C.S. Lewis was born on November 29, 1898 in Belfast, Ireland. He died on November 22, 1963, the same day President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. He had only one sibling, a brother, Warren, who was three years older and with whom he remained friends all his life. C.S. Lewis’ earliest memories involve “endless books” in the study, dining room, cloakroom, in the bedrooms, and piled as high as his shoulder in the attic. On the often dreary days, time would be spent in reading and in imaginative games involving “dressed animals” and “knights in armor.” These were the subjects of his first novel, *Boxen*, written at the age of twelve.

Perhaps the most significant event of his early life was the death of his mother when he was age nine. Lewis says in his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, “With my mother’s death all settled happiness... disappeared from my life. There was to be much fun, many pleasures, many stabs of joy; but no more of the old security. It was sea and islands now; the great continent had sunk like Atlantis.” At this point he lost not only his mother, but also, in effect, his father. Albert Lewis, perhaps out of grief, withdrew and decided to send both sons to a boarding school.

Warren later wrote of his father’s choice, “With his uncanny flair for making the wrong decision, my father had given us helpless children into the hands of a madman.” In fact, the headmaster whom they called “Oldie” was later declared insane and the school closed.

During this period, Lewis attended church and attempted to take his beliefs seriously. He tried to pray every night but developed what he describes as a “false conscience” about it. He had been told that it was not enough to say your prayers but also to think about what you were saying. As soon as he had finished his prayers each night, he would ask himself, “Are you sure you were really thinking about what you were...
New Opportunities Coming
by Tom Tarrants, President

Dear Report Reader,

As many of you know, our mission at the Institute is to develop disciples who can articulate, defend and live out their faith in Christ in today’s world. All the programs we offer are designed to equip men and women to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, helping them to influence their families, friends and co-workers for Christ. To better serve you we are offering two new opportunities, beginning this fall.

The first new opportunity will benefit all believers: a monthly time of teaching on an important topic related to understanding and living our faith. This event will be scheduled for 7:30–9:00 on a weeknight (probably Thursday) and will include ample Q&A time.

The second new opportunity is of particular interest for those in the marketplace: two weekly seminar series which will be offered by David C.L. Prior. David will offer weekly sessions during two upcoming months on Effective Discipleship in the Marketplace with topics including integrity, ambition, balance, success and failure, money, accountability, truth and lying, and pride and humility. The seminars will be held on week-night evenings (probably Tuesdays), 7:30–9:00, dates and location to be determined.

David is coming as our Guest Lecturer in Marketplace Ministry. For the last six years he has worked with business leaders in Central London, providing teaching and training in living out the gospel in the workplace. David served for a number of years as Rector of St. Aldate’s in Oxford and is the author of several books. His heart and ministry speak to business people where they live. Don’t miss this special opportunity. Watch for more details in future communications from the Institute.

Tom Tarrants
A recent poll of Christianity Today readers found that the one book—other than the Bible—that has most influenced their lives was C.S. Lewis’ Mere Christianity. C.S. Lewis’ popularity shows no sign of waning; if anything, it is increasing. What is the key to his continuing impact? An essential part of the answer would be the way in which he combines reason and imagination.

Different Genres
Other authors who have been considered culture-shapers have, like Lewis, employed more than one form of literature to communicate. For instance, Jean-Paul Sartre could write philosophy (e.g., Being and Nothingness) as well as drama (e.g., No Exit). In other words, his ideas were communicated in rational discourse and via the imagination by means of drama. Similarly, C.S. Lewis could give an argument against relativism in Abolition of Man or effectively counter it in his novel That Hideous Strength. This could be illustrated in the parallel between many of his non-fiction and fictional works.

Imagination and Meaning
Lewis argued at one point that, while reason is the natural organ of truth, “imagination is the organ of meaning.” In other words, we do not really grasp the meaning of any word or concept until we have a clear image that we can connect with it. You can find a more detailed argument of this contention in Selected Literary Essays (see “Blusphels and Flalanferes”). The practical effect of this belief in Lewis’ writing was that even in the midst of an apologetic argument, he provided just the right picture, image or metaphor to help the reader grasp the meaning of the argument. For instance, note the use of image or analogy in this quote from The Weight of Glory:

...Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

The “mud pies” and the “holiday at the sea” help us glimpse what it means to be “far too easily pleased” or to impoverish our own desires. Most of Lewis’ major ideas are also developed in his fiction.
The Importance of Imagination
(continued from page 3)

Imagination and Faith

Imagination played a key role in Lewis’ conversion. Through the reading of George MacDonald’s Christian fantasy, *Phantastes*, Lewis reported that a new quality, “a bright shadow,” leapt off the page. Later he described the new quality as “holiness,” recalling this time as a baptism of his own imagination. Although Lewis still needed to confront certain rational objections to the Christian faith—and to finally submit his will to what he had discovered—his “baptism of the imagination” was the starting point in his journey to faith. In a similar fashion, Lewis’ own fiction has resulted in the same imaginative renewal for many people.

