

A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR MUSIC • MINISTERING IN MUSIC OR JUST SINGING A SONG?

FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2000
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A woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark blue choir robe with a white collar, is singing with her mouth open and holding a sheet of music. The background is split diagonally: the top-left is yellow and the bottom-right is purple. In the yellow section, a man is partially visible, playing a guitar. The overall image has a textured, halftone-like appearance.

A NEW SONG?



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Mail Bag

Just a note to say thanks for *Frontline* magazine. The last issue I received, January/February 2000, was a tremendous blessing. The articles are extremely good.

Pastor Erald Edwards
LEEWARD ISLANDS

Thank you very much for faithfully sending me your *Frontline* magazine. I love it very much. This is the only fundamental magazine that I read.

Timothy Sui Lian Mang
President
Biblical School of
Theology
MYANMAR

It was a great blessing, the section "Windows," about "Seeking God," and "A Cup of Water" in the January/February 2000 issue. They made me think about my personal relationship with my God. *Frontline* is a great blessing for me. I will continue praying for you, brothers, that God will use you more and more.

Pastor Elio S. Mateo Gil
Hato Mayor del Rey
DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC

I have been reading your *Frontline* magazine which is precious and helpful to me. The light of *Frontline* shines around the world for Baptist Fundamentalism. Once again I thank God for you and for your worldwide ministries.

Rev. Dr. C. Valmurugan
Tamilnadu, INDIA

I am truly blessed through *Frontline* magazine. I must say that I

have gained a lot, and I am trusting I can pass on what I have received. Keep up the good work.

Pastor Francis Houston
St. George's, GRENADA

We are a fundamental Baptist mission. We are KJV in any worship services. We have Baptist convictions. We are not ecumenical. We are not charismatic. We are not liberal. We like to read your *Frontline* magazine. . . . I and my congregation are anxiously waiting to read this magazine, and it is very useful for our library.

Pastor V. Rajamohan
Colombo, SRI LANKA

I am so glad to know you and *Frontline* magazine. It is interesting and strengthens me in my spiritual life, and it is useful in my ministry. Since I started church planting four years ago, God has blessed and seven new churches have been founded in the western part of Myanmar. To

become an effective leader, I need your prayer and the encouragement of a magazine such as *Frontline*.

Pastor Va Bi
Yangon, MYANMAR

I look forward to receiving my copy of *Frontline*. Your article ("Behind the Lines") in the May/June issue of *Frontline* mirrors my own view of the seduction of evangelical Christianity by Roman Catholicism.

Roland Russell
Melbourne, FL

We really enjoy reading *Frontline*. Keep it coming!

The Foxes
Missionaries to France

Your magazine is excellent!

Art Woodward
Corwith, IA


We appreciate the articles in *Frontline* very much.

Jonathan Musch
Brighton, MI

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The Precious Blood of Christ

Part 1 of a sermon preached at the 1989 FBF national meeting at Bethel Baptist Church in Schaumburg, Illinois.

When I speak of the blood of Christ, I mean Christ's blood literally—not figuratively or mystically. When I speak of the blood of Christ, I mean all of the blood, including every drop He ever shed from His circumcision at eight days old to His crucifixion. All the blood of Christ is precious blood. All the blood of Christ is atoning blood. But preeminently, when I speak of the blood of Christ, I have in mind the blood of His cross (Col. 1:20). The whole of the Scripture is taken up with this theme. From Genesis through the book of the Revelation, the Bible has a scarlet cord of the rich, red, royal, divine blood of God running from beginning to end. The Bible begins and ends with the message of the shed blood.

In Genesis we read of the entrance of sin with death and its results. But we also read of the merciful provision of God for our first parents at that time. "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skin and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21). In other words, blood had to be shed. An innocent victim had to be slain to provide the necessary covering for the sin of the first parents.

In the Revelation 5:9 we read of Christ as the Lamb of the song of the redeemed in heaven glorifying Him

for the shedding of His blood for their redemption. In the New Testament, Hebrews 9:22 says, "Almost all things are by the law purified with the blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

The Lord emphasized to Moses, and through him to all his people, "The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls. For it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:11).

The Hebrew rendering here is, "the blood by reason of the soul or life (poured out in death) maketh atonement." In other words, the value of the shed blood is the value of the life sacrificed. When the Lord Jesus shed His blood, all the merits of His perfect life and obedience were poured out in a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and make atonement.

"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" (Isa. 53:10) is how the Word of God puts it. This must be understood in the con-

text of the meaning of Leviticus 17:11. When the blood of Christ is made the offering for sin and the soul is poured out in death, salvation is guaranteed. That is the plain meaning of the Scripture. That is the message of the gospel.

Nowadays there is little preaching about the blood of Christ. Men in their pride and carnal wisdom have seen fit to replace this fundamental truth of Biblical Christianity with a bloodless gospel. But a

bloodless gospel is a Christless gospel. A bloodless gospel is a hopeless gospel. In fact, a bloodless gospel is not a gospel at all, but a soul-damning, soul-destroying fraud.

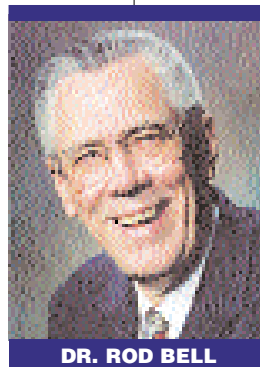
How different is the preaching of the New Testament. Our Lord Jesus spoke of "My blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sin" (Matt. 26:28).

The inspired apostles spoke plainly about the blood of Christ. Paul said, "In whom we have redemption through His blood" (Col. 1:14; Eph. 1:7). He also spoke of Christ as the One "In whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood" (Rom. 3:25). He further taught that we are "justified by his blood" (Rom. 5:9); we are "reconciled by the blood of Christ" (Col. 1:20); and our conscience is purged by the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:14).

The apostle Peter says, "Ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:19).

