

THE CHURCH AND THE CULTURE · MEDIA-CONSCIOUS CHRISTIANITY · THE FEAR OF THE LORD

FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1999
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The Christian and the Culture

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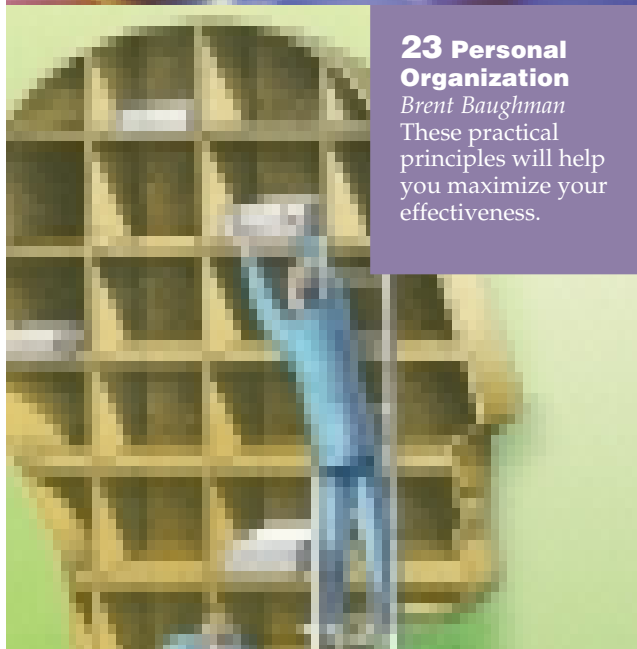
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I'm an original subscriber, and every issue of *Frontline* blesses our hearts and challenges us to be better servants for our blessed Lord. I was born again when I was 14 years old, and now I'm 95 and looking forward to eternity in heaven. May God continue to bless your good work.

*George S. Fichter
Dover, NJ*

I wish for my subscription to *Frontline* to lapse because your stated stand on being separated does not match the action of your leadership or your magazine. While you may condemn Catholicism, the FBF practices its own brand of it, and also practices selective separatism. . . .

*Bill Gray
Atlantic Beach, FL*

I'm an inmate at Arizona State prison, and I read your article . . . "No Longer Enemies" [March/April 1995]. I loved the story. . . . I'm in total lockdown and reading is all I do, and anything about the Lord I love to read. . . . I'm in a Bible study now and it helps, but I love to read stories also. They sink in real deep.

Name Withheld

I do enjoy reading *Frontline*. Each issue over the last year of my subscription has brought valuable information to my desk and for that I thank you. . . . Please allow me to make this observation concerning Dr. John

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Vaughn's excellent article titled "Incremental Compromise" [Sept./Oct. 1998]. He might have used this same argument against the incremental compromise so many Fundamentalists are guilty of concerning modern versions of the Word of God. The FBF is right to stand against CCM; would to God you were only able to see the devastation brought into so many once great churches by these subtle attacks against God's word, many by our own learned brethren!

*Pastor Kent Kirchmeyer
Franklin, IN*

It seems I'm always getting my very late in the mail. . . . Sorry if it sounds like a complaint. I just can't wait to read the articles. Thanks so much for bringing us strong Christian men and women not ashamed to take a stand for our Lord and Savior.

*Gayle Thompson
Troy, MI*

Ed note: We are trying to adjust our production schedule so that our readers receive their issues earlier.

In the recent edition of *Frontline*, your editorial writer headlined, "PCC Uses New Evangelical Lutheran to Promote KJV-Only Views" ["Newsworthy," Nov./Dec. 1998]. [The] source was David Cloud. . . . David Cloud is a faultfinder of PCC of long standing. . . . Whoever your editorial writer was apparently does not know what he was talking about. PCC does not take a KJV-only position.

*David Henry
Hermantown, MN*

Thank the Lord for the opportunity to renew one of the finest Bible-centered, fundamental magazines I have [received] in 25 years of ministry.

*Pastor Frank Hazelo
Pound, WI*

How blessed we are to read such a blessed, spiritual magazine. We're ordering a gift subscription to bless others and increase your readership.

*Bill and Mary Wiebe
CANADA*

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Back to Babylon, Back to Rome

Are Fundamentalists being desensitized by the god of this world and his worldly system? Both the Scriptures and reality tell us that the “prince of this world” is in control, and his “system” is alive and well. God entrusted His dominion over the earth to man, but when Adam fell, Satan became the ruler over God’s planet earth. Although God is sovereign and His purpose and eternal plan will ultimately be accomplished, Satan has a well-organized, extremely devious and intellectual army of wicked angels at his disposal. His desire is to be worshipped as God, and he uses the kings and kingdoms of this world to achieve his objective. But the Ruler of Darkness saves his greatest and most subtle wiles for the religious arena. Satan has a well-designed plan to deceive and brainwash mankind.

One of his principal objectives is to set up a one-world church by bringing together all the religions of the world. God calls this religious system, described in Revelation 17–18, the “mother of harlots.” Also called “Babylon the Great” (Rev. 17:5), it will be based in Rome. The Roman Catholic system is merely a compilation of the ancient Babylonian mystery religions. This revived Babylonianism will attempt to control all the nations of the earth. The “mother of harlots” lusts for religious, political, and economic power. But, how could a people who have been set free from the slavery of Babylon ever go back to it? Paul warned us in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work.” The proponents of this “New World Order” are captivated by this delusion and are motivated, some

knowingly and others unknowingly, by the power of Satan.

No one can deny that the pores of our society ooze sensuality, most of which is disseminated through the Hollywood entertainment industry. One of the primary weapons Satan uses to deceive, bewitch, and condition society is the news media. By manipulating “public opinion,” the truth becomes a lie, and a lie becomes truth. Even Adolf Hitler understood this principle. In *Mein Kampf* he wrote, “By means of shrewd lies, unremittingly repeated, it is possible to make people believe that heaven is hell and hell is heaven. . . .” It comes as no surprise, then, that even our churches have swallowed the lies which society touts

as “public opinion.”

Dare we deny that the church is daily becoming more like the world and the world more like the church? While we were asleep, Satan has sown his seed. Now the Lord’s day has become just another work day. Instead of a day of rest hallowed

unto God, Sunday has become a day of recreation. Teenagers have to work, dad has to work. They *must* work if they wish to keep that particular job, even if it requires them to work on the Lord’s Day. But this is not necessarily so; it is a choice we make, and we deceive ourselves, arguing “we have no choice!” Hollywood, T.V., music, the news media, humanistic and atheistic philosophies of education, etc., pursue and seek to indoctrinate us, while we accommodate them, even in the church.

I am reminded of Psalm 107, when the

Babylonian captives were set free and could return to their home. Their exile was over; the prophecy of Jeremiah had been fulfilled; the prayer of Daniel had been answered. God’s chosen ones, the Israelites, were free to go, but a terrible thing occurred. The majority of Israelites, many of whom were born under the influence of Babylonian society during the 70-year captivity, chose to stay in Babylon. *They* would not follow some old religious extremists who, no doubt, had told them this great day of deliverance would come. *They* were not about to march across a burning desert for 4–5 months—no, *not them*. They had never seen the glorious city of Jerusalem; they had never seen the God about whom their fathers had told them. Why? They had been influenced and desensitized by their environment. They were quite satisfied with the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Babylon. They were happy and content—no “pie in the sky” ideas about going back to some outdated religious culture. None of this pioneering, warring, and fighting for *these* enlightened Jews. Because their Babylonian lifestyle was satisfying and prosperous, they chose to stay in Babylon rather than be pushed outside their “comfort zone.”

Thankfully, not all were seduced and compromised. The first group to return to Israel’s homeland was led by Zerubbabel, a man who had a mighty stirring in his soul to obey the sovereign God rather than “public opinion.” Seventy-eight years later, God moved again upon another man—Ezra, the scribe. A small band of believers followed him, but they found chaos and destruction upon their return to Israel. The enemy occupied most of their land. There was no temple. The

Continued on page 6



DR. ROD BELL

city was a heap of ruins. The results of degeneration, destruction, and discouragement were everywhere. Nothing but the strain of distant memories and faint dreams reminded them of their fathers' God.

Alas! All was not lost! They had with them a small group of old men who had experienced the glory in years gone by. These faithful ones knew that the sins of the nation had brought about their captivity. The first thing these old saints did was to build an altar and offer a sacrifice to God. They knew their priorities. The very symbol of their faith was the sacrifice upon the altar, which pointed ahead to the Supreme Sacrifice to be given on Calvary. And here lay the nation of Israel's problem: Years before the captivity, Israel had lost the proper view of sin and redemption. Truth had become a lie, and a lie became the truth. Truth had been slain in the street. Without a proper view of sin, no nation can prosper. "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn" (Prov. 29:2).

Is it possible that our generation has forgotten the faith of our fathers and the glorious acts that our God did in their midst? Could it be we have been conditioned by this Babylonian society, that we have become desensitized by sin and are satisfied to stay in our "comfort zones" while we watch our future generations sink deeper into complacency and lukewarmness? We see so-called Fundamentalist leaders taking our young men back into the Southern Baptist Convention, an arm of the Baptist World Alliance with a direct and strong link to the National Council of Churches (which is bringing together the building blocks of the one-world church, "the mother of harlots"). Sin has desensitized us. The "back to Babylon" movement is alive and well.

God give us men who will separate from the Babylonian system. Come out of her, my brother, and stay out! Clear away the rubbish that prevents God's glory and His holy revival fires from returning to our churches in great power.

Let's get back to Calvary preaching, which includes the proper view of sin and redemption. Let us allow God to "fill our horns with oil," and may we anoint the King. David was God's choice for king; Saul was the people's choice. One was a keeper of the sheep, the other was the keeper of the asses. Saul was politically correct. He pleased the people, but he displeased God. Saul lied, disobeyed, and killed a priest, and yet sought to stay in office "for the good of the nation."

When Samuel went up to anoint the new king (God's choice), "the elders trembled" until they "sanctified themselves" and saw the sacrifice, the heifer. What were the reasons for their trembling?

- They had been silent and had gone along with public opinion.
- They saw God's man coming.
- They saw God's man coming with a message—the sacrifice (i.e., Calvary).

Samuel was coming in the power of God because "his horn was filled with oil." Oh, how we need some present-day Samuels with their horns full of the anointing oil. Samuel was not intimidated by the king or a few silent, compromising elders who had been influenced by their society to keep quiet. There is no trembling among the elders for God's servants today, only jokes and jesting!

We need a few Samuels who have the anointing of God upon them. We need overseers to lead our churches with the message of the cross, like David led his sheep, into the great promises of God's lush, green pastures. Rather than debating it

among ourselves, we must boldly proclaim God's truth, refusing to be desensitized by the sins of our society or silenced by public opinion.

Many of us are like the elders of Bethlehem (1 Samuel 17)—We are afraid to warn men about the wicked king whom God has rejected. Others among us have swallowed the lies of society and cannot discern the

seduction and danger of returning to Babylon. How, then, can we remain silent when we see the pervasive influence of today's "entertainment philosophy" in our churches, or when we see self-proclaimed Fundamentalists leading their flock back into the Southern Baptist Convention? Separation? There is none. We've chosen entertainment instead of ministering, the NFL instead of the Sunday service, another work day instead of the Lord's Day.

Instead of being righteously indignant or even embarrassed by the sensuality of our day, our people chuckle right along with the programmed laugh lines. They "not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. 1:32). Sodom and Babylon have seduced us and drawn our churches back into bondage. We must have revival. Our only hope is in 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

***Sodom and
Babylon have
seduced us and
drawn our
churches back
into bondage.***

Baptist World Mission


***"Follow me, and I will make
you fishers of men."
Matthew 4:19***

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The Church and the Culture

Richard Flanders



Many Americans believe that our culture is decaying and that moral decline presents the greatest danger we face. Writers and speakers from different positions on the philosophical or political spectrum have commented with dismay upon this decadence, and preachers have given many sermons on it. Hardly anything can serve to verify for the public mind the authority of the Bible more than the cultural decline of our country over the past 35 years. Actually, the downward slide began much earlier than this, but the rapidity of the descent has greatly increased since the middle 1960s. Truth without righteousness has led to the darkening of the mind. Darkened minds have perverted truth. Perverted truth has brought moral weakness, which has given way to sexual immorality and perversion. Now we see more and more the fruit of "a reprobate mind" that acknowledges no God or moral law and allows for every kind of cruelty, wickedness, and evil. Romans has been illustrated before our eyes.

The Bible calls the moral decay that results from unheeded and then rejected truth "corruption." In the Hebrew of Deuteronomy 31 and 32 the word for "corrupt" in the phrases "ye will utterly corrupt yourselves" and "they have corrupted themselves" is a word that

has the idea of decay. Moses was given a song to teach the Israelites that would serve as a warning against the cultural and spiritual corruption that comes when God and His Law are neglected. "For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands" (Dt. 31:29). Believers in the true God must always be concerned about cultural corruption because at its root it is rejection of divine authority. But believers are also interested in saving souls, and so many in our times have been willing to forget about the culture in order to bring sinners to the church. This strategy is a great mistake and has denied many ministries the blessing of God.

Evangelicals have widely accepted the idea that if cultural corruption is resisted by churches, the unsaved we are trying to reach will be "turned off" by our antiquated ways and unwilling to listen to our message. Isn't there a way to preach the gospel in language and with trappings acceptable to modern man? Years ago a Christian youth movement used the slogan "Anchored to the Rock: Geared to the Times." Cannot the church be geared to the times while still anchored to the Rock?

If we gear the gospel to the times, we can end up floating downstream with the flow of cultural decadence. It is like trying to win as many souls as we can before we all go over the falls of societal collapse. This scenario is acceptable to some Christians, but it does not represent the will of God for His church. We ought to preach the gospel and uphold all the rest of God's truth at the same time. The churches should seek to preserve people from corruption as well as damnation. Most, however, are doing everything but this.

In no area are evangelical churches going along with cultural decay more than in the field of music. More and more supposedly orthodox churches today are inviting people to come and hear their "contemporary" music. Actually the style called "Contemporary Christian Music" can be more accurately defined as rock'n'roll. Some of it is hard rock; some is soft rock; some is "rockabilly"; some is 1950s or 1960s rock; but all so-called CCM is rock music.

When pressed about this issue, young church musicians admit that the genre is rock, but they argue that musical style is a neutral medium; that only the words convey a message. Of course, no true artist will say that his art conveys no message. Every serious painter or composer believes that some philosophy or statement is being communicated through his art. The creators of the rock'n'roll style of music always claimed that their songs expressed the revolutionary themes of a new generation: rebellion against authority and abandonment of sexual restraints. Not only have the originators of this style defined its message in this way, but also the best analysts of cultural decline have recognized this as the meaning of rock.

In 1987, Professor Allan Bloom at the University of Chicago wrote what the *Chicago Tribune* said "may be the most important work of its kind by an American since World War II." *The Closing of the American Mind* deals in depth with the role of higher education in the current cultural decline. A whole chapter early in the book is given to "Music." Professor Bloom observes,

Nothing is more singular about this generation than its addiction to music. . . . Today a very large portion of young people between

the ages of ten and twenty live for music. It is their passion; nothing else excites them as it does; they cannot take seriously anything alien to music. . . . Rock music is as unquestioned and unproblematic as the air the students breathe. . . . But rock music has one appeal only, a barbaric appeal, to sexual desire. . . . Young people know that rock has the beat of sexual intercourse. . . . The inevitable corollary of such sexual interest is rebellion against the parental authority that represses it.

The professor convincingly links rock music to the elements of societal upheaval that have nearly destroyed the moral structure of our culture in the past 35 years. Rock music is the anthem of the revolt against God.

Judge Robert Bork's highly acclaimed book, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*, brought the former Yale University law professor and U.S. Court of Appeals justice to the forefront of public discussion. In his book, he repeatedly refers to the role of rock music in our society's problems. He says in the Introduction that the rock songs of the 1960s were among the "harbingers of a new culture" that overcame the old and took over the country. Later in the book he says that this music joined with other factors that "intensified the rebelliousness of the young."

Portable radios became widely available so that youths could choose their music without parental supervision. No longer must they sit in the living room with their parents and siblings to listen to the radio together. The music they now listened to was rock and roll, which their parents hated. It would be difficult to overstate the cultural importance of that music. Visiting Yugoslavia in that era, Irving Kristol learned that the regime banned rock because it was subversive of authority. In a personal communication he remarked that rock and roll is subversive of all authority—that of Western democracies, bourgeois families, schools, and church as well as communist dictatorships. Those

in the rock business understood very well that the music's subversion of authority was a large part of its appeal to the young.



Anyone who has read Bork's book or Bloom's bestseller understands the corrupting character of rock music. Why then do churches use it?

The changes that have come in society with the changing of the times have to a large degree been simply new stages in our corruption. This is why it is important for the churches to maintain rather than revise their moral and behavioral standards. If the definition of Christian living changes every time society moves its moral boundaries, the so-called Christian of tomorrow will be living the way a so-called sinner lives today! It is capitulation to corruption that has caused churches to back away from Bible-based standards. In order not to appear "negative" or "judgmental," some pastors skip over certain Scripture passages. Thus they become part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

Recently, a very famous evangelist lamented on television the fact that his most successful crusades over the years had produced no visible effect on the moral decline of his country. The reason for the sad truthfulness of this observation is the general unwillingness of evangelicals to resist the corruption of our society from an unswervingly Biblical standpoint. Extreme examples of the decay, such as legal abortions and assisted suicide, are protested by some when enough non-Christians share their moral outrage, but these same evangelicals and Fundamentalists are often involved in other ways in the very corruption of society that has produced the extremes. Certainly every church ought to stand in every community as an institution that resists cultural decay.

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matt. 5:13).

Dr. Richard Flanders is pastor of Juniata Baptist Church in Vassar, Michigan.

Media-Conscious Christianity

As we read the papers and magazines, as we watch the television news and especially the television journalism shows, we see and hear of many cases of seeming religious-activist “extremism.” We feel embarrassment and immediately condemn the extremists, putting as much distance between them and us as possible.

