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Interview with J. D. Douglas



*I*n the Spring of 2003 I sat down with Dr. James D. Douglas, in the conference room of the Wade Center at Wheaton College, to do the interview that follows. As you will soon see Dr. Douglas had come to the States to see some old friends before "they departed this life." A few months after this very lovely interview Dr. Douglas passed to his eternal reward. The interview would have been valuable regardless of the providence of Dr. Douglas' unexpected death, but now that he is gone this interview will stand as his last such personal and public conversation regarding his life and God's faithfulness to him as a humble follower of Christ.

Dr. James Dixon Douglas (1922-2003) was a remarkable man. At his memorial service, on August 20, 2003, Dr. David F. Wright, a long-time friend, noted that Jim, as he was called by his friends, remained "strikingly proud of his lowly origins. These years left him with not only an addiction to fish and chips but also an aversion from high-falutin, from self-important conceit and empty show. He became a master at puncturing pretentiousness, at pricking inflated balloons, often playfully but never cruelly."

I have known of the written and edited work of James

Douglas for many years, dating back to my college and seminary days and the early issues of *Christianity Today*. When I had the opportunity to meet him, which was unplanned by me, I was struck by his kindness and utter sense of unimportance, so refreshing to me personally. Speaking of Jim's faith at his memorial service, David Wright noted that "Jim rarely wore his evangelicalism on his sleeve (and he liked to expose evangelical foibles), but he retained a strong biblical faith to the end." I saw this in the two hours we spent together and thus came to love Jim Douglas very quickly. The loss of this godly man impacts the Church militant, and her work on earth. The Scripture says, "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Surely heaven's gain is apparent in the home-going of this gracious servant of God. If you love Christ and straightforward non-pretentious honesty you will enjoy this interview. David Wright said it well in the conclusion of his address at Jim's memorial: "This 'flavorsome character,' this self-styled maverick, this generous host and prized guest, this irrepressible Christian gentleman, will surely regale the saints in heaven as he delighted us on earth." His was a special life of faith, hope and love.

R R J — You have been visiting in the Chicago area for several weeks. What is the occasion for this visit to the United States?

J D D — I have come over primarily to see my dear friend Dr. Carl Henry before heaven sees him. He is my great mentor. He is in a nursing home in Watertown, Wisconsin. I thought that I might not see him again in this life, but then out of the blue the son of a Wheaton College professor informed me that he had thousands of frequent-flyer miles that he was willing to bestow upon a member of the deserving poor. That is how I got to Wheaton, with no expense to myself, a Scotsman's delight!

R R J — Over the years you must have visited the United States many times since you worked so closely with Christian leaders here. Any idea of how many visits you have made to America?

J D D — Fifty-five times. I have been in forty-seven of the States. It must be unusual for a Scotsman but I actually know that the Capital of North Dakota is Pierre.

R R J — Tell us about your early life.

J D D — I was born in the slums of Clydeside in Glasgow. My mother died when I was two and my father was a shipyard laborer. With my brother we lived in a single room in the top of a tenement building until I was fourteen years old.

R R J — So you had an older brother?

J D D — Yes, Alex was seven years older than I was. I conducted his funeral last year.

R R J — Was your home a believing home where Christian faith was loved and taught?

J D D — No, there was no formal Christian profession, but my father was very keen that Alex and I go to Sunday School every Sunday afternoon in our local church.

R R J — Tell us more about your childhood education.

J D D — Well, this will surprise you I think. I was in hospital from when I was two until I was five. I had a tubercular ankle and the disease was going up my leg until it was treated properly by some very skillful doctors. This was a great blessing in disguise. It meant that I was living in hygienic circumstances in hospital for three whole years.

R R J — And you lived during this time without your mother, only your father and older brother. Eventually, then, this condition was corrected and then you went to school in a more normal way?

J D D — No, I was discharged from hospital and given a pair

of crutches. I was sent to a special school that they then called, infelicitously, a school for mentally and physically defective children.

R R J — Did you remain in that context for some years?

J D D — Yes, I owe a great deal to the single ladies who had dedicated their lives in that school to looking after handicapped children. We knew what to do in class. Whenever one of our classmates had an epileptic fit we knew what not to do. The two teachers I knew best were Roman Catholics. The headmistress was an evangelical Protestant who used to come around the class once a year and tell us about why Jesus died on the cross. I can still see her with tears running down her face and that was the first time I really heard the gospel.

R R J — When did you come to explicit faith in Christ as your Lord and Savior?

J D D — I was sixteen at the time. A Scripture Union speaker named Hudson Pope had come up from England. Thanks to our headmistress I had been taken to a high school where she pleaded with the headmaster to give me a chance and he did. I would like to think that eventually I didn't let her down. In that school I got to know a boy who took me along to a Crusader (Bible) class. It was there that I came to personal faith. I had left school by this time in my life and I had only two and a half years of high school.

R R J — You were a teenage boy when World War II broke out. Tell us about your time during the War years and your military service.

J D D — From when I was fifteen until I was eighteen I was engaged in clerical or hotel work. I scrubbed floors, literally on my knees, and worked very hard indeed. The Germans were bombing Clydeside and we were in makeshift bomb shelters at night. A number of my friends were killed because

we were on Clydeside where the Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth had been built. I felt I was getting nowhere so I volunteered for the air force at eighteen in 1941.