Another important issue in his conversion was the emerging contradiction between his reason and his imagination. Referring to his youthful retreat into fantasy and myth, he says in *Surprised by Joy*:

> Such, then, was the state of my imaginative life; over against it stood the life of my intellect. The two hemispheres of my mind were in the sharpest contrast. On the one side a many-islanded sea of poetry and myth; on the other a glib and shallow ‘rationalism.’ Nearly all that I loved I believed to be imaginary; nearly all that I believed to be real I thought grim and meaningless.

Lewis saw the logical conclusion of his atheism as a “grim and meaningless universe.” Atheist Bertrand Russell made a similar observation that atheists must build their lives on the basis of “unyielding despair.” Yet Lewis deeply loved the realm of imagination. In poets, novelists and saints he discovered aspirations to meaning, dignity, morality, and immortality. These things he loved imaginatively but found them “full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” Later Lewis describes this tension:

> All the books were beginning to turn against me. Indeed, I must have been as blind as a bat not to have seen, long before, the ludicrous contradiction between my theory of life and my actual experiences as a reader. George MacDonald had done more to me than any other writer; of course it was a pity that he had that bee in his bonnet about Christianity. He was good in spite of it. Chesterton had more sense than all the other moderns put together; bating, of course, his Christianity. Johnson was one of a few authors whom I felt I could trust utterly; curiously enough, he had the same kink. Spenser and Milton by strange coincidence had it too. Even among ancient authors the same paradox was to be found. The most religious (Plato, Aeschylus, Virgil) were clearly those on whom I could really feed. On the other hand, those writers who did not suffer from religion and with whom my sympathy ought to have been complete—Shaw and Wells and Mill and Gibbon and Voltaire—all seemed a little thin; what as boys we called ‘tinny.’ It wasn’t that I didn’t like them. They were all (especially Gibbon) entertaining; but hardly more. There seemed to be no depth in them. They were too simple. The roughness and density of life did not appear in their books.... The upshot of it all could nearly be expressed in a perversion of Roland’s great line in the Chanson—‘Christians are wrong, but all the rest are bores.’

Later, of course, through a combination of many factors, the tension was resolved. Reason and imagination were united. Lewis had found through his imagination a key to reality.

Imagination and Myth

From an early age, C.S. Lewis had a fascination with mythology. He was...
particularly drawn to Norse mythology. Once as a young man he saw an illustration from “Siegfried and Twilight of the Gods” and one line, “the sky turned around.” For Lewis it was enough: “Pure ‘Northernness’ engulfed me: a vision of huge, clear spaces hanging above the Atlantic in the endless twilight of the Northern summer, remoteness, severity...the memory of Joy itself...”

The experience of the power of myth was not an isolated experience but a recurring theme in Lewis’ life and writing. When he arrived at Oxford, he joined an Icelandic study group led by J.R.R. Tolkien that required learning Icelandic for inclusion. He was so drawn to this pagan mythology that he describes himself later as “a converted Pagan living among apostate Puritans.”

One of Lewis’ early objections to the Christian faith was its comparison with Paganism:

No one ever attempted to show in what sense Christianity fulfilled Paganism or Paganism prefigured Christianity. The accepted position seemed to be that religions were normally a mere farrago of nonsense, though our own, by a fortunate exception was true.... But on what grounds could I believe this exception? It obviously was in some general sense the same kind of thing as all the rest. Why was it so differently treated? Need I, at any rate, continue to treat it differently? I was very anxious not to.

Along with this observation, Lewis had been gripped by the reality of the gospel narrative:

I was by now too experienced in literary criticism to regard the Gospels as myths. They had not the mythical taste. And yet the very matter which they set down in their artless, historical fashion...was precisely the matter of the great myths. If ever a myth had become fact, had been incarnated, it would be just like this.... Here and here only in all time the myth must have become fact; the Word, flesh; God, Man. This is not “a religion,” nor “a philosophy.” It is the summing up and actuality of them all.

When Lewis, years later, raised this issue with Tolkien and Dyson, it led to a crucial all night conversation. In this discussion they argued with Lewis that Paganism prefigured Christianity and Christianity fulfilled Paganism as suggested in the above quote. They argued that these pagan religions did contain truths and arose out of the structure of reality created by God. These pagan myths were echoes of reality and cosmic pointers to the true myth, the “Myth become Fact” in Christ. The Gospel account of Christ is the Story that fulfills these previous stories, the one difference being that the Gospel narrative is historical—a true fact. Later in his essay, “Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism,” he further develops these arguments in opposition to those who, like Rudolf Bultmann, want to argue that many of the Gospel accounts are mythological, that is, historically untrue.