John wrote that the song of the saints is "unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5). John's vision of the scene in heaven is recorded in chapter five of the same book. It is a scene of song as the redeemed and angels magnify Christ saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain" (v. 11). Every saint in glory feels that such praise is just, "for Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood" (v. 9), and by that blood all the redeemed are brought to heaven (Rev. 7:14).

The Bible begins and ends with the message of the shed blood.



DR. ROD BELL

A Biblical Foundation

Many churches that are sound in the Scripture, doctrine, theology, and practice have changed the foundation upon which musical decisions are made. This shift in musical philosophy is sometimes defended by statements such as, "The Bible has nothing to say about musical styles," or "There is no abominable praise." These bold, sweeping remarks go beyond music towards deeper, more fundamental issues and should be examined in the light of God's Word, and then accepted or rejected.

The primary question seems to be "Does the Bible speak about styles of music?" If by this question we mean "Does the Bible mention rock music? How about the baroque style or folk songs?" then the answer is *no*.

Nowhere in the Scriptures are any of these styles addressed by name. But the same can be said of books, magazines, newspapers, the World Wide Web, theater, television, movies, and videos. Although music, literature, and drama appear in the Bible, not a single statement refers to a current trend or style in any of these mediums. However, if by the question we mean "Does the Bible outline any principles or precepts about music? Does it give any guidance in this area?" then the answer is an unqualified *yes*. Psalm 119 and 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17 bear testimony to the fact that God's Word was given for our instruction in how to live and glorify Him. It is pure folly to claim that any part of our life lies outside the purview and authority of the Scriptures.

What has God established as standards for music, and all else, for His people? Perhaps the answer could be summarized in the words "different" and "better." The evidence for these distinctions is clear from both the Old and New Testaments.

In Leviticus 10, after God had established the ways and means of acceptable worship, Nadab and Abihu departed

from God's ordained order in their effort to make an offering. Judgment followed swiftly and severely.

Psalms 96 and 98 open with the command "O sing unto the Lord a new song." Israel, living in the promised land and surrounded by Gentile nations, is expected to sing a new song, a different song. What is this difference based upon? It is based upon the reason for the song. The verses following the initial call to praise in both psalms give the causes for the call: The Lord is great; other gods are idols, but the Lord created the heavens; He is coming in judgment; He has done marvelous things; He has made known His salvation and righteousness; He has remembered His mercy and truth toward His people, and all the world has seen it. The true child of God can hardly restrain himself from exclaiming "Praise the Lord" after reading such a list. The heathen people around Israel could not understand such glorious truths. Their religions and philosophies were filled with hopelessness. One can imagine what the music borne of such a state must have been like; but the psalmist cries out, "O sing unto the Lord a new song," a song from the hearts and minds of a people chosen by the one true God of all creation to be His own. What similarity or commonality could the songs of Israel have with those of the heathen?

The New Testament maintains these distinctions and heightens them. It is as if a hazy, overcast morning has turned into the burning brilliance of noon. One need only think of Christ's Sermon on the Mount to understand the sharp contrast of the regenerate life compared to the unregenerate.

The apostle Paul continues the theme in Ephesians 4 and 5, where commands for a separated life abound: "walk not as other Gentiles walk" (4:17); "put off concerning the for-

for Music

Doug Bachorik Jr.

mer conversation the old man" (4:22); "be renewed in the spirit of your mind . . . put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (4:23, 24); "be ye therefore followers of God as dear children" (5:1); you are "light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (5:8). This emphasis on the holiness and higher calling of the Christian life reaches a culmination in verse 18, where we see drunkenness (the indwelling of the world) contrasted with the Spirit (the indwelling of God).

It is in this context that we next read, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Can we really claim that all the previous references to and implications of the new life end when we reach verse 19? Does not the work of Christ on the cross radically alter and conform our worship and our lives to the standards of God? Shall God's people continually cry out for the leeks and onions of the old life when He commands that milk and honey be served? Christ and the Christian life are stumbling blocks to the world, but to the believer they are precious; it is with joy and dedication that we should affirm 1 Peter 2:9—"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." Any music that turns the hearer toward the desires or goals of the world has no place in the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Other privileges and responsibilities of the Christian life, such as liberty and evangelism, are completely valid and important, but they do not negate or overshadow the foundational truths of the previous passages. There is no limitation on the glorious change summarized in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

If it is true that the Bible does have something to say about the music sung and heard by God's people, then one may well wonder how solid, Biblical churches have come into such turmoil over music and what can be done about it. It seems that the problems have arisen due to two factors, which can only be summarized here. First, music has been released from Biblical and theological underpinnings. Second, the world has been allowed to have a say in how God's people worship and serve Him.*

Music, as with anything in our lives, is like a ship whose anchor should be lodged on the rock of the Scriptures, not left to be tossed upon the shifting waves of this world. The question remains—how is music secured to a Biblical mooring? Although the answers may seem myriad and complex, I would suggest the following: (1) treat music as a ministry

and (2) re-engage pastors.

Music, according to Colossians 3:16, is a ministry. Perhaps those responsible for decisions about special music, choir numbers, special services, and congregational singing should be selected on the basis of 1 Timothy 3 as well as on musical abilities. Mature spiritual discernment must be the primary criterion. A "young" Christian, no matter how talented, trained, or enthusiastic, is in no position to be asked to make judgments about the music to be used in the public, corporate worship of the church.

Since music is a ministry and a vital aspect of worship, pastors must end the trend toward less involvement and influence. The men with the greatest amount of Scriptural knowledge and wisdom have, for the most part, abdicated their role of shepherd in this area to professional musicians, many of whom lack serious theological training or spiritual understanding. It is time for pastors once again to take up the pen to write texts and to guide their churches into a Biblical philosophy of music.

With the retreat of pastors there has been an increase in the world's influence on the musical choices of the church. Rather than allow publishers and record companies (secular and sacred) to dictate the standards, the church and individual believers must exercise their right and fulfill their responsibility to examine everything in light of the Scriptures (Acts 17:10, 11).

