George MacDonald: An Original Thinker
by Tanya Ingham, M.A.
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George MacDonald, a Victorian Scottish writer, produced 53 books of varied genre, including fiction, fantasy, sermons, poetry, novels, short stories, and essays. His work was well known in the latter part of the nineteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic. In comparison, MacDonald became relatively unknown during the following century. Biographers consider the decline of interest the result of a change in the modern appetite, which no longer found palatable the didactic style of the religious content of much of his work. MacDonald’s son Greville observed that the theological slant became less appealing to an audience that was becoming less theological and that the reader no longer cared for the moral lessons or spiritual challenge inherent in his father’s work.

A deeply reverent and sincere Christian, MacDonald was accused of heresy on more than one occasion (and with good reason). His first pastorate was lost in part due to such charges. His life, thought, and work reveal a mystic concerned with widening the vision of others beyond this world; a writer who infused the mundane with the divine or revealed the divine in the mundane; a pastor whose pulpit lay beyond the bounds of the church; an unsystematic theologian; a loyal friend; and a loving husband and father. A complex man, yet childlike in his faith, MacDonald demonstrated a passionate love for God which his life displayed and which he exercised (continued on page 8)
For some months, we have been looking at the state of the church and asking what is necessary for the church to be restored to healthy spiritual life and vitality. In the last issue, we looked at the need for sound biblical exposition from the pulpit.

But biblical exposition, while essential, is not sufficient for a healthy spiritual life. One can perhaps survive on a thirty-minute sermon each week, but one will not grow to maturity without more sustained exposure to God’s word. Bishop J.C. Ryle has rightly said, “The Bible applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit is the chief means by which men are built up and established in the faith after their conversion.” Thus, to grow into maturity in Christ, we will also need to take initiative to pursue Him through regular reading, meditation, and study of Scripture.

Daily Bible reading is a proven, foundational discipline to develop. This is made much easier today by the One Year Bible, which organizes the entire Bible into daily fifteen-minute readings. As John Newton said, “I know of no better rule of reading the Scripture than to read it through from beginning to end, and when we have finished it once, to begin it again.”

Meditation on Scripture (quiet, prayerful reflection on a text) is essential if we are to experience its life-changing depth. Thomas Brooks said, “Remember, that it is not hasty reading but serious meditation on holy and heavenly truths that makes them prove sweet and profitable to the soul.”

And then there is study. We can grasp certain truths of Scripture only by careful study, and it is our responsibility to apply ourselves to understand them. Fortunately, there are many high-quality, simple-to-use study tools available today to make this process easier.

As vital as it is to immerse ourselves in God’s word, our efforts will come to nothing without two additional things. First, we must always come to Scripture with a conscious and prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit, who alone can open our hearts to it. And second, we must respond to God’s word with the obedience of faith, without which we will become increasingly self-deceived (Jas. 1:22-25).

In the next issue we will look at the vital place of prayer for restoring the church.
C.S. Lewis the Evangelist

by Philip G. Ryken, Ph.D.
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Recently, in celebration of its fiftieth anniversary, Christianity Today drew up a list of the fifty books that have exercised the greatest influence on evangelicalism in the last fifty years. The magazine went through a similar exercise ten years ago, when the editors concluded that “one author’s books indisputably affected American evangelicals during this period more than...those of any of the other authors mentioned.” “I mean,” wrote the author, “of course, C.S. Lewis.” Of course. Who else?

Not that the impact of Lewis has been limited to evangelicalism. C.S. Lewis holds sway among mere Christians everywhere. At the same time Christianity Today was celebrating its birthday, another publication was rightly advertising Lewis as “an ally we all trust,” Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox alike.

The marriage of British erudition to American consumerism has produced a marketing sensation. As one writer whimsically observed in The Virginia Quarterly Review, …[T]he Lewis devotee (and there are many, judging from the sales figures) could, upon rising, don his C.S. Lewis sweatshirt, ascertain the date from his C.S. Lewis calendar, make coffee wearing his C.S. Lewis apron and drink it from his C.S. Lewis mug, offer devotion to his Maker in the words of C.S. Lewis, and meditate on what C.S. Lewis had done on that date, before setting off to work or school with his C.S. Lewis tote bag filled with C.S. Lewis books.

Just how influential has C.S. Lewis been? One way to answer that question would be to quantify the sale of his books. The numbers are impressive. As many as one hundred Lewis-related titles are in print at any given time. Roughly two million copies of his works are sold every year in the United States and the United Kingdom. According to one estimate, Lewis is the best-selling Christian author of all time, with some forty million copies in print altogether. He may also be the most frequently quoted Christian author of all time.

The trouble with statistics is that, although they can lie, they cannot tell stories. The important thing about C.S. Lewis is not how many people have read him, but the extent to which reading him has become a life-transforming experience. Popularity is not the same thing as influence; C.S. Lewis has had both.

C.S. Lewis is usually considered to have had a substantial influence on atheists, agnostics, and other unbelievers. In the first critical study of his thought, Chad Walsh identified him as the Apostle to the Skeptics. One often sees references to the “numerous” or even “countless” people whom C.S. Lewis has brought to faith in Jesus Christ. To cite just one example, the evangelist Stephen F. Olford speaks of knowing “not just scores, but hundreds of intellectual people...[who] have come to Christ subsequent to reading [Mere Christianity].”

Although the influence of C.S. Lewis is widely assumed, it has (continued on page 15)
The following sermon was delivered at the Keswick Convention, July 17, 2007.

I remember very vividly, some years ago, that the question which perplexed me as a younger Christian (and some of my friends as well) was this: what is God's purpose for His people? Granted that we have been converted, granted that we have been saved and received new life in Jesus Christ, what comes next? Of course, we knew the famous statement of the Westminster Shorter Catechism: that man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever: we knew that, and we believed it. We also toyed with some briefer statements, like one of only five words—love God, love your neighbor. But somehow neither of these, nor some others that we could mention, seemed wholly satisfactory. So I want to share with you where my mind has come to rest as I approach the end of my pilgrimage on earth, and it is—God wants His people to become like Christ. Christlikeness is the will of God for the people of God.

So if that is true, I am proposing the following: first to lay down the biblical basis for the call to Christlikeness; secondly, to give some New Testament examples of this; thirdly, to draw some practical conclusions. And it all relates to becoming like Christ.

So first is the biblical basis for the call to Christlikeness. This basis is not a single text: the basis is more substantial than can be encapsulated in a single text. The basis consists rather of three texts which we would do well to hold together in our Christian thinking and living: Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18, and 1 John 3:2. Let’s look at these three briefly.

Romans 8:29 reads that God has predestined His people to be conformed to the image of His Son: that is, to become like Jesus. We all know that when Adam fell he lost much—though not all—of the divine image in which he had been created. But God has restored it in Christ. Conformity to the image of God means to become like Jesus: Christlikeness is the eternal predestinating purpose of God.

My second text is 2 Corinthians 3:18: “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory...
to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” So it is by the indwelling Spirit Himself that we are being changed from glory to glory—it is a magnificent vision. In this second stage of becoming like Christ, you will notice that the perspective has changed from the past to the present, from God’s eternal predestination to His present transformation of us by the Holy Spirit. It has changed from God’s eternal purpose to make us like Christ, to His historical work by His Holy Spirit to transform us into the image of Jesus.

That brings me to my third text: 1 John 3:2. “Beloved, we are God’s children now and it does not yet appear what we shall be but we know that when he appears, we will be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” We don’t know in any detail what we shall be in the last day, but we do know that we will be like Christ. There is really no need for us to know any more than this. We are content with the glorious truth that we will be with Christ, like Christ, forever.

Here are three perspectives—past, present, and future. All of them are pointing in the same direction: there is God’s eternal purpose, we have been predestined; there is God’s historical purpose, we are being changed, transformed by the Holy Spirit; and there is God’s final or eschatological purpose, we will be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. All three, the eternal, the historical, and the eschatological, combine towards the same end of Christlikeness. This, I suggest, is the purpose of God for the people of God. That is the biblical basis for becoming like Christ: it is the purpose of God for the people of God.

I want to move on to illustrate this truth with a number of New Testament examples. First, I think it is important for us to make a general statement, as the apostle John does in 1 John 2:6: “he who says he abides in Christ ought to walk in the same way as he walked.” In other words, if we claim to be a Christian, we must be Christlike. Here is the first New Testament example: we are to be like Christ in his Incarnation.

Some of you may immediately recoil in horror from such an idea. Surely, you will say to me, the Incarnation was an altogether unique event and cannot possibly be imitated in any way? My answer to that question is yes and no. Yes, it was unique, in the sense that the Son of God took our humanity to Himself in Jesus of Nazareth, once and for all and forever, never to be repeated. That is true. But there is another sense in which the Incarnation was not unique: the amazing grace of God in the Incarnation of Christ is to be followed by all of us. The Incarnation, in that sense, was not unique but universal. We are all called to follow the example of His great humility in coming down from heaven to earth. So Paul could write in Philippians 2:5-8: “Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped for his own selfish enjoyment, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.” We are to be like Christ in his Incarnation in the amazing self-humbling which lies behind the Incarnation.