Lewis’ insight into the role of myth influenced his view of other religions. Lewis writes in Mere Christianity:

If you are a Christian you do not have to believe that all the other religions are simply wrong all through. If you are an atheist you do have to believe that the main point in all the religions of the whole world is simply one huge mistake. If you are a Christian, you are free to think that all these religions, even the queerest ones, contain at least some hint of the truth.

Later in the essay, “Christian Apologetics” in God in the Dock, he divides religions

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Dr. Lindsley: What legacy would you like to leave with the leaders, with whom you have been involved?
Dr. Stott: I would urge upon them the priority of preaching. It is the Word of God which matures the people of God. As Jesus said, quoting Deuteronomy, human beings do not live by bread alone, but by every word which comes from the mouth of God. Moreover, what is true of individuals is equally true of churches. Churches live, grow, and flourish by the Word of God; they languish and perish without it. Of course the Word of God can reach people both in private Bible study (if they are literate and have a Bible) and in Bible study groups. But the major way in which the Word of God comes to the people of God worldwide is through preaching. I am an unrepentant believer in the power of the pulpit. I long to see a recovery of faithful biblical preaching from the pulpits of the world; the result would be a dramatic growth in mature discipleship.

Dr. Lindsley: Which is the most important book you have written?
Dr. Stott: I think the answer must be The Cross of Christ. The first reason is that the cross lies at the center of both the Christian faith and the Christian life. If pressed about my favorite verse in Scripture, I would have to say Galatians 6:14: ‘God forbid that I should boast in anything except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified unto me, and I have been crucified unto the world.’ The reason why the cross was central to the mind of Paul is that it was central to the mind of Christ before him.

Secondly, I have been concerned to write a book which is not just about the Atonement but about all aspects of the
death of Christ as unfolded in the New Testament. For instance, Christ calls us to take up our cross and follow him. ‘When Christ calls a man,’ wrote Dietrich Bonhoeffer, ‘he bids him come and die.’ We are always in danger of trivializing the meaning of conversion as if it involved only the adoption of a veneer of piety in an otherwise secular life. Then scratch the surface and there is the same old pagan underneath. But no, conversion is much more radical than this. No imagery can do it justice but death and resurrection—death to the old life of self-centeredness and sin, and resurrection to a new life of self-sacrifice and love.

Thirdly, more of my heart and mind went into the writing of The Cross of Christ than into any other book. It is my ‘apology,’ my personal statement of faith.

Dr. Lindsley: What are the top five most influential books in your life?

Dr. Stott: Every book I read influences me to some degree, so that I find this question hard to answer. But here is my choice of five:

Revelation and Inspiration, by B.B. Warfield, a collection of essays related to biblical authority. This book is marked by the careful exegesis for which Warfield was renowned, and lays a solid foundation for an acceptance of biblical authority. The argument is compelling; I do not believe it has ever been answered.

Holiness, by Bishop J.C. Ryle. This is another collection of articles or essays, whose emphasis is that ‘there are no gains without pains.’ That is, although justification is by faith alone without works, sanctification is by faith and works. This book saved me from a naive ‘let go and let God’ holiness teaching.

The Reformed Pastor, by Richard Baxter. I read this 17th Century Puritan classic during the week before my ordination. I was moved by its heartfelt call to conscientious preaching and to the faithful visitation and ‘catechizing’ of the congregation. The whole book is an exposition of Acts 20:28, in which Paul exhorts the Ephesian elders to tend God’s flock which Christ has purchased with his own blood. Baxter imagines Christ saying to pastors: ‘Were they worth my blood, and are they not worth your labor?’

Masters of the English Reformation, by Archbishop Marcus L. Loane gives thumbnail sketches of Ridley, Latimer, Cranmer, Tyndale and Bilney. This book helped to clarify for me the fundamental issues involved in the Reformation, and made me proud to stand in the tradition of those brave and godly martyrs for Christ.

The Christian Mind, by Harry Blamires, not only emphasizes the importance of the use of our minds in general, but in particular the need to learn to think ‘Christianly.’ For a Christian mind is not a mind thinking about religious topics, but a mind which is thinking about even the most secular topics from a Christian perspective. Harry Blamires bemoans the almost complete absence of a Christian mind in the contemporary church.

Dr. Lindsley: How do you shape your devotional life?