The church must also be careful not to substitute musical entertainment for the preaching of the Word as a way to evangelize. Although music can be used to aid in spreading the gospel, its primary Biblical roles are worship and teaching. Even if evangelism were a primary use of music, that would not justify the abrogation of the principles found in Ephesians 4 and 5. God never contradicts Himself.

Thus we have come full circle. In the final analysis, music, like every other practice or tradition, must be weighed in the balances of the Bible and not in the world's false balances. Our music and our lives must be characterized by our spiritual rebirth; not by the old man, but by everything that is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. "Think on these things."

* Berglund, Robert, *A Philosophy of Music* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 12.

Doug Bachorik Jr., former head of the music department at Fergus Falls Community College in Minnesota, is a now missionary appointee with GFA to the Philippines. This article was first published in a slightly different format in the *North Star Baptist*, January/March 1998, and is used here with permission.

Why Cling to a Conservative Music Standard?

Ministries need a Biblical and philosophical basis for rejecting popular music in favor of conservative, traditional music. The music used in our churches and schools should provide a high-quality, meaningful alternative to the high-pressure worldly influence of popular music. While the text is important, it is by no means the only criterion by which our music should be evaluated. There are at least three general principles to consider.

Making music is essentially an activity of the spirit, not the flesh, and each of us lives with an ongoing battle between the two. We have grown accustomed to making a distinction between "sacred" and "secular" music, a distinction emphasizing only the texts of vocal music or the context for which instrumental music

was written. Scripture distinguishes between the spiritual and the sensual. Galatians 5:17 says, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Ephesians 5:18 and 19 admonish us to "be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

Too many of us select our music on the basis of carnal enjoyment rather than spiritual edification. When we criticize our traditional church music as "boring," we reveal a great deal about our spiritual condition. What we call "exciting" or "boring" usually has little or nothing to do with its spiritual content and everything to do with our physical response to the music. We reveal ourselves to be carnal Christians if we



Paul W. Downey

make our personal likes and dislikes the only criteria for determining what music we listen to.

The Scriptures abound with passages exhorting us to use music in our worship. (Ps. 100:2; Col. 3:16) Even instrumental music serves a spiritual purpose (2 Chron. 5:13, 14).

Numerous studies have indicated music's power to influence the spirit. David Merrill, a high school student in Suffolk, Virginia, experimented with the effects of music on mice. He took 72 mice and divided them into three groups: one to test a mouse's response to hard rock, another to the music of Mozart, and a control group that would listen to no music. He played music ten hours each day. He put each mouse through a maze three times a week that originally had taken the mice an average of 10 minutes to complete. The control mice cut their time to

about half. The mice listening to Mozart cut their time by 85%, to an average of only 1.5 minutes. The group listening to rock music tripled their time to an average of 30 minutes. This was the second time Merrill had tried the experiment. The first time he had allowed all the mice in each group to stay together. "I had to cut my project short because all the hard-rock mice killed each other," he said. "None of the classical mice did that" (*Insight*, Sept. 8, 1997).

An article in *Reader's Digest* ("Music's Surprising Power to Heal," August 1992) told of a surgical team in Cleveland's St. Luke's Hospital using classical music to help relax the patient, reduce staff tension in the operating room, and reduce the amount of anesthesia needed by the patient. Others in the medical profession using soothing music as part of their treatment strategy include Tallahassee Memorial Regional

Medical Center (in the newborn ICU) and Dr. Raymond Bahr of Baltimore's St. Agnes Hospital (in the coronary care unit). Others are using it to treat pain; anxiety; depression; mental, emotional, and physical handicaps; and neurological disorders. The University of Georgia now offers a degree in Music Therapy. Advertisers use music to create interest in a product and to boost sales. Businesses use music to influence behavior. The world at large knows that music has a powerful impact on one's mind and spirit.

Clearly, music evokes an emotional response. People insist that others have no right to tell them what music they ought to like. Of course, one's enjoyment of tobacco does nothing to reduce its damaging effects, any more than enjoyment of alcohol makes it less dangerous. David's sin with Bath-sheba is not mitigated by the fact that she was attractive. Why then do we think that music should be evaluated only on the basis of its entertainment value? The very strength of the emotion leading to such illogical conclusions ought to warn us to be careful in our music.

A significant part of the problem is that we have forgotten the reality of the Devil's enmity. We know that he is the father of lies (John 8:44) and that he seeks our destruction (1 Pet. 5:8). We tend to forget that he appears as "an angel of light" and a minister of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:13–15). It is foolish to assume that we would immediately recognize the Devil's music and that we would not like it.

Everything we do, including our music, is to be done for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). This principle applies whether we are at church, at home, or driving down the road. If we are selecting our music to bring glory to God, then it is our responsibility to choose only music that reflects the character of a holy God. God has commanded that we evaluate everything in creation in the light of His revealed Word, clinging to the good and abstaining from evil wherever we find it (1 Thess. 5:21). It is on the basis of this principle that we reject many activities that would feed fleshly lusts.

It should follow that we would select only music that would make us better and reject any that might bring us harm. But in this area we tend to argue that there is no way to evaluate music objectively. We ignore the teaching of Scripture. Instead of looking outward to *inform* our taste, we look inward to clarify or *discover* our taste. Instead of trying to develop a taste for that which is good, we insist on doing that which pleases ourselves. We have made our desires the final authority by which we measure what we will accept. *The primary purpose of our music must be to please God, not ourselves.*

The world seems to recognize intuitively the Biblical principle of the clean and the unclean (Hag. 2:12–14). It is professing Christians, not unbelievers, who try to argue that you can use any kind of music as long as it has Christian words. But Paul tells us that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (2 Cor. 10:4). Paul also warned against those who try to evangelize by using

*Everything
we do,
including
our music,
is to be done
for the glory
of God.*

The Center of Our Music

Brad McKenzie

Recently, while preparing the walls and ceilings of our house for painting and papering, I have gained additional experience with an electric sander. In fact, one of three sanders I have used literally fell apart through frequent use. This enabled me for the first time to look at the mechanism, normally hidden above the sanding surface, which causes the machine to vibrate. It is simple, actually. There is a weight in the machine on the order of a flywheel that rotates at a high speed. What causes the vibrating, however, is the fact that the flywheel does not rotate on its center of gravity. The rotation point within the sander is intentionally off-center, which generates a violent jerking, and which in time, as I discovered, can also be self-destructive.