Secondly, we are to be like Christ in His service. We move on now from his Incarnation to His life of service; from His birth to His life, from the beginning to the end. Let me invite you to come with me to the upper room where Jesus spent his last evening with His disciples, recorded in John’s gospel, chapter 13: “He took off his outer garments, he tied a towel round him, he poured water into a basin and washed his disciples’ feet. When he had finished, he resumed his place and said, ‘If then I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet, for I have given you an example”—notice the word—“that you should do as I have done to you.”

Some Christians take Jesus’ command literally and have a foot-washing ceremony in their Lord’s Supper (continued on page 27)
Theology: Who Needs It?

by Art Lindsley, Ph.D.

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“Many people were happy Christians until they met a theologian,” said one old-time preacher. His implication was that theology not only was unnecessary but also could be dangerous to one’s spiritual life. But is that really true?

Webster’s Dictionary defines the word “theology” as “the study of God and His relation to the world.” It takes only a moment’s reflection to realize that if someone wants to grow in knowing, loving, and serving God, it will involve at least some amount of “the study of God and His relation to the world,” or, to put it more simply, study of the doctrine (teaching) and practice (daily living) taught in the Bible.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones often emphasized the biblical connection between doctrine and practice. For instance, Romans 1-11 focuses on theology and Romans 12-16 focuses on its practical applications. The transition verse, Romans 12:1, says, “Therefore my brothers, by the mercies of God, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, which is your reasonable service.” In other words, the only logical conclusion, the only adequate response to the mercies of God revealed in Romans 1-11 is to commit yourself totally. Chapters 12-16 outline what that commitment means. Even in the “doctrinal” sections, application is often present. For instance, Romans 11 ends with spontaneous worship: “Oh the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgment and His paths beyond tracing out…For from Him and through Him and to Him be the glory forever. Amen.” (Romans 11:33-36). Sound teaching necessarily leads to godly living.

But the Bible’s teaching must be set in its proper context if it is to be meaningful. In fact, B.B. Warfield once argued that when we fail to study the Scriptures in a context that is in relation to the whole of biblical revelation, we lose half the spiritual impact. But when we have an understanding of the flow of redemptive history or of the great themes of Scripture, individual texts often jump off the page at us. The texts have a clarity, force, and power that they would not have otherwise. We can gain this context from the study of biblical theology (Genesis to Revelation) or systematic theology (biblical themes arranged topically), both of which are often rejected in the contemporary church. This leads not only to a diminished understanding of the text we read, but also to a spiritually weak and impoverished life.

“Yes,” you say, “I guess that makes sense for pastors, but why should an ordinary believer study theology?” The primary reason for anyone studying theology is that in reality everyone is a theologian. That is, everyone has a certain set of ideas about God and His relation to the world.

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is sin? How do I live the Christian life? Is there life after death?—you are giving answers based upon ideas that you have arrived at either through careful thought or not-so-careful thought. On matters so important to ourselves and others, surely we want to be good, informed, sound theologians rather than bad, uninformed, and unsound ones.

Despite this rather obvious (but often neglected) insight, theology has a negative connotation for many within the Christian culture. With the advent of postmodernism, the influence of anti-mind, anti-rational, and anti-intellectual sympathies abound; in that light, it might be helpful to look at some of the most often heard objections to studying theology:

**Doesn’t theology focus too much on the mind?**
Good theology focuses on the “head, heart, and hand,” as someone has put it. It involves knowing, feeling, and doing. Jesus affirmed as the Great Commandment that we are to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our strength, and with all our minds. You can never love God with your mind too much, just as you can never love him with your heart, soul, and strength too much.

**Isn’t it enough to just focus on Jesus?**
Certainly Jesus Christ and what He has done for us (the gospel) is to be at the center of our focus. But, unless there is a solid understanding of who Jesus is and what His teachings mean, there can be problems. For instance, one movement in England asserted, “All we need is Jesus,” and the next four generations went through every heresy of the early church. As one scholar said, “If you don’t learn from the mistakes of the past, you are doomed to repeat them.” Some in the church have gotten lost or gone down dead-end streets. It’s valuable to have a map that shows you the best way to your destination, and for this we need the whole Bible.

**Aren’t there great dangers in theology—pride, diversion, and dryness?**
Yes, these can sometimes be problems. But an argument against abuse is not an argument against use. In 1 Corinthians 8:3, it says, “We all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant but love edifies. If any one supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know, but if any one loves God, he is known by Him.” Clearly, knowledge without love can lead to pride. Thus, seeking knowledge for its own sake or for mere curiosity has always been seen as dangerous by the great saints and theologians. Safety is found in humbly seeking first and foremost to know and love God and to serve others through a deeper knowledge of His word, in prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

**Doesn’t Paul say in 1 Cor. 2:2 that he was determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified?**
Yes. However, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:6 (four verses later), “Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature.” Later, in 1 Corinthians 3:1, he says, “I could not speak to you as spiritual men, but as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not able to receive it.” (continued on page 29)
Profile in Faith: George MacDonald
(continued from page 1)

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through unquestioning obedience; obedience being for MacDonald the very soul of knowledge and the essential key to Christian growth.

The religious convictions of MacDonald permeated both his life and work. Ronald MacDonald describes the integrity of his father’s faith:

The ideals of his didactic novels were the motive of his own life…a life of literal, and, which is more, imaginative consistency with his doctrine….There has probably never been a writer whose work was a better expression of his personal character. This I am not engaged to prove; but I positively assert…that in his novels, his fantastic tales and allegories, and most vividly, perhaps, in his verse, one encounters…the same rich imagination, the same generous lover of God and man, the same consistent practiser of his own preaching, the same tender charity to the sinner with the same uncompromising hostility to the sin, which were known in daily use and by his own people counted upon more surely than sunshine.4

Christ was the center of his life and work. MacDonald did not hold a position in a church for any significant length of time and consequently did not have a regular pulpit from which to deliver his sermons. Many of his sermons were “delivered” through written form. His sermons are found in the following works: Unspoken Sermons, 1st Series (1867), Unspoken Sermons, 2nd Series (1885), Unspoken Sermons, 3rd Series (1889), The Miracles of Our Lord (1870), and The Hope of the Gospel (1892).

The Making of an Original Thinker

George MacDonald was born and raised in the small village of Huntly, which is located in Aberdeenshire in the northeast of Scotland. He was born on December 10, 1824. He lived into the next century, dying in 1905. At the time of his birth, the Industrial Revolution had not reached his village and its economy was dependent upon agriculture and handicrafts. The Celt’s love of poetry and music, his passionate nature, his loyalty to family and land, and his sincere piety all distinguished the heritage and life of MacDonald.

He grew up on a farm; his father and uncle ran a bleaching business for several years and farmed the land. In 1832, when MacDonald was eight years old, his mother died from tuberculosis. Helen MacKay MacDonald had been well educated, beautiful, and dearly loved by her husband. She left behind her husband and four sons; Charles, George, Alexander, and John Hill. This loss was alleviated for George when his father remarried seven years later.

George enjoyed his childhood in the environment of a close and loving family. A delicate constitution, which would plague him throughout his adult life, prevented him from being as physically active as some of the other children, though he loved roaming the town and surrounding fields with schoolmates. He did well in school and at an early age began reading such titles as Pilgrim’s Progress, Paradise Lost, and Klopstock’s Messiah. Michael Phillips refers to MacDonald as a “thinker, a juvenile mystic of sorts,” who was fascinated with nature and the meaning of life from an early age.5 Greville describes how his father’s world differed from that of his playmates because “his keener vision everywhere disclosed fairyland and bewitchment, chivalry and devotion.”6

The Wrath of God

Isabella Robertson, George’s grandmother, insisted upon the children’s attendance at the Missionar Kirk in Huntly. His grandmother was an example of a cold, dour,
severe woman who had destroyed her son’s violin at an early age, considering it a tool of Satan. She had left the Parish Church of Huntly for the more passionate and zealous Missionar’s Congregational Church. A portion of George’s early religious instruction could be described as strict and joyless. MacDonald retained several of the positive aspects of his religious upbringing, such as a fervent, evangelistic spirit, but he did from an early age begin to struggle with aspects of a strict Calvinist theology, questioning the legalism and the teachings on predestination. As he wrestled with questions concerning the nature and character of God, he was not left without positive input. Nature seemed to hint of a God of wonder; a God of creation; a God of joy and delight. Along with nature’s testimony, the most important ingredient for George in the forming of a fuller and more positive impression of God at an early age was his father.

George MacDonald Sr. demonstrated warmth, understanding, compassion, forgiveness, and love. Greville describes his grandfather as “of noble presence, well built and robust—a ‘wyss’ man…brave, patient, and generous; finely humorous, of strong literary tastes, and profound religious convictions.” And he says his father’s reverence for him was “absolute.”

C.S. Lewis states:

An almost perfect relationship with his father was the root of all his wisdom. From his own father, he said, he first learned that Fatherhood must be at the core of the universe. He was thus prepared in an unusual way to teach that religion in which the relation of Father and Son is of all relations the most central.

As George MacDonald matured and faced periods of doubt in regard to his faith, it was to his father, both as a source of wisdom and as an example to model, that he turned.