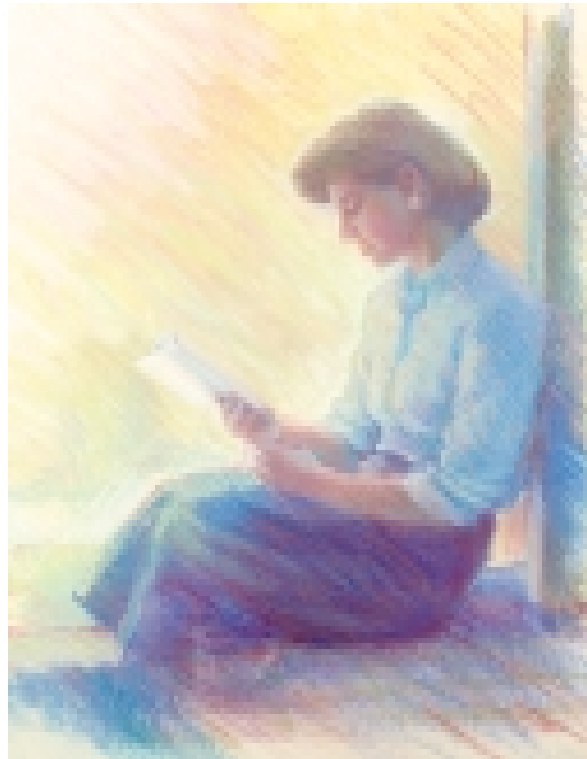
A Christian publication carried several true stories that bear consideration. In one incident, a man objected to an established business, both because of its location and because of the spiritual damage done to those affected by the business—not to mention the fact that the business was crooked. The business had the approval of the city leaders and was well established, though tolerated resentfully by the community.

Upon seeing the business firsthand, the man calmly and purposefully knocked over displays, sales tables, and cash boxes. He also chased the businessmen out physically, but nothing was said about anyone being hurt. Worse yet, he physically blocked access to the building for anyone involved in the business. The article points out that there was an overwhelmingly negative reaction from the city leaders and from the mainline denominational religious leaders, some of them saying privately they were so angry they wanted to “destroy him.” None of them were saved or persuaded to the man’s viewpoint. His actions were offensive to many.

In another incident, a man had accepted an invitation to eat with several ministers, community leaders, and professionals. When his host expressed surprise at the guest’s failure to follow protocol, the guest proceeded to rebuke the underlying hypocrisy of the host’s standards. When another guest rose to the host’s defense, the man censured the rest of the professional people who were there as well.

Although the article does not mention the public’s reaction to this outburst, it does note that the dinner guests became very angry and began to shout at him, escalating the rhetoric. As in the previous situation, this man apparently offended just about everybody present.

In yet another situation, a man was giving a speech to



Gil Fremont

a very large crowd, among whom were many community leaders and mainline religious leaders. Right in front of these important people, the speaker began to undermine their leadership, eventually directing his criticism at them specifically and even addressing them bluntly with names such as “fools” and “hypocrites.” One can readily imagine the anger and discomfort of the offended persons and perhaps of the rest of the crowd too, although the article doesn’t record their response.

In each incident, lines were drawn, people offended, positions hardened, and nothing was accomplished from a human perspective. And when things got really tense, each man

stood alone. Were these men effective? Were they loving? Were they Christlike? The man in each incident was the same man. The “Christian publication” is the Bible, and the man is the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The “articles” are from John 2:13-17 (also see Mark 11:15-18), Luke 11:37-54, and Matthew 23, respectively.

From a Biblical perspective, these accounts are not in the Word to advocate trashing businesses or creating uproars. But it is important to see each of these scenes from a media perspective. Had there been a video crew filming, what would the viewer reaction have been? If we could interview the Pharisees, what opinion would they have had of Jesus? When we say of an activist, “That isn’t a very good testimony,” or “That isn’t very Christlike,” are we basing our judgment on media-created traditions or on the Biblical example of Jesus Christ? In other words, by our modern, shortsighted, media-driven, impression-conscious standards of behavior would Jesus Christ have been a good Christian? Was He “Christlike” when He called people names, when He disrupted banquets, when He took a whip to those who were cheating others in His Father’s house, when He provoked the leaders of the synagogue? Would He have helped “the cause,” or hurt “the movement”? Was He successful? Was He loving? Was He effective? Would we have been embarrassed by His words or actions? Put in this light, perhaps our traditional views need re-examination.

Anecdotal Christ-likeness

When determining what is and what is not Christ-like behavior, we should keep in mind the legal maxim, "Hard cases make bad law." In the same way, hard cases make bad doctrine, and by hard cases I mean the horror stories we hear about how such-and-such a preacher or layman spoke harshly to someone, made a condemning statement, or in some way offended. The key focus in every anecdote is the undesirable outcome, the hardening of the hearer even to the point of becoming an implacable, persecuting foe of Christianity. Meanwhile three other very important factors are left unconsidered. Those factors are the content of the message, the heart attitude of the hearer, and the purposes of God.

By the same measurements (the reactions of the rebuked), we would have to blame Moses' blunt demands for Pharaoh's initial crackdown on the Israelite brick makers (the Israelites certainly did); blame John the Baptist's personal moral accusations against the First Couple for his own beheading; and even blame Jesus' scathing public rebukes of the Pharisees for His crucifixion. Are we to frown and shake our heads at their "lack of wisdom" or "lack of tact" and hide them from the public?

Here is a radical question. What if God doesn't care what the public thinks? What if God wants His Word proclaimed, both to save and to harden? In the Old Testament, God told Jeremiah that his ministry would be fruitless, except as a means to make Judah more accountable. Their faces would be hard like flint, because God meant to destroy them.

Jesus said the same things in His ministry. When asked why He spoke to the crowd in parables, He answered that only some were meant to understand and that others were meant to be hardened (Matt. 13:10-17; cf. John 12:40). While that doesn't seem like a winning strategy in public relations, it presupposes a higher purpose than merely changing public opinion. And it is that higher purpose that made Him act without consulting a public relations firm.

We as Christians must not go our own crusading, willful way, utterly oblivious of who we hurt or offend, but we must realize an important principle about the concept of absolute truth and its corollary, righteousness. In and of themselves, they are inherently offensive to fallen man. If they are presented at all, they will offend. By trimming back the truth, by tailoring the message not to offend, by dancing around the judgment of God on sin, the messenger most certainly can keep on talking, if talk is the goal. But at some point, if there is any eternal purpose in the talk, the truth must be brought to bear. People will take offense, and it will never play well at 6:00 or at 11:00.

Media with a Mission

That brings us to the question of public perceptions and media presentations. Given the news media's rapidly deteriorating attitude toward Judeo-Christian standards, does it make any practical difference how the Christian acts?

Syndicated columnist Joseph Sobran has pointed out that the old journalistic ideal of objectivity has almost completely been replaced by a sense of mission, a zeal to bring about a change in public opinion and then in society at

large. That sense of mission is coupled with Joseph Fletcher's "situation ethics," excusing dishonesty and unethical behavior in the service of the cause or ideal. While this attitude has been developing over several decades, the number of flagrant examples has been increasing exponentially.

Granted, there are still many honest and principled people left in the media, but they are rapidly being replaced by activist reporters—the "missionary media." Any hope that this new generation of indoctrinated, skillful missionaries will be kind to a Biblical worldview is wishful thinking.

"Love-Conscious Christians"

Yet how the Christian acts does matter. The ultimate goal of the believer in society is to glorify God, through obedience and reflection of His character. In public discourse Jesus pulled no punches, boldly proclaiming the truth and exposing the wickedness of those men who openly opposed Him. As we oppose sins such as abortion, pornography, euthanasia, and infanticide, we must remember that there are many who support these practices in sincere ignorance or naivete; however, the leaders of the organizations that oppose traditional values are hostile to Biblical authority, cynical and deceptive in their manipulation of information and statistics, and committed wholeheartedly to the promotion and encouragement of the sin their group represents. Many of them have sound Biblical backgrounds which they have scornfully rejected. While they may be kind to their neighbors, children, and pets, they have declared themselves to be enemies of God, and they will do whatever is necessary to accomplish their agenda.

Christ condemned, labeled, prodded, provoked, and embarrassed God's enemies in public (Matt. 23; Mark 3:5, 6; Mark 12:35-40; Luke 4:16-29). Why do we then shrink from true, Biblical Christ-likeness as divisive and counterproductive? Didn't Jesus Himself say He came "not to seek peace but a sword" (Matt. 10:34)? In public He drew lines, and it was up to the wicked to step over to His side or stay put and fight Him. Didn't Jesus love the movers and shakers whom He rebuked?

By contrast, in private discourse, one-on-one, His approach was totally different. His manner was direct, but could be best described as loving confrontation. He treated those who came seeking the truth in a different way than He did those who fought the truth.

In many situations, Christ dealt one-on-one with individuals who were open to the truth, and we can see a theme of loving confrontation running through each narrative. In John 4:1-42 Jesus purposefully went through Samaria (v. 4), an area considered to be "below" any Jew. When He conversed with the woman at the well, He spoke only one introductory sentence before beginning the gospel message. By His fourth sentence (v. 16), He was dealing with her sin, gently but pointedly. He then took time to teach her and others who believed (vv. 39-42). For the untaught outcast, he gave time and acceptance.

In John 3, Jesus dealt patiently with the timid but intensely interested Nicodemus, getting right to the point and explaining as fully as possible the complexities of sin

and salvation. In John 7:50 and 19:39, we find Nicodemus apparently having become a believer. For the seeker, He gave answers.

In John 8, the woman caught in adultery was facing death at the hands of hypocritical men. After rescuing her from them by pointing out their hypocrisy, He instructed her to cease from sin. He changed her morals by compassionately dealing with sin, not by rational arguments. For the one enslaved by sin, He commanded a change in lifestyle.

In Acts 9, Jesus forcefully confronted Saul, showing Himself to be the true Way. The renamed and redirected Paul used his zeal to serve instead of fight the Way. In the case of the earnest and sincere persecutor, He dealt directly but graciously with Saul's misdirected zeal and guilty conscience.

Loving confrontation is "speaking the truth in love," according to Paul. Treat everyone as an individual, factoring in his attitude and background, but with the focus on dealing with sin.

With individuals Jesus was direct and compassionately confrontational. With wicked leaders He was, by popular standards, sometimes harshly so. When dealing with issues that affect the family and the sanctity of life, we must recognize that there are many individuals who are miserably trapped in sin or naively blinded to the truth. For these individuals who have no hope, who want light to chase away the darkness of their sin, Jesus is the loving Savior.

However, there are indeed people in this world who can look sincere and concerned while plotting to obstruct

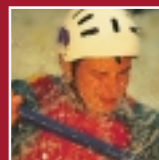
and destroy the truth, crush ministries, and bludgeon decent, godly people. For these people, as for the rulers of Jesus' day, power and money, and a cynical, manipulative disregard for the Word are the driving forces. For these kinds of people, Jesus, John the Baptist (Matt. 3:7-12), Peter (Acts 8:20-23) and Paul (Acts 13:10-11) had forceful words of judgment.

Easy on the Salt

In Colossians 4:6 Paul said, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." The key to Biblical, balanced confrontation is to remember that principle—salt is for seasoning, not consumption. Too much salt burns, and a steady diet of caustic speech has the same effect. If the activist is a loose cannon, unleashing verbal destruction on any and all comers, then God will not be glorified because His grace will not be manifested. Grace that is the verbal diet, seasoned with the salt of directness that is necessary when confronting people who have sold themselves to do evil (Rom. 1:17-32).

If Christ is the pattern for Christlikeness, then there are times when the truth will cause some hard feelings. But whether the camera is rolling or not, let's remember that we are not fighting for approval of men or to fit their false impressions of Christianity. We are not fighting to win public opinion. We are fighting for the approval, the "well-done," of a holy and righteous God.

Gil Fremont teaches Bible and history at Bob Jones Junior High School in Greenville, South Carolina.



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Movies and TV: Popular Culture's Pipeline

Jim Van Gelderen

Lot's wife is a pillar of salt. Two or more of his daughters and their husbands lie consumed in the fire and brimstone of God's judgment. Two of his daughters imitate the degraded lifestyle of the heathen around them. Lot himself ends his saga in utter disgrace. How could a believer reach such a low?

Lot made serious wrong choices. He took his family out of the will of God and "in seeing and hearing" subjected himself and his family to the "unlawful deeds" of those around them. Today when we assimilate media we use our eyesight and hearing. These were exactly the two senses Lot and his family used to assimilate the "media" of their day. In a real sense there was a choice of media available to Lot. He could have chosen another place to live. He then would not have seen and heard the wicked "media" of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

What was it about Lot's media choice that was so destructive? In 2 Peter 2:6–8 God gives us a description of Sodom and Gomorrah:

And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;).

The elements of these wicked cities that proved to be the undoing of Lot and his family ought to be scrupulously avoided in our own media choices.

Profanity

When Lot "turned on" Sodom and began to assimilate this media, what was it that "vexed his righteous soul"? What was it that proved so destructive to him and his family? First, as 2 Peter 2:6 describes, Sodom and Gomorrah were "ungodly." Spiros Zodhiates defines this as "sin against anything which should be considered sacred." The word "wicked" is used to describe men of Sodom in Genesis 13:13. The definition of this word includes the concept of a "rejection of God." These cities, at best,

had no regard for God and, at worst, had animosity toward their Creator.

A wrong concept of God or an animosity toward God should be avoided at all costs. Even a philosophy where there is "no God" has a subtle danger. How much media programming weaves plots where there is no God? However, today many movies and TV programs go beyond this and actively vent an animosity toward God. In 1997 one of the blockbusters of the year was a movie by the name of *Men in Black*. This movie's opening word is God's name being taken in vain. It is followed by 65 more profanities. The movie *Armageddon* has "many blasphemous uses of God's name," according to *Plugged In*. *Godzilla* has at least six profane uses of the Lord's name. And the list could go on and on. When *Preview* reviewed 209 films in 1997, it found that 73 percent used God's name in profanity.

Perhaps we should remember God's perspective on this. Remember the Ten Commandments. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Ex. 20:7). Those are strong words. If you subject yourself or your family to this kind of treatment of God, you are as foolish as Lot himself. Did not the Savior tell us the truth when He warned that "blasphemies . . . defile a man" (Matt. 15:19–20)? Was not Solomon inspired of God when he commanded, "Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee" (Prov. 4:24)? Dare we do any differently?

Promiscuity

The second aspect of the media of Sodom and Gomorrah was that it was "filthy." In fact, the word "filthy" in 2 Peter 2:7 is used to describe the lifestyle of those residing in Sodom and Gomorrah. One commentator defines this word as "the absence of all moral restraint, especially in the area of sexual sins." The people of Sodom and Gomorrah lived a very pornographic lifestyle. The cities were places of no moral boundaries, cesspools of sensuality. Even Jude 7 reveals the people's deliberate "giving themselves over to fornication."

Sensuality in our media choices has destructive consequences.



Several passages of Scripture teach us the connection between what one sees and what one thinks about. "I have made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1). "Lust not after her beauty in thine heart . . ." (Prov. 6:25). "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). The tragedy unfolds when what one thinks about develops into a course of action. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). Jesus said in Mark 7:21, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders." D. Edmond Hiebert makes an interesting point concerning the Greek construction of "evil thoughts": "Standing before the verb, they are viewed as the root of the varied evils enumerated." In other words, "evil thoughts" beget "fornications."

According to *U.S. News & World Report*, 90 percent of all teens who have lost their virginity in promiscuity have done so primarily because of the influence of television. Is it any wonder, with programs such as *Dawson's Creek* polluting the airwaves? *Entertainment Weekly* claims that *Dawson's Creek* is the " frankest depiction of teenage sexuality ever seen on the small screen." And then there is *Friends*. "Casual sex is the basic plot line on NBC's top-rated sitcom *Friends*, about a group of libidinous twenty-somethings always on the make" (*USA Today*, April 17, 1996). Even the blockbuster *Titanic* has a love story plot that culminates in fornication. The tragedy and shock is how many believers have watched this blockbuster. Again,

the list could go on, and with it the tragic fallout in the lives of those too foolish to tune out.

I received a letter from a lady who was saved four years ago. She had been present when I gave a presentation on media choices. Her letter concluded with these words: "I would like to encourage you to continue speaking to parents and teens about the dangers of TV I began watching soap operas at age 11. I stayed home sick from school one day, a TV was brought into my room, and I then saw my first episode of *All My Children*. It was a day I will never forget because my mind was never the same. By 13 I began experimenting in what I had seen on TV, and by 15 there was nothing left for marriage. Always trying to have the relationships I had seen on TV but *always* coming up empty." It makes tragic sense. What one sees, one thinks about. What one thinks about, one eventually will do. Maybe we should heed the little Sunday school song, "Oh be careful little eyes what you see."

Not only did Lot and his family see a pornographic lifestyle, they heard pornographic talk. Second Peter 2:8 tells us that Lot, "in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." According to writer Laura Buckeley Goldsmith, Barbara Kaye of Southern Illinois University "studied two weeks of prime time—one from 1990 and another from 1994—on NBC, ABC, CBS and Fox and found that foul language increased 45 percent during that period. The biggest increase was in sitcoms. Off-color jokes shot up 370 percent from 1990 to 1994. Sitcom viewers, Kaye says, now hear a dirty

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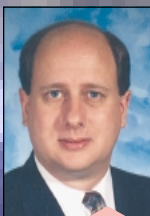
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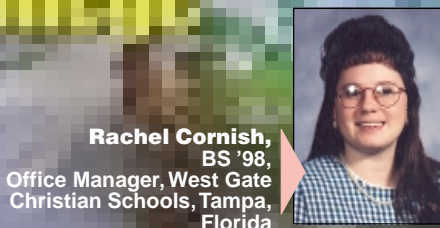
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word every five minutes on average."

In Ephesians 5:3 God commands, "But fornication, and all uncleanness . . . let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints." God never wants a believer to be involved in moral impurity in any way, not even once! But that is not all. Verse four continues the exhortation by adding, "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting." God clearly adds three other things that should never "once be named among you, as becometh saints." All three terms revolve around filthy, dirty speech. Not *once* should a believer ever knowingly watch a TV program with vulgar or dirty talk. Not *once* should a believer ever watch a TV program that uses dirty humor or tells a dirty joke. Not *once* should a believer ever intentionally watch a TV program with a bed scene. God makes it clear—not *once*. Dare we do any differently?