It still bothers me when I hear an American say "World War II broke out with the bombing of Pearl Harbor," because I was in the air force by then and we had been fighting Hitler for two-and-a-quarter years before Americans like John Wayne and Audrey Murphy came and won the War for all of us.

R R J — I am a great admirer of the life and times of Winston Churchill. Obviously you have some very personal memories of his becoming a leader who came back to the political scene at the darkest hour and gave the people hope and courage. Tell us, both personally and as a historian, about Winston Churchill and your memories of him. What was it like when he became Prime Minister again during this difficult time?

J D D — At the beginning of the War our leader was Neville Chamberlain, who thought he had reached an agreement with Hitler. Hitler reneged on any promise he made and then Churchill appeared on the scene and an electric shock went through the Admiralty where he had been First Lord. He sent a message out to the fleet and it simply said, "Winston's back!" He took over in 1940 and we all learned a great deal from him. He was a great tonic. Mr. Churchill had a great sense of humor. He once said, "If Hitler had invaded hell I would feel the need to speak a good word for the devil."

R R J — He had a remarkable ability to energize the spirits of people, to help them fight this difficult battle. Tell us about how he did this and why was he so able to motivate the nation and the people at this very difficult time.

J D D — Well that has always been a bit of a mystery. He was already about sixty-five at the time he came back to be Prime Minister again. He had a facility with words. He had a good memory. He had a way of expressing himself that could speak to the condition and imagination of ordinary folks. I remember

those broadcasts to France. He would begin with the first four notes of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. This caught the attention of the French people and the underground movement.

Churchill had this unique ability to speak for all of us. Although he came from aristocratic stock he had a common touch. The first time he visited Manchester he visited the slums and said, "Fancy living in these mean streets, never saying anything clever and never eating anything savory."

I got the job of writing his obituary for *Christianity Today*. It was quite an undertaking really. His funeral moved London. Londoners came out in droves for the funeral procession.

RRJ — From my reading of Winston Churchill's life there is little evidence of a personal faith in Christ. He had respect for Christianity and for the Church. I would say he had respect especially for Christian culture, but there is little evidence of personal piety and faith. Is that true?

JDD — Yes, that is true. He said on one occasion, near the end of his life: "I am ready to meet my Maker; whether my Maker is ready to meet me is another matter." Sadly, that is a faithful expression of his outlook on Christianity.

RRJ — The War ended, and so did your service with the Royal Air Force, in 1946. You then went on to further academic studies. There is little in your earlier school experience that would seem to prepare you for serious academic pursuit but that is exactly what you did after the War. How did this pursuit of academic study develop?

JDD — At the end of the War I was stationed in Tunisia. Most of my air force experience had been overseas. There was not a lot to do by that time. Ours was the only allied unit left there. In that camp there was an education officer who thought he detected a spark of intelligence in me so he encouraged me to read and to sit for a little general knowledge examination available to those who were serving in the armed forces. I remember hitching a ride from Malta to

Algiers for the examination on a little twin-engine plane. I passed the exam.

When I got out of the military I got ideas about my station in life and I wanted to advance my education. Just to test out the waters I phoned the dean of the faculty of arts at Glasgow University at his home on a Saturday afternoon. This was an outrageous thing for a timid boy to do. I asked his advice. He said, "You left school without any certificates but I'll tell you what I'll do. Five years in the air force is an education in itself. You pass our entrance examination in a language on the higher level and we'll let you through but after that you're on your own." Well, I had been a great wanderer through the casbahs of Algiers and Tunis and I had picked up the kind of French that no schoolboy could possibly know, and so I sat this examination. They only let twenty percent of the candidates through each year. It was a very hard department but I worked in all the out-of-the-way expressions that I had picked up and I got through. The Frenchman on the staff said, "We let you through because of the boldness of your translation!" I was able to matriculate at the university. I had this enormous gap from when I was fifteen until I was twenty-three. I had just been elected captain of our local cricket team but I could play only in every second or third match because I had to study.

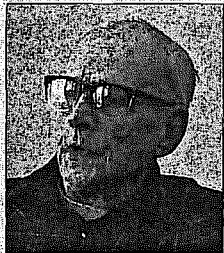
RRJ — Were you a reader before this academic pursuit came to fruition? Did you actually dream about doing the kind of academic work you now found yourself pursuing?

JDD — Yes, I had done a lot of reading, thanks to that officer in the camp near Carthage in Tunisia who had taken an interest in me. This helped me enormously. I also had a good memory. This helped things. There was one professor at Glasgow, Professor J. G. Riddell, who took a real interest in me. He was the professor of divinity at the University of Glasgow and he directed me toward studies for the ministry in the Church of Scotland. He was very good to me and went above and beyond the call of duty because he knew my circumstances. This was at a time when a lot of service men were coming

back to university so that at Glasgow we sometimes had to sit on the floor because the lecture room was not big enough in the English class and the Moral Philosophy class. Professor Riddell felt this would not be good for me since I needed a place with more space and opportunity to develop. He sat me down one day while I was there and called up his counterpart, the dean of divinity at St. Andrews. He explained the situation and I was then transferred to St. Andrews in 1947. I had been a year at Glasgow by then. St. Andrews is, of course, the oldest university in Scotland and also the home of golf if you are interested in such things.