What is appropriate for an electric sander that is designed to shake would be undesirable for any machine designed to run smoothly—say, for instance, an electric plane, a router, or a drill.

Not long ago I read an article in a regional paper in which the pastor of a prominent church was calling, for the most part atheistic people, to return to "the center" of their community, to the church. The church, he said, provides a much-needed "center" of social activity, a "center" for concerts, a "center" of child care, as well as a visual "center" with its towering steeple. Unfortunately, in the article there was no mention of Him, who by design should be at the center of people's lives: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17).

Is it not true that God has often been pushed more than just a little to the side by something which itself is not far off-center, the church? God intends for the church He has called into existence to direct the attention and praises of people to Himself (1 Pet. 2:9). Any church, however, which itself becomes the center of attention—an end in itself, and not a means to "the End" (Rev. 1:8, 13; 2:1)—is itself not in balance, and so cannot cause the lives of its parishioners to be in balance.

Let us return God and His Son Jesus Christ to the center of our lives, our churches, and yes—even of our church music—where He belongs, lest we discover too late that a slight aberration from the "Center" was indeed earth-shaking, and has caused our lives and churches to fall apart.

Bradley McKenzie is a Gospel Fellowship Association Mission church planter in Magdeburg, Germany, where he has served since 1994. Brad and his wife, Krischa, are pianists and instruct five of their seven children in piano. Brad has lectured repeatedly in Germany on Christ-honoring music.

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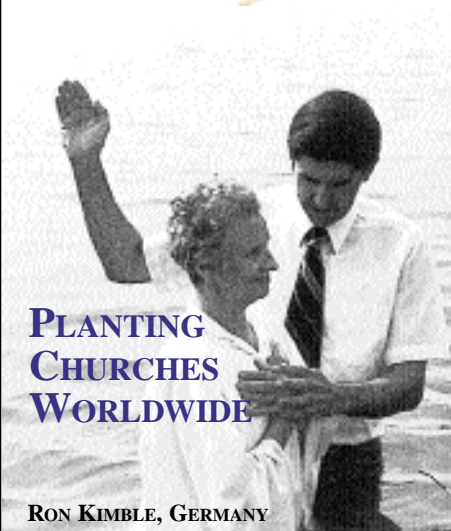


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Dr. Fred Moritz, Executive Director

"enticing words" rather than preaching (1 Cor. 2:4 with 1:21). We are not to use illegitimate means to spread the gospel on the grounds that they will attract a crowd. You could do the same with a circus or a belly dancer. You do not make pornography "Christian" by adding Bible verses to obscene pictures.

An incident in the life of King David vividly illustrates the importance of doing God's work God's way. David wanted to return the ark of the covenant to the tabernacle (1 Chron. 13). The book of Leviticus had given details of how it was to be moved, but David imitated the Philistine method of transporting it by oxcart—a seemingly more practical and efficient medium. However, when he used the Philistine method, it cost a man his life. While they thought they were being successful, making rapid progress toward the tabernacle, they found that God was not pleased. Too many are making excuses for using Philistine music to move God's work forward.

God has told us what should occupy our minds: that which is true, honest, pure, lovely, and of good report; "if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). The word "music" is based on the root "to muse" or "to meditate." It is a medium of communication designed to cause one to ponder, think, or meditate upon a message. Thus, a more common term for a singer or songwriter used to be "muse." And Philippians 4:8 has told us what we are to "muse" upon.

Our music, then, must be excellent music, true music, honest music, righteous music, pure music, beautiful music, reputable music, virtuous music, and praiseworthy music. We should neither waste our time or talents nor harm our spirits with music that is false, dishonest, unrighteous, impure, ugly, disreputable, licentious, or shameful. We must not ask, "Will this music appeal to sinful men?" but "Is this music acceptable to a holy God?"

The fact that much of Israel's music was purely instrumental is also important. Just as music need not have a sensual text to be sensual music, neither must it have a "spiritual" text in order to be spiritual music. To glorify God the music itself must be excellent (cf. Phil. 1:10a) in the technical aspects of

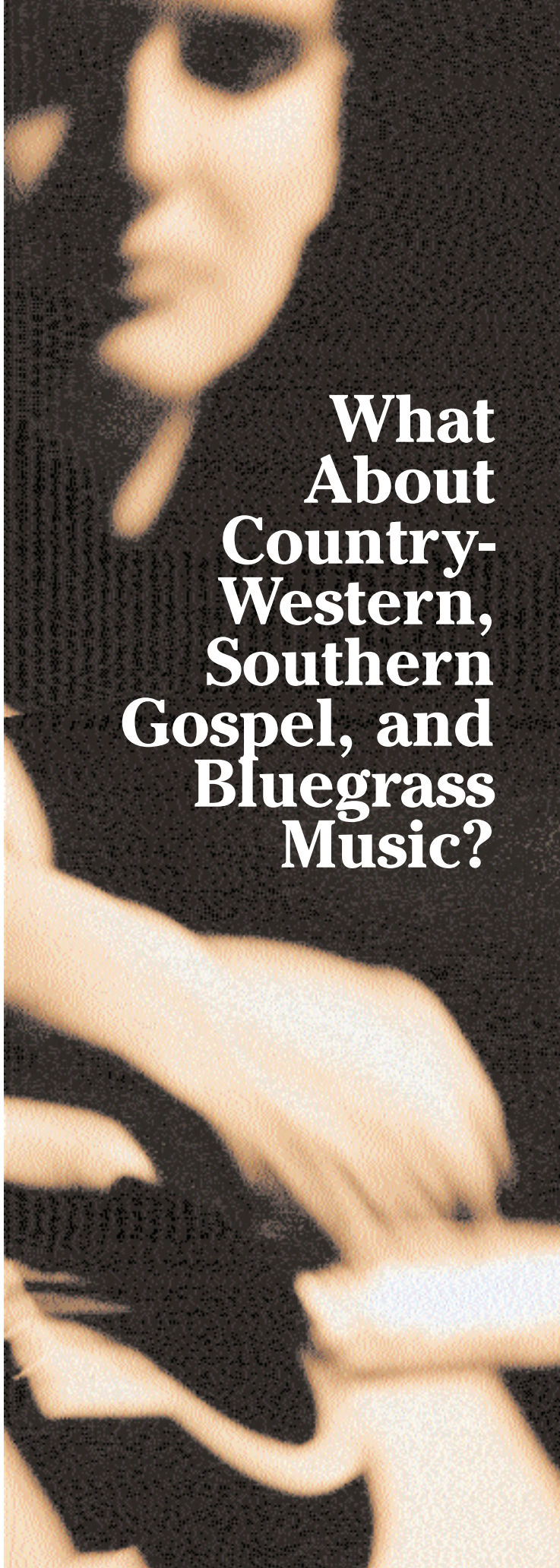
melody, harmony, and rhythm, without having an inordinate sensual appeal.