Perverseness

There are certain things that even nature and conscience correctly teach us are wrong. Romans chapter one indicates that one of these is homosexuality. Jude 7 teaches us that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah went "after strange flesh." As a result they are "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

The *National Liberty Journal* reported that 22 shows on the fall '97 lineup had regular homosexual characters. Obviously the homosexual is portrayed in a positive light. This is exactly what Lot and his family were exposed to, and it took its toll. Could it be that exposure to one kind of sexual perversion is what prepared Lot's daughters to consider another kind of sexual perversion? The words of the law that God gave to Moses are clear: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination" (Lev. 18:22).

Conclusion

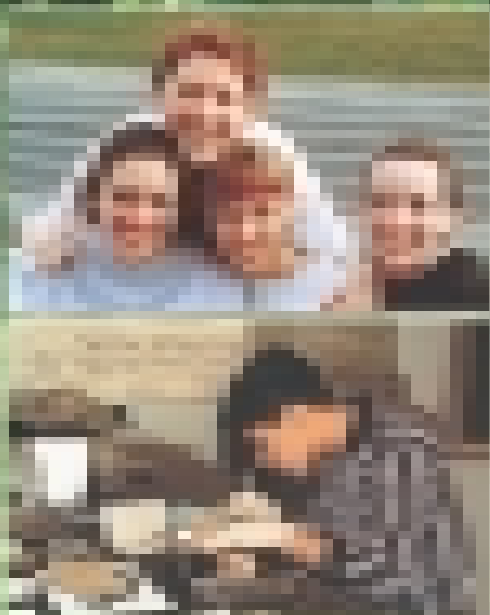
Lot's life teaches us that believers are susceptible to carnal choices and fleshly foolishness. Make no mistake about it—Lot was saved. Second Peter affirms this three times. He is called "just Lot" and "that righteous man," and "his righteous soul" is referred to as well. Tragically this illustrates that saved people make poor media choices. Do saved people watch *Melrose Place*? Do saved people watch *Friends*? Do saved people watch *Titanic*? Tragically, yes they do. But, as with Lot of old, their righteous soul will be vexed "with their unlawful deeds."

Compromise of Biblical truth and rationalization of worldliness have disastrous consequences. I have heard that some Christians have justified the nudity in *Titanic* by saying it is very brief. What blind and unbiblical thinking! Psalm 101:3 says, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." Lot, however, did the same kind of gymnastics with truth, and the price was high—very high. Perhaps the most obvious price he paid is found in the fact that his choices had a terrible impact on his family. He left daughters in Sodom, who were married to heathen men whom he had never told of the coming Messiah. He managed to get two virgin daughters out of Sodom, but he didn't get Sodom out of them. Unspeakable acts would follow. His wife so loved Sodom she looked back in direct disobedience to God. Her epitaph is found in Luke 17:32, "Remember Lot's wife." Lot's own life was marked by ineffectiveness and defeat. Although you will see Lot in heaven, it is doubtful whether any of his family will be there.

Lot paid an awful price for poor media choices. You will too. The compromise of conscience, the trampling of truth, and the rationalization of right is never worth it—not even to watch the latest glimpse of Gomorrah.

Evangelist Jim Van Gelderen is the director of Minutemen Ministries, based in Greenville, South Carolina.

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Biblical Christianity and Popular Culture

Dwight Gustafson

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Philippians 4:8

Until the mid-1960s, there was an obvious and accepted separation between high, serious culture and popular culture. It was reflected not only in concert halls but in our homes and in our Bible believing churches as well. The sounds of music, the style of our lives, and the indulgence of our free time were most often distinctly different from the sights and sounds and styles of the world at large. The ever pervasive television set and omnipresent sounds of today's popular music have brought their visual and aural images into our schools, our ears, our stores, our work places, and our homes. They have broken down the walls between us and the world.

The 1960s produced a "cross over" effect. It was a time when serious artists and musicians waited in line to endorse pop culture and its cheap icon, rock and roll, as worthy of inclusion in the mainstream of serious culture. This endorsement and the clamoring to mix the serious and the popular were the actions of a pragmatic, liberal, modern philosophy which says, "You can be anything you want to be; you can do any thing you want to do." Unfortunately, it also affected our churches and schools.

But you say, "Is not at least some of popular culture entertaining and enjoyable and some of it really innocent?" Yes, that is true. But while some of it may be part of the "all things" that God has given us "richly to enjoy," we also need to realize that some of it, though permissible, may not necessarily be constructive. Some of it may well be part of the meat offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 10.

This pervasive popular culture compels us to shield ourselves and our families from worldliness, and sometimes we feel as though we should shield them from all of secular culture itself. Although I cannot agree with them, I must respect Christians who say they are determined not to come into contact with anything that even hints of the secular world.

What has happened to us? I don't claim special insight, but I feel I have a broad perspective after working with college students in fine arts for more than 40 years. A student in the 1950s, whether or not he cared for it, was at least aware of a high cultural heritage and respected it. He was aware that there was a difference between his church music and the world's music, a difference between his style

of life and the world's style of life. Our students then also came from a small segment of society, but it was a broader evangelical segment of the religious world where these cultural divisions were clearly defined. These students had at least heard of the program called *The Voice of Firestone*. They knew about and respected Toscanini, whether or not they had heard his NBC symphony on the radio. As a teenager, I cleaned the linoleum on our kitchen floor on Saturday morning to the strains of the *Texaco Opera Broadcast*; but on some Friday nights, I also sang gospel songs at a rescue mission service where my dad preached. Our church quartet, like the *Old Fashioned Revival Hour* quartet, sang "We'll Understand It Better By and By," but our little choir also sang Handel's *Messiah* and other fine music from high culture. We appreciated and enjoyed our innocent, appealing folk culture, but it was a culture that was part of traditions that were stable and rooted in heartfelt religious expression. Many of the simple Swedish gospel songs I learned as a boy came from folk traditions, as, by the way, did much serious music of the 19th and 20th centuries. However, these two cultures did not conflict; they complemented each other. One was rooted in a serious, pietistic tradition. The other was rooted in serious musical traditions from the 15th century to the present time. Both had stability and a certain timelessness.

But our society has been reshaped. Society's newfound knowledge is rooted in sensation, in nonverbal images—particularly rock in all of its shapes and forms and sizes, from the most subtle to the most obscene. Energy expended to reach a goal is replaced by energy expended for self-stimulation. Even verbal images—letters and words—jumble and dance across our TV screens to become nonverbal messages. The limitations of time and the long, hard work of human endeavor are all erased as we see TV images of happy, satisfied, young adults enjoying the best things of the fast, good life with thrilling immediacy. Nor can we ignore the worship of man himself and the glorification of his sexual gratification by innuendo advertising or by more direct, shocking images.

What is the result? It is a generation that must feel rather than reflect, that must acquire rather than earn, that must indulge rather than restrain. Whether we like it or not, our congregations and our families are products of this popular culture.

Biblical Fundamentalism's musical traditions are rooted in both classical music and in the folk music of America, Britain, and Scandinavia—music that strongly influenced our earlier hymn and gospel songwriters. Churches had their musical roots in stable traditions that were, for all practical purposes, timeless. Now an attempt to expose and educate students to high culture is

suspect because the folk culture of our fundamental churches has been infiltrated and overcome by a worldly popular culture. The rousing congregational hymns based on the dotted rhythm of the Sousa march and the simple gospel songs rooted in the traditions of folk music have been supplanted by the novel devices of "pop" music.

The same corollaries can be applied to art and literature. Many freshmen entering college have a "comic book" mentality. In the area of music, our teenagers have been raised on a diet of unacceptable pop and rock music or, at best, a diet of insubstantial Christian music that has no doctrinal depth or much musical substance. Our children are often separated from general congregational worship until they become teenagers, and in many cases in their Sunday school classes, children's church, youth groups, or whatever separate activity they have, the use of at least a few solid, soul-building hymns is rare or completely absent.

However, there is an even more subtle influence at work. Traditional, evangelical, Biblical values imply a threat of punishment if you don't behave properly. Liberal, popular culture says, "You can choose—you are the master of your fate, and you are worth it." Man is his own master; God is not even his copilot. The satisfaction of personal desire replaces respect for an authoritative standard.

When we look at the differences between popular and traditional (or high) culture, we are not always dealing with issues that defy Biblical standards, but we are dealing with influences that have a strong effect when our young people are constantly exposed to them. That effect is the killing of character-building habits of mind and heart and soul. "Pop" desensitizes us to subtleties of line, shade, design, color, and form. It desensitizes us to subtleties of rhythm, harmony, relaxation, tension, and contrast. It robs us of the joy of the choices we are admonished to make in Philippians 4:8. Modern day egalitarianism and relativism set the stage for this generation's regarding matters of taste as being purely private and personal—again eliminating the necessity for an authoritarian standard. That authoritarian standard is the Word of God, but we must deal with both positives and negatives. Like bank tellers who learn to identify counterfeit currency by having tremendous knowledge about and close acquaintance with the details of genuine money, we need to be able to identify the good article from the bad. Then we carefully and prayerfully need to apply the admonitions of Philippians 1:9–10, not choosing the cheap or the mediocre or even the second best, but choosing God's best for every area of our lives.

Now comes the question, what can I as a pastor do? You say, "I don't have enough time now to study prop-

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erly for my preaching, to pray, or to give adequate counsel to the people in my congregation who have spiritual needs and who are hurting." You will have to determine the priorities of your ministry, but we are talking here about a problem basic to the Christian testimony and walk of your people. As a pastor, you have an obligation to assist and reinforce the deliberate reshaping of your congregation's worldview. Granted, you may not be a trained musician or an expert in fine arts, but you have had to become an expert in many issues, from creationism to abortion. If our congregations are going to survive the onslaught of the media, you need to take advantage of good opportunities to praise and reinforce positive responses to that which conforms to God's standards in this world. You need to comment on the "Hallelujah Chorus." You need to quote the rich and powerful texts of great hymns in your sermons. When something truly beautiful is presented to your congregation, you need to respond and reinforce their appreciation of it. When we don't understand how a computer works or don't understand some aspect of medical science that we want to mention in a sermon, we seek answers from the experts in those fields, and we reinforce an attitude of learning and appreciation on the part of our flock.

Let's be careful in cultural matters that we don't assume an attitude that I would call "them and us." You can always get a few laughs if you make fun of serious culture. But at the same time, you can permanently damage the attitude of your young people toward acquiring what is beautiful and the best in their lives.

At a time when the devil is at work as never before "selling" his popular culture to everyone who will watch and listen, we cannot afford to be passive or neutral on the subject. Our ability to build up the saints will be enhanced or seriously impaired by what we do now in our ministries to counteract this bombardment by popular culture.

Dr. Dwight Gustafson is dean emeritus of the School of Fine Arts at Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina.

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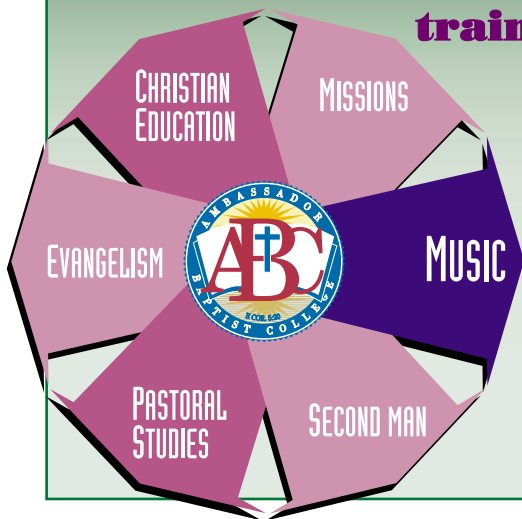
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The Fear of the Lord

Darren C. Hammermeister

Our culture is changing. There is no doubt about that. Some of the changes are good; some, not so good. One of the difficulties that arises for fundamental believers is how to deal with cultural change without being caught up in those aspects of change that are not pleasing to the Lord. How does one live in the midst of and adapt to cultural change without being molded by it?

Some of these physical changes in society are easy to identify. Take, for example, the advancements in the computer and communications industries. It is much harder, however, to identify the changes in society when they are invisible. The attitudes, values, and beliefs that we have as a society are being reshaped. Many voices are calling out to us to “reprogram” the way we think. Unfortunately, many of these internal changes are not good and are even more disturbing than the technological changes.

The Link between Creed and Conduct

Man’s thoughts about God are changing. The way we “see” God, as a society and even as Fundamentalists, has changed from the way the previous generation viewed Him. God is perceived *very* differently today than He was by those who lived during the early part of this century. Our attitude toward God has become very casual. Fundamentalists have not escaped the effects of this shift in attitude. Our thinking and actions too often seem unaffected

by the reality of God and His presence. In many ways, we have become dangerously “accustomed” to the idea of God, numbed and apathetic to the practical impact His existence and character are to have on our lives.

God’s character must shape our lives and govern our conduct. His omniscience has, for too many, become little more than an abstract theological doctrine. If our attitudes and actions in life are not affected by the reality of His omniscience, we transform our creed into dead orthodoxy. If we do not order our lives in submission to His rightful Lordship over us, our “belief” in His sovereignty becomes a shallow mockery. How we perceive God is vitally important to our creed and to our conduct. If our creed does not affect our conduct, then our conduct *will* affect our creed. Has God changed His revelation of Himself, or have our ears become “dull of hearing”?

What It Means to Fear the Lord

The “fear of the Lord” is one area in which our thinking has been changed. There was a day in American Christianity when a “fear of God” was an emblem of genuine Christianity. Rarely now do we hear anyone described as a “God-fearing man.” The term has become almost anachronistic. The concept of fearing God has been reduced to little more than a respect or reverential awe of God. What has changed? We still have God’s Word. But we are no longer listening. We may be listening to men, but we have left off listening to *Him*.

Astonishingly, about 270 verses in the Bible mention the fear of the Lord. These verses underscore the necessity and benefits of cultivating a Biblical fear of God.

We cannot dismiss fearing God as an outmoded Old Testament concept. The New Testament contains more than 60 verses regarding the fear of the Lord, nearly all of them using the words *phobeo* or *phobos* (from which we get “phobia”), meaning “fear.” (See, for example, Acts 5:1–11; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:17.)

Neither can we dismiss fearing God as inconsistent with the believer’s relationship with God. Respect and awe are part of a proper fear of God, but we fall short of the Biblical mark by stopping there in our definition. It is easy to show respect for someone without being submissive to him. Many are willing to “respect” God but have no intention of being submissive to His authority or conforming to His standards. The Bible tells us that the absence of a fear of God actually characterizes the attitude of the *unregenerate* (Ps. 36:1; Rom. 3:18). A believer who lacks a Biblical fear of God is more like an unregenerate person than he realizes.

Fearing God includes an exalted respect and reverence and awe of God (Heb. 12:28). But it also includes the kind of fear that governs behavior—the kind of healthy fear any good son has for a firm and loving father. If I fear God, I am genuinely afraid of the consequences of disobeying Him (see, for example, Acts 5:5 and 11). Paul even used the word (translated “terror”) to describe the sobriety that ought to mark our contemplation of appearing before the *bema* of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10, 11). If I fear God, I am afraid of doing anything that would displease or disappoint God and mar my relationship with Him (1 Pet. 1:17–19).

Objections to Fearing God

How and what we think is vital; it determines how we live. Did you know, for instance, that man possesses the ability to change God's appearance? He does so through his thoughts. God never changes, of course. But when people fail to allow the Bible to form their view of God, their perception of His character, and their understanding of His claims, they become "vain in their imaginations" (Rom. 1:21). The next step is to reconstruct God into an image that suits them: they change "the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man" (v. 23).

Such corruption of thought is illustrated in the lives of God's people in the time of Jeremiah. By the time that Jeremiah began prophesying, the people engaged in base rituals, including the sacrifice of their own children to Baal. These people did not suddenly "fall" into this religious gutter. They drifted into it—one thought at a time. They became accustomed to the rut of going through religious "motions" (Jer. 6:20). They did the right things with wrong motives, while at the same time adopting the surrounding culture and hoarding up hidden sin. Inevitably, they re-fashioned their "image" of God (Jer. 2:9–19). If they could think of God as different than He revealed Himself to them, they could fit into their culture more comfortably and justify their sins more easily. God responded this way: "Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee" (Jer. 2:19; see also 5:22–24).

Conclusion

The fear of the Lord is a vital and dynamic element of Biblical living. It is the fountainhead of all true wisdom (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10). It purifies your life (Ps. 19:9; 34:11–14; Prov. 8:13; 16:6). It even prolongs your life (Prov. 10:27; 14:27; 19:23; 22:4). And it produces confidence (Prov. 14:26). We would rather "respect" God than "fear" Him. If we choose to restructure our thinking about God and change His image into one that need only be respected, we compromise the claims of God's Word.

How does one cultivate a Biblical fear of God? First, read and *hear* God's Word (Deut. 4:10; 31:12–13). Allow your thinking about God to be fashioned by His revelation, not molded and misshapen by your surrounding culture. Second, ask God's help (Ps. 86:11). David entreated the Lord to give him an undivided heart that was concentrated on one ambition: "Unite my heart to fear thy name." Third, make God-fearers your companions (Ps. 119:63). The company you keep will affect you for good or ill. David allied himself with those whose manner of life and conversation reflected a God-fearing attitude. (Notice in the verse how their fear of God dictated their lifestyle.)

Changes in society and our surrounding culture are inevitable. We must adapt to the culture (not adopt the culture) where we can. But we must guard our hearts to make sure that with change, we do not exchange our Biblical beliefs for a watered-down version of the truth. We must meet the challenge of change head-on with the resolve that Truth, like God, never changes.

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Is it appropriate for New Testament believers to "fear" God? Or is the "fear of the Lord" inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity? Certain verses remove any doubt that fearing God is a proper response of believers toward God (Acts 9:31; Rom. 11:20; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:21; Col. 3:22; 1 Pet. 2:17). At first glance, however, a few verses seem to contradict this conclusion. What about them?