RRJ — I had the privilege, in the summer of 1992, to go to the Open Tournament in Muirfield, Scotland with Sinclair Ferguson, who is quite a golfer himself.

So you entered St. Andrews in 1947. Where did the interest in theology and Church history begin to develop?



I was often in a canvas tent with a wide variety of men. I was gripped by the exercise of kneeling by my bedside at night to say my prayers. I remember a rough corporal saying to me, "Do not ever change. Stay the way you are."

JDD — The interest in theology began in the air force when I was confronted by the usual problems one encounters as a Christian. There were, of course, a lot of rough men. Having no formal education I never rose above the rank of leading aircraftsman. I was often in a canvas tent with a wide variety of men. I was gripped by the exercise of kneeling by my bed-

side at night to say my prayers. I remember a rough corporal saying to me, "Do not ever change. Stay the way you are."

I had to do an arts degree first so I finished that at St. Andrews, not very spectacularly I might add. I was still trying to catch up. I entered the theological college at St. Andrews, St. Mary's, and then decided to do the B. D. degree, which only twenty percent of the theological students did at that time, which meant doing Hebrew and Greek among other things. That was a tough struggle. I gave the faculty a very hard time. They imperfectly understood me because I had done logic in arts. In Hebrew I did very well and got a first-class certificate but I failed my Greek. This was standing things on their head.

RRJ — That is almost the opposite of what many students struggle with in the two ancient languages.

JDD — Well, I can almost see old Principal G. S. Duncan, eminent New Testament scholar, looking at me in perplexity. "Mr. Douglas, what are we going to do with you?" What they did was to banish me to the northeast of Finland so I could study and then retake the examinations. There was no one in this little village who spoke English except a lady doctor. I spent my time studying and rowing on the lake.

RRJ — So, you went back and took the examinations again.

JDD — I passed it and finally got the highest grade of B. D., to the utter astonishment of the faculty who did not expect this to happen. They gave me a grant to pursue the first year of Ph. D. study, also at St. Andrews. There was also a connection with Hartford Theological Seminary in Connecticut. They sent me over there for my second year.

RRJ — Was that your first trip to the United States?

JDD — Yes, and it was then that I founded the Society for the Suppression of Pumpkin Pie.

R R J — Please, tell us the story.

J D D — Well, this was during the McCarthy era. I came off the Mauritania at New York and went into New York. I saw a large sign that said, "It's here at last! Fresh pumpkin pie, 15 cents. 7 cents extra for whipped cream." So, I thought to myself, "There is a time for even a Scotsman to splash out and I went in and had the pumpkin pie." I hated it, with a great hatred! People tell me, "But you haven't had the homemade stuff with all the spices, etc." I still hate it! So, I began at Hartford Seminary the SSPP, the Society for the Suppression of Pumpkin Pie. Many of the students would have joined but it was the era of Joe McCarthy and we feared it would be considered an un-American activity.

R R J — You could be brought before Congress for such in those days. So you were at Hartford Seminary in 1953?

J D D — Yes, this was 1953. Hartford Seminary was an extraordinary institution. It was radical theologically, with some exceptions. But it also had the Kennedy School of Missions. My own two supervisors were eminent scholars. One was Matthew Spinka, who had been a professor in Chicago and had come to Hartford so he could do more writing and not as much lecturing. He was an eminent scholar on Jan Comenius and Jan Huss and the Russian writers. The other was Ford Lewis Battles, an eminent Calvin scholar who ended up at Calvin College later. They were both extremely helpful to me. I owe them both a great debt.

R R J — Tell us something about Ford Lewis Battles. Some of our readers will surely recognize that name. I know a good bit about his academic work in John Calvin studies and the Meeter Center at Calvin is a great legacy to his lifetime of work. He clearly was one of the foremost Calvin scholars in the twentieth century.

J D D — Ford was a very meticulous scholar. I had to show him that I had a reading knowledge of two languages. He

supervised my studies. I had to do three papers on the history and development of Calvinism. Ford was encouraging, all the way. He knew something of my circumstances and I was in his hospitable home a number of times. He gave me one or two of his books. I visited him in Calvin Theological Seminary later, before he died. He helped to make Hartford tolerable for me. Some of the emphases at Hartford were not my own. Let me give you an illustration of what I mean.

There was an Irish student who had come over to study. He came from a fundamentalist background. Why he ended up at Hartford I do not know. Well, we were sitting in the refectory one evening and the dean was eating at the next table. The dean called over and said, "How are you two getting along?" Before I could answer Bob Little's foot pressed on mine under the table to keep me quiet. Bob said, with an exaggerated Irish accent which I dare not imitate, "The people in this institution say they don't believe in a personal devil but you're not here for more than two or three days before you meet him face-to-face."

R R J — So, you obviously finished the time at Hartford and then went back to St. Andrews to finish your doctorate?

J D D — Things never worked out for me as they should. Hartford was giving me a modest sum of money. It was a thousand dollars a year. I had to supplement this by babysitting, shelving books, waiting tables, etc. By the end of the year Hartford said "Why don't you stay here and finish your Ph. D. here?" I said, "You would have to ask St. Andrew's." They said that I could complete my work in America so long as the external examiners on my dissertation were at St. Andrews.