The Young Thinker

In 1840, at the age of sixteen, George was sent to Aulton Grammar School in preparation for the Bursary Competition. He won twelfth place and was awarded the Fullarton Bursary, which granted him fourteen pounds a year. This allowed him to attend King’s College, where he excelled in chemistry and natural philosophy. He desired to continue studies in medicine, but lack of funds prevented this. He was forced to miss the third session at university due to lack of funding, and spent the period cataloguing a library in the north of Scotland.

During this interim, he began reading Schiller, Goethe, and E.T.A. Hoffman. He was especially drawn to the German mystic, Novalis. Attracted to his sensitive treatment of nature, his fascination with death, and the general melancholy of his work, MacDonald would later go on to translate Novalis’ Twelve Spiritual Songs. Michael Phillips discusses how this period strengthened, rather than weakened, his struggling faith. Phillips describes how it gave him the room and boundaries for doubts, and that he returned to university having resolved certain issues. He no longer feared that God would judge him for his doubts or questions, and, more importantly, he felt convinced that his instincts in regard to God’s character, goodness, and love were correct.

He returned to the university in 1843, widening his study to include language and literature. He was an “ardent, if nervous, speaker in the Debating Society,” and he enjoyed playing charades. He was also introspective, analytical,
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When the old poets made some virtue their theme they were not teaching but adoring, and what we take for didactic is often the enchanted.”

C.S. Lewis

emotional, and moody. He demonstrated a complex personality, which revealed him playful and carefree one moment and pensive and withdrawn the next. One of his closest friends at King’s, Robert Troup, wrote in 1898:

He was studious, quiet, sensitive, imaginative, frank, open, speaking freely what he thought. His love of truth was intense, only equaled by his scorn of meanness, his purity and his moral courage. So I have found him when I became acquainted with him….So I have found him ever since.10

Troup also notes his silent and thoughtful moods and the consequential concern his friends expressed over MacDonald’s spiritual state.

God’s Call

MacDonald received his master’s degree in chemistry and physics in 1845. The period of 1845-1853 was especially significant in regard to the development of MacDonald’s faith. He had been repelled by the surrounding worldliness and hypocrisy of the church, but he had found renewal and encouragement in the Gospels. The spring of 1847 witnessed a deepening of his Christian experience, marked by a stronger sense of joy. The teachings from youth faded into the background as the reading of Scripture and the teachings of Christ claimed more and more of his attention. He wrote to his father how he was in the habit of reading the Gospels every day and that if the Gospel was not true, he wished his maker to annihilate him, for nothing else was worth living for.11

In 1848, MacDonald made the decision to become a Congregationalist minister. He entered Highbury College in London, spending two years studying Greek and Latin classics, European biblical scholarship, and the Bible in its original languages. He graduated in 1850, fluent in Latin, Koine and Classical Greek, Hebrew, German, and French. An influential part of his experience at Highbury was the teaching of Professor John Godwin. Godwin held the Chair of Systematic Theology and New Testament Exegesis. Suspected of heretical tendencies, Greville remarks that “his mode of thought appears to have been independent with leanings towards Arminianism” and also that “it was for his exposition of the New Testament that my father was most indebted to him.”12

Husband and Pastor

During his tutorship, MacDonald had met his future bride, Miss Louisa Powell. They were married on March 8, 1851. The Powells had found the young suitor “unconsciously persuasive” and had “recognized
with sure instinct that a daughter given to this lover of God, this poet who opened the eyes of all who were not slaves to pharisaic convention, was in good keeping indeed.” Louisa was sharp-witted, perceptive, and honest. She was also extremely sensitive and throughout their marriage dealt with periods of depression and struggles with self-esteem. George, though, became increasingly dependent upon her for love and encouragement throughout their courtship and marriage. They enjoyed deep companionship in their marriage and lovingly raised eleven children together.

The year of his marriage found Mac Donald accepting a position at the Trinity Congregational Church in Arundel. The church was attracted to its young pastor’s sensitivity and humor, but time revealed a ruling minority who found some of the pastor’s admonishments uncomfortable. Greville states:

My father’s flaming words against mammon-worship and cruelty and self-seeking, were as thoroughgoing as the giving of himself to all who needed him….The poor understood him—as they did his Master; but the purse-proud resented his plain speaking and turned away. The church expressed a desire for more doctrinal sermons and seemed to be unresponsive to MacDonald’s call to be obedient and mirror the goodness of Christ in the mundane activities of life.

The parishioners were uncomfortable with MacDonald’s emphasis upon the love of God and his treatment of the doctrine of hell. MacDonald had come to believe that the suffering of the damned compromised God’s goodness and, thus, could not accept the Calvinist understanding of God’s wrath and punishment. He viewed suffering and punishment as God’s instruments of purification. His emphasis upon the purgatorial nature of hell and the possibility of redemption beyond the grave reveals threads of universalism in his thinking and beliefs. (See the article on page 6 of this issue on the importance of theology.) MacDonald reveals his frustration with systems of thought to his father in a letter, dated April 15, 1851:

I firmly believe people have hitherto been a great deal too much taken up about doctrine and far too little about practice. The word doctrine, as used in the Bible, means teaching of duty, not theory. I preached a sermon about this. We are far too anxious to be definite and to have finished, well-polished, sharp-edged systems—forgetting that the more perfect a theory about the infinite, the surer it is to be wrong, the more impossible it is to be right. I am neither Arminian nor Calvinist. To no system would I subscribe.

Preacher Without a Pulpit

After being dismissed in 1853 by his congregation for heterodoxy, MacDonald shared his particular vision of the truth of the Gospel through lecturing and writing. The publication of Phantastes in...
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1858 propelled his literary career into a new direction and widened his circle of friends. Acquaintances included Dickens, Trollope, and Thackeray, and significant friendships included those of Lady Byron, John Ruskin, Lewis Carroll, and Frederick Denison Maurice. Maurice had been forced to resign from King’s College due to the charge of heresy. In “A Thanksgiving for F. D. Maurice,” MacDonald reveals his sympathetic leanings in the following verse:

He taught that hell itself is yet within
The confines of thy kingdom; and its fires
The endless conflict of thy love with sin,
That even by horror works its pure desire.  

After lecturing at the London Institute in 1859, MacDonald was invited by the Philosophical Institute of Edinburgh and the Royal Institution of Manchester to give a series of lectures. In the same year, he secured the Chair of English Language and Literature at Bedford College. He supported his family primarily with teaching and lecturing, though his family was often financially sustained by the charity of family and friends. He was asked to preach occasionally, but would never accept monetary compensation for preaching. Eventually he turned to writing novels at the encouragement of his publicist, and their success allowed for the financial provision of his family.

In the fall of 1872, George, Louisa, and Greville sailed for America. George lectured throughout the country. He was received enthusiastically and, aside from physical ailments, enjoyed the trip. The Princess and the Goblin was published in 1872, along with The Vicar’s Daughter and Wilfrid Cumbermede. The publication of novels, sermons, and poetry continued up until 1897, with his last publication, Salted with Fire.

Prophet and Poet

MacDonald lived during an era marked by significant philosophical and religious developments that fueled doubts, inspired debates, and challenged traditionally held beliefs. Such developments included the publication of Darwin’s Origin of Species in 1859; findings and new interpretations in geological studies; the application of German scientific historical methods and principles of literary criticism in biblical studies; and the growing interest in comparative religions. Some evangelicals demonstrated an inability to face the challenges squarely and consequently developed an anti-intellectual reputation. MacDonald’s faith was relatively unshaken as he believed that all truth was God’s truth. He sustained throughout his life an open and eager disposition towards the advancement of knowledge, which served him well in the wide variety of friendships he maintained.

MacDonald by temperament and experience was comfortable stepping outside the bounds of traditionally held beliefs. His extreme sensitivity to his early religious instruction, which he considered spiritless and life-denying, prompted him to question throughout his life tenets of Calvinism. He wrestled with whether certain doctrines caused the believer to take refuge in beliefs about Christ, rather than in Christ himself. As a romantic poet, he longed to render truth in fresh ways while he struggled with an inherent distrust of system. While aspects of his thinking flow outside the bounds of what evangelicals would consider biblical teaching, for the Christian reader of MacDonald there is still much to glean from his writings and life.

First of all, MacDonald’s importance for the contemporary Christian lies in his impact on other Christian thinkers. An obvious example is C.S. Lewis. In order for the reader to fully appreciate Lewis’s thought, he or she must be familiar with the thought of MacDonald. As mentioned earlier, Lewis
claimed that he never wrote anything without quoting MacDonald.

An example is Lewis’s *The Great Divorce*. Lewis wrote the story specifically with MacDonald in mind and, in fact, the story serves as a tribute to MacDonald. The book describes a short trip to heaven made by some of the occupants of hell. During the trip, MacDonald serves as Lewis’s guide and spiritual mentor. This is very appropriate, since Lewis boldly claimed MacDonald as his “master.” Unfortunately, however, Lewis brings in MacDonald’s understanding of a purgatorial nature of hell, along with the idea of post-mortem conversion. With an understanding of MacDonald’s thought, the reader is able to discern the themes attributable to him and to appreciate the commonalities and differences between the two writers.