Romans 8:15 says that we "have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." The bond between the believer and God is not that of a slave bound against his will, fearing his new master. The Holy Spirit whom we have received is not a Spirit of "bondage," leading us back into a slavish, anxious fear of God; rather, He is the Spirit of "adoption," who testifies that we are His children (v. 16).

Second Timothy 1:7 seems unequivocal: "God hath not given us the spirit of fear." Two considerations help steer us in the right direction here. First, the specific word Paul chose is not *phobos* but *deilia*, which refers to cowardice or timidity. Of what? That is where the second consideration comes in: context. The immediate context of chapter 1 (vv. 6, 8), as well as the larger context of 1 and 2 Timothy, clarifies that Paul was referring to timidity in the ministry. Paul repeatedly exhorted Timothy to stand unintimidated in the face of opposition. A spirit of timidity before men or cowardice in affliction (1:8) is not from God; rather, God has equipped us with a spirit of power, love, and sound-mindedness.

Finally, 1 John 4:18 seems to make love and fear mutually exclusive: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." Again, however, the context must govern our understanding of what John was saying. Verses 12–16 tell us how we can be assured that we are safe in the Savior, the Son of God: by our experience of the love of God for us, our love for Him and our love toward the brethren. Verse 17 spells out a practical effect of that love and its evidence of our salvation: we may now have "boldness in the day of judgment." Why? Verse 18 continues the thought: there is no fear (of judgment) in that love, but that mature love casts out that (kind of) fear (of judgment) because that (kind of) fear has (to do with) punishment. No believer need fear God's punishment for his sin any longer; God's love casts that fear out once and for all. If we still fear God's judgment on our sins, we do not fully understand the ramifications of God's love.

None of these verses, rightly understood, removes the emphasis of the New Testament passages on the importance and appropriateness of fearing God.

Subscription Prices

Just a reminder that as of January 1, 1999, *Frontline's* subscription rates are as follows: 1 year, \$16.95; 2 years, \$30.95; and 3 years, \$44.95. Rates for foreign subscribers are only an additional \$5 per year.

Frontline Sunday Success

Our heartfelt thanks to the many pastors who responded to our *Frontline* Sunday program. At this writing, we have shipped about 40,000 pieces of literature to more than 225 churches, and new requests for literature continue to come in daily. Many people across the country are taking advantage of the music offer, so in addition to receiving the finest in fundamental Baptist reading in the coming year they are also enjoying Christ-honoring music. Our thanks to Tim Fisher at Sacred Music Services for helping us provide tapes and CDs for our *Frontline* Sunday program.

Frontline for Others

Last issue I mentioned several churches that give *Frontline* subscriptions to their missionaries and others. I did not mention, however, Bethel Baptist Church in Schaumburg, Illinois, which provides more than 50 subscriptions! Hamilton Acres Baptist Church in Fairbanks, Alaska, provides subscriptions for 27 people. Trinity Baptist Church in Concord, New Hampshire, recently subscribed for its entire church and school staff, a total of 30 people. In addition they gave a generous gift to *Frontline*. Many other churches provide subscriptions for missionaries, and others have given us

one-time gifts. We praise the Lord for your help and encouragement for the ministry of *Frontline*.

FBF Web Site

My apologies to those who tried to access our new web site and found that it was not yet available. We were told it would be ready before Thanksgiving, but at this writing in mid-December it is still under construction. Murphy's Law seems to apply doubly to anything related to computers. I can only hope that by the time you read this the work will be completed. I believe the wait will be worth it when you find what all will be available at www.f-b-f.org.

U.S. Postal Regulations

Just in case you were wondering why your name and address appear on your magazine label or renewal notice without punctuation, we wanted you to know that we hadn't forgotten our punctuation rules. We learned recently that in order to qualify for the best bulk rates we should (among other things) eliminate punctuation marks from addresses.

Your Manuscripts Wanted!

Frontline is always interested in receiving manuscripts, especially practical non-fiction and seasonal material. If you would like to submit an article for publication, we encourage you first to get a copy of our "Guidelines for Writers." It's free for the asking, so call, write, or e-mail your request!

Upcoming FBF Meetings

March 8-9

Mid-Atlantic Region

Calvary Independent Baptist Church
300 Standing Stone Ave.
Huntington, PA 16652
(814) 643-4075

March 15-17

Northwest Region

Galilee Baptist Church
11517 SE 208 St.
Kent, WA 99218
(253) 854-5828

March 29-31

Rocky Mountain Region

Tri-City Baptist Church
6953 W. 92nd Lane
Westminster, CO 80021
(303) 424-2287

April 12-14

Southeast Region

McEver Road Baptist Church
5135 McEver Road
Oakwood, GA 30566
(770) 718-0612

July 5-9

National Meeting

in conjunction with the
World Congress of Fundamentalists
Bob Jones University
Box 34555
Greenville, SC 29614
(864) 242-5100, ext. 3120

If you know of other FBF meetings not listed here, please contact us so we can announce them in an upcoming issue.

SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

First Partaker

The Source of Spiritual Songs

It's likely that many of us have sung one or more of the following hymns within the last month: *I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus*; *Who Is On The Lord's Side?*; *Take My Life and Let It Be*; *Lord, Speak To Me That I May Speak*; *Like A River Glorious*. I wish that the Lord's people (especially contemporary Christian musicians) would take time to learn something about the authors of older hymns like these. We might discover why they are so enduringly cherished by devout Christians everywhere.

What is there about so many of these older hymns that awakens such deeply responsive chords in us? Why do our consciences seem to witness approvingly to their words, and even their mood? Why do we have such a sense of having been . . . well, for lack of a better term, washed, after singing them? Are these feelings merely sentimentally subjective, the nostalgic remembrance of a childhood spent in tiny country Sunday schools and whitewashed clapboard churches? Or is there something inherently quickening in these hymns—some quality that can only be fittingly described as spiritual?

There is such a thing as a spiritual song (Eph. 5:19). But what gives it that quality? I've wondered if some pastor with musical training in his background and a church small enough to afford him the time might be able to do the Church an immense service by helping us to answer that question from a study of the lives of the great hymnwriters.

Each of the cherished hymns listed above was authored by the 19th-century British

hymnwriter, Frances Ridley Havergal. Born December 14, 1836, as the youngest of an Anglican minister's six children, she passed into the Lord's presence at just 42, on June 3, 1879. But in those four decades, Frances Havergal had an unusual walk with the Lord. I've come to believe it had a great deal to do with the unusually spiritual quality of her hymns.

*The husbandman
that laboreth must
be first partaker
of the fruits
(2 Tim. 2:6)*

I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus!

I am trusting thee, Lord Jesus!
Trusting only Thee!
Trusting Thee for full salvation,
Great and free.

To Frances Ridley Havergal, those words were much more than mere poetry. Although precocious (reading the Bible and nearly any other book by age four) and reared by lovingly devout parents, Frances knew no spiritual conviction until she was six. But that year she heard a sermon on hell and judgment that literally terrified her. "No one ever knew it," she wrote, "but this sermon haunted me."

Her immediate response was to try to be a better child. Every Sunday afternoon thereafter, she went alone into a little front room to read the Bible and pray because it made her feel "less naughty." By age eight she was sometimes saying to herself many times a day, "Oh if God would make me a Christian." But "at this time," she testified later, "I don't think I had any clear ideas about believing on the Lord Jesus."

In 1848, when Frances was not yet 12, her mother died. Some of Mrs. Havergal's last words to her grieving daughter included the admonition, "Remember, nothing but the precious blood of Christ can make you clean and lovely in God's sight." Frances, however, recalled, "I know I did not love God at this time, the very thought of Him frightened me. . . . Going to bed, I would

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determine I would try to think about God. . . . Nevertheless it usually ended in my crying most heartily because I was so bad and He was so good, and because I didn't and couldn't love Him when He even died for sinners."

By May of her 13th year she was praying, "Oh to believe in Jesus, to believe that He had pardoned me!" "I used to go to bed rather early," she recalled, "and lie awake in the long summer twilight . . . praying for this precious gift. 'Oh for faith!' That was my cry." Once she even determined that if eternal life was to be found in the Scriptures she would read the New Testament for an hour a day. But still she found that she could not yet love God.

At 14 she was sent away to school for the first time. Mrs. Tweed, the schoolmistress, earnestly prayed that the Lord would save her young pupils. "She prayed and spoke with us, together and individually, with a fervour which I have never since seen equalled, and seemed a very St. Paul in the intensity of her yearning over us."

The result was a full tide of conversions among the students, some of whom were Frances' close friends. For her, the influential event came in the early weeks of December, 1850, when her closest friend, Diana, embraced Christ: "I could

breathless. I remember how my heart beat. I could surely, was my response." And leaving Miss Cooke suddenly, she ran upstairs to fling herself on her knees in her room where she definitely and believingly committed her entire soul to Jesus. "Earth and heaven seemed bright from that moment," she recalled, "I did trust the Lord Jesus."

Who Is On The Lord's Side?

Who is on the Lord's side?
Who will serve the King?
Who will be His helpers,
Other lives to bring?

Havergal was not merely the writer of Christian music. She was the Christian epitome of the music she wrote. When she asked insistently, "who is on the Lord's side?" she did so as a blameless example.

Shortly after her conversion, the Havergals moved to Germany in order for her father to be under the care of an especially fine oculist. In her new school at Dusseldorf there was not one other girl among the 110 pupils who "cared for religion." Although no girls responded positively to her testimony, she so conducted herself in word and deed that by the term's conclusion she left with the "highest praise and regret from every one." More importantly, the experience was, she wrote, "a sort of nailing of my colours to the mast. . . . I had come out more boldly and decidedly on the Lord's side than I might have done for years under ordinary circumstances."

Calling others to "the Lord's side" proved to be one of Havergal's most effective ministries. In her early twenties she began to teach Sunday school classes. A neat register, containing every child's birthday, entrance date, circumstances at home, general character, and spiritual progress was kept assiduously from 1846 to 1860. Its last page includes her reminiscence, "I cannot tell any one how I loved them, I should hardly be believed. Neither could I tell how bitter and grievous any misbehaviour among them was to me. No one knows the tears they have cost me. I trust it has been true bread which I have cast upon these waters; my Saviour knows, and He only, my earnest longings that these little ones should be His own." The register concludes with her fervent prayer, "May all whose names are written here, in the Lamb's Book of Life appear."

Not content to work for Christ alone, Miss Havergal urged others to put their hands to the plow as well. To a correspondent she wrote, "Will you tell your 'band' that God seemed to put it in my heart, in a very special way, to pray that they

Lest anyone lightly dismiss her spiritual sensitivities, it ought to be duly considered that her estimations of what it meant to be "all" for Him flowed out of a disciplined devotional reading of the Scriptures that would be paralleled by few today.

not help seeing—nobody could—a new and remarkable radiance about her countenance. It seemed literally lighted up from within, while her voice, even in the commonest necessary remarks, sounded like a song of gladness."

When the two girls were alone Diana pled with Frances, "Oh, Fanny, dearest Fanny, . . . Jesus has forgiven me I know. He is my Saviour, and I am so happy! He is such a Saviour as I never imagined, so good, so loving! Only come to Him and He will receive you. Even now He loves you though you don't know it."

Two months later, while Frances was home for the school holiday, her new mother-to-be, Miss Cooke, asked the simple question, "Why cannot you trust yourself to your Saviour at once?" "Then came a flash of hope across me," Frances testified, "which made me feel literally

all might be soul-winners, and at once! No waiting for further orders, they have got their commission now: 'let him that heareth say, Come!'" To another she bared her disappointment: "One meets so many who only go such a little way; I mean really Christians, yet taking such faint interest in Christ's cause and kingdom, all alive as to art, or music, or general on-goings, yet not seeming to feel the music of His name. One does so long for all who are looking to Him for salvation to be 'true-hearted, whole-hearted.'"

In addition to teaching, Miss Havergal expended herself lavishly in the work of the YWCA, the Church Missionary Society, a ministry to Jews, and a Bible Society. She threw her weight behind an effort to halt the delivery of mail on the Lord's Day, observing, "No manner of work' must include postal delivery, and it is not right to ignore it; it grieves me when some double-first-class Christians do not consider the subject." And to the end of her life she labored to induce others to come to Christ. In February of her last winter (1879), on a bitterly cold night, she headed a number of Welsh neighbors to go, for the first time in their lives, to a Bible Society meeting. Hers was truly a life conspicuously staked out on "the Lord's side."

Take My Life

Take my life, and let it be,
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

This work, which Havergal called a "consecration hymn," is perhaps the most well-known of all her writings. The story of its composition explains its enduring effectiveness as a spiritual song.

I went for a little visit of five days. There were ten persons in the house, some unconverted and long prayed for, some converted but not rejoicing Christians. He gave me the prayer, "Lord, give me all in this house!" And He just did! Before I left the house every one had got a blessing. The last night of my visit I was too happy to sleep, and passed most of the night in praise and renewal of my own consecration, and these little couplets formed themselves and chimed in my heart one after another till they finished with, Ever, ONLY, ALL for Thee!

For the rest of her life Havergal searchingly applied the stanzas of this hymn to her own walk with Christ. Her motto, kept by the door of her study (called her 'workshop') was "For Jesus' sake

only." Any failure to be entirely given over to this ideal elicited the deepest contrition. "It is so utterly horrid not to have been all for Him," she grieved. "I do feel ready to say 'sinners, of whom I am chief,' and no expressions of self-bemoaning are too strong for me."

This determined dedication to be Christ's alone resulted in spiritual decisions that would be largely misunderstood by most today. Her writing the stanza, "Take my lips, and let me sing, always, only, for my King," was the direct result of having some months earlier given up the singing of all secular music, though she had once enjoyed participating in a local philharmonic. Following that decision, her advice to others was to "master one song, make it part of yourself, throw your whole self in to it, then pray it may be His message. . . . For myself, I have more confidence in singing Scripture words than any other, because they are His."

Two years before her homegoing, the dedicated hymnwriter was still applying "Take My Life" to herself. She began to think upon the couplet, "Take my silver and my gold. Not a mite would I withhold."

The result was a new sacrifice. "The Lord has shown me another little step, and of course I have taken it with extreme delight. 'Take my silver and my gold' now means shipping off all my ornaments to the Church Missionary House, where they will be accepted and disposed of for me. I retain only a brooch or two for daily wear, which are memorials of my dear parents; also a locket with the only portrait I have of my niece in heaven . . . and her two rings. But these I redeem, so that the whole value goes to the Church Missionary Society. . . . Nearly fifty articles are being packed off. I don't think I need tell you I never packed a box with such pleasure."

Lest anyone lightly dismiss her spiritual sensitivities, it ought to be duly considered that her estimations of what it meant to be "all" for Him flowed out of a disciplined devotional reading of the Scriptures that would be paralleled by few today. Her sister related,

It was at her study table that she read her Bible by seven o'clock in the summer and eight o'clock in winter; her Hebrew Bible, Greek Testament, and lexicons being at hand. Sometimes on bitterly cold mornings, I begged that she would read with her feet comfortably to the fire, and received the reply: "But then, Marie, I can't rule my lines neatly; just see what a find I've got! If one only searches, there are such extraordinary things in the Bible!"

The Hebrew Bible and Greek Testament were not for show. Her letters frequently contain sparkling interpretational nuggets mined out of the treasures she found in the original texts. One morning she discovered the present tense of the verb “cleanseth” in 1 John 1:7. “I had never seen the force of the tense before, a continual present, always a present tense, not a present which the next moment becomes a past. It goes on cleansing, and I have no words to tell how my heart rejoices in it.”

On another occasion she related, “This morning I read 2 Corinthians iv in the Greek, and was so wonderingly happy over that ‘far more exceeding weight of glory.’” To a friend struggling with the possibility of having lost her salvation, Havergal wrote, “As to 1 Corinthians ix 27, why did you not see that the Greek *adokimos* is literally and clearly ‘not approved,’ being simply the negative of *dokimos*. You cannot read the Greek word otherwise; and how it came to be translated ‘castaway’ I can’t imagine.”

What she found in her Bible study was very carefully noted. Her words to her sister about ruling “my lines neatly” referred to her habit of making straight lines across the margins of her Bible, where she beautifully penned what the Lord showed her. The notes reveal special interest in cross references (65 in the margins of Hebrews 1–2) and topical studies.

This kind of Bible study inevitably conditioned the spirit of her hymns and led to a firm conviction about the source of the very words she wrote.

Lord, Speak to Me That I May Speak

Havergal’s hymns give one the sense of being addressed by the Lord Himself—an effect due, no doubt, to her deliberate dependence upon Him for every line she penned. “I often smile to myself,” she said, “when people talk about ‘gifted pen’ or ‘clever verses,’ etc; because they don’t know that it is neither.” She wrote in 1866, “I have a curious vivid sense, not merely of my verse faculty in general being given me, but also of every separate poem or hymn, nay every line being given. It is peculiarly pleasant thus to take it as a direct gift, not a matter of effort, but purely involuntary.”

To a friend she confided that her method of getting rhyming lines was to look up and say, “Now, dear Master, give me another . . . and then

another; and then perhaps He will send it all in one flow of musical thoughts, but more likely one at a time, that I may be kept asking for every line. There, that is the process, and you see there is no ‘I can do it’ at all. That isn’t His way with me.” Another time she said, “Writing is praying with me, for I never seem to write even a verse by myself, and feel like a little child writing; you know a child would look up at every sentence and say, ‘And what shall I say next?’ That is just what I do.” No wonder that her hymns resound with “living echoes” of His “tone.”


Like A River Glorious Is God’s Perfect Peace

Havergal spent May 21, 1879, out in the cold ministering to a group of men and boys she had promised to meet for Scripture study. Drenched by rain, she contracted the illness that ended her life in just 13 days. “God seemed to permit the severest suffering,” her sister wrote, “but her peace and joy shone through it all.” Once, when Marie prayed for the Lord to speak peace to the sufferer, Frances answered, “I have peace, but its Himself I am longing for.”

The longing was intense. Several times she was heard to whisper, “Come, Lord Jesus, come and fetch me; oh, run, run.” Once she told her doctor, “If I am going, it is too good to be true!” And on the Monday of her last week she confided to Marie, “I am so happy; God’s promises are so true. Not a fear.”