I said to Hartford, "What color is your hood?" They said, "Royal blue and gold." I said, "I'll stay, since yours is much more interesting than the St. Andrews one." I really had to work much harder at Hartford than at St. Andrews. At St. Andrews I had only to complete three years under supervision. At Hartford I had to have knowledge in two languages, a number of courses, six hours on the history and development

of Calvinism, and then defend my thesis before the faculty for an hour and a quarter. There was a man there who was editor of *The Muslim World*, Kenneth Cragg, an Englishman. He was one of the other eminent men on the faculty there. I was lonely at first but two men took me under their wing and helped me get over the cultural shock I experienced there. I completed the Ph. D. there *magna cum laude*, which was very gracious of them. I had also taken an S. T. M. degree along the way.

RRJ — Hartford was historically begun in the early nineteenth century by the efforts of a minister named Bennett Tyler. One of the first professors there was the famous revivalist Asahel Nettleton. You know this I am sure.

JDD — Yes, and Hartford had suffered a great sea change by that time in the 1950s. The dean of women was a lady from one of the upper classes of New England. She had a great presence. At the welcome tea she heard I was from Scotland and said, "The last Scotsman who was here was a beautiful boy." He succeeded me as lecturer at St. Andrews and I can tell you he was not a beautiful boy. He did even better than I did at Hartford since he got *summa*. But I consoled myself since I got the S. T. M. too.

RRJ — So, you finished your studies at Hartford in 1955 and then went back to Scotland. What followed over the next few years?

JDD — Again, things happened not according to my expectations. They appointed me lecturer in ecclesiastical history at St. Andrews. The professor had never had a lecturer in his department so I was the first one. I did not want this job and it was very foolish of me to take it on. It was not quite my line. I got out the following year. There were various reasons for this. My school days were haunted by the fact that I had a very serious speech impediment, which held me back and led to my leaving school early. This had plagued me for quite a while. It had gotten better as I went through university but



I was appointed librarian of Tyndale House in Cambridge, which was IVF's research center and in between work there I was to edit the New Bible Dictionary. Well, one day I shall write up the story about how that volume was put together. I learned that God gives you wisdom in certain situations and insights beyond your natural capacity if you are in the place he wants you to be. This was exactly what I found with the New Bible Dictionary.

one or two things happened in my personal life and this problem recurred. It made lecturing very difficult for me and my hearers both, so I got out the following year. I jumped on my bicycle and made two very long cycle trips—one to John O'Groats and the other to Land's End. These are the opposite extremities of the British mainland geographically. I had no idea what I was going to do next. I had all kinds of adventures along the way. I was then invited to become the minister of a church in Rothesay in Bute, an island off the West Coast of Scotland. I again think I made a mistake. I wasn't there for very long. These were two occasions when the cloud was still. I was very sorry that it happened that way. I think I learned from these mistakes. When the cloud moved on it was in a direction I never expected. The IVF (InterVarsity Fellowship) came to me and said they wanted to do the *New Bible Dictionary*. They said there hadn't been one from an evangelical quarter for sixty years or so. I found that they had first gone to all kinds of older and wiser scholars and they all with one accord made excuses because it seemed to be an impossible

task. I laughed out loud when they presented the idea to me. It seemed clearly to be an impossible task, to be honest. They went away sorrowful. But I needed a job. A few months later it was borne in upon me that this was something I had to do. By this time I had graduated to a motorbike so I rode down to Cambridge. I was appointed librarian of Tyndale House in Cambridge, which was IVF's research center and in between work there I was to edit the *New Bible Dictionary*. Well, one day I shall write up the story about how that volume was put together. I learned that God gives you wisdom in certain situations and insights beyond your natural capacity if you are in the place he wants you to be. This was exactly what I found with the *New Bible Dictionary*.

RRJ — How long did the work on the *New Bible Dictionary* take from start to publication?

JDD — I sat down at Tyndale House library on April 1, and please note the date, in 1958 and I finished the manuscript on a Canadian Pacific train going from Ottawa to Vancouver in early 1962. So the work took nearly four years. I was privileged in having the assistance of four consulting editors. F. F. Bruce, my fellow Scotsman, was the chief among them. He covered up for my ignorance in so many ways. In fact, when the *New Bible Dictionary* was published it was sent for review to a small evangelical magazine who obviously didn't know who was who because the review went: "The organizing editor is Dr. J. D. Douglas, well known as a Church historian. Almost as well-known as four consultants—F.F. Bruce, J. I. Packer, etc." I cut it out and sent it to Fred Bruce saying, "Aren't you glad you know me [Laughter]?"

RRJ — Since you mentioned F. F. Bruce, share something about him with us. He was one of the great evangelical New Testament scholars of the last century and wrote his memoirs a few years before he passed away.

JDD — Bruce was one of the most versatile men I ever knew.

He was always at the end of a telephone if I had a question. I got an article once in the Dutch language. It was a Tuesday. I phoned him and said, "What shall I do with this?" He said, "Send it along." So I did. Friday morning it came back to me in the post translated. He had done it himself. He knew Dutch.

His knowledge covered a huge field. I wrote a book on the Scottish Covenanters. This is my special field. He was the series editor for this volume and he picked up on something that caused him to say, "I am not quite sure it was quite like that. My memory is that it happened this way." I looked it up. He was right and I was wrong. He was not a brilliant lecturer. He was a very good writer and an excellent scholar. He had no hobbies. He would work on the train the hour-long journey from his home in Derbyshire on his way to Manchester. His was also a very compassionate man. He understood. He was a great spiritual help to me as well as a great academic help. When he died I wrote to his wife Betty. I told her just how much Fred had meant to me. I told her one particular thing that he had done for me. I had never told anyone else. She wrote back and said she was surprised that he had done so many things for them and she never knew anything about them at all.