Even if one disagrees with aspects of MacDonald’s theology, one can still appreciate the good in his work. In *The Pleasures of God*, John Piper describes this good, while recognizing that MacDonald “had thrown away the baby of much true biblical teaching with the bath water of a certain brand of gloomy, lifeless Calvinism.” Piper describes how the reader of MacDonald’s stories comes away with a “new zeal to be pure” and that one can’t help but be impressed by his “radical commitment” to following Christ. The source for the good one finds in reading MacDonald is best summarized by William H. Burnside:

*Part of the attractiveness of George MacDonald’s writings is the “natural” way his Christocentricity works out in his novels. Christ was the center of his life, God the most important theme. This is not contrived as an adjunct to his stories, but flows out of the center…. For George MacDonald, Christ, above all else, gave meaning and direction to his life.*

Rolland Hein states that MacDonald’s “strongest literary gift was to perceive and communicate the realities of Christ through myth” and that “it is this mythic component that makes his stories and tales continue to live today.” In short, there is much good to be gleaned by the reader, whether one is inspired through the Christ-like character of a protagonist in one of MacDonald’s theological romances or one’s longing for truth, goodness, and beauty is stirred by his masterful use and construction of myth.

This passion for Christ and for radical discipleship propelled MacDonald to serve as a type of prophet to his generation. The themes in MacDonald’s writing and the topics of his sermons reflect a deep concern for fellow believers, as he witnessed many Victorian Christians assenting intellectually to beliefs while failing to live out the demands of Christian discipleship. He believed that too much attention was given to theological discussion, and not enough to spiritual disciplines that would increase not merely intellectual knowledge, but also one’s desire and ability to love others.

The development of his theology is directly impacted by his emphasis upon the practical value of truth above mere theory. This remained a lifelong theme for MacDonald and led him away from biblical orthodoxy at points, as it has others in the history of the church. His belief that it was better to err in one’s knowledge than in one’s practice, since “to the man who gives himself to the living Lord, every belief will necessarily come right; the Lord himself will see that his disciple believe aright concerning him,” failed to recognize (continued on page 14)
Profile in Faith: George MacDonald
(continued from page 13)

the consistent teaching of Scripture that a knowledge of the truth is foundational to godly living. Orthodoxy (right belief), orthopraxy (right practice), and orthopathy (right feelings) must be held together, difficult though it may be.

MacDonald’s distrust in theological systems increased as he felt many people took refuge in a system of belief rather than in Christ himself, hence avoiding the call to radical discipleship. His concern is well-founded, as this has been a perennial problem in the history of the church and one that none of us can escape. Each of us has a system of thought, whether recognized and articulated or not, and we can easily rest in it instead of Christ himself. MacDonald helps us surmount this danger and points us to the heart of true discipleship when he says we must, “refuse, abandon, deny self altogether as a ruling, or determining, or originating element in us” as we seek our highest calling, which is willing God’s will.22 He reminds us that our faith should be deep and spirit-transforming, and that our final goal is not information, but transformation through our knowledge of the Lord that we might increasingly enjoy and reflect our Savior.

MacDonald experienced many emotional, spiritual, and physical hardships in his life, yet he remained constant in his trust in the Lord. He remained confident that everything he experienced in life came directly from the hand of God. Every pleasure and pain worked as an essential part of God’s redemptive plan for his life. Whether in the role of sage, popular lecturer, gifted poet, prolific novelist, or respected Christian teacher, MacDonald’s thought and work reflect a heart and mind captured by the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Notes

2. G.K. Chesterton, foreword to George MacDonald and His Wife by Greville MacDonald, 9.
6. MacDonald, George MacDonald and His Wife, 51.
7. Ibid., 30-31.
8. Lewis, George MacDonald: An Anthology, 13.
10. MacDonald, George MacDonald and His Wife, 76.
12. MacDonald, George MacDonald and His Wife, 113-14.
13. Ibid., 116.
14. Ibid., 156.
15. Ibid., 155.
16. Ibid., 398.

…there is much good to be gleaned by the reader, whether one is inspired through the Christ-like character of a protagonist in one of MacDonald’s theological romances or one’s longing for truth, goodness, and beauty is stirred by his masterful use and construction of myth.
**Recommended Reading**

*Two Books from John Piper*

**Desiring God: The Meditations of a Christian Hedonist**

This classic book argues that God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in Him. It is not only that our chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever (as the Westminster Confession states), but that we are to glorify God by enjoying Him forever. Duty and delight are not to be polar opposites. Delight is our duty. This book will alter your paradigm about the Christian life.

**Future Grace**

This book continues in the vein of *Desiring God*, focusing on the power of the promises of God’s grace given in Scripture, and how these can help overcome the power of sin in our lives. The promises of God can help us to overcome pride, covetousness, anxiety, lust, bitterness, impatience, and more. Many biblical texts are expounded, and examples given.

*C.S. Lewis the Evangelist*

(continued from page 3)

never been adequately documented. My purpose in this article is to describe the effectiveness of his work as an evangelist. Some questions one might like to answer—such as “How many souls did Lewis help to save?”—are necessarily unanswerable. But among the questions that can be answered there are one or two surprises. For one thing, C.S. Lewis was not very aggressive at personal evangelism. For another, he seems to have been more gifted at internal evangelism (within the church) than at external evangelism (outside the church). In other words, he has been more successful at keeping people in the kingdom than ushering them in to begin with. Yet there are some valuable lessons to be learned from the evangelism of C.S. Lewis. His life is a portrait of the winsome evangelist: gifted in teaching, persuasive in writing, fervent in prayer, and thorough in discipling.

*The Teaching Evangelist*

C.S. Lewis was a man of firm evangelistic convictions. So strong was his fervor for the Christian gospel that he became an object of ridicule to colleagues and a source of embarrassment to friends, even among the Inklings. For Lewis the salvation of human souls was “the real business of life.”

Yet the example of C.S. Lewis also challenges some evangelical stereotypes about how an evangelist ought to behave. He was not always winsome in the sense of being charming and engaging. He did not stand in the Oxford City Centre calling passersby to repentance. It was not his usual practice to ask students or colleagues if they had a “personal relationship with Jesus Christ.” Nor did he go door-to-door in Headington Quarry passing out tracts

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and asking his neighbors, “If you were to die tonight...”

On occasion, Lewis seemed even reluctant to evangelize. His long-time driver, Clifford Morris, observed that he rarely used casual conversation as a context for evangelism. In Morris’s words, C.S. Lewis “was no sort of Billy Graham type, at all.” Perhaps this was because he was convinced that, in his own words, “[what] we practice, not what we preach, is usually our great contribution to the conversion of others.” It may also have been due to his awareness of “the risk of making a nuisance of ourselves by witnessing at improper times.”

C.S. Lewis was especially reticent to speak of his Christian faith to his students. When the noted ecclesiastical historian A.G. Dickens went to him for undergraduate tutorials, he observed that “Lewis never behaved as a Christian apologist. He wasn’t a sort of heavyweight Christian.” Lewis’s eventual biographer, George Sayer, was scarcely aware of his tutor’s faith at all:

...[F]or the first two years when I was being tutored by him, I did not realize he was a Christian. He’d never brought Christianity up, and indeed I think he thought it would have been wrong and improper for him to have influenced his pupils in that sort of way. But when I remarked rather casually, I think in my third year, that I’d become a Roman Catholic, well he said, “Good. I’m glad you’ve become a Christian of some sort.”

The experience of Harry Blamires was much the same. It was not until nearly a decade after Blamires had been a student of Lewis that the two men discussed “religious matters.”

One place where C.S. Lewis’s teaching did assume an evangelistic purpose was the Oxford University Socratic Club, for which he served as President from 1941 to 1954. The Socratic Club was open to atheists, agnostics, and believers alike. From the beginning, its purpose was to encourage people to start “facing the question, is the Christian faith true, or not?” Meetings began with a talk on a religious subject by a prominent speaker, followed by vigorous open debate. Lewis always figured prominently in the disputations and he always argued from the distinctively Christian point of view.

The founder of the Socratic Club, Stella Aldwinckle, also remembers Lewis attending a week-long house party during a vacation in 1943. The purpose of the party was to nurture students who were beginning to get serious about the Christian faith. Of the twelve agnostics in attendance, the full dozen returned to university professing faith in Jesus Christ. The success of the holiday suggests how winsome Lewis could be as a personal evangelist.

C.S. Lewis’s involvement with other student groups was less intimate. To some he came as the apostle Paul came to the Corinthians, “in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling” (1 Cor. 2:3; KJV). Lady Elizabeth Catherwood recalls Lewis’s reluctance to be overtly associated with the Oxford Intercollegiate Christian Union (OICCU). On one of the rare occasions upon

“What we practice, not what we preach, is usually our great contribution to the conversion of others.”

C.S. Lewis
which he agreed to speak to the OICCU, his topic was “What is Christianity?” Catherwood describes the address as a “really splendid, perfect talk.” Lewis presented four facts upon which Christianity depends: the fact of God, the fact of man, the fact of sin, and the fact of salvation.

After the address, a member of the audience stood up and asked, “You know, Dr. Lewis, in the light of all you’ve been saying, this is clearly of vital importance to us all. If everything you’re saying is true, what do we do about it?” Lewis’s reply was blunt: “God forbid, sir, that I should intervene in such a personal matter. Go and talk to your priest about that.” This was hardly winsome evangelism, yet the remark should not be misunderstood as petulance or indifference. C.S. Lewis viewed himself as an apologist rather than a preacher. He was an evangelist of a particular kind—a teaching evangelist—and he was always careful to observe the limitations of his gifts for evangelism.