Dr. Stott: I am very grateful to the late Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, minister of Westminster Chapel in London, that about forty years ago he introduced me to the Bible reading calendar which had been produced by Robert Murray McCheyne for his people in Dundee, Scotland, in 1842. He wanted them to read the Bible through every year, the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice. It is quite an exacting

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Richard Gathro wrote the aging John Wesley, as a word of encouragement, to William Wilberforce (1759-1833), the Member of Parliament who led the campaign to abolish the slave trade in the latter part of the eighteenth century and first part of the nineteenth century. The cause of abolition is probably the activity for which Wilberforce is best known in history. However, it marks only a central theme to approximately forty years of public life and activity.

Wilberforce’s life was filled with one moral and religious project after another. It was a life of unrelenting activity that included tireless organizing, research, persuasion, confrontation, persistence and pressure upon the British system. In addition to his abolition work, he was consistently involved in church work that included the Church Missionary Society and the sending of missionaries to India and Africa, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Proclamation Society Against Vice and Immorality, the School Society, the Sunday School Society, the Bettering Society, the Vice Society and others. His public philanthropic efforts were many, including relieving the suffering of the manufacturing poor, and French refugees and foreigners in distress. He made major financial contributions to at least seventy such societies, many of them bearing his name as an officer. History records Wilberforce as having been active in numerous reform movements, which included reform in hospital care, fever institutions, asylums, infirmaries, refugees and penitentiaries. He supported religious publications and education, especially the schools of Hannah More, a close friend and leading reformer of British education.

Much has been written of late about Mr. Wilberforce and his accomplishments. Indeed, he was a great reformer who delighted in people, a strong family man, deeply disciplined in his dedication to Jesus Christ, who overcame illnesses to accomplish what he did. Yet something is missing in the accolades that he now receives. This missing piece, is that he was indeed gifted and deserving of admiration, but he could not have done what he did without his circle of friends. Most of the books and articles written about him throughout history often overlook this critical factor.
Wilberforce was part of a unique circle of friends that empowered him, along with Providence, to accomplish what he did. One only needs to read the 400+ letters to and from Wilberforce located in the Duke University Library to begin grasping this insight. For example, it was Wilberforce’s circle of friends who shared his deep faith in Christ, particularly Hannah More, who encouraged him to write a “manifesto” of what had taken place in his life and what he regarded as the essentials of the faith. The lengthy title was A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in This Country Contrasted with Real Christianity. The book was an immediate success without precedent, with sales of 7,500 copies in the first six months. By 1826, fifteen editions had been printed in Britain and 25 in the United States. Translations of the work were printed in French, Dutch, Italian, Spanish and German. This publication served as an excellent means of expressing conviction in a society whose courtesies of life and forms of society prevented much verbal expression of religious sentiment.

Throughout history groups of men and women have banded together for the purpose of promoting what they believed to be critical causes. With the defeat of his motion for the abolition in 1789, Wilberforce and his closest friend, Henry Thornton, called together such a group around themselves. The common bond that held this “Clapham Sect” together was the desire to apply their faith in Jesus Christ to personal, social, political, national and international matters. The group made no claim to be theologians, yet they were people who regarded prayer and Bible study as serious matters. The Clapham group believed that they were representatives of God’s kingdom on earth and the faithful stewards of all God had given them. Together, this Clapham fellowship sought to make the British Empire an instrument of social and moral welfare to all people. Throughout their time together, they remained remarkably committed to these goals. The labels “Clapham Sect” and the “Saints” were given to them by others, the latter by members of Parliament. No indication of any desire to give themselves a name was reflected in the correspondence and literature of members of the group. The term “Clapham Sect” was not used until later, when the phrase was coined in an 1844 essay by Sir James Stephen. The name originated from the London suburb, Clapham, where many of the group members chose to live.

The group had many distinctive characteristics. It had no exclusive membership requirements. They gathered together by virtue of their faith in Jesus Christ, love for one another, and out of concern for a variety of moral, social and religious causes. The spirit of inclusiveness caused Hannah More to remark that those who worked together on the slavery issue were like “Noah’s ark, full of beasts, clean and unclean.” The Clapham group’s acquaintances were many in number, representing a broad cross-section of Britain’s leadership. Wilberforce and his friends’ organizational skills and steadfast purpose carried the Saints through many difficulties, but the fact that the Clapham fellowship “knew everyone” was very important to the movement’s success. Indeed, the “Saints” loved to entertain and socialize. While Wilberforce and Thornton lived at Palace Yard in London, they kept a virtual “open house” for members of Parliament. A unique feature of the “Clapham Sect” was the desire to live with one another, or in proximity to each other. Always welcome in each other’s homes, the Saints were
What had begun as an informal group of friends drawn together by common concerns eventually took definite shape.