Toward the end she requested, “Let my own text, ‘the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin’ be on my tomb; all the verse, if there is room” (a request lovingly fulfilled in the inscription of her tomb in Astley churchyard). Her sister relates that the dying hymnwriter’s last ten minutes were spent looking steadfastly up as if she saw the Lord. “Her countenance was so glad, as if she were already talking to Him. Then she tried to sing; but after one sweet high note, ‘HE—,’ her voice failed; and, as her brother commended her soul into her Redeemer’s hand, she passed away.”

The Methodist preacher, William Quayle, once observed that a sermon is not a piece of speech but a piece of life. A sermon, he said, is “a great life, telling a great truth,” and therefore “a preacher’s business is to amass a life of cubic dimensions.” Just so, a spiritual song is not merely a piece of poetry but a piece of spiritual poet.

What is the source of spiritual songs? In Frances Ridley Havergal’s case it was undoubtedly a spiritual life. Is it logical to conclude, then, that in order to have better Christian music we must have better Christians writing it? 



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Bring . . . the Books

Reforming Fundamentalism

Reforming *Fundamentalism* stands out as a must-read for pastors and anyone interested in the Fundamentalist–evangelical debate. Author George Marsden not only sheds light on the New Evangelical mindset and priorities, but also traces the theological drift that inevitably pulls a believer away from a safe harbor when he casts aside the anchor of spiritual truth.

Marsden uses the history of Fuller Theological Seminary as the backdrop for recounting the New Evangelical effort to “reform fundamentalism.” Consciously striking a “middle-of-the-road” posture early on (p. 23), Fuller Seminary started on a shaky foundation.

A gaggle of intellectual “theological stars” were recruited; but for the sake of academic freedom, tolerance, and reputation, the institution had weighed its anchor from the harbor of Biblical truth.

Marsden offers an incisive history of Fundamentalism beginning in the 1920s, when Machen separated from the theological compromise at Princeton and started Westminster Theological Seminary. Another group, however, deliberately chose moderation instead of separation: “By 1946 or 1947, [Carl F. H.] Henry and [Harold] Lindsell were in a sort of ecclesiastical no-man’s land. On the one hand, they sympathized deeply with the cause of the separatists; on the other, they rejected separatism itself” (p. 46).

A protracted struggle ensued between the Fundamentalism of radio evangelist Charles Fuller and the growing tension to pull away to a more moderate position. This risked (and frequently resulted in) the loss of support from more conservative contingencies. But nothing would stop the quest for intellectual freedom and scholarly reputation. From the beginning, Ockenga publicly stated, “We do not believe and we repudiate the ‘come-out-ism’ movement” (p. 64).

Only two years after its founding, Fuller Seminary hired Bela Vassady, a Hungarian ecumenical theologian who was involved in the founding of the World Council of Churches and steeped in Barthian theology. When Vassady extolled the virtues of the ecumenical movement, more radio listeners tuned Fuller out. Vassady was forced to leave.


The history relates a series of miscalculations in the ongoing attempt to bring “real” scholarship to evangelical Christianity, to discredit Fundamentalism, and to redraw the boundary lines for a movement we now know as New Evangelicalism—a movement that began with a mood that was brewed in Fuller’s intellectual environment.

Marsden also traces how they enlisted their spokesman (Billy Graham) and initiated their printed mouthpiece (*Christianity Today*).

In January 1955, when *Christianity Today* was just getting off the ground in its conceptual phase, Harold Lindsell wrote to Nelson Bell and Graham suggesting that Carl Henry would be an excellent editor. Graham’s reply was most revealing. Henry, he said in effect, might be too Fundamentalistic. The new periodical, as Graham envisioned it, would “plant the evangelical flag in the middle of the road, taking a conservative theological position but a definite liberal approach to social problems. It would combine the best in liberalism and the best in fundamentalism without compromising theologically.” It would see good as well as bad in the World and National Councils of Churches.

So where has the slippery slope of compromise, especially in the doctrine of inspiration, led this scholarly Princeton of the West? By 1982, only 25 years after Charles Fuller founded the seminary, a scant 15 percent of the student body believed in inerrancy. Long ago, the faculty had been purged of those who held to inerrancy, after what Fuller historians call “Black Saturday” (December 1, 1962). “The overwhelming choice was for a limited inerrancy view” that sought to retain the Bible’s doctrinal authority but dismiss its reliability in areas of science and history (p. 269).

The New Evangelical movement is an effort to reform Fundamentalism. Yet hindsight reveals that New Evangelicalism leaves theological shipwreck in its wake. Once Fuller had repudiated Biblical inerrancy, the speed and direction of the drift is incredible. By the end of the work, you read of Professor Kraft in the School of Missions, who maintains that a Muslim can be saved without believing in the deity of Christ or having saving faith.

New Evangelicalism begins with a mood—a mood of compromise, of toleration, of accommodation, of anti-separatism, of jettisoning standards—a mood far too dangerous for us to ignore. May we stoke the fires of Fundamentalism in our souls, and stand true to our Lord and His Word no matter what the cost, until Jesus comes! 

**“ . . . when
thou comest,
bring with thee
. . . the books”
(2 Tim. 4:13)**

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Straight Cuts

Biblical Separation: 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15

An ongoing controversy among Fundamentalists is ecclesiastical separation. Of particular concern is the question of believers separating from other believers. Recent publications in the Fundamentalist movement indicate that some want to repudiate so-called “second-degree” separation. They recognize the Biblical responsibility of separating from unbelief; they reject that believers should ever separate from other believers. This article responds to their arguments, with special reference to 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15, and reaffirms that “second-degree” separation is a necessary part of Biblical discipline.

Opponents frequently argue that the passages traditionally used to support “second-degree” separation involve separating from unbelievers rather than believers. They claim passages such as Matthew 18:15–17, Romans 16:17–18, 1 Corinthians 5:1–13, 1 Timothy 6:3–5, 2 Timothy 2:16–19, and Titus 3:8–11 address the sins of apostates and unbelievers. Hence, only from these is a church to separate.

While there is a question in some of these passages whether the individuals from whom believers are to separate are saved or lost, the evidence decidedly favors identifying the censured in many of these references as believers. Note, for example, the references to the offender as “brother” in Matthew 18:15 and 1 Corinthians 15:11. In the latter passage, Paul asks the Corinthian believers, “Do not ye judge them that are within?” His question concerns the readers judging those within the local church; the form of his question demands a “yes” answer. He then concludes in verse 13 that they are to expel the sinful brother. The contention that believers are never commanded to separate from other believers has no basis.


In response, opponents offer a second argument. They propose contextually restricting the passages on “second-degree” separation. That is, these passages are interpreted narrowly, limiting (if not removing altogether) their application to subsequent generations. Second Thessalonians 3 is frequently cited as the test case. The command to separate in verses 6 and 14, they hold, is restricted to the disorderly who are intentionally unemployed and who take advantage of the fellowship meal observed in the early church. As such, separation involves exclusion from this meal, not from the congregation. Support for this interpretation comes from verse 10 where the apostle says, “If any would not work, neither should he eat.”

Such an interpretation does injustice to the context. To begin with, the statement in verse 10 about

not working and not eating must be understood in light of the surrounding statements. In verses 7 and 8, Paul says that he himself did not act disorderly by taking bread from others, but worked constantly to provide for his own needs. The reference in verse 8 to “bread” does not refer to a congregational meal but to the apostle’s subsistence. The same is true in verse 12. There the disorderly are directed to work in order to provide for their own “bread.” Hence, verse 10 simply means that the church should not care for one who intentionally does not work.

Turning to the command in verse 6, Paul directs the church to separate from a disorderly brother. “Disorderly” refers to one violating a code of conduct. The code Paul identifies is the teaching or tradition the readers had received from him. Granted, the specific tradition in view, according to verse 11, involves intentional unemployment. However, the commandment in verse 6 should be more broadly applied. Paul uses the plural “traditions” in 2:15 to refer to the entirety of the apostolic teaching they had received. By application, any continuing violation of a specific command from Paul qualifies the offender for the discipline directed in verse 6.

Verse 14 further supports this application. Paul enjoins the church to disassociate from anyone who disobey his “word.” This “word” includes Paul’s instruction about working and eating in the preceding verses. However, the apostle’s “word” cannot be limited to this. According to verse 14, this “word” is further described as “by this epistle.” Hence, all that Paul had written in his epistle was included in this “word.”

In verse 15, the apostle warns against possible misapplication of his call for separation. His caution is that believers should not treat the offending party as an enemy. They were to regard him as a brother in Christ and carry out the injunction with the intent of restoration. If, as some have argued, there is a lack of Christian love among Fundamentalists in this matter of Biblical separation, the solution is not to abandon the Biblical imperative. To forego discipline is not a sign of love (cf. Heb. 12:6). The true test of Christian love is our obeying the Biblical mandate in its entirety, including our manifesting a proper attitude toward the errant and disciplining with the hope of restoration. “To separate ourselves from those who separate themselves from the truth of God is not alone our liberty, but our duty” (C. H. Spurgeon, “The Drift of the Times: Sound the Alarm!”). 

***Rightly
dividing
the Word
of Truth
(2 Tim. 2:15)***

Dr. R. Bruce Compton is professor of Biblical languages and exposition at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary and currently serves the 180th Fighter Wing of the Air National Guard as a military chaplain.

What he doesn't know won't hurt him—a popular cliché, but what people don't know does hurt them spiritually. In fact, knowledge is central to spiritual life and growth. We are to develop the knowledge of a specialist in things of God and the knowledge that comes by experience in the ways of our Lord (see Stewart Custer, *A Treasury of New Testament Synonyms*, pp. 106–112, for a discussion of the Greek words in the New Testament that mean “to know”). The apostle Peter exhorted all believers to add to their faith knowledge (2 Pet. 1:5–6). Our Savior agreed with the statement of the rich young ruler when he said the greatest commandment was to love God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength—implying the importance of the acquisition and application of knowledge in spiritual life (see Luke 10:27).

Conservative theologians have argued convincingly for generations for the priority of the mind in spiritual life. What a man thinks affects how he feels, what he chooses, and what he does. When examined in their various contexts, both the Old Testament Hebrew and the New Testament Greek terms for “heart” include the idea of the mind in their semantic domains. Little wonder that Solomon warned, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). What a man knows in his heart will affect what he does and what he says.

Knowledge Enriches Spiritual Experience

Robert Cutshaw, a self-proclaimed mountain man living in Andrews, a little community nestled in the Smoky Mountains of western North Carolina, read a news story about a fellow rock collector named Roy Whetstine. Whetstine had purchased what came to be called the Star of America, the largest pure crystal sapphire ever discovered, at a Tucson, Arizona, gem and rock exposition for only ten dollars. The seller obviously didn't know what he had, and under-priced his stone—just a tad. After cutting, this massive gemstone was valued at \$2.28 million.

The story stimulated Robert Cutshaw's curiosity. For many years he had been digging precious and semi-precious gems out of the caves of the Smoky Mountains and selling them at his small rock stand along Route 19, hoping to earn a little extra money from tourists looking for a souvenir from the area. Twenty years earlier, he

had found a large blue-colored stone in one of those caves and had tried unsuccessfully to sell it many times. He would have been happy to take \$75 for it, but he never had any takers. Most of the time the rock just sat under his bed in his trailer on Route 19.

Robert decided to call John Robinson, a master gem cutter mentioned in the article he had read about the Star of America, to see if he could get some advice about the value of his stone. Robinson dismissed his inquiry because of the many similar calls he had received. He told Robert that if he wanted to know the value of his rock he should just put it in a box and mail it to his bank in Dallas and he would look at it, thinking he would never hear from Robert again. Robert didn't like that idea, so he gathered up his stone, his brother Lemuel, and his revolver and drove his pickup truck to John Robinson's house in a suburb of Dallas. When Robinson examined the stone, he declared it a killer gem and estimated it to be 5500 carats of blue star sapphire. After cutting, the gem was 3000 carats. For years Robert didn't know what he had and he was a poorer man for it. This new knowledge changed his life forever (*People Magazine*, March 16, 1987).

A full realization of our riches in Christ, arrived at by careful pursuit of that knowledge, is life-transforming. To know ever more fully the love of Christ, the mercy of God, and the faithfulness of our Lord is to be changed forever. Knowledge of the riches of our inheritance as saints of God is to be enriched beyond imagination. That knowledge comes from personal, painstaking investigation in the rich mines of God's Word. Only the Lord Himself can unveil to us the priceless value of the treasures contained in our Bibles.

Knowledge Demands Obedience

Knowledge without action is self-deception (James 1:22–24). It's like a man looking into a mirror who realizes the need to improve his appearance but who then turns away and does nothing. Knowledge raises expectations and makes a person responsible to God.

General Chuck Yeager, American war hero

“To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, ‘A window shalt thou make in the ark’”

and the first test pilot ever to break the sound barrier, once figured out why several Air Force pilots had crashed their F-86 Sabre fighter jets. Four pilots had lost their lives in these situations while rolling their jets in flight.

While flying a Sabre, Yeager was able to help diagnose the cause of the mystifying accidents of these experienced pilots. As he flew 150 feet above the fishing cabin of a buddy, he gently rolled his aircraft over. Immediately, he was stuck in the position and only saved himself by some quick action with his throttle, which freed up the system that had frozen up. Climbing to 15,000 feet, he performed the same rolling maneuver; only by expert flying was he able to pull himself out of the dive. He now knew *how* the pilots had crashed, but he did not know *why* the planes had malfunctioned. After landing the jet, the wings were dismantled by technicians to determine why the aileron-assembly, the system that allowed the jets to right themselves after a roll, was malfunctioning. The problem was traced back to the assembly plant and to the worker who had inserted a vital bolt upside-down in the unit, which had then caused the malfunctions that cost the pilots their lives. When asked why he had not followed the clear assembly directions, he replied that it just seemed right to him to insert it that way, rather than follow the instructions of the engineers who designed the aircraft. His failure to obey the knowledge he possessed resulted in tragic disaster for several men and their families. He knew what he needed to know but he did not do what he needed to do, and the result was catastrophic (*Reader's Digest*, "Yeager: An Autobiography," November, 1995, p. 241).

For the believer, like the man in the assembly plant, knowledge is not enough. He must obey what he knows to prosper in the things of God. The prophet Samuel rebuked the well-informed but disobedient King Saul, "Behold, to *obey* is better than sacrifice, and to *hearken* than the fat of rams. For *rebellion* is as the sin of witchcraft, and *stubbornness* is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

Knowledge Increases Faith

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Paul reminds the believer in Romans 10:17. Saving faith comes this way, as does sanctifying faith and serving faith. As the believer considers the transforming power of the gospel in the lives of thousands as recorded in Scripture, his confidence in that gospel grows, urging him on in his proclamation of it to oth-


ers. As he observes the miraculous provisions and deliverances of God recorded for Israel and the Church, his heart soars in the confidence that God can do the same for him. Increased knowledge from the Word of God brings increased faith in the God of the Word.

Our observation of the works of God can greatly increase our faith. Psalm 102:25 reminds us, "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands." How can a man's heart not grow in confidence when his own Savior is the One who made and sustains all things by His power (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16-17)? It is He who made the sun which sits 93 million miles from us in the heavens, a star 865,000 miles in diameter (the earth is a "mere" 7,918 miles in diameter) that converts 5 million tons of matter into energy every second, providing exactly the heat and warmth needed for our survival on this comparatively tiny planet (*The New Encyclopedia Britannica*. Micropedia. Vol. 11, p. 367). Can He not provide the spiritual warmth and light the believer needs every day?

It is the Christian's Lord who created the 3500 species of honey bees and bumble bees that exist in America alone. He designed these creatures to carry pollen on their hairy legs, picked up accidentally as they seek nectar, to cross-pollinate crops like fruit orchards, vegetables, and cotton fields that account for billions of dollars in our economy (Borror, Delong, and Triplehorn, *An Introduction to Insects*, p. 692). Can He not "cross-pollinate" our lives in the field of human experience with the influence of others at school, work, and church to make us better believers?

It is the believer's Master who created his physical heart. He crafted that muscle which will beat 2.5 billion times in a 75 year life span, that will drive five quarts of blood every 60 seconds, 1440 times a day, to every cell in the body to bring the cleansing and nourishing they need (*The Incredible Machine*, National Geographic Society, p. 104). Will He not strengthen our hearts by His Spirit in the inner man so that we can be cleansed and nourished to do His will?

Conclusion

What a man knows determines what he feels, chooses, and does. What a man doesn't know will hurt him if he lacks the knowledge of God. That knowledge enriches spiritual experience, demands obedience, and increases faith. No wonder that Paul expressed as his great aim, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings" (Phil. 3:10). 

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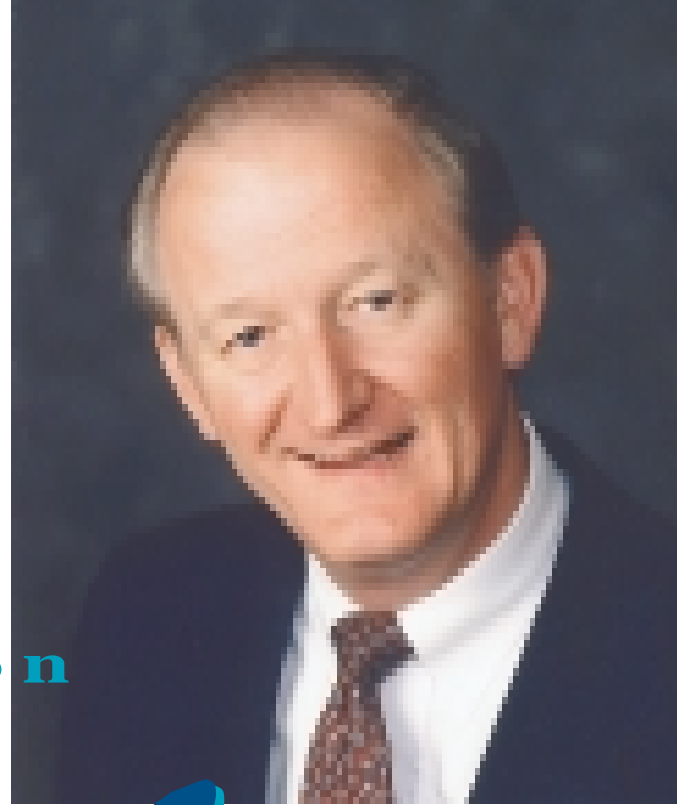
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Bridges

Andrea Boeshaar

I was thinking about bridges one day, wondering if I was willing to be one. Not a drawbridge, nor a suspension bridge, nor one made of steel and concrete, but a bridge God can use to cross a soul from an eternity in hell to one in heaven.