When we add Christian words to sensual music we create a musical double-entendre. It has been estimated that the words we say communicate seven percent of the message, our tone of voice communicates 28 percent of the message, and nonverbal signals communicate 65 percent of the message. When our words agree with our tone of voice and nonverbal signals, clear and good communication occurs. When our words do not agree with our tone of voice and/or nonverbal signals, we create confusion. The listener decides you are being either dishonest or sarcastic and believes the tone and nonverbal message while rejecting the misleading words. That is precisely the point being made by Nick Tosches in "Good Golly Miss Molly: Sex in Popular Music" (*Vanity Fair*, April 1983). Commenting on the Beatles' "I Wanna Hold Your Hand," he said their "tone belied the niceness of the lyrics—they asked to hold milady's hand in the manner that a street thief might ask to hold one's wallet—and their music reflected nothing less than the collective [sexuality] of four . . . boys in their early twenties."

When our music expresses a sensual message through tone of voice and nonverbal communication, adding words that are spiritual does not make the music spiritual. Rather, it makes a mockery of the message by adding the understood "not" of sarcasm or the obvious hypocrisy of words that say one thing while everything else communicates a contrary message. Ultimately, the message communicated is the message of the music, not the text.

We need to stop trying to convince God that He ought to accept the music we love, and begin allowing God to teach us to love that music which brings Him glory. All of our music, whether it is for public performance or private enjoyment, must be evaluated in the light of these principles. We will give an account to a holy God for the choices we make and the influence we exert. May He be pleased to say of our choices, "Well done."

Dr. Paul W. Downey is pastor of Temple Baptist Church in Athens, Georgia, and is a co-author of *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man: A Layman's Guide to How We Got Our Bible*.



What About Country-Western, Southern Gospel, and Bluegrass Music?

Historic musical art forms are known to us in these familiar terms: classical, folk, and popular (pop). An understanding of these terms is essential to grasp the full picture of what is happening in our culture today.

The first term, classical, refers to music or art that has intrinsic value or worthiness based on *objective* beauty. A phrase used to describe classical art is “art for art’s sake.” The term “classical” refers to works of high culture (e.g., classical music, classical art, classical drama). In order to write classical music, composers had to be thoroughly educated—training for years while studying their art. This is why classical music stands the test of time. It is still heard in concert halls because it is built on objective principles of excellence. In a broad sense, this music was written for beauty and symmetry of form, not merely to please an audience.

“Folk” refers to music with a social emphasis. There is a clear social bond among the musicians and the audience, a common bond of belief or outlook—fellowship. It has been described as music or art “made by people who know each other for people who know each other”¹ and is used in a social sense to bring the community together. Folk music is characterized by its simplicity. It is the music of the common people, which historically have not had the benefit of formal or extensive education. Folk music is written and performed with the audience in mind; its ultimate goal is wholesome community rather than artistic beauty. Folk songs endure as an art form even though they reflect the cultural changes taking place on a broad scale. Folk music is simple and honest—both in secular and sacred music. (The *gospel song* is the most common sacred folk style.)

Both classical and folk are art forms that provide examples of worthwhile music to enjoy and inspire. Leonard Payton contrasts them by saying,

It is important to recognize that high culture [classical] has its roots in aesthetics; folk culture has its roots in sociology. Comparing them is like comparing apples and oranges. They are both good when done well, and the canons of what is “good” are quite different for the two types. The Bible has a good deal more to say about folk culture than high culture, because folk culture is inextricably based in interpersonal relationships.²

But when we come to the third term, popular (pop) music, we find “an imposter and a parasite because it is based in deceit.”³ Pop music borrows liberally from classical and folk forms, but it is grounded in covetousness. It is a product, produced to sell for financial profit—its value is not intrinsic, it is commercial. “The artist is not held accountable to God for a transcendent standard of beauty, nor to a local community with ethical responsibility.”⁴ His only accountability is marketability.

Pop music is neither written nor marketed to make us better people. Rock idols are not selling their recordings for the “good of the community.” Since whatever sells is

the goal—the lust for money finds its market in the lusts of consumers—ultimately, selfishness is the motive. Thus, pop performers reject appeals for propriety or restraint in their music. They cry “censorship” at the first hint of objective judgment, and refuse any standard that makes them accountable to anything but sales figures.

In this context let’s address the question: What about country-western, southern gospel, and bluegrass music? Whatever style of music we refer to, it is essential to clarify whether we mean the original folk style or the pop style. For example, there is a folk style that has existed for generations which has been identified by the term “country” or “country and western” music, and there is much that is wholesome about it. But today there is a hybrid form of original folk music infused with the prevailing pop style: rock. The result is pop country, which represents a huge segment of the pop music market.