What had begun as an informal group of friends drawn together by common concerns eventually took definite shape. To this fellowship not only came Parliamentarians William Wilberforce and Henry Thornton, but the aforementioned Charles Grant and Edward Elliot, brother-in-law to William Pitt. Elliot moved to Clapham with the desire for Wilberforce’s spiritual guidance. William Smith, the Unitarian and Radical Whig, lived in Clapham and was ultimately drawn into the circle. Abolitionist Granville Sharp was also a resident. James Stephen, Master-in-Chancery and Member of Parliament from Tralee, and East Grinstead bought a house across the common. Scholar and former slave-owner Zachary Macaulay and his wife, Selina, settled in Clapham upon his return from governing Sierra Leone. Upon retirement as Governor-General of India, John Shore (Lord Teignmouth) joined them in 1802. Added to this group was the rector of Clapham church, John Venn, and a stream of visitors, including Prime Minister William Pitt, Parliamentarian Thomas Babington, Reverend Thomas Gisborne, Dean Isaac Milner of Queens College, poet and playwright Hanna More, and Reverend Charles Simeon of Cambridge. Perhaps this circle of friends can best be remembered by these characteristics:

- They shared a common commitment to Jesus Christ and a clear sense of calling.
- They were committed to lifelong friendship and mutual submission was the norm.
- Their advocacy was marked by careful research, planning and strategy.
- They worshiped both privately and publicly, gathering twice weekly at the Clapham Church.
- Their friendships were inclusive and focused on the essentials. For example, Wilberforce was a Wesleyan and his closest friend, Henry Thornton, was a Calvinist.
- They made family life a clear priority and delighted in each other’s marriages and children.
- They kept the “long view” on completing projects. Abolition of the slave trade took 20 years!
- They made no dichotomy between evangelism and social action. Their magazine, The Christian Observer, exemplifies this.
- Their faith was integral to all of life...family, career, friendship and more. It was a faith that the younger generation calls, “24/7.” They talked together of a faith that impacted every part of their lives. There were no “compartments.”

Known to be “good family people.” In spite of the Clapham Sect’s many crusades, life in many ways was centered around their homes, with family and friendships as priorities. This was undoubtedly one of the group’s important sources of vitality. The village of Clapham, the gathering place, was a prosperous suburb located five miles from the heart of London. The building of a Christ-centered community at Clapham was the vision of Henry Thornton, a banker, philanthropist and Member of Parliament. He bought Battersea Rise House in 1790. This was eventually to become the “headquarters” of the Clapham fellowship. Wilberforce lived with Thornton until Wilberforce’s marriage to Barbara Spooner. He and Barbara then moved into Bloomfield, one of two houses built on the grounds. The other was leased to Charles Grant, another regular member of the Clapham group.

Abolitionist Granville Sharp was also a resident. James Stephen, Master-in-Chancery and Member of Parliament from Tralee, and East Grinstead bought a house across the common. Scholar and former slave-owner Zachary Macaulay and his wife, Selina, settled in Clapham upon his return from governing Sierra Leone. Upon retirement as Governor-General of India, John Shore (Lord Teignmouth) joined them in 1802. Added to this group was the rector of Clapham church, John Venn, and a stream of visitors, including Prime Minister William Pitt, Parliamentarian Thomas Babington, Reverend Thomas Gisborne, Dean Isaac Milner of Queens College, poet and playwright Hanna More, and Reverend Charles Simeon of Cambridge. Perhaps this circle of friends can best be remembered by these characteristics:

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William Wilberforce and ... Friends

- They enabled one another vs. trying to “have it all.” They recognized each other’s passions and supported one another in addressing them.

The historian, Sir Reginald Coupland, wrote on the communal strength of the Clapham sect:

It was a remarkable fraternity—remarkable above all else, perhaps, in its closeness, its affinity. It not only lived for the most part in one little village; it had one character, one mind, one way of life. They were mostly rich, living in large roomy houses; but they all were generous givers to the poor. Thornton indeed gave away as much as six-sevenths of his income till he married, and after that at least a third of it. They could mostly have been of leisure; but they all devoted their lives to public service. They were what Wilberforce meant by ‘true Christians.’

The love of God was the very center of the group’s reason for being together and what became their legacy. From this love sprang a group that changed history. May there be many such associations that come to pass in these days as we enter the new millennium.

Richard Cathro serves as Senior Vice President of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, Washington, DC. He has also served as adjunct professor for Trinity International University, is on several non-profit educational boards, and has held various positions in higher education, student leadership, and public policy. He is a frequent lecturer and the author of numerous articles. Rich played a significant part in founding the C.S. Lewis Institute and has served on its Board and in other leadership roles.