Oh, but I want to be used that way! I think most Christians do. But here's the problem: bridges take a lot of abuse. Some people drive their trucks across them. Some walk all over them. Some spit on them. Some even "burn their bridges." Just look what happened to John Huss!

So, was I willing to be one—even as my Savior calls? *I don't know, Lord.*

Then I remembered that He was a bridge. Jesus Christ was *the* Bridge. Since He alone could be the perfect sacrifice, He spanned the gap between God and man by giving His life and shedding His blood for the remission of sin. He gave up divine rights to come to this earth and walk among sinful mankind. He healed the sick, cast out demons, and fed 5,000 with only "five loaves and two fishes" (Matt. 14:17). He made the blind to see, raised the dead, stilled the tempest, and walked on water—all so we might believe that He is who He claims to be: the Son of God. And yet Jesus took His share of abuse.

In the Bible it is written, "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him" (John 19:1). Scourging is a form of whipping or flogging for the sole intent of inflicting pain and suffering. They scourged the Bridge.

"And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews!" (John 19:2-3). Jesus was the perfect Son of God! He had no sin in Him, and, therefore, He had not committed any crime. Yet He was sentenced to die a humiliating, excruciating death on a cross as though He had committed a felony. But first the Savior was tortured. Then, adding insult to injury, the Roman soldiers made fun of Him because of their wicked sin of disbelief. They mocked the Bridge.

"And they smote him with their hands" (John 19:3). The word "smite" means to strike with the palm of the hand. They smote the Bridge.

Isn't it amazing that Jesus didn't fight back? The very One who performed numerous miracles could have also stopped His persecutors. He could have called more than 12 legions

of angels (Matt. 26:53), but He submitted to His Father's perfect will instead.

As I reflect on these things, it's as if I can hear my Savior whisper, *Are you willing? I did it for you, you know.* "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Yes, Lord, but . . .

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:13-14).

Yes, Lord, yes!

"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13).

Holding onto these promises, I am no longer unsure. I know what I must do: I must submit myself to being a bridge for my Master.

And the next time my relatives shun me because I've "changed religions" and they can't understand why, or when my coworkers treat me with disdain because I told them God's plan of salvation, but they don't like the idea of being a "sinner," I will think of bridges. And I will rejoice!

Andrea Boeshaar is a freelance writer living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

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PERSONAL ORGANIZATION

Brent Baughman

"I can't get everything done!"

"I want to do more, but I just can't keep it all straight! Things just seem to fall through the cracks!"

Sound familiar? I must confess that those expressions are convictingly familiar to me. While I am, by nature, inefficient and unorganized, the work of the ministry is too eternally important for me to use my time inefficiently. Wise scheduling, however, maximizes effectiveness, and effectiveness of the ministry starts with the effectiveness of the leader in his personal organization.

Following are some practical ideas for personal scheduling that are helping me in my endeavor to maximize my effectiveness, and they may help you too.

Master your temperament.

Personal biorhythms make us more effective at some times of the day, week, month, or even the year than others. For example, I live in northwest Florida.

Even our corner of paradise has a touch of purgatory in the summer. So I do more planning and reading during the summer in my nicely air conditioned office than I do at any other time of the year.

Also, our gifts and skills make us more effective at some tasks than others. All of us have some things to do that are not in our area of strength. Therefore, find someone on your staff or in your church who can help you in your areas of weakness. You can then devote as much of your time and energies as possible to doing the things you do most effectively. The author of the award-winning book *Ordering Your Private World* has well said that he found he was spending "inordinately large amounts of time doing things [he] was not good at, while the tasks [he] should have been able to do with excellence and effectiveness were preempted."¹

This brings fresh insight to Paul's injunction "to think soberly" (Rom. 12:3)



when engaging in self-evaluation. Schedule your life in a way that makes your temperament a tool to help rather than hinder your effectiveness.

Manage your time.

How you manage your time shows how you manage your life and the priorities of your life. A man in our ministry asked me how I put so much in a day. I told him that the one key that helps me is deadlines. Some deadlines are imposed on me (a preaching deadline, or a bulletin announcement that must be given to the secretary by Thursday). Other deadlines are self-imposed to force me to manage my time wisely. I might set an appointment with a visiting partner to make sure lesser things don't crowd out the vital ministry to people. There may be progressive deadlines on a project which move me toward its completion. I may even forgo lunch until a project gets done. This leads us to the next principle.

Manage your tasks.

Determine the priority of each task.

1. Urgent. Tasks that have to be done this week.

2. Immediate. Tasks that will become urgent in 1–2 weeks and will need some attention this week so they can be completed when they become urgent tasks.

3. Intermediate. Tasks that need a measure of attention this week (depending on the priority and attention needed at the given time) in preparation for the time when this will become urgent in 3 weeks to 12 months.

4. Long Range. Tasks that need a measure of attention this week (depending on the priority and attention needed at the given time) in preparation for the time when this will become urgent in 3 months to 5 years.

5. Ministry Development. This deals with vision, goals, direction, and philosophy development. It is a vital part of, if not the key to, leadership. While these tasks are

rarely pressing, they are vitally important to the health and future of the ministry.

You can eat an elephant—given enough time and small-enough bites. This is the benefit of weekly categorization and completion of tasks from each of the categories. Time becomes your friend rather than your enemy.

A variety of tools can help you manage your tasks. Here are tools that have been helpful to me.

1. A "Weekly To Do List"

I have a master form that I copy and insert in my planner/journal. The list includes three sections: Projects to Do, People to See, and Phone Calls to Make. Each thing that is written down gets assigned a code for which day it is to be done (T=Tuesday, Th=Thursday, etc.) and a priority (A=must be done, B=should be done if possible, C=it can be done next week, D=I don't expect to get it done, but I want to keep it in front of me). This takes a good deal of time to do, but it is worth it. The next week I can review what did not get done and put those things on the list again so I don't lose track of them. The list becomes a blueprint for each day and week, a goal list, and a planning guide. This works hand-in-glove with the next tool.

2. A Tickler File

I have a folder for every two weeks of the year (i.e. January 1–2; July 3–4). This allows me to place things that come to my attention now where I can get to them at a more appropriate time later. I had some work that a man in our church could do with his specialty software. He was glad to do the project, but his schedule made it impossible for a few weeks. I wrote a brief note assigning it a month and week when the man was available and gave it to our secretary to file. I no longer had to think about it, but it wasn't forgotten. When the appropriate week came the reminder was in my tickler file. This keeps things from "falling through the cracks."

3. The Calendar

Your calendar needs to be current, but it should also enable you to look months and years into the future. It should include personal events and personnel events, as well as church and/or school events.

Minister to task-takers.

This is the forgotten element in many ministries—purposely planning the training of people who will lead and manage ministry. Yet this is the New Testament methodology for multiplying one's impact (Jesus and the disciples; Paul in 2 Tim. 2:2). You risk disappointments and frustration, but the long-range benefits of developing task-takers greatly outweigh the risks. A wise leader makes the investment in the future of his ministry by purposely developing leaders today.

"Redeeming the time" (Eph. 5:16): a convicting verse for an unorganized or under-organized preacher? You know it! But these ideas are helping me, and I trust they will help you. Wise scheduling can affect your ministry as well as your personal life.

Brent Baughman has served more than ten years as assistant pastor at Faith Baptist Church in Pensacola, Florida.

¹ Gordon MacDonald. *Ordering Your Private World* (Nashville: Oliver-Nelson Publishers, 1984), p. 75.

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Fielding your Position

Phil Shuler

If I have a second love (my first being the ministry God has given me), it would have to be sports. Among the sports I enjoy is baseball. This game impresses me because of the importance of teamwork. When every player does his job well, the team is successful.

It grieves me to hear of an evangelist who comes to a church that is in need of help, and who then adds problems to the ones already there and reports he has had a revival! A pastor once told me a tragic story about an evangelist he had scheduled for a week. When he arrived, the pastor took him over to a bed-and-breakfast where he was to stay. A Catholic woman owned the bed-and-breakfast and gave the room to the church for no charge. The evangelist was alone, yet she offered the evangelist a large room with a king-size bed.

Upon checking in, the proprietor said: "My dear husband was a good Catholic, and he died recently and went home to be with the Lord."

The evangelist looked up from the card he was filling out and said: "If your husband was a Roman Catholic, he is right now in hell's fire and will be for ever."

The dear woman began to cry and told the man to leave. She later told the pastor that the room was not offered free to the church anymore. When I arrived to hold meetings in that town years later, that story was still making the rounds! The evangelist in question missed a valuable opportunity to witness to an unsaved woman and to point her to a Savior who could turn her tears of grief into shouts of joy! The evangelist failed to field his position.

The players on a baseball team and true God-called evangelists have this in common: They must field their position. The pastor teaches three or four times a week, month after month, year after year, until he finds himself competing with himself. Like the parent who keeps correcting the child, the

pastor's voice becomes redundant. His listeners may compliment his message but refuse to act on it.

The position the evangelist should take is (1) gathering the members back to the church, pressing them for nightly loyalty, (2) preaching repentance from sin, and then (3) taking the position of the pastor's friend. He shores up the pastor's ministry with messages that incorporate sound doctrine but are dressed in common clothes.

We need to get back to this. The professional evangelist has little desire to brag on anyone outside of himself. But the God-called evangelist has a burden for the church that is only exceeded by that of the pastor.

John the Baptist states in God's Word that Christ must increase and that he must decrease. In a way, that is the correct formula for a successful meeting. The evangelist leaves after a few days of ministry, but the pastor stays on. When the evangelist backs up the pastor, compliments him over and over for work done well, tells the crowd how lucky they are to have him, and in general, takes his stand with that faithful servant of God, the evangelist has fielded his position well.

I thank God for the young evangelists who serve fundamental churches today. We have some good ones. Each evangelist has a different method of doing his job, but each of them should have the same desire to build up the pastor before his congregation. A football player likes to be told that he has played well. We don't give "high fives" in the pulpit, but a pastor longs to know that he is appreciated for his efforts.

There is a rare chance that the evangelist might get stuck with a bad pastor. In the 1950s, when I was just a young man, I received an invitation to a small town in Texas. When I arrived, I faced a difficult situation. The pastor told me that he thought I was some other fellow he went to school

with. The first thing he told me was not to preach against the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. He asked that I make no waves. He was sorry he invited me.

Rather than supporting that pastor, I preached the blood of Christ in every message that week, pounded away at the lost condition of man, explained vividly the subject of hell, etc., and on closing day, Sunday morning, that pastor left the platform, walked to me at the altar, and asked me to lead him to the Savior. I did, and that evening we saw over 20 saved! Evangelists, field your positions! This is our job!

Dr. Phil Shuler is an evangelist based in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. Since 1946, he has served churches throughout America and in many foreign lands.

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Theodore P. Letis. *The Ecclesiastical Text*. (Philadelphia, PA: The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies) 1997. 232 pp.

While Theodore Letis has impressive academic credentials, one may be concerned about his theological and textual views. Theologically, the author identifies himself as a confessional Lutheran who is “outside of American fundamentalism” (p. 141), and in agreement with “those free from the modern dogma of belief in ‘inerrant autographs’” (p. 188). He is critical of American Protestantism generally (pp. vii, 168–72), of Fundamentalism specifically (pp. 172–74, 179–81, 199–200), and of independent-separatist Baptists particularly (p. 163).

With regard to textual criticism and the text of the Bible, he regards himself as a maverick “working from a post-critical point of reference, . . . I do not readily fit into anyone’s category comfortably” (p. xi). What he means by “a post-critical point of ref-

erence” is defined in the text of the book; it amounts to a historical defense of the *Textus Receptus* as the authoritative text, based on the authority invested in it by the so-called reformation “Church.”

Letis’s defense of the *Textus Receptus*, which he identifies as the Ecclesiastical Text, is that the Reformation leaders and scholars recognized the *apographa* (the Greek and Hebrew texts used by the reformers) as the infallible and authoritative text of Scripture, having been preserved unaltered from the hands of the prophets and apostles.

By sacred *apographa* I mean the final referent of Biblical authority in the opinion of the Protestant dogmaticians—both Lutheran and Reformed. These are the faithful copies of the originally inspired *autographa*. . . . I mean those copies the Protestant dogmaticians regarded as faithful and authoritative copies of the original as opposed to corrupted or inauthentic copies (pp. 31–32).

Here he describes the *autographa* as inspired, but later he gives the distinct impression that he somehow does not regard them as inerrant, or as ever having existed. He supports this thesis with quotations from representative scholars and authorities from that era. This tactic provides him with an alleged “catholic” consensus that he assumes constitutes the ecclesiastical authority of the Protestant “Church” analogous to the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. For Letis, the “Church” provides the *Textus Receptus* with its authority as the infallible Word of God: “the Church was seen not only as the vehicle of received orthodox Christology and of the canonical books of the Bible, but also as the ‘witness and keeper of holy writ’” (p. 57).

Further, he declares that “it was, in fact, ecclesiastical use that actually

determined the *macro* canon (books) as well as the *micro* canon (the textual form of those books)” (p. 94, emphasis and glosses his). He holds that the Church’s role in “configuring as well as canonising [*sic*] and transmitting the text of Scripture” is what grants it authority (p. 82, n. 16). Letis seems to regard the authority of the “Church Catholic” as very much like that of Romanism: “as a Lutheran, I speak in terms of a Protestant catholicism” (p. 106).

This thesis has two serious problems. The first is that the concept of a Protestant Catholic Church is purely theoretical, not actual. It is true that there was some degree of doctrinal consensus among the various groups of Reformers, but there never was a formal council of delegated representatives of the various Protestant groups who met together to canonize a common confession of faith, let alone to canonize the text of Scripture.

The second problem is that there never was a consensus regarding the precise identity of the *Textus Receptus*. In the Reformation era, numerous editions of the Greek and Hebrew Bibles were printed, each differing from all others in a variety of details and each being used by various Reformation authorities. In Europe, the 1633 edition of Elzevir came to be widely accepted as the authoritative text, whereas in England, Robert Stevens’s third edition (1550) became the popular authority. The King James translators did not follow one particular printed edition, but selected readings from several different editions, depending on the preference of the individual translators. So Letis has postulated a hypothetical “Church” that canonized a hypothetical text.

Letis attacks the practice of textual criticism, whether of the traditional form or of the Majority Text variety, as having originated from an erroneous view of inerrant *autographa*

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“Pensacola Christian College teaches that God gave the words of Scripture by inspiration without error in the original autographs. God promises that He will preserve His word; Jesus said, ‘but my words shall not pass away’—Matt. 24:35. We believe God has kept that promise by preserving His infallible Word in the traditional Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and that the Authorized Version (KJV) is the translation singularly blessed by God in the English language. We hold it with confidence believing that it accurately shows forth the inspired and infallible words of the Hebrew and Greek. We do not believe in double inspiration, nor do we believe that the Greek received text should be corrected from an English translation.”—PCC Update, Winter 1998

(the original texts of the prophets and apostles). He cites with approval various scholars who question the possible existence of the *autographa*. He favorably refers to “many studies suggesting there never was one original” (p.151), and cites F. F. Bruce, who wrote, “There was no autograph of the Epistle to the Romans in the proper sense” (p. 151). Bruce, however, was referring to the technicality that the apostle Paul actually dictated the book to Tertius, his stenographer.

Likewise, Letis favorably cites others who deny that the *autographa* were ever authoritative, such as Charles Briggs (“Such autographs the Church and the Synagogue have never known,” p. 69), even though Letis admits earlier that Briggs “was called up on heresy charges and suspended from the ministry in 1895” (p. 65).

Letis refers to the autographic text as “a theoretical *autographic exemplar*” (p. 67, emphasis his) and as “mythical autographs” (p. 88, n. 11). With such uncertainty about the actual existence of original autographs and of their form and content, one may wonder how Letis could refer to them as inspired.

Letis attributes the introduction of the term “inerrant autographs” to B. B. Warfield in the late 1800s (“Warfield . . . posited the inerrant autograph theory,” p. 10), and regards Warfield’s view of “inerrant autographs” as a significant paradigm shift from the earlier reformation view of “infallible *apographa*.” Letis asserts that “Warfield shifted authority from the *apographa* to the *autographa*” (p. 57; see also pp. 48, 67), and further states, “It is my conviction that Warfield himself represented a paradigm shift at Princeton, away from the tradition of Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge. In this I think it right to refer to Warfield’s paradigm as the first ‘neo-orthodoxy’” (pp. 87–88, emphasis his).

Letis gives the distinct impression that the Reformation “Church” regarded the *apographa* as more authoritative than the *autographa*. Somehow the *apographa* are infallible and authoritative, but the *autographa* were not inerrant. In order to justify this conundrum he cites selected quotations from the dogmaticians and ignores statements from the Church Fathers and

the Reformers that placed final authority in the *autographa*.

For example, here is what Augustine wrote to Jerome on this topic:

On such terms we might amuse ourselves without fear of offending each other in the field of Scripture, but I might well wonder if the amusement was not at my expense. For I confess to your Charity that I have learned to yield this respect and honor only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error. And if in these writings I am perplexed by anything which appears to me opposed to truth, I do not hesitate to suppose that either the Ms. [manuscript] is faulty, or the translator has not caught the meaning of what was said, or I myself have failed to understand it. As to all other writings, in reading them, however great the superiority of the authors to myself in sanctity and learning, I do not accept their teaching as true on the mere ground of the opinion being held by them; but only because they have succeeded in convincing my judgment of its truth either by means of these canonical writings themselves, or by arguments addressed to my reason. I believe, my brother, that this is your own opinion as well as mine. I do not need to say that I do not suppose you to wish your books to be read like those of prophets or of apostles, concerning which it would be wrong to doubt that they are free from error. Far be such arrogance from that humble piety and just estimate of yourself which I know you to have, and without which assuredly you would not have said, “Would that I could receive your embrace, and that by converse we might aid each other in learning!” [*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 5, Augustine’s Anti-Pelagian Works, Second Division, Letter 82 (to Jerome A.D. 405) Chapter 1, paragraph 3.]