There is a simple southern folk gospel style that has existed for generations. There are many examples of this folk music in our hymnals today such as “Amazing Grace” and “Brethren, We Have Met to Worship.” But worthwhile folk gospel music is far removed from the southern gospel style that exists today—again a hybrid form of the original folk style mixed with the prevailing pop style: rock.

One college music appreciation textbook states that “rock [music] should be understood both as a style (with many substyles) and as an era in popular music—an era in which a diversity of musical types have flourished.”⁵ It is appropriate, therefore, to speak of rock in a specific sense as a style of music, but also a form that has invaded virtually all prevailing styles in this era. The rock idiom has invaded jazz, country and western, gospel, southern gospel, and bluegrass. Even though there is historic and legitimate folk music in these styles, we must discern the corrupting influences of rock.

The rock idiom is hard to define. Not many textbooks will tackle the subject. A reasonable description of the rock idiom includes: (1) a unique use of and emphasis on the dance beat, especially utilizing the backbeat or breakbeat; (2) an emphasis on the amplification of the bass/rhythm instruments, including the trap set and bass guitar; (3) a performance style which emphasizes the performer more than the song; and (4) a style of singing which is built on sensual clichés (e.g., scooping, sliding, wailing, screaming, or cooing). There are several offshoots of these elements which apply to a broad spectrum of popular music, whether we call it country, rock, southern gospel, or jazz.

The *Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock and Roll* describes the evolution of country music to rock.⁶

This is not to say that everything is okay about “old” country—discernment is essential with any style of music. But when a Christian chooses to listen to today’s pop country hits, he must not only tolerate questionable and even wicked lyrics, he also subjects himself to the fleshly influence of the rock backbeat—the same incessant throb of mainstream pop. Traditional country really wasn’t “cool.” Only when it became country rock did it begin to enjoy its modern popularity. The following quotations

made mostly by country performers, or others describing country music, explain this. Notice the comparison of country with rock and the prevailing theme of sensuality. In each quotation, emphasis has been added.⁷

As a country artist, I’m not proud of a lot of things in my field. **There is no doubt in my mind that we are contributing to the moral decline in America.** (Conway Twitty; *People*, 3 September 1979, p. 82)

Many rock performers grew up with country-and-western music, and its characteristic forms and sounds are close to the ensemble sound of rock—instrumental combinations and techniques are closely parallel . . . **The division between country-and-western and urban pop has now blurred almost to vanishing.** (William J. Schafer, *Rock Music* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972], p. 92)

Today rock [is] inescapable. Country music? **Middlebrow rock with pedal steel veneer:** Reba McEntire could use **the same sterile jackboot drum tracks** as Aerosmith or Snoop Doggy Dogg. (David Gates, “Twenty-Five Years Later, We’re Living in a Woodstock Nation,” *Newsweek*, 8 August 1994, p. 44)

Most of the [Country Club band] have played with Tritt since the honky-tonk days, and the contrast between those dives and this space-age stage is as great as that between the bluegrass they played then and **the country rock they pound out now.** (Claudia Glenn Dowling, “Travis Tritt Takes Country Into the Future,” *Life* [Collector’s Edition: *The Roots of Country Music*], 1 September 1994, p. 78)

Country lyrics have always intimated **sex and promiscuous affairs.** The backstreets to romance have always been a part of country music. (Charlie Monk, head of April-Blackwood’s Nashville division; *Billboard*, 11 October 1980, p. 32)

The country music of today is really the ’50s rock and roll—the music we had back then. (Little Richard, *Live With Regis and Kathie Lee*, 10 November 1994)

[Conway Twitty’s] burly voice combined a trademark growl with a **seductive** purr, promising a behind-closed-doors blend of sensitivity and sensuality. (*Rolling Stone*, 5 August 1993, p. 27)

I used to be a heavy drinker, drinking my way from middle-class bars to Skid Row. I *always* listened to country music. And with that self-wallowing twang, it’s a natural mood depressant. The correlation is there—**country western music and drinking go hand in hand.** (Dr. James M. Schaefer, Director, University of Minnesota Office of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Programming;

Us, 31 March 1981, p. 12.)

One word, **the only way I can describe it**—and I apologize for this—it's **sex**. (Garth Brooks's answer to "How do you describe what you do?" *Barbara Walters Special*, ABC, 29 March 1993)

If Chet [Atkins] hadn't **married twang to a drum kit, producing a far more commercial sound**, where would the industry be today? Well, it would be someplace that might make hillbilly-music puritans happy, but it sure wouldn't be on TV, on radios everywhere, in department stores, on Letterman and in special commemorative issues of national magazines that are published by big multinational corporations based in New York City. For all this we can thank, or blame, Chet. (Charles Hirshberg and Robert Sullivan, "The 100 Most Important People in the History of Country," *Life [Collector's Edition: The Roots of Country Music]*, 1 September 1994, p. 22)

Is this really what we want to expose ourselves or our children to? Is it any wonder that so many Christian teenagers refuse to give up their rock when their parents won't give up their country? Teenagers recognize that the basic sound and presentation of rock and country vary little. Both are pop styles which have been inundated with the rock idiom.

The same answer applies to the present gospel or southern gospel music. No matter how pure its roots may have been, southern gospel has succumbed to the same market-driven philosophy. It has borrowed from the rock idiom and has become just another subset of pop music. Yes, it does sound different from other rock genres, and the words (at times) may be good, but its reliance on sensual rock idioms is evident. Sensuality in any style is incompatible with the Christian walk—walking in the Spirit.

Endnotes

¹ Leonard Payton, "How Shall We Sing to God?," taken from John Armstrong, ed., *The Coming Evangelical Crisis* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), p. 197. Note: The author is indebted to Mr. Payton for many thoughts contained in this explanation.

² Ibid., p. 198.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 199.

⁵ Ronald Byrnside, *Music, Sound and Sense* (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Publishers, 1985), p. 334.

⁶ Jon Pareles and Patricia Romanowski, ed., *The Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock & Roll* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), p. 124.

⁷ Thanks to David Warren who assisted in compiling these quotations.