John Stott Interview

(continued from page 7)

discipline, since it involves reading four chapters a day. What is special about the McCheyne calendar, however, is that it begins on January 1st with the four great beginnings or ‘births’ of Scripture, namely Genesis 1 (the birth of the universe), Ezra 1 (the rebirth of Israel after her Babylonian captivity), Matthew 1 (the birth of Christ), and Acts 1-2 (the birth of the body of Christ). In this way readers follow the story in parallel. Nothing has helped me more to gain an overview of the Bible, and so of God’s redemptive plan. [McCheyne’s Bible reading calendar can be downloaded from the FAQ section of the website <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/d.haslam/mccheyne.htm>]

As for prayer, I like to begin by responding to the Word of God, turning its message into praise and prayer. I also use a number of prayer diaries produced by different Christian organizations. I also keep developing my own diary. As a pastor I naturally receive many requests for prayer. They usually refer to evangelism (people near the kingdom or newly converted), to sickness or bereavement, to people faced with an important decision in their lives, and to particular and personal situations. I keep revising these four columns as people’s circumstances change.

Dr. Lindsley: How have you been so productive in writing?

Dr. Stott: I have refrained from marriage! My detractors tell me that my books are my wife-substitute, but I respond that they are a very poor substitute! Nevertheless, free from the responsibilities of a home and family, I have had more time at my disposal.

When the Bishop of London installed me as Rector of All Souls Church, he urged the vestry or church council to give me time to read and write. So the church has encouraged me to set aside time in which to do this.

Most of my books began their life as either sermons or addresses. I have found it very helpful to test material in a living situation before committing it to writing.

When I became Rector Emeritus, I was able to plan my own schedule, and for many years now I have been able to spend three months a year traveling, three months reading and writing, and six months in and around London.

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saying?” The answer was inevitably “No.” Then he would say his prayers again (and again). This led to insomnia and nightly torment and, Lewis says, “Had I pursued the same road much further, I think I should have gone mad.”

At a later boarding school, Chartres, encounters with a teacher who introduced him to the occult, as well as his doubts drawn from the problem of evil, concern over the similarities between Christianity and paganism, and sexual temptation were factors that led to a loss of faith. He lost his faith, virtue, and simplicity. Later he rid himself of unchastity, atheism, and the occult, but not another acquired habit: smoking.

When he was sixteen, Lewis was sent to be tutored by W.T. Kirkpatrick. “Kirk” or the “Great Knock” as he was sometimes called, was a brilliant teacher who taught Lewis to analyze, think, write, and speak clearly and logically. At their first meeting at the train station, young Jack (as he chose to call himself) made a comment to Kirk about not expecting the “wildness” of the scenery of Surrey. “Stop,” said Kirk. “What do you mean by wildness and what grounds do you have for not expecting it?” As he attempted an answer, it became increasingly clear that he had no distinct idea about the word “wildness” and that “insofar as I had any idea at all, ‘wildness’ was a singularly inept word.” “Do you not see, concluded the Great Knock, that your remark was meaningless?” Thinking that the subject had been dropped, Jack proceeded to sulk. Never was he more mistaken. Kirk proceeded to inquire about the basis of Jack’s expectations about the flora and geology of Surrey. It had never occurred to Jack that his thoughts needed to be based on anything. Kirk concluded, “Do you not see, then, that you had no right to have any opinion whatever on the subject?” This kind of interrogation was the tone of his whole stay with Kirk, and it was of great benefit to Lewis. In fact, much of the clarity of his writing, his careful choice of words, his considered arguments for the faith, and his later tutorial style were shaped during this period. Lewis says: “My debt to him is very great, my reverence to this day undiminished.” Some have said that many of his later works were written with a sense that Kirk (although by that time dead) was looking over his shoulder.

Many factors combined to lead him away from his atheism and to the robust faith of his later years. Once in a bookstore he bought a copy of George MacDonald’s Phantastes. As he read it, a “new quality” touched Lewis’ life, what he described at first as a “bright shadow,” but later came to realize was “holiness.” That night his imagination was “baptized” although “the rest of me, not unnaturally, took longer.”

Another factor contributing to his later conversion was the destruction of his “chronological snobbery.” This is defined as “the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate of our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that count discredited.” His friend Owen Barfield argued with him that we must always ask: “Why did it go out of date?” “Was it ever refuted (by whom, where, and how conclusively)?” Our own age is a mere period that has its own characteristic illusions, which can be corrected by reading old books. In fact, Lewis later argued that, “it is a good rule, after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one till you have read an old one in between. If that is too much for you, you should read one old one to every three new ones.” The only cure to chronological snobbery was to keep the “clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds and this can be done only by reading old books.”

One by one arguments against the faith were answered until already having his imagination “baptised” and his reason satisfied, he felt the “steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet.” Finally he gave in, knelt and prayed one night “the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.” At this time he only became a Theist and began considering who Christ
was and sorting through other religious views. His conversion to Christ was similarly unspectacular. He describes a trip in the sidecar of a motorcycle on the way to the Whipsnade Zoo. When he left for the zoo he did not believe that Christ was the Son of God; when he arrived at the zoo, he did believe that Christ was the Son of God, yet nothing extraordinary had happened along the way.