Lewis’s sense of his evangelistic limitations can be illustrated best from the approach he took in his talks to the Royal Air Force. Early in World War II, a mother who lost her pilot son in combat provided money for the YMCA to sponsor evangelistic work among pilots in training. The intent was for the RAF chaplaincy to wage war on “The Forgotten Front”—the spiritual front. C.S. Lewis was an obvious choice for a speaker. Though initially skeptical of his suitability for the task, Lewis accepted invitations to speak at RAF bases and camps throughout the summer of 1942.

Accounts of the effectiveness of the RAF talks vary. By Lewis’s own account they started badly. Scarcely a handful of men attended his first addresses, and there was little response afterwards. As Lewis confessed to Sister Penelope, “I’ve given talks to the RAF at Abingdon already, and so far as I can judge, they were a complete failure.” The impression is sometimes given that the rest of the talks were equally ineffective as evangelism. George Sayer concluded that members of the RAF were “put off by his cool, rational approach, by the lack of emotional and obvious devotional content.”

Canon H.A. Blair thought the talks featured C.S. Lewis “at his most characteristic, which is just clear I’m telling you clear sense.” Yet Blair denied that they had an evangelistic thrust (“It wasn’t evangelistic. It wasn’t in the sense of being a conversion talk. It wasn’t any kind of hot gospelling.”)

These assessments seem unduly negative. Stuart Barton Babbage recounts a memorable meeting in Norfolk at which Lewis bared his soul to a chapel packed with bomber squadrons. He spoke winsomely about the personal cost of his own discipleship and about the greater cost of Christ’s obedience. Bishop A.W. Goodwin-Hudson—then an RAF chaplain—was enthusiastic about the response of his men to Lewis’s presentation of the gospel.

After their first meeting, Goodwin-Hudson hurriedly telephoned his wife to say, “We’ve had a wonderful response tonight and some of the cream of English manhood have come forward to talk to us and to confess Christ as Saviour and Lord.”

Lewis was both moved and humbled by this experience:

“When the noted ecclesiastical historian A.G. Dickens went to [Lewis] for undergraduate tutorials, he observed that “Lewis never behaved as a Christian apologist. He wasn’t a sort of heavyweight Christian.”
The two men agreed that Lewis would continue presenting a twenty-minute case for Christianity, after which Goodwin-Hudson would issue a passionate gospel appeal.

A similar strategy was employed when C.S. Lewis spoke at a “This is Life” Crusade at Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones’ Westminster Chapel in London. Lewis gave a convincing testimony of his own commitment to Christ. This was followed by a gospel invitation from Stephen F. Olford, to which there was a tremendous response. Perhaps Lewis had these experiences in mind when he later wrote:

I am not sure that the ideal missionary team ought not to consist of one who argues and one who (in the fullest sense of the word) preaches. Put up your arguer first to undermine their intellectual prejudices; then let the evangelist proper launch his appeal. I have seen this done with great success.

C.S. Lewis, of course, was the evangelistic set-up man, the arguer and underminer of intellectual prejudice.

Lewis’s distinction between “the heart stuff” and “the head stuff” yields an important insight about evangelism. Although every Christian has a responsibility to evangelize, not all evangelists are created equal. “It was [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11; NIV). Although his ministry had an apostolic flavor, C.S. Lewis was not, strictly speaking, an apostle. Nor was he a man of pastoral temper, as his reluctance to do “the heart stuff” indicates. Instead, C.S. Lewis was a teaching evangelist. His particular gift was to defend the reasonableness of the Christian faith with strong arguments expressed in simple terms.

The talks C.S. Lewis did for BBC radio during World War II played to his strengths as a teaching evangelist. Although he detested the radio, Lewis accepted the invitation to give the talks because he rightly expected them to reach people who would never read his books. The weekly, fifteen-minute talks were given in three series between 1941 and 1944. They were then published as booklets under these titles: Broadcast Talks (1942), Christian Behaviour (1943) and Beyond Personality (1944). The booklets were later revised and published in a single volume as Mere Christianity, the book which remains Lewis’s single most influential evangelistic book.

The BBC talks were a tremendous success. Lewis’s vigor and no-nonsense style won him a wide hearing. Since the talks were given during the war, they reached people who were already pondering the ultimate questions of human existence (and non-existence). George Sayer recalls listening to one of the addresses with a pub full of soldiers who heeded the bartender’s loud admonition to “listen to this bloke. He’s really worth listening to.” Lewis was soon inundated with letters from listeners seeking spiritual help. A further measure of the evangelistic impact of the talks is that their published editions became immediate bestsellers.

C.S. Lewis himself did not consider the broadcast talks to be evangelistic, in the strictest sense of the word:

Mine are praeparatio evangelica rather than evangelism, an attempt to convince people that there is a moral law, that we disobey it, and that the existence of a Lawgiver is at least very probable and also (unless you add the Christian doctrine of the Atonement) that this imparts despair rather than comfort.

C.S. Lewis notwithstanding, the talks were both pre-evangelism and evangelism. Once the atoning death of Jesus Christ
had been introduced to the discussion, the

talks became a presentation of the gospel. If
C.S. Lewis was not a radio preacher, he was
at least a teaching evangelist.

The Writing Evangelist

C.S. Lewis was also a literary evangelist. In-
deed, he has had a far greater evangelistic
impact through his books and essays than
through his tutorials and addresses com-
bined. This is not surprising, since Lewis
himself observed that most of his books
were ‘evangelistic.’ It is also unsurprising
because of the natural intimacy between a
writer and a reader. Lewis was most win-
some in the pages of a book.

That Lewis was a writing evangelist is
crucial to his lingering significance, for it
enables his evangelistic work to transcend
the limitations of time and space. As for
time, “He being dead yet speaketh” (Heb.
11:4; KJV). As for space, C.S. Lewis’s min-
istry has extended far beyond the borders
of Great Britain. His greatest influence by
far has been upon the religious culture of
the United States, this despite the fact that
Lewis never set foot upon American shores
and treated the nation with some disdain.
He once wryly observed to a pupil, “The so-
called Renaissance produced three disasters:
the invention of gunpowder, the invention
of printing, and the discovery of America.”

One of Lewis’s first American converts
was Joy Davidman. Joy was a brilliant poet
and writer raised in the Jewish community
of New York City. Her path from atheism
to Christianity passed through Commu-
nism, as well as through a brief flirtation
with Judaism.

Several spiritual experiences helped pre-
pare the way for her conversion. One was her
reading of the Old and New Testaments as a
young girl. Another was her captivation by
an ice storm which displayed a beauty that
seemed to transcend the material world. Still
another was her occasional poetic writing
on themes such as the crucifixion of Jesus
Christ. In retrospect, it seemed as if her “in-
ner personality” was “deeply interested in
Christ and didn’t know it.” Later Joy read
The Screwtape Letters and The Great Divorce
by C.S. Lewis. Although she still considered
herself an atheist at the time, these books
“stirred an unused part of [her] brain to mo-
mentary sluggish life.”

Joy’s spiritual transformation was finally
precipitated by the nervous breakdown of
her first husband, William Lindsay Gresham.
Left alone and afraid by his collapse, Joy
had a personal encounter with the presence
of God. She described it like this: “All my
defenses—the walls of arrogance and cock-
sureness and self-love behind which I had
hid from God—went down momentarily—
and God came in.”

Once God had come in, various Chris-
tian writers helped lead Joy to faith in Jesus
Christ. Chief among these was C.S. Lewis:
“I snatched at books I had despised before…I
went back to C.S. Lewis and learned from
him, slowly, how I had gone wrong. With-
out his works, I wonder if I and many oth-
ers might not still be infants ‘crying in the
night.’” Joy was so enamoured of the writ-
ings of C.S. Lewis that she began to corre-
respond with him. Their correspondence led
to friendship, romance, and finally marriage.
Yet before C.S. Lewis became Joy’s husband,
he was her evangelist.

Lewis was equally influential in the con-
version of Sheldon Vanauken. Vanauken
was a sharp young agnostic from Virginia
when he went to Oxford to study literature.
Partly inspired by the soaring beauty of the
University Church of St. Mary the Virgin,
Vanauken determined to take a second look
at Christianity. He did so

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C.S. Lewis the Evangelist
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as much to make sure that Christianity was not true as to discover if it was.

The first Christian books Vanauken read were the space trilogy of C.S. Lewis: *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*. He went on to read many other Christian authors, including G.K. Chesterton, Charles Williams, Graham Greene, Dorothy Sayers, and T.S. Eliot. But mostly he read everything he could find by C.S. Lewis.

Vanauken found himself on the precipice of the Christian faith but unsure how to take the next step. He wrote to C.S. Lewis for help, hoping that if Lewis could not make a leap of faith for him, he might at least “give a hint of how it’s to be done.” A series of letters ensued, followed by a friendship. This serves as a reminder that winsome evangelism is always a form of friendship. In Vanauken’s case the friendship was crucial, for he found living Christians to be among the strongest arguments for the truth of the gospel. The two men were later drawn even closer by a shared grief: each lost the love of his life through illness.