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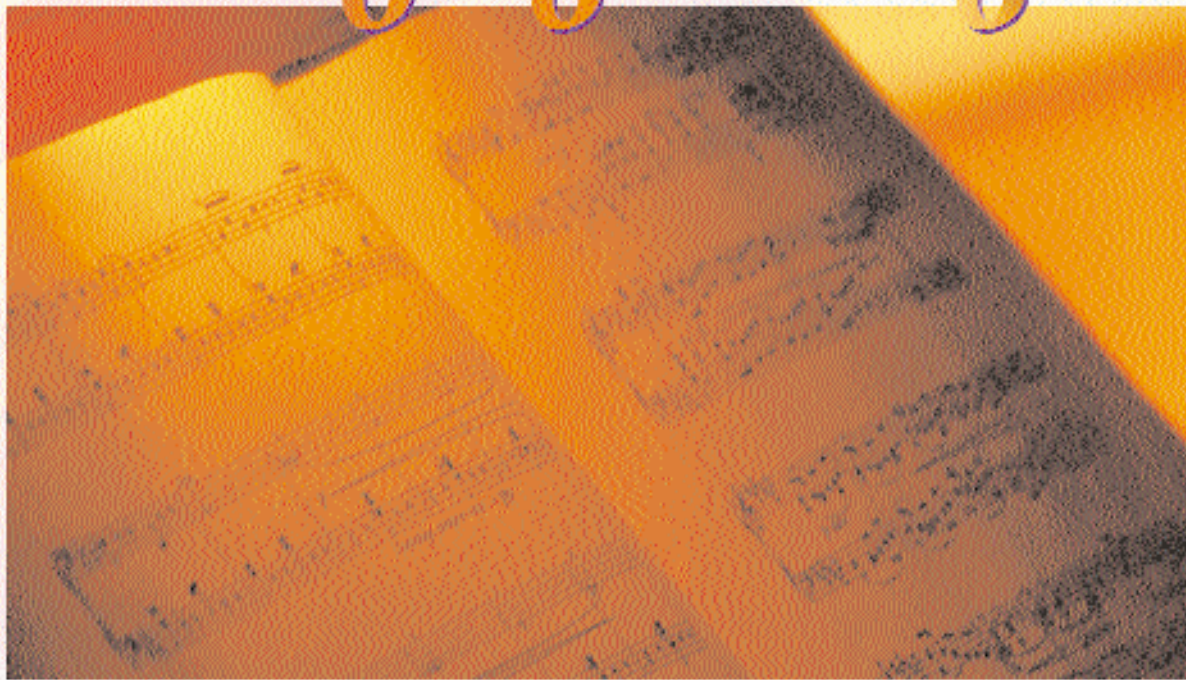
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Ministering in Music or Just Singing a Song?



Bonnie Oberg

When I was 11 years old, the pastor of our very small church asked me to sing a solo for the evening service. I'm not sure why he took that chance on an 11-year-old girl, but he did. I squeaked through the song and started to sit down, feeling totally embarrassed. He stopped me in my tracks and made me get up there and do it all over again. By then I had more confidence, and it went better. I didn't know much about singing, and certainly nothing about ministry, but that was the start of my ministry of singing for the Lord. Since that time I have sung many times and have picked up a few things along the way. Here are a few practical suggestions to help distinguish between truly ministering and just singing a song.

Your Heart

The first and foremost consideration is your own spiritual condition. This is an absolutely essential component if you

are going to minister. It is understood that you are a born-again believer in Jesus Christ as your Savior, but is there any sin in your heart that would hinder the Spirit's working? God may choose to minister in spite of a dirty vessel, but why should that even be an option? This is one of the reasons I am so thankful that God has given me a ministry of singing—it constrains me to confess my sins and walk the straight and narrow path. Make sure you are a Spirit-filled singer.

Choice of Music

Pray over and think through your choice of music. I have gone through many pieces of music only to reject them and start over. The music must be God-honoring. The melody, harmony, accompaniment, and whole structure of the piece should be interesting enough to compel people to listen. It should also be simple enough that people can follow the melody and "get it" upon first hearing. The accompaniment

should not overwhelm the words. The music should go hand in hand with the words. The words are all-important. You are communicating divine truth!

The best pieces are, of course, straight Scripture. But finding the right tune to fit the Scripture is sometimes difficult. Also consider the occasion for which you will be singing. Is it a church picnic? An evening evangelistic service? A morning worship service? At our church, for instance, the soloist's special music in the morning worship service should be about the person or work of Jesus Christ. A soloist who truly communicates can have a profound impact on the service. Singing about the Lord is a good goal for every service, not just for Sunday morning. Testimonial songs are fine, but they tend to focus on what the Lord has done for *me*. Do not make man the focus. Sing about the Lord, not about yourself.

Be selective. A lot of music out there has a nugget of truth in it and repeats that nugget over and over—and that is about all. If the words do not have enough “meat” in them, look for something with a message that some people can hold on to and take home with them.

Be sensitive to the Spirit's leading. Many times a certain song will go through my head for months. I pray about it and ask the Lord if He would have me sing it for the next special. Many times the answer is yes. Sometimes the music is chosen for you. Sometimes the season narrows your choice. If it is six days before Christmas, everyone expects a Christmas song. Usually, however, you have to make the choice. Choose prayerfully a song that will genuinely minister.

Choice of Accompanist

The accompanist can make or break your special number, so choose one who is right with the Lord and has a servant's heart. If you want to do a key-change at the end of verse two, for instance, make sure your pianist can do one and do it well. The accompaniment should complement the singer and not vice-versa. Other instruments besides piano are a welcome addition to a special number and can add a variety and beauty that enhances the message, provided they are not overpowering. Don't forget that sometimes an *a cappella* piece (or even singing one stanza *a cappella*) can be effective in conveying the message.

Enunciation

This needs special emphasis. We have all heard someone sing an absolutely gorgeous rendition of some song—but many of the words were unintelligible. The words matter most, for they minister truth. (Even instrumentalists can minister more effectively if they think about the words and color the tone while playing.) Open your mouth! Enunciate! Make the words clear. Finish the ends of the words. If you have to, sacrifice some of the roundness of the tone to communicate the truths.