When Lewis came to faith in 1931, he was already teaching on the English faculty at Magdalen College, Oxford. Within two years, he had written his first apologetic work Pilgrim’s Regress (1933). Over the next thirty years Lewis produced a stream of books. He wrote capably in a number of types of literature: philosophical and apologetic works about faith in Christ such as Miracles, The Problem of Pain, Abolition of Man, and Mere Christianity; more imaginative books on the faith such as Screwtape Letters and The Great Divorce; fictional children’s books, The Narnia Chronicles, his so-called “space trilogy” (Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, and That Hideous Strength), and Till We Have Faces. In English literature he pursued excellence, and his works such as Allegory of Love and English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama are still widely read and highly regarded. He also wrote numerous poems.

During his life, he established and maintained many close friendships. One group, “The Inklings,” met in Lewis’ rooms on Thursday nights during the years 1933-50, and then the meeting place moved to the “Eagle and the Child” pub until Lewis died in 1963. Regular participants were C.S. Lewis’ brother, Warren, J.R.R. Tolkien, Dr. R.E. Harvard and Charles Williams. Other attendees included Nevill Coghill, Hugo Dyson, Owen Barfield and Adam Fox. The focus of each meeting was a reading from one of the group’s works in progress. Tolkien would read a draft of The Lord of the Rings, Lewis a draft of The Great Divorce or Warren Lewis’ work on Louis XIV and so on. None of the group’s members were shy to criticize, and lively discussions followed, always punctuated with much laughter.

C.S. Lewis’ marriage to Joy Davidman has been powerfully portrayed in the B.B.C. and Hollywood versions of Shadowlands. The latter version starring Anthony Hopkins and Deborah Winger contains a number of inaccuracies but Douglas Gresham, C.S. Lewis’ stepson, described it as “emotionally true.” When Jack and Joy married, she had cancer and a long life was not expected. However, when a remarkable remission occurred, they experienced two years of great happiness before the cancer returned, and Joy died in 1960.

On September 8, 1947, Lewis’ picture appeared on the front cover of Time magazine. The heading read “OXFORD’S C.S. LEWIS His Heresy: Christianity.” What amazed the secular world was that this Oxford don would write a philosophical defense of miracles. During WW II, Lewis’ B.B.C. broadcast of a series (that later became the book Mere Christianity) made his voice widely recognized, second only to that of Winston Churchill.

The appeal of C.S. Lewis’ writings continues to be the way in which he combines reason and imagination. He argued that “Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important.” Whether in the realm of reason or imagination, in personal or public life, Lewis maintained,

I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen—not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else. ✠
Two Great Conferences

On March 23-24, the Institute hosted its largest-ever conference when Dr. John R.W. Stott spoke to an overflow audience of almost 900 at the Falls Church Episcopal. Delivering two lectures from his series “The Incomparable Christ,” Dr. Stott held those gathered in rapt attention. Many cited the conference as a truly outstanding and life-changing event. Thanks be to God.

Two months later, Dr. Armand Nicholi delivered his lectures on “The Conflicting Worldviews of C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud” to almost 400 men and women who crowded into the Upper Room of Fourth Presbyterian Church, Bethesda, Maryland. Taken from his highly acclaimed course taught to Harvard University undergraduates, the lectures gave the fascinating perspective of this psychiatrist’s study of the life, writings, and deaths of both men, one an avowed atheist and the other an atheist turned Christian.

Cassette tapes of the two series “The Incomparable Christ” by Dr. John Stott (available in video also; $50 +S&H) and “The Conflicting Worldviews of C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud” by Dr. Armand Nicholi are available for purchase. Tapes are in an album and easy to keep in the car for travel. The price of each cassette tape set is $29, shipping in the continental U.S. and handling included. Please allow 2-3 weeks for delivery. Call to order: 703/914-5602 or 800/813-9209. Visa & MasterCard accepted.

John Stott Interview
(continued from page 11)

In 1954 I bought a derelict farmhouse and its outbuildings near the Southwest tip of Wales, and have gradually made it habitable. It is one mile from the nearest other house, and in this privacy and isolation I have done nearly all my writing without any fear of interruption.

Dr. Lindsley: What advice have you for us in learning to communicate across cultures?

Dr. Stott: James’s instruction ‘let everybody be quick to listen’ (1:19) is of enormous importance. In fact I believe in the valuable discipline of ‘double listening’ (listening both to the Word of God and to the voices of the modern world, in order to relate the one to the other).