Again, here is what John Calvin had to say about a difference between an Old Testament passage and a New Testament reference to it:

“These are the names of the children of Israel.” He recounts the sons and grandsons of Jacob, till he arrives at their full number. The statement that there were but seventy souls, while Stephen (Acts 7: 14) adds five more, is made, I doubt not, by an error of the transcribers. . . . But that the error is to be imputed to the transcribers, is hence apparent, that with the Greek interpreters, it has crept only into one passage, while, elsewhere, they agree with the Hebrew reckoning. And it was easy when numerals were signified by marks, for one passage to be corrupted. I suspect also that this happened from the following cause, that those who had to deal with the Scripture

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were generally ignorant of the Hebrew language; so that, conceiving the passage in the Acts to be vitiated, they rashly changed the true number. [John Calvin Commentaries: Genesis on 46:8.]

Such remarks suggest that the reformers and Church fathers regarded the *autographa* as the final authority and without error, even though they may not have used the term *inerrant*.

Again, Calvin had this to say about the authority of an ecclesiastical body over Scripture:

A most pernicious error has very generally prevailed; viz., that Scripture is of importance only in so far as conceded to it by the suffrage of the Church; as if the eternal and inviolable truth of God could depend on the will of men. With great insult to the Holy Spirit, it is asked, who can assure us that the Scriptures proceeded from God; who can guarantee that they have come down safe and unimpaired to our times; who can persuade us that this book is to be received with reverence, and that one expunged from the list, did not the Church regulate all these things with certainty? [Calvin's Institutes, Book I, chapter 7, trans. Henry Beveridge reprint in 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 1:68–69.]

One might forgive Letis's zeal for the traditional text in assuming that the autographic text indeed has been flawlessly preserved in the *Textus Receptus*. And one might suppose that he really believes that the autographic texts were without error (*inerrant*), even though he vociferously attacks the expression "*inerrant autographa*." After all, he admits that "in reality a post-critical advocacy of the Ecclesiastical Text is a theological decision, not a text critical one" (p. 145, n. 18). Such forgiveness, however, would be a hasty concession because of the approach to the text that he actually approves—namely the so-called canonical view of Brevard Childs and the view of orthodox corruption advocated by Bart Ehrman.

One must not assume that Letis merely misunderstands Childs' posi-

tion; he devotes an entire chapter (chapter 4) to a discussion of Childs' view which he labels "A Window to a New Paradigm."

Letis quotes Childs' view of how the canonical text came into existence, stating that "Israel's traditions arose early in its history and extended in different ways throughout the oral, literary, and redactional stages of growth of the material until it reached a fixed form of relative stability" (p. 104). With this explanation, one can understand why Childs would take a post-critical stance and not try to discover the autographic text—he doesn't believe it ever existed: it just grew!

Letis indicates why he prefers Childs' paradigm: "The canonical approach takes seriously all aspects of Biblical criticism" (p. 106). Presumably that means that Welhausen's documentary hypothesis should be taken seriously. No wonder Letis disdains Fundamentalism.

Finally, Letis mentions what he considers "the most important book written in textual critical studies in the past fifty years" (p. 224), Bart Ehrman's *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (Oxford University Press, 1993). Ehrman's thesis is that the early forms of the New Testament texts were far less orthodox than the current forms because scribes in the second, third, and fourth centuries altered the text to make it conform to the "orthodox" form of theology that took shape in the generations succeeding the apostolic age. Thus Ehrman proposed that reliable records of the facts about Jesus' birth, baptism, deity, miracles, and resurrection do not exist in the current Greek texts. Like Childs, Ehrman believes that the Biblical texts have no *autographa*, but that they grew from oral traditions that went through various stages of redactions. Ehrman added the dimension of corruption by later "orthodox" theology.

Letis accuses Warfield's search for *inerrant autographs* as opening the door to the quest for the historical Jesus (p. 80). On the contrary, it was the influence of scholars like Ehrman who laid the foundation for such inquiry. [Though Ehrman himself comes chronologically much later than the original "quest" epitomized by Albert

Schweitzer at the turn of the century, recent years have seen a revival of this "quest" in some scholarly circles.] Letis clearly accepts the textual views of Childs and Ehrman, so it is no wonder that he distances himself from Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism. He rejects the idea of *inerrant autographs* because he evidently thinks they never existed, and, therefore, a textual critical search for those texts is a vain enterprise. He must be satisfied with a text that grew out of multiple redactions of traditions and that was ultimately canonized by an ecclesiastical authority. It is hard to reconcile this description of the origin of the *apographa* with Letis's earlier description of them as "the faithful copies of the originally inspired *autographa*" (p. 31). How can that process of human origin result in an authoritative infallible text? Can an ecclesiastical body of fallible men produce such a text? Such ideas are unacceptable to Fundamentalists.

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What's in a name? Nowadays, not much. (My name means "meadow-town," but I doubt anyone knows or cares.) Personal names may carry on a family heritage, and Christians often choose for their children Bible names with a special meaning. But generally, personal names do not now carry the kind of significance they did in the ancient oriental civilization of Bible times.

In Hebrew society, "a name was chosen very carefully, and with attention to its significance" and was considered "an embodiment of the person bearing it" (Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 269). Names were regarded as representative of one's character (Jacob, "supplanter," Gen. 25:26), as memorializing the circumstances of one's birth (Isaac, "laughter," Gen. 21:3; Moses, "drawn out," Ex. 2:10; Ichabod, "where is the glory?" 1 Sam. 4:21), or as commemorating some deed or event in one's life (Abraham, Gen. 17:5; Israel, Gen. 32:28) [J. A. Thompson, *Handbook of Life in Bible Times*, 80]. Ruth 1:19–21 demonstrate the enduring significance attached to a name even by adults.

That is why so much revelatory significance is attached to the names of God in Scripture—and why there are so many. They are not merely titles by which God is addressed; they represent the "manifestation of God in His relation to His people" (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 47). Zophar was right at least in his assertion that no man can, by searching, find out God (Job 11:7). God is knowable to us only because He has chosen to reveal Himself to us. The names of God are part of His self-revelation to man; they are revelatory of the relationship He bears to us and reflective of various aspects of His character and attributes. That is why He takes the misuse of His name so very seriously (Ex. 20:7).

It is the unique privilege of believers to know the one true God as He has revealed Himself through His names. "The **name** of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe" (Prov. 18:10). We can find refuge in God's name because it reveals His character and relation to us. "They that know thy **name** shall put their trust in thee" (Ps. 9:10), because His name embodies the authority of His Person and the trustworthiness of His character. Isaiah 52:6 expresses God's passion and intent for the future, restored Israel: "my people shall know my **name**."

How well do you know your God? How much significance do you attach to His names? This study is a good place to start your own exploration of God's revelation of Himself to you in your Bible.

OLD TESTAMENT

'El, 'Elohim* (eh-lo-HEEM)

Usually translated "God," this is the first name for God in the first verse of the Bible. The root of this name has reference to strength and might (though some trace it to another root denoting fear or dread), and reveals God as the Strong, Mighty One.

The fascinating feature of the common form 'Elohim is that it is a plural (and thus is sometimes used to refer to pagan gods), yet it is used with singular verbs when referring to God (indicating that, though the form of the word is plural, God Himself is one God, not many). In fact, the "plural form is unique to the O.T. and appears in no other Semitic language" (Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 45). Such a plural in Hebrew denotes either an intensive form or a plural of majesty, magnifying God as unique and unrivaled in His power. Though the term sometimes refers to other false gods (Isa. 45:20), God insists repeatedly that He alone is the only God and Savior, besides whom no other exists (Isa. 45:21–22; notice also verse 23 in this context and its significance for the reference to Christ in Phil. 2:10–11). Many names contain a form of this Divine name (Ezekiel, Daniel, Gabriel, Bethel, Samuel).

'Adonai (ah-do-NY)

Usually translated "Lord," this name is from a root meaning ruler, owner, master—emphasizing God's supreme authority and absolute ownership in relation to everything in general, and to man in particular (note David in 2 Sam. 7:18, 19, 20, 28, 29). He alone is Lord, Ruler, Owner "to whom everything is subject, and to whom man is related as a servant" (Berkhof, 48). Isaiah recognized this truth in his response to the Lord's quest for a messenger (Isa. 6:1, 8–11).

Yahweh (YAH-weh)

This is the most frequent O.T. name for God, occurring well over 5,000 times. Whenever you read the word LORD or GOD (in all capitals) in the King James Version, it is this Hebrew name. Fearing even to pronounce this name because of the special sacredness uniquely attached to it, the Jews came to combine the consonants of this name (YHWH) with the vowels from the name 'Adonai (a-o-a), producing the pronunciation YaHoWaH (from which we get the more common English pronunciation, Jehovah). Many names and terms contain abbreviated forms of this Divine name (Joshua, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah, Zechariah; "hallelujah" = "praise the LORD").

This is the unique, personal name for the God of the

OF GOD

Bible, the name by which He wanted to be memorialized (Ex. 3:14–15). This verse connects the name Yahweh with the verb that means “to be,” portraying God as living and active, self-existent and independent, ever-present with His people and unchangeable. There are several ways the phrase “I am that I am” can be grammatically translated, the most expressive and perhaps most contextually justified of which is, “I (always) will be what I (always) have been.” Berkhof elaborates: “The name contains the assurance that God will be for the people of Moses’ day what He was for their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It stresses the covenant faithfulness of God, is His proper name *par excellence* (Ex. 15:3; Ps. 83:18; Is. 42:8), and is therefore used of no one but Israel’s God” (p. 49).

That is why the N.T. insists on identifying Jesus not only as God, but specifically as Yahweh: “the essence of the Christian faith was to acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as the Yahweh of the Old Testament” (Ryrie, 49). John 12:37–41, for example, identifies Jesus Himself as the one sitting on the throne (“the LORD”) in Isaiah’s famous vision (Isa. 6:2–5; note connection between “he” and “him” in John 12:37 and “his” and “him” in 12:41). That is also why His name was called Jesus, the Greek form of the Hebrew Joshua, which means “Je[hovah] saves” (Matt. 1:21). His very name not only revealed His mission of saving but identified Him as Yahweh (Jehovah), the only one who can save.

Other Names

There are many other compound names and descriptive titles which reveal God’s multi-faceted character: ‘El ‘Elyon (“Most High God,” Gen. 14:19,22) or simply ‘Elyon (“Most High,” Ps. 91:1,7, Isa. 14:14; cf. Lk. 1:32,35,76); ‘El ‘Olam (“Everlasting God” or “God of Eternity,” Gen. 21:33, Ps. 100:5, Isa. 40:28); ‘El Roi (“God Who Sees,” Gen. 16:13); Yahweh Tsidqenu (“Yahweh our Righteousness,” Jer. 23:6); Yahweh Sabaoth (“LORD of Hosts,” probably a reference to the angelic armies of heaven, 1 Sam. 17:45, 2 Sam. 6:2, Ps. 24:10, Ps. 46:7,11); “Holy One of Israel” (common throughout Isaiah); “Ancient of Days” (Dan. 7:9,13,22).

NEW TESTAMENT

Theos (theh-OS)

Usually translated “God” (and the word from which we get “theology”), this is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name ‘Elohim. Like that Hebrew term, it can be used of false gods (Acts 14:11, 19:26, 1 Cor. 8:5), and even of Satan (2 Cor. 4:4). But it is usually reserved to denote the God of the Bible as the one and only true Deity (John 17:3, 1

John 5:20, 1 Cor. 8:4–6). Christ Himself is designated throughout the N.T. as deity by this title (John 1:1–2, 20:28, Rom. 9:5, Tit. 2:13), as well as by other terms.

Kurios (KOO-ree-os)

This Greek word corresponds to the Hebrew ‘Adonai, but it is also used in the N.T. to translate O.T. references to Yahweh. Though the word can be used as a term of respect for humans, whether masters or owners (or even husbands, 1 Pet. 3:6), it is almost always translated “Lord” with reference to God generally and Christ specifically. The term emphasizes absolute, unrivaled “authority and supremacy” (Ryrie, 49), and “designates God as . . . the Ruler who has legal power and authority” (Berkhof, 50).

The consistent and prolific application of this term to Christ (John 20:28; Rom. 10:9; Phil. 2:11) underscores the utter contradiction of calling Him “Lord” yet willfully refusing to obey Him (Luke 6:46, Matt. 7:21). If we believe and own Him as Lord, we will submit. If we do not submit, He is not “Lord” to us.

Despotes (des-POT-ace)

Though it occurs only a handful of times with reference to God, this term highlights another feature of the relationship He bears to us. While *kurios* underscores God’s (and specifically, Christ’s) “authority and supremacy,” *despotes* conveys the idea of absolute ownership (Ryrie, 50). Apostates and false teachers expressly disavow the rightful claim of God over them (2 Pet. 2:1, Jude 4). Though our word “despot” is saturated with negative overtones, the Biblical use of the word communicates the warmth and security of Divine ownership (Luke 2:29, Acts 4:24), as well as the basis of a strong appeal for revenge (Rev. 6:10). Our ambition, as the owned of God, should be our personal holiness and sanctification so that we are “fit” for our Master’s use (2 Tim. 2:21).

Conclusion

God’s glory is revealed in His names. When Moses begged to see God’s glory, God’s answer was to pass before him and proclaim His name (Ex. 34:5–6). The names above are just a few gems in a mine full of treasures that God has given us to understand and know Him better—which God says should be the glory and ambition of every believer (see Jer. 9:23–24).

*Note: The apostrophes in Hebrew words represent Hebrew consonants for which there is no English equivalent. A forward or backward apostrophe denotes a particular Hebrew letter which, though present, is not pronounced in English.

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"Having served as a missionary for twelve years without a mission board, I sense that pastors today, more than ever before, feel the need for missionaries to be allied with the accountability and the strong stand that a board like GFA offers. We feel honored to be a part of a mission agency which works hand in hand with local churches in the U.S. to establish local churches in the regions beyond, in accordance with God's standards and methods."



Gospel Fellowship Association

Dr. Mark Batory, Missions Director

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WCC to Establish New Forum

Konrad Reiser, general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), hopes to see an unprecedented ecumenical breakthrough involving all Christian traditions by the year 2001. A September 21, 1998, Ecumenical News Service (ENI) news release announced, "It seems likely that in the first few years of the next century—possibly in the year 2001—all the main Christian traditions will form a new 'network' to discuss ways in which they can cooperate." Raiser said the idea would be proposed at the WCC international assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, in December 1998. (*Foundation*, Sept.-Oct. 1998)

Methodist Commission Offended by Baseball Mascot

Despite the plea of the church's Commission on Religion and Race, the United Methodist Church will hold its General Conference in Cleveland in 2000. The commission wanted to boycott the city because of the Cleveland Indians' baseball mascot, known as Chief Wahoo. The commission believes the team's depictions of "native Americans" are offensive. (*Christian News*, 10/26/98)

Groups Sue to Stop Online Pornography Law

The Child Online Protection Act is aimed at preventing access by children to pornography

material on the internet. One day after President Clinton signed the act as part of a new federal spending bill, a coalition of groups challenged the new law in court. The coalition includes booksellers, media companies, and homosexual advocacy organizations. They say the law violates free speech guarantees and could be used to suppress Internet discussions on such topics as AIDS and art. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 11/4/98) On November 18 U.S. District Judge Lowell Reed issued a temporary order delaying the implementation of the Child Online Protection Act. (*Daily Brief*, 11/19/98)

Chicago Sues Gun Industry

The city of Chicago has filed a \$433 million lawsuit against the gun industry, claiming that gun makers and dealers have violated public nuisance laws by allowing criminals access to firearms. (*Daily Brief*, 11/13/98)

"Holy Homosexuals"?

The Dallas-based Cathedral of Hope, America's largest homosexual "church," is suing Chicago's WGN-TV because the station refused to run the Cathedral's infomercial titled "Holy Homosexuals." "We wanted mostly to reach out to lesbian and gay teenagers but also people living in rural areas, to tell them there is this possibility that you can be gay and Christian," said Michael Piazza, the group's senior pastor. (*World*, 11/7/98)

November Election Victories

In Alaska, voters elected to amend the state Constitution to limit the definition of marriage as only between one man and one woman. A successful ballot initiative in Hawaii amended the state constitution by giving the legislature authority to ban homosexual marriage. The vote was a landslide defeat and major setback for homosexual activists with two-thirds of voters approving the ballot. Elizabeth Birch, executive director of the Human Rights Campaign, told *Time* that a defeat on this issue would set the homosexual agenda back ten years. Homosexual activists also suffered decisive defeats in ballot initiatives that would extend special rights to homosexuals in the cities of Fayetteville, Arkansas, and Fort Collins, Colorado. Furthermore, Colorado passed a measure requiring minors to have parental consent before getting an abortion. (*Salt Server*, 11/4/98)

Church Keeps Government Out of Offering Plate

Nearly seven years after it began, Crystal Evangelical Free Church's battle to protect church offering plates from government agents is at an end. On October 5, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected an appeal designed to force the church to return \$13,450 in donations by a couple who later declared bankruptcy. The Court let

stand a lower court ruling which held that forcing the church to return the tithes and offerings would violate the religious freedom rights of the church and the donors. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 10/25/98)

Gambling a Bad Bet

Churches in Canada are becoming alarmed by the social costs of legal gambling and the growing dependence on government on its cut of gambling revenues. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) calls gambling "an insidious form of evil which takes advantage of the poor and disadvantaged and undermines a healthy and just society." The EFC further claims that when governments sponsor gambling for education, etc., they give "an implicit endorsement of greed, materialism, and the denigration of the value of productive work." (*Calvary Contender*, 11/15/98)

Uzbekistan Bans Non-government Religion

Uzbekistan's constitution provides for religious freedom, but a harsh new law bans all religious activities not certified by the government and makes it illegal for anyone except government-certified clergy to talk about religion. Sunday school and home Bible studies are banned, and any church with fewer than 100 members must close its doors and stop all activities in this mainly Muslim country. (*Calvary Contender*, 10/15/98)

Operation Rescue Founder Declares Bankruptcy

Randall Terry, founder of Operation Rescue, has filed for bankruptcy court protection, citing huge debts owed to abortion advocates who have sued him. Operation Rescue's protests against abortion clinics, including sit-in demonstrations that block clinic doors, have been the target of intense legal action. Terry, who is no longer the head of the group, has been ordered to pay the National Organization for Women and Planned Parenthood \$1.6 million, and other lawsuits are still pending. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 11/19/98)

Christians Persecuted in Egypt

During a recent government crackdown on Egypt's Coptic Christian community, a thousand Christians were manacled to doors, then beaten and tortured with electric shocks. Teenage girls were raped. Mothers were forced to lay their infants on the floor and watch helplessly while police struck them with sticks. Christian men were nailed to crosses. It was a grisly example of a grave problem in the Middle East: the persecution of Christians by Arab governments—including governments like Egypt that America supports financially. According to the London *Daily Telegraph*, the police in the city of Al-Kosheh instigated a dragnet, detaining 1,200 Christians. They were rounded up after the death of a Muslim who other Muslims believed

NOTABLE QUOTES

President Clinton is a walking measuring stick of how far American culture has fallen. What would have happened if Bill Clinton's idol, John F. Kennedy, had advocated abortion on demand, homosexuals in the military, and condoms for teenagers? Kennedy would have been wiped out by press and public alike on the character issue.