RRJ — During the years you have described I would assume that you were not married since you have not mentioned a wife during these years. Did you remain unmarried?

JDD — When I went to Singapore Bible College, in due course, I began the Unclaimed Treasures Club, the UTC. I had not gotten married. I was comforted by the fact that John Stott had never been married either and so we had quite a lot in common from that point of view. Every year at Singapore Bible College I was a lecturer in ethics to the senior students. I would give a lecture on singleness because over the years I had seen that there were many magazine articles on singleness but I had never found one written by a man. I would give my lecture every year on this subject.

RRJ — You would go to Singapore Bible College and teach, which says you eventually took on classroom lecturing again. You had struggled with speech earlier in your career but now you are doing it again. How did that happen?

JDD — I spent many years editing things. If I can come back to the *New Bible Dictionary* for a few moments I can explain this much better. I had felt that this was a work that was utterly beyond me but eventually the whole thing worked out. Now, I am going to share with you a secret about how to get articles out of people who are dilatory.

RRJ — As an editor I need to know this secret [Laughter].

JDD — Evangelical Christians are the world's worst about meeting deadlines. I would occasionally use a Roman Catholic writer for an article that fit his abilities well. I would also use women as writers. But evangelical men were the world's worst at meeting deadlines. But I found the secret. If they were long overdue I would write to their wife. It never failed. No wife ever let me down. It seems they were very happy to enter into any conspiracy against their lawful spouse [Much Laughter]. The only time I ran into trouble was with one bachelor. He was notorious for not meeting deadlines and not submitting things at all. But I was on name terms with his dog. His dog was my friend, a German Shepherd. So I wrote to his dog. The man's name was Reynolds and his dog's name predictably was Joseph. So I got a huge post card and wrote on it with very large letters "To Joseph Reynolds, Esquire." I said to the dog, "Please remind your master that he is four months overdue." This guy sent the material the next week [Laughter].

I have to admit I overreached myself once. I was interviewed by the editor of the *Church of England Newspaper*, for which I had written for many years and I was boasting about this story and he said to me, "How about lady contributors? What do you do about them, write to their husbands?" I said, "I've never had problems with the ladies," which was quite true. He published this piece and the headlines said: "Jim

Douglas Has No Trouble with the Ladies!"

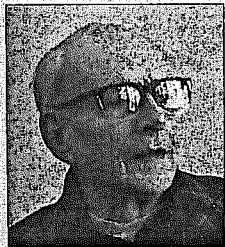
RRJ — So you went to Tyndale House at Cambridge in 1958 and remained there as librarian until when?

JDD — I was there until 1961.

RRJ — And then another unplanned major change came into your life? This is all enough to make you believe in a very personal doctrine of providence. In 1961 you came into association with *Christianity Today*. Speak about this please.

JDD — I was near the end of my work at Cambridge on the *New Bible Dictionary* not knowing what to do next. I found, not for the first time, that God's trains never keep each other waiting. I had contributed a couple of articles to *Christianity Today* and Carl Henry thought that this was something that might be encouraged. So when he was in the UK next he came from London to Cambridge to see me and he offered me a job. I didn't feel it right to settle in the US. I have never felt called to settle permanently in the US. I have had many opportunities to do so but for various reasons I have felt that my place was in the UK. I did say I would come over and help them for six months and I did from the first of October 1961 until end of April in 1962. Carl was going to the World Council of Churches meeting in New Delhi. He left Frank Gaebelein in charge. Frank Farrell was also there and James Daane. We looked after the shop in Carl's absence. The usual thing that would happen was that we would get manuscripts in and Jim Daane and Frank Farrell might disagree whether to accept it or not. Jim Daane would come in with a fierce look on his face and hurl it down on my desk and say, "We call you to *decision*." Those were good days because Frank Gaebelein became one of my best friends. I remember once we got in an article titled, "Camping as a Means of Grace." Frank Gaebelein was a great outdoorsman. He was a mountaineer and much more besides. He and I argued for the acceptance of this article. Eventually it went in. That was my start with *Christiani-*

ty *Today*. In due course I took on the "Current Religious Thought," the back page feature, and with four others I wrote that in rotation. The others were all heavy profound scholars like G. C. Berkouwer, Philip Hughes, Addison Leitch, and Harold Kuhn. I was the clown of the team who was brought on every fifth issue to give the readers some light relief.



The first Eutychus was Edmund Clowney, who was president of Westminster Theological Seminary. I was shanghaied into becoming Eutychus IV. I wrote that for two years and my hardest job, even though I am bi-lingual speaking both English and American, was to conceal to readers that I was not an American. I wrote fifty columns over that course of time.

RRJ — Here is a trivia question about *Christianity Today* that readers like myself always wondered about in those earlier years. Do you know the history of the column, which no longer appears, called Eutychus? When did this begin and who was the first Eutychus? I can still remember these features when I was a very young man in the 1960s.

JDD — The first Eutychus was Edmund Clowney, who was president of Westminster Theological Seminary. I was shanghaied into becoming Eutychus IV. I wrote that for two years and my hardest job, even though I am bi-lingual speaking both English and American, was to conceal to readers that I was not an American. I wrote fifty columns over that course of time.