It is a mark of our fallen self-centeredness that we assume our culture (the way we think, speak, eat, play, laugh, dress) to be the norm and other people’s the abnormal. But there is no cultural norm, and we need to cultivate the humility to learn from other people’s cultures.

We are fortunate nowadays that cross-cultural travel is continuously increasing, so that people from far away may now be living in our neighborhood and attending our school, college, club or church. This provides us with a wonderful opportunity to develop deep cross-cultural friendships. Such a friendship is the best possible context in which to share Christ.
as we do soups into “thick” and “clear.” To summarize his argument:

By Thick I mean those which have orgies and ecstasies and mysteries and local attachments: Africa is full of Thick religions. By Clear I mean those which are philosophical, ethical and universalizing: Stoicism, Buddhism and the Ethical Church are Clear religions. Now if there is a true religion it must be both Thick and Clear: for the true God must have made both the child and the man, both the savage and the citizen, both the head and the belly. Christianity...takes a convert from central Africa and tells him to obey an enlightened universalist ethic: it takes a twentieth-century academic prig like me and tells me to go fasting to a Mystery, to drink the blood of the Lord. The savage convert has to be Clear: I have to be Thick. That is how one knows one has come to the real religion.

In other words, the disdain that a Western atheistic sociologist might have for a primitive tribe that sacrifices a chicken in order to placate evil spirits would show a truncated view of religion. Certainly this view of sacrifice might be argued to demonstrate unwarranted superstition but at least this primitive tribe understands the “deeper magic” that blood is necessary to deal with evil. Something, somehow is written into the conscience that points to the nature of ultimate reality. So in reading the stories in all religions and mythologies, we catch echoes, however faint, of the Myth become fact.

Extending Our Awareness

Imagination can also lead to an expanding awareness of the world by seeing through the eyes of others. Lewis loved to read about worlds created by authors as much as he enjoyed creating his own. He loved reading novels that showed the writer’s insights into life. He wrote:

My own eyes are not enough for me. I will see through those of others. Reality even seen through the eyes of many is not enough. I will see what others have invented. ...Literary experience heals the wound, without undermining the privilege of individuality.... In reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself.... Here as in worship, in love and in moral action, and in knowing I transcend myself and am never more myself than when I do... [Without this exposure to other worlds of literature, one may be] full of goodness and good sense but he inhabits a tiny world. In it, we should be suffocated. The man who is contented to be only himself, and therefore less a self, is in prison.

Children’s Stories

Lewis also applied his understanding of the imagination to the realm of children’s literature. He questioned the division between children’s and adult literature, realizing that when we lose childlikeness, we lose something of our humanity (Mark 10:15). A good story is good for both child and adult.

Children’s stories retain their appeal throughout the generations:

It does not seem useful to say, “What delighted the infancy of the species naturally delighted the infancy of the individual.... Surely it would be less arrogant and truer to the evidence to say that they are not peculiar. It is we who are peculiar. Fashions in literary taste come and go among adults, and every period has its own shibboleths. These, when good, do not improve the tastes of children, and when bad, do not corrupt it, for children read only to enjoy. Of course, their limited vocabulary and general ignorance make some books unintelligible to them. But apart from that, juvenile taste is simply human taste.

C.S. Lewis’ Narnia Chronicles, although written for children, have been read and enjoyed by people of all ages. Having recently read all of Narnia to my boys (ages 7 and 9), I found my own appreciation for the books to be greater than ever.

Imagination, then, was the beginning of Lewis’ conversion, an important dimension in his view of other religions and myths, significant to his perception of the world, and an aid in his grasping the meaning of anything. His great capacity for imagination combined with his extraordinary ability to reason reveal a key to C.S. Lewis’ abiding relevance and appeal to this increasingly postmodern age where the focus is always too much on one or the other.

Dr. Art Lindsley is Scholar-in-Residence at the C.S. Lewis Institute, author of numerous articles, co-author of Classical Apologetics and a frequent lecturer.
UPCOMING EVENTS

♦ Dr. James Houston, “Spiritual Living in a Secular World: Enduring Insights from Saints of Ages Past,” September 7-8, 2001 at Christ Our Shepherd Church, Washington, DC

♦ Rev. David Prior, “Ministry in the Marketplace,” September 28-29, 2001 at The Falls Church Episcopal, Falls Church, VA
- “Effective Discipleship in the Marketplace”—Parts I & II, 7:30-9:00, Dates & Location TBA

♦ Dr. N.T. Wright, November 9-10, 2001 at the Falls Church Episcopal, Falls Church, VA

COMING IN 2002

♦ Dr. Ravi Zacharias, June 7-8 at McLean Bible Church, Vienna, VA
♦ Dr. Michael Green, at Truro Episcopal Church

COMING IN 2003

♦ Dallas Willard & Richard Foster, May 2-3

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