Lewis encouraged Vanauken’s conversion through his letters and prayers. He soon perceived that his friend was on his way to becoming a Christian, writing, “I think you are already in the meshes of the net! The Holy Spirit is after you. I doubt if you’ll get away!” This terrified Vanauken, but Lewis was right. He had reached a point of no return. Not long afterwards he wrote to Lewis with news of his conversion: “I choose to believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—in Christ, my Lord and my God…I confess my doubts and ask my Lord Christ to enter my life.” For his part, Lewis was elated: “My prayers are answered…Blessings on you and a hundred thousand welcomes. Make use of me in any way you please: and let us pray for each other always.”

The most famous of the American converts of C.S. Lewis remains Charles Colson, former Special Counsel to Richard M. Nixon. Often referred to as Nixon’s “hatchet man,” Colson was known for getting things done. As *TIME* magazine put it, few men in the Nixon Administration were “tougher, wilier, nastier or more tenaciously loyal to Richard Nixon.” Colson was even said to have boasted that he “would walk over [his] grandmother if necessary” to get the President re-elected.

As Colson was drawn into the maelstrom surrounding Watergate, he discovered that his life was empty. He was first confronted with his need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by Tom Phillips, president of the Raytheon Company. Phillips told Colson that “the first step” to facing God squarely was to read a book called *Mere Christianity*.

To help Colson get started, Phillips read aloud from a chapter entitled “The Great Sin.” In that chapter C.S. Lewis exposes the evils of pride. “Pride leads to every other vice,” he writes, “it is the complete anti-God state of mind.” “Pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense.” These words exposed not only the evils of the Nixon Administration, but also the deepest sins of Colson’s own heart. “Suddenly I felt naked and unclean, my bravado defenses gone. I was exposed, unprotected, for Lewis’s words were describing me.” Colson was not yet a Christian, but the transformation had begun. Already that night he begged God with many tears, “Take me, take me, take me.”

Colson left the next day for a seaside vacation in Maine. He took his copy of *Mere Christianity* with him and wondered if knowing God was simply an emotional experience.

Perhaps, I thought, it is on this intuitive, emotional level that C.S. Lewis approaches God. I opened *Mere Christianity* and found...
myself instead face-to-face with an intellect so disciplined, so lucid, so relentlessly logical that I could only be grateful I had never faced him in a court of law. Soon I had covered two pages of yellow paper with pros to my query, “Is there a God?”

One by one the rest of Colson’s questions began to be answered as well: “If God is good, why does He preside over such an evil world?” “If God is listening to my prayers, how can He hear those being uttered at the same time by many millions of others?”

The most important question was the one that still remained: “How does Jesus Christ figure into all this?” Here Colson was helped by Lewis’s famous argument that Jesus Christ was either the Lord, a liar, or a lunatic. As Colson put it, “for Christ to have talked as He talked, lived as He lived, died as He died, He was either God or a raving lunatic...Lewis’s question was the heart of the matter. The words—both exciting and disturbing—pounded at me: Jesus Christ—lunatic or God?”

Colson was ready to make his commitment later that same evening.

I knew the time had come for me: I could not sidestep the central question Lewis (or God) had placed squarely before me. Was I to accept without reservations Jesus Christ as Lord of my life? It was like a gate before me. There was no way to walk around it. I would step through, or I would remain outside.

Charles Colson walked through the open gate to accept Jesus Christ. Indictment on charges related to Watergate, conviction, sentencing, and imprisonment were to follow, then release from prison and a national ministry to prison inmates. But the first step was to read Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis.

The names of some of Lewis’s other converts are also worthy of mention. Os Guinness, a gifted critic of church and culture, was converted by reading Mere Christianity as an Irish school boy. C.E.M. Joad, Professor of Philosophy at the University of London, was an ardent defender of atheism before being converted by reading The Problem of Pain. Chad Walsh is the writer and critic who first grasped the significance of C.S. Lewis for the American church. Walsh was “slowly thinking, feeling, and fumbling” his way towards the Christian faith, but his faith was “more of the mind than of the imagination and heart.” When he read Perelandra, he finally “got the taste and smell of Christian truth. My senses as well as my soul were baptized.” Like Colson, Walsh was eventually helped to recognize the deity of Jesus Christ by pondering the “Lord or lunatic” dilemma posed in Mere Christianity.

These brief conversion narratives remind us that evangelism is a team sport. Since the salvation of a soul rests upon a complex of experiences and relationships, each of these men and women was drawn to Christ by a web of influences. C.S. Lewis served merely as first among equals in the conversion process. Lewis himself was careful not to exaggerate the significance of his own involvement: “My feeling about people in whose conversion I have been allowed to play a part is always mixed with awe and even fear.”

There is another reason to avoid giving C.S. Lewis more credit than he deserves for these conversions. Coming to faith is never the work of a human being; it is always the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:8). A Christian testimony is a story about the grace of God, not a story about one’s own spiritual development or the influence of friends and writers. What saved these converts was the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. What convinced them to put (continued on page 22)
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(continued from page 21)

their trust in Jesus Christ was the Spirit of Christ speaking through the Word of God. As C.S. Lewis once reminded his American readers, “We must remember that neither Paul nor Apollos gives the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6; KJV).

The Praying Evangelist

It would be easy to miss the significance of what C.S. Lewis wrote to Sheldon Vanauken on the occasion of his conversion: “My prayers are answered.” On the lips of some Christians, perhaps, this would be little more than a cliché. For C.S. Lewis, however, prayer was the foundation for effective evangelism. If conversion is a work of the Holy Spirit, and if the work of the Holy Spirit is often prompted by the prayers of believers, then prayer is indispensable to the evangelist.

In 1949 C.S. Lewis wrote a letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, a Benedictine monk and a former pupil in need of encouragement:

I think a glance at my correspondence would cheer you up; letter after letter from recent converts, by ones and by twos, often (which is most hopeful) married couples with children…it amounts to nothing by the standards of world statistics. But are they the right standards? I sometimes have a feeling that the big mass conversions of the Dark Ages, often carried out by force, were all a false dawn, and that the whole work has to be done over again…Oh, by the way, Barfield was baptized last Saturday: have him in your prayers.

For C.S. Lewis…prayer was the foundation for effective evangelism. If conversion is a work of the Holy Spirit, and if the work of the Holy Spirit is often prompted by the prayers of believers, then prayer is indispensable to the evangelist.

This letter is significant for several reasons. First, it gives a hint of the evangelistic influence of Lewis, with a steady stream of new converts always contacting him by post. Second, it includes a helpful caveat about the dangers of quantifying salvation. Most importantly, it offers a glimpse of C.S. Lewis as a praying evangelist. He made it his regular practice to pray for the unconverted by name, and to give thanks to God when those prayers were answered. This practice also extended to his books, for which he prayed that God would help him “say things helpful to salvation.”

The Discipling Evangelist

In 1986 an unscientific survey was taken to determine the extent of the influence of C.S. Lewis in the United States. The following advertisement was placed in publications such as the Christian Century, Christianity Today, Eternity, and the New York Times Book Review: “The Marion E. Wade Collection is seeking evidence of the impact of C.S. Lewis and his writing on peoples’ lives. If you or others whom you know have been markedly influenced by Lewis, will you please write to us and share your reminiscences.” Dozens of lengthy responses were received from America and around the world.

Several respondents testified that C.S. Lewis had been influential in their coming to Christ in the first instance. A theology student at Berkeley explained that his “adult conversion to the faith [he] had been raised in” was “guided by C.S. Lewis.” A classicist chanced upon a copy of The Pilgrim’s Regress in a New York City bookshop, bought it, started reading it that night, and discovered that he had become a Christian by three o’clock the following morning. (continued on page 24)
**Questions & Answers on C.S. Lewis**

**Q:** Should the Narnia books be read in the order in which they were published, or in the order that is presently recommended by publishers?

**A:** C.S. Lewis published *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* first and *The Magician’s Nephew* last. For many years, publishers numbered the order of reading accordingly. In more recent years, however, following a comment by Lewis, publishers reversed the order, putting *The Magician’s Nephew* first and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* later. The argument was that *The Magician’s Nephew* portrays Narnia’s creation, while *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* presents the fall (always winter, never Christmas) and redemption (Aslan’s death for Edmund). This certainly makes logical sense. However, most Lewis scholars prefer the original order because a number of foundational ideas regarding Narnia, Aslan, and other important aspects of the Chronicles have their origin in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Therefore, *The Magician’s Nephew* is better understood after reading *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* than vice versa.

**Q:** Did C.S. Lewis have any favorite character from Narnia?

**A:** Lewis once told Walter Hooper that he considered his favorite and most successful characters from Narnia to be Reepicheep and Puddleglum. (Puddleglum was likely patterned after the family gardener, Fred Paxford.)

*Photo used by permission of The Wade Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL*
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Lyle Dorsett wrote that during his days as a professor of history at Denver University, C.S. Lewis and G.K. Chesterton “were instrumental in moving me from agnosticism to faith in Jesus Christ.” In each of these instances the writings of C.S. Lewis were decisive in an individual conversion to the Christian faith.

