, the answer you would give, I'm sure, would be "yes." Why is it, then, that in Matthew 22, instead of giving a one-word answer, Jesus again asks a series of questions of his own? The reason is that the issue of paying taxes had become clouded in the minds of the people in Jesus' day. As a matter of fact, Jesus knows that the question is a trap.

Israel was under occupation by the Romans, who were regarded by the Jews as the evil oppressors. To pay taxes, and certainly to collect them, was seen to be strengthening the hand of the enemy. Was not Israel God's chosen people? Was this not their land? Surely to help the Romans was to go against God himself.

In the minds of the listeners, if Jesus is going to be on God's side, he is expected to say no. If he says no, it will get back to the authorities, and he will be arrested—which is what the questioners want. If he says yes, then he will lose the respect of the people. As far as the questioners are concerned, it is a win/win situation.

Jesus however asks for a coin. "Whose portrait is this?" He asks. "Whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they reply. "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's," Jesus answers.

Do you see what has happened? Jesus has redefined the issue at hand. Yes, pay your taxes, he says, but he answers in such a way as to make sure that no one misunderstands what he is saying. He has not only answered the question, but also the sentiment and prejudice that lay behind the question. Frequently, as Christians, we think we have discharged our obligation to communicate the Gospel by answering questions put to us, without attempting to disarm what lies behind the question

Let's take a contemporary example with a lot of feeling behind it, the question of abortion. The temptation again is to rush in with answers, when really we should first of all be thinking about questions to help the situation along. The way that the issue is normally phrased is in terms of choice—does a woman have the right to choose what happens to her own body? The question, when phrased this way, seems to allow only one answer—yes, she does have the right to choose.

However, it is actually the wrong starting question. The first question is not about choice, it is about how to define life. If you were to ask the question, "When does someone have the right to terminate an innocent person's life?" the answer from most people would be never. The primary question, therefore, is not one of choice, but how do you define life? Is what is in the womb a human life or not? If it is a human life, should it be protected? If it is not a human life, what is wrong in terminating it? Many people define life pragmatically in terms of what we do,

and the fetus doesn't really do much. For the Christian, however, life is defined, essentially, on the basis of who we are. To answer the question of choice without first raising the issue about how to define life is to fall into a trap by failing to effectively communicate with the people listening.

Giving the right answer does not rectify the problem of asking the wrong question. The question must first be reformulated before any answer can be given.

There is much more that can be said and written on this topic. Indeed, it already has. Let us listen carefully to what is being asked, and then get as much help as we can to effectively share that which has changed our lives.

Michael Ramsden was born in Hertford, England, in 1971. He lived in England until the age of seven when he moved to the UAE, then to Saudi Arabia, and finally to Cyprus, where his parents still live. It was while living in Cyprus that he came into contact with Christians, and, through the love and teaching of a youth leader, he came to Christ in 1988. He then came back to England, first to study for a degree in law at the University of Hull and then to study for a doctorate in law and economics at the University of Sheffield.

During his time at Sheffield, he became increasingly involved with and committed to apologetics and evangelism. Although a career in law or economics was the obvious direction, Michael knew that his passion was to share Christ and to help remove the obstacles to faith.

Throughout Michael's Christian life, Dr. Zacharias' tape ministry had inspired and encouraged him. Dr. Zacharias agreed to speak at an evangelistic outreach at the University of Hull, and it was through this initial contact that Michael came to know Ravi and Margie Zacharias and their vision. At a founders conference in 1995, Michael discovered the RZIM vision statement was almost identical to one that he had written and posted on the wall of his student room. Michael came on staff with RZIM in January 1997 and is now the European Director of the Zacharias Trust, working as an apologist and evangelist reaching students and professionals internationally. He is married to Anne, and has a daughter, Lucy, and a son, James.

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versed in the disciplines of comparative religions, cults, and philosophy and held the chair of evangelism and contemporary thought at Alliance Theological Seminary for three-and-a-half years.

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

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