RRJ — We should note at this point that the writer of this feature was anonymous and carefully concealed from readers.

JDD — Yes, that's right. All went well during my stint for forty-nine issues until the chief press officer at the World Council of Churches remembered something I had said to him a long time ago. (He was an Irishman and Irishmen remember these things!) I had repeated this point and he sent me a postcard and said, "Gotcha!"

RRJ — You wrote a number of different contributions for *Christianity Today*. Have you ever thought of pulling some of these together and publishing them in book form?

JDD — Frank Gaebelein published a collection of articles called *The Christianity Today Reader*. In it he was kind enough to publish three of my articles. I would love to see someone bring this up to date but no one has done so.

RRJ — In 2002 we interviewed Frank Farrell, whom you referred to during your time at *Christianity Today*. You have told me he was a very good friend. He was single for many years and then married a widow who had served on the mission field and who had several children. Have you kept up with Frank as a friend?

JDD — We corresponded for sometime but we then lost contact for a period of time. He became editor of *World Vision* magazine. I had the opportunity to succeed him but I didn't feel it was quite the job for me. We corresponded for quite a while and then on my seventy-fifth birthday a group of colleagues gathered at New College in Edinburgh for a surprise party and Frank was one of the 140 people who sent messages for that event.

RRJ — During your years with *Christianity Today* (1961-1983) you were also involved in another publishing venture with *The Christian*.

J D D — *The Christian* was a weekly publication that had begun in 1859. It had flourished under the influence of the Moody-Sankey revivals in the 1870s in the UK. I inherited that rather reluctantly. *Christianity Today* had an office in London, which I took over when I returned from Washington. But two or three years later the offices of *Christianity Today* and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association were joined together. The BGEA had bought *The Christian* several years before. Jerry Bevin was the man behind this decision who had bought *The Christian* which had fallen upon lean times for various reasons. Some of us had been trying to do something about it. Three of us were appointed as consulting editors. The editor eventually left and I was offered the job. I didn't want it but when Billy Graham puts a half nelson on you cannot win, so I was persuaded.

R R J — What happened to this publication?

J D D — This was a time when things were not working out well for evangelical publications and it eventually ceased its operations in 1969 while I was the editor. This brought me into a whole new scene by working with the Billy Graham team. I was asked to travel with them to report on crusades in places like Tokyo and Sydney. In fact I gained great credence when we went to Sydney. I was the only one of the team asked to stay with the Archbishop of Sydney, Bishop Marcus Loane. This upped my reputation with Cliff Barrows and George Beverly. Marcus had been an old friend. He had come to speak at an IVF conference in Loch Lomond when I was the secretary of the St. Andrews Christian Union. We had kept up ever since. He is a delightful man and he knows more about Scottish Church history than most Scotsmen. I remember writing to him when he was appointed bishop saying, "I suppose you don't remember me." He wrote back saying, "Of course I remember you but I am astonished that you remember me." When he became archbishop I wrote to say, "Congratulations, but don't expect any more congratulations from me when you become Cardinal" [Laughter]. He's had a remarkable influ-

ence in Australia. He was even knighted by the Queen.

R R J — You referred to Billy Graham putting a "half nelson" on you with regard to taking this editorial position at *The Christian*. You said that half in jest but he does have this remarkable ability to get people to do things, doesn't he?

J D D — My chief memory of Billy Graham was when I was working at *Christianity Today* once and he passed by the office door and he waved to me. I had never met him at this time. That was the first time I had ever seen him. He did visit London occasionally. When I went to *The Christian* we of course became closer. I then traveled with the team and I would see him in all sorts of positions, early in the morning, traveling in the train between Washington and New York, or in Zagreb, the first communist country he visited. He was always the same, whether up on the platform or in private. He was genuine. I am often asked about American tele-evangelists. I have the greatest admiration for Billy Graham. I would treat him just as I would treat anybody. I can remember at one of the Amsterdam Congresses where there were thousands and thousands of people and he had given one of the major talks. (I was the editor of the compendium.) We went down on the elevator together and I said to him, "Never mind I'll have all that heresy edited out before it gets into cold print." (I appalled one or two people with such comments.) Billy liked it, I think! We've always had a very good relationship.

R R J — It sounds like you both enjoyed a great sense of humor.

J D D — I could never have survived without a God-given sense of humor. It is a great thing. I found this sense of humor in the Chinese when I was at Singapore Bible College. I remember writing to Mrs. Billy (Ruth) Graham who was born in China. I reproached her about never warning me that the Chinese were such fun. So she wrote back a very apologetic letter.

RRJ — You've mentioned editing, writing and teaching. I would like to ask a few questions that are a bit different than career related questions. Quite clearly, in studying Scottish Church history and Church history in general, you have paid some attention to revivals and spiritual awakenings. Many of our readers are praying for a new movement of the Spirit in true revival in our time, especially in Europe and North America where most of our readers live and serve. Tell us a bit about your own study of revival movements. Does anything stand out in your own thinking?

JDD — Well, I have not studied revival movements real closely. I knew J. Edwin Orr. We corresponded for some time. I know about some of our Scottish experiences; Cambuslang in 1742, etc. I have been involved in so many things but revivals have not been a special study of mine. I have read a good deal about a lot of them and have been amazed at how you can't predict revivals. They will come unexpectedly, just out-of-the-blue, and sometimes from the most improbable people. I have found that God has a habit of surprising us.