Other respondents used Lewis as a partner in their own evangelistic efforts. A minister from Pennsylvania wrote of “haunting the rows of shelves in used-book stores in a relentless search for used copies of Mere Christianity” to give away. An English professor at Arizona State University reported, “Several students in my university classes on Lewis have been converted, receiving Jesus Christ as their Savior, as a result of reading and discussing Mere Christianity.” A Welsh mathematician remembered his father keeping copies of the same book in his glove compartment to give to hitchhikers. Thus one aspect of Lewis’s influence has been to help other Christians become active evangelists. A questionnaire filled out by new Presbyterian missionaries during the 1950s revealed that C.S. Lewis had influenced more people to go to the mission field than all other names combined.

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The majority of those who responded to the Wade Center query did not write conversion narratives. Instead, men and women from all walks of life wanted to tell how C.S. Lewis had helped them stay on the pilgrim road. A lonely woman struggling with an unwanted pregnancy read and reread A Grief Observed. There “every feeling and thought I was having seemed to be written—anger, anguish, denial, hopelessness and the most burning one—who and where is God when we hurt.” A professor of English wrote, “His apologetics helped settle and confirm my own faith.” Another academic had allowed “high powered math and modern physics” to displace his faith almost entirely. When he read The Screwtape Letters his faith “came roaring back—adamant, larger than ever it had been.” For a woman trapped in “dry, duty-bound orthodoxy,” reading Mere Christianity was a “world-shaking event” which led to a “renewal or rebirth of spiritual vitality and fervor.” For a student at a fundamentalist university, recently converted from Roman Catholicism, “it was C.S. Lewis who provided a wonderful sense of Christian sanity in a warped, bitter environment.” Lewis’s apologetic arguments helped a woman from Stuyvesant “keep the faith,” kept a student from Wheaton College “within orthodox Christianity,” and enabled a bored Christian student at Akron to find “the Lord and God I had always longed for.”

These testimonies conform to what one writer has called “an almost archetypal pattern in the lives of countless (!!) evangelical students of the past three decades”:

First in the traditional pattern of appreciating Lewis came a period of gnawing doubt about the whole Christian faith...Into this dark night of the soul swept whatever happened to be the student’s first Lewis book. That led inexorably to the others. And what he or she found there was not so much answers—though they were wonderful beyond all hope—but more, an irrefutable demonstration that at least one Christian mind actually existed.

Such men and women were already Christians when they first encountered...
C.S. Lewis. He did not so much bring them to faith as keep them in the faith. The value of this should not be underestimated. Part of the purpose of apologetics is to shore up the intellectual defenses of Christianity when they start to crumble. This apologetic work is as necessary inside as it is outside the church. Internal evangelism is as valuable as external evangelism. What is the use of rescuing lost sheep if the sheep already in the fold are wandering off, or worse, being pilfered by hungry wolves?

C.S. Lewis did not simply make and keep converts, he also discipled them. Nearly all those who responded to the 1986 survey explained that C.S. Lewis taught them how to live the Christian life. Some even spoke of him as a “mentor.” A pastor from Maryland reckoned that, with the exception of the Bible, the writings of C.S. Lewis had done “more to shape [him] spiritually than any other influence.” A Newbery medalist wrote that the characters in the Chronicles of Narnia had shaped her understanding of patience as a virtue. Lewis’s writings on English literature helped guide a doctoral student in her study of medieval literature. A student worker from West Germany spoke for all: “The impact of Lewis for me is that his words and thoughts have, to a certain extent, become my words and thoughts and have penetrated my lifestyle, my worldview, my values and attitudes.”

A further attempt to solicit testimonies of the influence of C.S. Lewis was made via the Internet in 1996. Visitors to one or another C.S. Lewis web pages were encouraged to tell their stories “about the influence of C.S. Lewis on [their] conversion to faith in Jesus Christ or on [their] subsequent Christian pilgrimage.”

Answers to this question followed a pattern similar to the one that emerged from the earlier survey. One or two respondents spoke of owing their salvation to C.S. Lewis. A former atheist, for example, wrote that Lewis helped him see “that if I was going to deny God’s existence, I had better be prepared to explain why I sometimes wished so desperately that He did.” Another young man was so convinced that Christianity was a hoax perpetuated by “hucksters and vain pompous types seeking fame and glory” that he was stunned when he was unable to rebut the arguments made in Mere Christianity.

Other respondents explained how C.S. Lewis kept them in the church. A man struggling with spiritual doubt identified Lewis’s “logical arguments for the existence of God and the deity of Christ” as “the single most important factor in coming to complete and total belief in Christ.”

A seminar testified that when he read Mere Christianity, “for the first time in my life I found solid reasons to bolster my belief.” A lapsed Catholic explained how reading Lewis helped shepherd him back into the Roman church, especially because “the evangelical experience C.S.L. himself lived was so close in so many ways to the Catholic experience.” Another Christian rejoiced that C.S. Lewis had inspired “a whole new commitment to my Lord and Saviour which grows fresher every day.”

The Internet survey again revealed the importance of C.S. Lewis for Christian discipleship. In the words of one respondent, “Lewis has not been a solution for my sins, Christ has already taken care of that, but he has been a comfort in my daily struggle to be a better Christian.” A Fortune 500 consultant allowed Lewis’s thoughts about materialism and idolatry to shape his dealings with business clients. A Texas lawyer found in C.S. Lewis the

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authentic Christianity for which he had long yearned, free from the hypocrisy of outward appearances. Another man discovered the grace and joy to overcome his legalistic background by reading Lewis’s preface to *Letters to Young Churches*, the J.B. Phillips translation of the New Testament epistles. A fourth grade teacher read the *Chronicles of Narnia* to her students every year, hoping that the books would introduce them to the joy of life in Christ. Upon reading *The Abolition of Man*, a student at a midwestern Bible college devoted his life to presenting absolute truth to Generation X. C.S. Lewis has helped all kinds of Christians follow the Lord in all kinds of ways.

One striking feature of both the 1986 and 1996 surveys was the eagerness with which respondents wrote of their hope to meet C.S. Lewis in heaven. As they told the stories of their encounters with his writings, they spoke of him with an affection usually reserved for close friends. For C.S. Lewis and his readers, even literary evangelism can become a form of personal, winsome, friendship evangelism.

The foregoing testimonials suggest an important conclusion: the primary influence of C.S. Lewis has been in the area of Christian discipleship. That is to say, his primary impact has been to help people become disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in heart, mind, and will. However many people he has brought into the church, he has helped many more to think and act biblically once they arrived.

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Much of the vast correspondence of C.S. Lewis also falls under the category of discipleship. Some of the letters Lewis received came from unbelievers who were curious about the Christian faith. A great many more came from Christians seeking pastoral counsel. These correspondents wrote to Lewis with doctrinal questions, spiritual burdens, and personal problems. To answer such letters was to become a discipling evangelist. One illuminating example comes from one of the Latin letters Lewis wrote to Don Giovanni Calabria, himself a venerable priest and the founder of an Italian orphanage: “You write much about your sins. Beware (permit me, my dearest Father, to say beware) lest humility should pass over into anxiety or sadness.” Here Lewis was a pastor, counseling, confronting, and consoling.

The lives of Lewis’s converts show that he has been most influential in the discipleship of the Christian mind, or perhaps the Christian imagination. Men and women such as Joy Davidman, Sheldon Vanauken, Charles Colson, and Os Guinness have gone on to make outstanding contributions to the imaginative and intellectual life of the church. Joy Davidman is something of a special case, of course, since Christian marriage is always a covenant of discipleship. Yet the others were also shaped by the mind of C.S. Lewis. His work reversed Charles Colson’s view of politics, for example, by convincing him that the individual is more important than the state.

To emphasize the role of C.S. Lewis as a discipler of the Christian mind is not to diminish his stature as an evangelist. A good evangelist is a discipling evangelist. Fulfilling the Great Commission entails more than simply “going into all the world.” It also includes “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20a; KJV). As a discipler of the mind and imagination, C.S. Lewis continues to be a winsome evangelist.
once a month or on Maundy Thursday—and they may be right to do it. But I think most of us transpose Jesus’ command culturally: that is, just as Jesus performed what in His culture was the work of a slave, so we in our cultures must regard no task too menial or degrading to undertake for each other.

Thirdly, we are to be like Christ in His love. I think particularly now of Ephesians 5:2—“walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Notice that the text is in two parts. The first part is walk in love, an injunction that all our behavior should be characterized by love, but the second part of the verse says that He gave Himself for us, which is not a continuous thing but an aorist, a past tense, a clear reference to the cross. Paul is urging us to be like Christ in his death, to love with self-giving Calvary love. Notice what is developing: Paul is urging us to be like the Christ of the Incarnation, to be like the Christ of the foot washing, and to be like the Christ of the cross. These three events of the life of Christ indicate clearly what Christlikeness means in practice.

Fourthly, we are to be like Christ in His patient endurance. In this next example we consider not the teaching of Paul but of Peter. Every chapter of the first letter of Peter contains an allusion to our suffering like Christ, for the background to the letter is the beginnings of persecution. In chapter 2 of 1 Peter in particular, Peter urges Christian slaves, if punished unjustly, to bear it and not to repay evil for evil. For, Peter goes on, you and we have been called to this because Christ also suffered, leaving us an example—there is that word again—so that we may follow in His steps. This call to Christlikeness in suffering unjustly may well become increasingly relevant as persecution increases in many cultures in the world today.