Current Thoughts & Trends, March 1998

The President's values deficit illustrates that ours is a culture in crisis. Its symptoms include family breakdown, teen pregnancy, violence, and drug abuse. Now, more than ever, America needs a president who offers moral leadership. But the bully pulpit is empty. The President, who should be able to lead by example and who should be a model, is now missing in action. The President's self-inflicted wounds disable him from providing the leadership the culture so desperately needs. . . . The honorable act is to resign so that the nation can properly heal from the wounds he has inflicted and the culture can be put on the path to recovery.

Senator John Ashcroft

What is the cultural mandate? It is a devised socio-political-religious concept that redeemed mankind has two commissions to discharge: first—the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20) to evangelize individuals in every nation; and second—the responsibility to Christianize the culture and structures of society and, by human effort, to bring the world under the sovereignty of God. . . . The cultural mandate movement prostitutes the energies of evangelism to an unworthy purpose, diverting them into useless avenues of service far removed from the cause of Christ. It siphons off funds and strength which could be better directed into channels of fruitful, Scriptural endeavor.

**G. Archer Weniger, writing in
Faith for the Family in 1974**

If the Christian worldview does not prevail, the public policy that will teach your children and grandchildren—the policy that will rule their society as well as yours—will be formed by people who think your beliefs fell off the edge of the flat Earth. They will defame what you respect and discount your reason for believing it. They will dismiss with rancor everything you think is important. . . . It's not that we want to impose our religion on somebody. It's that we want to shape the culture and laws by using a worldview we believe has value. Both sides believe in their position, but both sides can't be right.

Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee

had been murdered by Christians, even though doctors had attributed his death to natural causes. Since the Camp David accords in 1979, Egypt has been one the largest recipients of American aid. This fiscal year alone, Egypt is scheduled to receive approximately \$2.5 billion from American taxpayers. (News Release from Charles W. Colson, 11/17/98)

. . . And in Saudi Arabia

Hundreds of house churches have stopped meeting, and Christian leaders fear imprisonment after 12 foreigners were recently arrested. Many foreign workers, mostly Filipinos, worship secretly in 400 house churches. The tiny native Saudi church is even further underground and avoids contact with foreign believers for security reasons. Christian worship, evangelism, literature, Bibles, and crosses are forbidden in Saudi Arabia. (*Church Around the World*, September 1998)

Enrollment Up at Pillsbury

Pillsbury Baptist Bible College in Owatonna, Minnesota, reported a 30 percent increase in enrollment, with 183 students registered for the fall 1998 semester. (*Pillsbury Bulletin*, Fall 1998)

Chinese Believers Arrested After Protesting Persecution

The Chinese government is cracking down on the independent house church movement in apparent response to a letter of protest by Chinese house church leaders that called

for better treatment of Christians by the Communist Chinese government and for government recognition of the underground church. According to *Voice of the Martyrs*, 40 people were arrested October 26 in Henan province while holding a church meeting. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 11/19/98)

New President at Maranatha

Dr. Dave Jaspers has accepted the call to become the president of Maranatha Baptist Bible College in Watertown, Wisconsin. Jaspers, a 1976 graduate of Maranatha, pastored churches in Michigan and Iowa before entering evangelism in 1986. He and his family plan to move to Wisconsin in January to begin their ministry, with inauguration set for May 6, 1999. (*Calvary Contender*, 1/1/99)

New School Starting in 1999

The Baptist College of Ministry, a ministry of Falls Baptist Church (Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin) in cooperation with Preach the Word Ministries, will begin classes in the fall of 1999. Falls Baptist church is pastored by FBF board member Dr. Wayne Van Gelderen. Preach the Word Ministries is led by evangelist John R. Van Gelderen. Among the visiting faculty are FBF board member Dr. Fred Moritz and *Frontline* contributing editor Dr. Layton Talbert. (*Preach the Word*, Oct.-Dec. 1998)

Disney Attempts Cover-up

The Disney Company is a key partner in a cable

television channel distributing soft-core pornography, according to *Disney: The Mouse Betrayed*, recently released by Regnery Publishing. In a chapter titled, "Minnie Makes Room for Marilyn Chambers," authors Peter and Rochelle Schweizer detail Disney's involvement in Viewer's Choice, which they describe as a pioneer in pay-per-view television. According to an October 14 article in the *Washington Post*, ABC News killed a report by its television newsmagazine 20/20 investigating these and other allegations against The Disney Company. ABC is owned by Disney. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 10/20/98)

OBF Resolution

... Whereas, the traditional, Fundamentalist view on inspiration of Scripture is that only the original manuscripts are God-breathed and therefore inerrant (2 Timothy 3:16); thereby the people of God have never declared a particular manuscript family to be the only written Word of God; neither have they argued for the miraculous inspiration and inerrancy of the King James Version itself or its historical text type;

And Whereas, Pensacola Christian College continues to sow discord among our brethren (which our Lord condemns in Proverbs 6:19) by propagating falsehood, heresy and "other doctrine" in the video "The Leaven in Fundamentalism" which misconstrues historical facts and maliciously condemns faithful,

godly men such as B. B. Warfield, J. Gresham Machen, Dr. Charles Brokenshire and many other godly men of our day including fundamental Christian universities and colleges such as Bob Jones University, Northland Baptist Bible College, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, with their graduates who earnestly contend, defend the Faith and the Bible and hold pulpits in our fellowship and across the world;

Furthermore, Pensacola Christian College has misled the people of God that the aforementioned men adopted and practice the "liberal leaven of textual criticism." Pensacola Christian College is purposefully distorting and corrupting in the minds of Christians

the process of sound textual criticism that has been used for centuries and is repeatedly pronouncing judgment that these same men have "abandoned the doctrine of preservation."

... Therefore, be it Resolved, at the 1998 Fall Meeting of the Ohio Bible Fellowship, held October 9-10 at Bucyrus, Ohio, that the Bible does not directly give the method of preservation of Scripture, and the Bible clearly teaches the indestructibility of the verbal revelation of God, nor does it tell how or where the written manuscript lineage of that Word is preserved. . . .

This news is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship.

RE: BBFI Special Report

A major controversy in the largest fellowship of independent Baptists is certainly a newsworthy topic. Reporting the facts objectively is difficult, however, when it seems that everyone involved is on one side or the other. Our report on the controversy [July/August 1998] was written by Pastor John Waldrip, who was heavily in it and obviously presented his own perspective. We purposely placed his report in the "Newsworthy" section, which carries a disclaimer. Nevertheless, we received several letters disagreeing with Waldrip's report and criticizing *Frontline* for publishing it. Their main objection seems to be that Waldrip referred to all of those who wanted to start a new school in Oklahoma as "Ruckmanites." Some accused Waldrip of leaving out certain facts, although no one has pointed out any specific factual errors in his report. We invited several of these men to write a response to Waldrip's report, but none has done so. Our intention in publishing the report was simply to inform our readers of the controversy. We pray for our brethren in the BBF, and we trust that God will use even this controversy to further their great church-planting tradition and missionary emphasis.

God's Plan for "Confronting the Culture."

There seems to be a growing interest in developing a strategy to combat the effects of the cultural, political, social, economical, and religious climate in America and the way in which it is setting the agenda for our churches. Even discussing it, however, can be divisive. Some hold that we have abdicated our leadership role by refusing to address these issues, and others point out remembered similarities to the early talk of the New Evangelicals. Discussions about "social relevance," "impacting society," and "confronting the culture" have become commonplace among Fundamentalists.

If what we are talking about is speaking out against a worldview that is contrary to and in competition with Biblical truth, I'm all for it. If we are trying to get "society" to listen to us by appearing more relevant and equally respectable—well, count me out. Frankly, it seems that a better investment of our energies would be spent not in confronting our culture, but in teaching our people how to survive it. But there has always been a way to impact society, and though it may be seen by some as simplistic, it is really the only sensible way. We cannot win society; we can only win men, and if we win enough of them, we will impact society.

Unquestionably, America was founded by Bible-believing Christians. Over 75 percent of the population in 1776 was of Protestant Puritan extraction¹—essentially "Fundamentalist." America could never have come into existence otherwise. Today we live in a "pluralistic" society that cannot allow fundamental Christianity to be the prevailing worldview, and it uses a perverse interpretation of the first amendment to prevent it. Although the current crises in the Congress are seen by the pundits as "partisan politics," they are nothing less than this conflict

of worldviews. Although there are a few exceptions on both sides of the impeachment issue, those who hold to human responsibility are in conflict with those who hold to an evolving denial of it—the current mutation of which is called "postmodernism," a subject that will receive future attention in this space.

In place of the theology and national character that produced American freedom, a new religion has developed out of the sin nature of

We cannot win society; we can only win men, and if we win enough of them, we will impact society.

fallen men. Its catechism is in the curricula of the government schools, its "evangelism" is promoted by the entertainment media, and its academic credentials are assumed by the press. Its authority is, humanly speaking, absolute. To the degree that we seek merely to correct this cancer in our culture, politics, society, economy, and religious climate, we have already allowed it to set the agenda. The answer never has been, nor can be, nor should be in this realm of discourse.

These are but the consequences that we must necessarily obtain when an irreligious people inherit an essentially religious society. Our "culture" is the expression of the "cult," or "system of religious worship"

that produces it. Today's American society is what the U.S. Constitution looks like through heathen eyes as opposed to the eyes of faith that produced it. To try to change this without a spiritual change in the men who make up the society is to ensure the very tyranny that brought our forefathers to our shores. The folly of New Evangelicalism is the denial of human nature in the attempt to reason with unregenerate men to be more civilized by being more "Christian." If Fundamentalism forgets this, it will cease to be the residence of Bible-believing Christianity.

The plan of attack can only be evangelism. In our necessary defense of the faith, we must not neglect the propagation of the faith. Revival is our only hope, and it must begin in the house of God—the local church. Had the proper attention been given to personal holiness and power by the true people of God, there would be more of us. Were there more of us, indeed a majority, then we could render an honest interpretation of the U.S. Constitution, pass righteous laws, truly legislate morality—the only purpose of legislation, in fact—and combat the cancer of institutionalized depravity.

As long as we are in the minority, the results are what we see. Expenditures of any resources, be they money, muscle, or man-hours, can only contribute to symptomatic relief. Unless we pray for God to open the eyes of individual Americans through the miracle of the New Birth, and "beseech them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God," we are but the "blind leading the blind," and may both fall into the ditch of depravity that characterizes our culture.



DR. JOHN C. VAUGHN

¹Hart, Benjamin. *Faith and Freedom, The Christian Roots of American Liberty*. Lewis and Stanley, Dallas: 1988. p. 337.

What's on the Web

Bob Whitmore

I used to wonder if I would be able to come up with three or four new web sites every two months to review in this column. Now I wonder how I can possibly mention in a short column all of the good sites I have discovered.

In the last issue I mentioned The Biblelands Project web site (www.mustardseed.net) that allows a virtual tour of the Holy Land. Since then someone sent me another site with photos and information about this area. The Jerusalem Mosaic (www.jeru.huji.ac.il/jeru) is part of the Hebrew University web site. It is not a Christian site, but there is much information about Jerusalem available there that should be of interest to Christians.

When I attended the Southwide Baptist Fellowship meeting last fall as an exhibitor, Melissa Baccarella picked up a copy of *Frontline* at our table. She happens to be the webmaster for Baptist International Missions, Inc. (BIMI), and in an e-mail message she asked me to check out their web site at www.bimi.org. "I think you will be well pleased with the presentation, organization, and information available on our site," Melissa wrote, and she was right. The site's graphics are pleasing, and it provides a lot of information, not only about their mission and missionaries, but missions in general.

For you rare book lovers, missionary Don Johnson in Canada recommends Advanced Book Exchange (www.abebooks.com), which claims to be the "World's Largest Source of Out of Print Books."

"This site is a database of used book stores from around the world," Don says. "There are over 2400 bookstores that list their inventory on the site. . . . You can search by title, author, subject, etc. You can even register a book you are looking for and get automated e-mail notification when a bookstore owner lists it in the database." But

Don includes a warning with his recommendation: "This place is one of the greatest treasure troves I have ever found for used books. I do have to be careful and put a lock on my wallet every time I browse there!"

Comforting Mercies Ministries is based locally here in South Carolina. Recently CMM produced a great children's story cassette tape titled "White Fangs in a Black Hole," and kids can hear more stories from the "talkin' dawgs" at CMM's web site: www.needcomfort.org. This ministry has several other tapes available, many in Spanish.

"The Biggest and Best Children's Ministry Resources on the Web." So says the home page at www.ChildrensMinistry.net, which consists of a listing of links to other sites. Most of the organizations, resources, and publishers listed there are New Evangelical, but you may be able to find some materials that are useful. I noticed a couple of familiar ministries (Children's Bible Hour and Keys for Kids) under the category "For Kids Only!"

A new web directory that organizes Biblical articles, essays, outlines, and studies by subject can be found at www.ChristianTopics.com. From Abortion to Worship, I counted 147 topics listed alphabetically. I did not take time to evaluate the quality of the materials under the topics, but much of it should be useful for anyone doing research. Among the topics are Church History, Discernment, Cults, Homosexuality, Movies, Music, Pornography, Race, Tongues, and many others that looked interesting. When you get "snowed in" this winter, exploring this site might be a good use of your time.

So many web sites to review and so little space in which to do it. Next issue we'll consider some more goodies. In the meantime, if you have a favorite site you'd like to share with our readers, drop me a line at FBFLINE@aol.com.

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Dad Was Right

Steven N. Skaggs

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart. . . . Psalm 24:3-4

When I was a kid there were certain TV programs that Dad didn't allow us to watch. When we pleaded with him (using our irrefutable childhood logic, "Why not? All our friends watch them!") he would always give us the same response: they were "dirty."

On occasion Dad wouldn't be home, or I'd be at a friend's house, and I'd get an opportunity to watch some of those shows. They didn't seem so bad to me. In fact, the people in the studio audience (and the families with whom I would watch the shows) seemed to think they were quite funny.

But since becoming an adult, I've seen some of those shows as reruns. You know what? Dad was right. Many of those "classic" shows from my native childhood *were* dirty. There's really no better word for them.

I wonder if the typical Christian parent uses the word *dirty* with his children today. It seems to have fallen out of favor. It's ironic that while so many formerly dirty words have become acceptable in society as a whole, the word *dirty* itself has become unpalatable. Somehow terms such as "inappropriate" or even "off-color" aren't blunt enough to describe most of what the media produce. It's dirty, and Christians ought not to expose themselves to it.

Dad didn't have a diploma from a Christian high school. He never attended a Christian college. But he knew that one of his jobs as leader of our home was to protect his family from deleterious influences. That's why, years before he was saved, he gave up habits that would have been a bad influence on his boys. He set high standards for his sons to live up

to—no arguments! And one of those standards was no dirty TV shows.

I think it would be a good thing for Christian parents to revive that good old word *dirty*. "I want to see what books you've borrowed from the library, son. Hmm . . . I'm not going to let you read this one—it looks dirty." "Which video did your friend let you borrow? You know better than that; I won't let you watch it. It's dirty." "No, you're not going to get unlimited or unsupervised access to the Internet. There's too much temptation to look at dirty sites."

Of course, good parental teaching goes beyond just saying no. We need to explain why we make our decisions, what the Scriptural basis for them is, and why we set the standards that we do. Ultimately such standards are set out of love, in an effort to maintain our children's purity, to raise them "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

I encourage you to try something, Christian Dad. The next time you find yourself in a situation in which your children are exposed to material that's not pleasing to the Lord, don't say, "I wish they wouldn't put stuff like this on TV!" Don't click your tongue and say, "This video is getting bad. If they swear one more time, we'll have to turn it off." By all means, don't merely sit there feeling uncomfortable but ignoring the issue. Turn it off; close it up; put it away; tell the kids, "We're not going to expose ourselves to this. It's dirty."

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

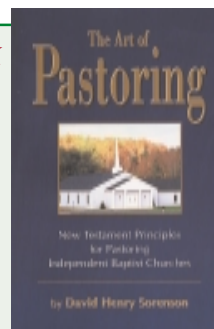
(2 Cor. 7:1).

Steven N. Skaggs, the father of four children, serves in the Secondary Authors Department at Bob Jones University Press.



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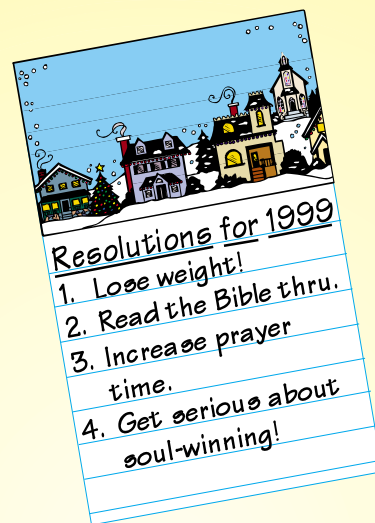
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