This observation hasn't got anything directly to do with revivals, but I remember at Singapore I was teaching class one day and someone came in and spoke to one of my senior students, a man who had been in jail for drug dealing, and who had been converted and had come to college in his 30s. This student left the class. He later apologized to me for leaving my class and said that he had to leave to go and cast out a demon. He was known for this. It was the most natural normal thing in the world for him to do this kind of thing. I can also remember a village in Ethiopia where missionaries had been and then because of the political situation they were forbidden to minister and were forced to leave the country. When they had come back many years later they found they were still experiencing New Testament miracles. No one had told them that these were a thing of the past. So, I have always had an interest in revival and miracles but I don't think I have a lot more helpful to say.

RRJ — What encourages you about the Church in both Europe and North America in our time? There has been severe decline in Christianity in Europe. Is there anything that encourages you about what you see now after eight decades of life?

JDD — I would like to be positive. I would like to be positive, but I see very few signs that encourage me about the Christian Church in Europe. There are some great signs in individual congregations but I get confused. I speak candidly when I say this but when I come to America and find you have so many religious television programs I am troubled. As a Scottish Presbyterian we tend to take our religion quite seriously. I am still surprised at your multi-million dollar budgets, which is of course no bad thing in itself. A few days ago I was watching a television panel in which there was an evangelical with a Muslim, a Jew, a Hindu, and an Episcopalian. I was very disappointed with my evangelical brother. He was speaking about the Word of God, which he said was written in Greek. Someone said there were portions in Aramaic and that this was the language Jesus spoke. He would not accept this point. He said the New Testament was in Greek. The Jesus you present is not always recognizable. You do it in an uncompromising way and he said, in effect, "You present the claims of Christ but you do not display the beauty of Christ." This is a real kick in the teeth for anyone to say. I have not noticed any great working of the Spirit in Europe or the British Isles. But again we should remember that out-of-the-blue things happen and you never know what God might do. Singapore is a great place for young people's religion. The churches are booming. I got to speak in one church and looked around to see if there was anyone older than I was. Usually there wasn't. Singapore is a place where the men used to retire at 55. I went there just four days after my sixty-sixth birthday. There is a sense of revival there when these young people get together. We Scots are usually rather reserved about these things. I remember my Church history professor the first day of class saying to us at St. Andrews, "Gentleman, let me

give a piece of advice. Learn reticence." He was no robust evangelical but I did learn that was this was a very good bit of advice.

R R J — I have learned that you do not have to take back what you never said. And you do not have to change what you haven't created or caused.

You were a Christian scholar, a historian, an editor and a writer. Through all these years you have kept your faith *and* retained a warm evangelical heart for the things of the gospel. You have a love and desire to know Christ better. What have you done to stir up your heart and keep your glow for the Lord and his work?

J D D — I used to get very disturbed when I found ministers leaving the ministry because they had taken a wrong path in their lives. We evangelicals have not yet learned how to deal with our casualties. I used to get greatly exercised about this but one day when I was in the offices of the Billy Graham Association in Minneapolis I saw on an elderly lady's typing desk an inscription which said, "What is that to thee, follow thou me." I learned a great deal from that. I would take this a little bit out of context, that word from the end of Luke's gospel, but when things happened that surprised me, a veteran evangelist losing his way, then this would lead me to remember, "What is that to thee, follow thou me."

What keeps me going? Reading is one thing. I have a card for every day. I have compiled these over many years. It marks the birthday or the death date of someone who has said something that I found remarkable. So, every morning I look at one or more of these cards.

R R J — Did you make the cards yourself?

J D D — Yes, I did. I compiled them. They are all things that people have said down through the years that have helped me. This started with my keeping a commonplace book that I started in Algiers in 1945. I built it up since then. I get all

kinds of help from this practice. This is not always a religious thing. William Barclay said every believer should have some non-religious interests. Friedrich von Hügel, the Catholic spiritual counselor, said the same thing. Non-religious interests keep the balance in your life. I am great football fan (soccer you call it here) myself and this helps me keep the balance.

R R J — You obviously read the Scripture as well.

J D D — During the short time when I was in high school we had an English teacher named James Spiers. I do not know what his religious profession was but he would have us learn whole sections of the King James Version of the Bible. Still on long-haul journeys I find myself saying these verses. Over and over again they flow through my mind. Texts like: "The beauty of Israel is slain upon the high places; how are the mighty fallen" just came to my mind. I have been given a good memory and I have not forgotten these verses. In fact, when I went to Singapore the Chinese students sized me up very quickly. The Chinese are very astute about these things. I was interviewed by a fellow who is now on the faculty at the University of Illinois, Lawson Lau, and he wrote about me, "He wears his learning so lightly that one wonders if he is properly attired." I have looked at that from every angle [Laughter] . . . I decided that he meant it well.

I also learned poetry. I found poetry a great help. Very often when I go to church I do not have to look up the words of hymns or the order of the verses except over here where you've messed things up a bit. I will say these things over to myself. I have a friend in St. Andrews, Eric Alexander, who is a well-known speaker over here. From my house to his I can sing five verses of the "Sands of Time Are Sinking" as long as I sing it slowly and thoughtfully. I get a great deal of help from hymns and religious poetry.