My fifth and last example from the New Testament is that we are to be like Christ in His mission. Having looked at the teaching of Paul and Peter, we come now to the teaching of Jesus recorded by John. In John 20:21, in prayer, Jesus said, “As you, Father, have sent me into the world, so I send them into the world”—that is us. And in His commissioning in John 17 He says, “As the Father sent me into the world, so I send (continued on page 28)
The Model: Becoming More Like Christ

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you.” These words are immensely significant. This is not just the Johannine version of the Great Commission but also an instruction that their mission in the world was to resemble Christ’s mission. In what respect? The key words in these texts are “sent into the world.” As Christ had entered our world, so we are to enter other people’s worlds. It was eloquently explained by Archbishop Michael Ramsey some years ago: “We state and commend the faith only in so far as we go out and put ourselves with loving sympathy inside the doubts of the doubters, the questions of the questioners, and the loneliness of those who have lost the way.”

This entering into other people’s worlds is exactly what we mean by incarnational evangelism. All authentic mission is incarnational mission. We are to be like Christ in His mission. These are the five main ways in which we are to be Christlike: in His Incarnation, in His service, in His love, in His endurance, and in His mission.

Very briefly, I want to give you three practical consequences of Christlikeness.

Firstly, Christlikeness and the mystery of suffering. Suffering is a huge subject in itself and there are many ways in which Christians try to understand it. One way stands out: that suffering is part of God’s process of making us like Christ. Whether we suffer from a disappointment, a frustration, or some other painful tragedy, we need to try to see this in the light of Romans 8:28-29. According to Romans 8:28, God is always working for the good of His people, and according to Romans 8:29, this good purpose is to make us like Christ.

Secondly, Christlikeness and the challenge of evangelism. Why is it, you must have asked, as I have, that in many situations our evangelistic efforts are often fraught with failure? Several reasons may be given and I do not want to over-simplify, but one main reason is that we don’t look like the Christ we are proclaiming. John Poulton, who has written about this in a perceptive little book entitled, A Today Sort of Evangelism, wrote this:

The most effective preaching comes from those who embody the things they are saying. They are their message. Christians need to look like what they are talking about. It is people who communicate primarily, not words or ideas. Authenticity gets across. Deep down inside people, what communicates now is basically personal authenticity.

That is Christlikeness. Let me give you another example. There was a Hindu professor in India who once identified one of his students as a Christian and said to him: “If you Christians lived like Jesus Christ, India would be at your feet tomorrow.” I think India would be at their feet today if we Christians lived like Christ. From the Islamic world, the Reverend Iskandar Jadeed, a former Arab Muslim, has said “If all Christians were Christians—that is, Christlike—there would be no more Islam today.”

That brings me to my third point—Christlikeness and the indwelling of the Spirit. I have spoken much tonight about Christlikeness, but is it attainable? In our own strength it is clearly not attainable, but God has given us his Holy Spirit to dwell within us, to change us from within. William Temple, Archbishop in the 1940s, used to illustrate this point from Shakespeare:

It is no good giving me a play like Hamlet or King Lear and telling me to write a play like that. Shakespeare could do it—I can’t. And it is no good showing me a life like the life of Jesus and telling me to live a life like that. Jesus could do it—I can’t. But if the genius of Shakespeare could come and live in me, then I could write plays like this. And if the Spirit could come into me, then I could live a life like His.

So I conclude, as a brief summary of what we have tried to say to one another: God’s purpose is to make us like Christ. God’s way to make us like Christ is to fill us with his Spirit. In other words, it is a Trinitarian conclusion, concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
“You must translate every bit of your theology into the vernacular...if you cannot translate your thoughts into uneducated language, then your thoughts were confused.”

C.S. Lewis

Theology: Who Needs It?
(continued from page 7)

So it seems that Paul stayed with the ABCs (milk) because they weren't ready for more.

Surely you don’t believe in a system of theology—isn’t that modernist?
If God has a consistent character and can meaningfully reveal Himself, then it must be possible to organize these truths in a coherent way. If God were contradictory, it would be impossible to know Him because everything you could affirm about Him you could also negate. It would also make any revelation about Him impossible to understand.

Aren’t all our problems because we have too much theology?
That’s a common idea. First theology is neglected, then deliberately deemphasized, then regarded as unimportant, then viewed as dispensable. The problem is that another “theology” takes its place. And those who follow it become more conformed to the culture or to a charismatic leader.

Doesn’t the Bible emphasize the heart rather than the mind?
The word heart (especially in the Old Testament) is used many more times than mind. However, the biblical term for heart includes the mind. There is no divorce between the two in Scripture.

How much theology should you know?
The Apostle Paul recommends the “whole purpose of God” (Acts 20:27). In fact, Paul says that because he gave the Ephesians the “whole purpose of God,” he is “innocent of the blood of all men” (Acts 20:26). Paul spent about three years in Ephesus, which gives a general idea of how much time it took for the Ephesians to learn about the whole purpose of God.

What is this “whole purpose of God”?
It’s not possible to say exactly what Paul’s curriculum contained. We can be confident that it would have been well-grounded in both the Old Testament and the teachings of Christ proclaimed by the original Apostles, plus what Christ personally revealed to Paul. And of course, the major focus would have been Christ. We probably get a good idea of what Paul focused on from reading his epistles (Romans, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Timothy, etc.). Since these epistles are just short summaries, imagine how much Paul could teach given three years (Acts 20:31) and regular sessions “publicly, and from house to house” (Acts 20:20), as well as individual meetings admonishing “each one with tears” (Acts 20:31). Also note that he stresses that he did not “shrink back” (vs. 20 and 27) from teaching them anything that was profitable, including difficult—hard to hear—teaching.

Why is this thorough, comprehensive teaching so important?
First, it is life-giving and also protects against teaching and (continued on page 30)
Theology: Who Needs It?
(continued from page 29)

practice that would endanger our souls. Paul warns about savage wolves that would come to take away the flock (vs. 29). These are other religious movements and philosophies coming in from the outside. Then there are those who rise up from inside the church (false teachers) determined “to draw away the disciples after them” (vs. 30). Not only do these teachers give false, destructive content, but they are also self-centered, focused on gaining a following—“after them.”

Isn’t Paul’s emphasis here harsh and judgmental?
Not if it is done in love. Paul says he offered his teaching “with tears” (vs. 31). He showed them so much love that the Ephesians came to love him deeply. When he left them, “they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him” (vs. 37).

What difference would it make if we didn’t have sound teaching?
Solid teaching gives life and protects from harm. It leads us to a way of life and establishes us in our identities as believers. Take 1 Peter 2:9-10: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a people for God’s own possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” Note that it is said that “once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God.” Any basis for our identity, whether racial, ethnic, political, or national, pales into insignificance compared to who we are in Christ.

Aren’t some theologians living in an ivory tower—just living in their minds?
Certainly some are; however, this is not true of all. The English puritans such as William Ames defined theology as “living to God.” This means that the best theologian is the one who lives best. Jonathan Edwards just adds a couple of words to this definition: “Theology is living to God in Christ.” Jesus stresses that it is not enough to just know or hear His words. You must act on them. He says that the one who hears and acts on His words builds on a foundation of rock, and the one who hears but doesn’t act accordingly builds without a foundation. When the river bursts, the house collapses and is ruined (Luke 6:46-49). This river represents tragic events that happen in our personal and public lives. There are many who hear and don’t act on it, or who don’t hear because they were never taught. Either way, the lack of a foundation has devastating consequences.

Why do we need theology? Because the failure to know biblical teaching and apply it to our lives is a threat to us personally and to the church in our time. The truth is that everyone has a theology; the only question is whether it is sound and life-giving or faulty and dangerous. Let us then build our lives on the foundation of Holy Scripture, with special attention to the teaching of Christ and His delegated agents—the Apostles. Only thus will we be able to truly know, love, and serve God with faithfulness in our generation.
THOUGHTS TO PONDER

Charles Spurgeon on Reading the Bible


1. **Read the Bible with an Earnest Desire to Understand it.**
   Do not be content to just read the words of Scripture. Seek to grasp the message they contain.

2. **Read the Scriptures with a Simple, Childlike Faith and Humility.**
   Believe what God reveals. Reason must bow to God’s revelation.

3. **Read the Word with a Spirit of Obedience and Self-Application.**
   Apply what God says to yourself and obey His will in all things.

4. **Read the Holy Scriptures Every Day.**
   We quickly lose the nourishment and strength of yesterday’s bread. We must feed our souls daily upon the manna God has given us.

5. **Read the Whole Bible and Read It in an Orderly Way.**
   “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable.” I know of no better way to read the Bible than to start at the beginning and read straight through to the end, a portion every day, comparing Scripture with Scripture.

6. **Read the Word of God Fairly and Honestly.**
   As a general rule, any passage of Scripture means what it appears to mean. Interpret every passage in this simple manner, in its context.

7. **Read the Bible with Christ Constantly in View.**
   The whole Book is about Him. Look for Him on every page. He is there. If you fail to see Him there, you need to read that page again.

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