R R J — Eric Alexander is a good friend. Do you retain a friendship with him?

J D D — Eric's brother was the one I knew best. He died after he was in the ministry for only six years. Eric took a year off from his B. D. studies to take care of Tom in his terminal illness. He's been a good friend ever since, although when he came to St. Andrews he bought a house right across from me, before he retired, which he let out to students and I had to rebuke him because the students were hanging out their laundry on the Sabbath. I had to exercise my ministry on him [Laughter].

R R J — Since 1994 you have been an associate editor involved with the Oxford University project on the *New Dictionary of National Biography*.

J D D — This is a rather remarkable tale in itself. In 1997 I received a letter from a professor at Oxford University inviting me to become an associate editor in charge of Scottish twentieth-century Church history entries. This was for the revision project. The last edition was completed a hundred years ago. There have been supplements since then but this is a completely new one. I don't know who fingered me for this job. There is an ugly rumor that a well-known liberal had suggested me for the job, which is of course the kiss of death in some circles. I felt this was a great opportunity. I wrote and agreed to this and I must say that the Oxford people could not have been more helpful. They accepted all of my suggestions. I worked hard for them. I got people like Oswald Chambers, F. F. Bruce, and so on, into this new revision. I don't think they would ever have had these entries included if they had had the usual sort of secular editor they would have employed. I felt this was a kind of *nunc dimittis* to my career since I could move into a secular field and be able to make a contribution. I felt a bit of a charlatan because I was allocating articles to people who were much older and more learned than I and very often I had to answer their questions. I've had a great time on this since 1997. I began this just before I came home from my ten years teaching in Singapore (1988-1998).

R R J — Is this work on schedule and when will it be published?

J D D — It is on schedule for next year, 2004, and it will be about sixty-five million words, which means about sixty volumes in all. This is something that will be in every English-speaking library all over the world. I think that I am almost prouder of this than any of the religious works I have edited.

R R J — Why is that?

J D D — Because in most of the other things I was speaking to the converted. In this case I was given an open door. I didn't even apply. The editor had a huge task and, in fact, dropped dead at age 58 when the work was 78% done. We had a good relationship. He had been educated at Edinburgh Academy and had done rather well in the far country, shall we say. It was good to think I was trusted. I thought they asked because the Oxford people didn't know what was happening north of the border, but I like to think I built up this trust with the editor. So, I was very happy to be involved in this very worthwhile project.

R R J — You have obviously, over many years, used your gifts in many ways and places. You must believe that Christians ought to engage the whole of culture, including the arts, society, culture, writing, etc. We want to encourage our readers not to withdraw from culture but rather to apply their gifts and calling to the culture as real believers and followers of Christ. I believe God calls Christians to engage all of life, as reformers like John Calvin and Abraham Kuyper plainly taught.

J D D — That was part of the doctrine of the old Celtic Church. I interviewed William Barclay once. He was very kind to me, as he was to all his evangelical students. He did me a great act of kindness and I only learned it thirteen years later. He did it behind my back and he didn't tell me. He had a religious program on TV that went out on a Sunday afternoon

and it had a great vogue even from those who had little interest in religion. So, I asked him, "How do you explain this?" He answered, "I imagine a working man who is just about to sit down in his living room to read his Sunday paper. My job is to stop him!" So, he would come up with great anecdotes. He was a great soccer fan, like myself. He would come up with some anecdote that keeps their attention. He could communicate. He knew it is not enough to know the Lord's song in a strange land. You have to know how best to communicate it. Barclay was an expert at that. I think it's important that we should involve ourselves in all aspects of life. I have found myself sitting on planes next to people. You get opportunity to talk to them because you know who won the cup final. I even know who Woody Hayes was [laughter]. These have all been helpful in getting to know people and in relating to them.

RRJ — All of life is not to be divided into secular and sacred, as evangelicals so often do. We live all of life to the glory of God!

JDD — I think it's a mistake to try think otherwise. It lands us in a great deal of misunderstanding with evangelicals of a particular strain of thought. As we Scots say, "I think I'll just let that flea stick to the wall!"

Recovery of the truth that what we do reflects who we are is vital, if Christian witness is to have any integrity today.

MICHAEL B. THOMPSON
(*THE NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL*, 23)

Plainly Paul interchanges the verb obey with the verb believe (see Romans 6:17; 10:16). No one can seriously doubt that faith expresses itself, necessarily, in obedience. The problem arises when we try to get this connection right in terms of how to express this necessary consequence. Does "faith alone" really save you? Not according to James 2:24, as the best Catholic apologist will always remind you.

Even Luther, it is often pointed out, properly noted that though it is faith alone that saves, the faith that saves is never alone. The problem here is *not* the necessity of "works." The problem is to be seen in how we relate "works" to active faith? I believe the answer lies not in the sixteenth-century conflicts over law and gospel, though there is plenty there to warn us about important dangers to be avoided, but rather in a fresh biblical theology that is rooted in Christ as the goal and end of all revelation and redemption. When we begin to talk about the center of evangelical faith as being in Christ alone, and of our redemption as rooted in our union with Christ by the Spirit, we avoid many of the pitfalls created by both Catholic and Protestant definitions that are not adequately grounded in Pauline categories.

JOHN H. ARMSTRONG