Facial Expression

In singing as in speaking, facial expression is an important element in accurate interpretation and effective communication. “You mean contorting my face?” you ask. Well, maybe not “contorting,” though it may feel as if you are doing that if you are not used to it. *Make your face match the words*. I would suggest practicing diligently in front of a large mirror. Be hard

on yourself. This is *not* about “performance” or “theatrics.” This is about ministry. If the text says, “O sacred Head, now wounded, / With grief and shame weighed down,” you should not be smiling gleefully. If it says, “I've found a Friend, oh such a Friend,” you should not look as if you'd just lost your best friend. Don't go overboard; that in itself can distract from the message of the music. Find a good balance. When you are singing as a member of the congregation, practice really thinking about the words and moving your facial muscles to agree with the statements of the song. If you minister in a choir, that is an excellent place to practice and develop this communication technique, since you are already ministering the words.

Familiarity with Your Piece

It would be wonderful if I had the time to memorize every line of every song I have ever sung. Memorization is always best, and if you can memorize, by all means do so. Since that is not always practical for me, I have adopted the “familiarity method.” I meditate on my song and sometimes type out the words so I can refer to them often. I also add breath marks where needed and practice the piece quite a bit. I plunk out the notes on the piano and go over it in different ways (just the melody line, just playing the piano part, just playing the chords). Recording and replaying your song on a tape will also help work out any problems you may have with the piece. The more comfortable I feel with a piece of music, the less likely I will be to slip on the words or the notes or the rhythm. I will just need to glance down occasionally so I can maintain eye contact with the congregation. Preparedness is a major key in unlocking the difference between having a real ministry and just singing a song. (Note to music directors: Be sure to give your singers plenty of notice for adequate preparation—preferably at least two to three weeks.)

Prayer

Not long ago I had an exceptional answer to prayer. In the middle of my year-long struggle with allergies, I was scheduled to sing. The only problem was that I did not have much of a voice. I prayed and prayed, but things did not look very good on the day before. By then it was too late to call for a substitute. The Lord's Day morning came and I still did not have much of a voice. In fact, I was cracking and breaking through the congregational songs, but still praying. I got up to sing and the Lord wonderfully helped me through it. Not one crack distracted from the message. The great God I sang about is *real*. He does answer our pleas.

Pray over your song. Pray over your time to minister. Pray for the people receiving it. Pray for your pastor and the message he will bring. Pray for the entire service. This is serious business! Souls are at stake. The Lord's honor is at stake. God's pleasure is our aim. It could be that your ministry will touch someone's heart and show him the Savior whom he may not know. If you view special music as just singing a song, prayer will change your perspective.

Bonnie Oberg, a wife and mother of three, is an active member of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.

There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood

William Cowper (1731–1800)

Vicki Johnson

William Cowper (pronounced Cooper), one of England's most beloved and revered poet laureates, struggled throughout his life in the deep sea of mental illness. His literary achievements as a poet, translator, and letter writer brought him worldly fame, but his contributions as a hymn writer brought glory to the God whom he loved and served.

Cowper was born in 1731 in Hertfordshire, England. His father was a pastor and chaplain to King George II. When William was six years old his mother died, leaving him traumatized and ill prepared to face the rough experiences awaiting him at boarding school.

Cowper excelled in areas of scholarship. Though Cowper attended Westminster School, he accumulated little knowledge of true Christianity. A dark cloud of depression punctuated the pessimism with which he struggled during his academic career.

Cowper's father pushed him into a law career, and Cowper later remarked, "I was bred to the law, a profession to which I never had much inclination." Soon after his 21st birthday, violent attacks of melancholia set in. Then his father died; his stepmother died; his best friend drowned. Standing on the precipice of complete despair, Cowper plunged headlong into full insanity caused by an impending public examination prior to his taking a position as Clerk of the Journals of the House of Lords. The dread of this procedure overtook him, and he tried several times to take his own life. The failed suicide attempts heightened his sense of guilt and oppression, and Cowper found himself in darkness, overcome with feelings of being under God's wrath.

Following William's mental collapse, his brother entrusted him to the care of a private mental asylum in London for 18 months. During his stay at the asylum, Cowper began reading the Bible for comfort. On one such occasion, sitting down in a chair and picking up the Word, he read the first verses that the pages opened to—Romans 3:25, 26: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Upon reading these words, Cowper understood that Christ's atoning sacrifice sufficiently covered his own sin. He recalled the moment—"I could only look up to heaven in silent fear, overwhelmed with love and wonder."

Following his release from the asylum, Cowper resolved to leave London and the corrupting influence of society which he felt had contributed to his illness. He made the acquaintance of Morley Unwin in Huntingdon and took up residence with this minister and his family in 1765. Two years later, Mr. Unwin died, and Cowper and the Unwin family moved to the village of Olney at the request of John Newton.

Cowper gained Newton's devoted friendship during his years at Olney. Because the Olney parish was a large one,

Newton took on Cowper as his assistant to help him meet the needs of his parishioners, and Cowper delighted in visiting the sick and poor and in helping with village prayer meetings. While Cowper enjoyed the healing power of Newton's friendship, it was not enough to keep him from slipping back into mental darkness. To help bring his friend out of the gloom, Newton suggested they collaborate on hymn writing.

In 1770, Cowper wrote a hymn based on of Zechariah 13:1: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." "There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood" paints a vivid picture of Christ's atoning blood and God's forgiveness. The words of this edifying hymn are sung today by believers who find assurance and comfort in the cleansing fountain springing forth from Calvary—as did William Cowper.

THERE IS A FOUNTAIN FILLED WITH BLOOD (as found in *Olney Hymns*)

There is a fountain fill'd with blood
Drawn from EMMANUEL'S veins;
And sinners, plung'd beneath that flood,
Loose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoic'd to see
That fountain in his day;
And there have I, as vile as he,
Wash'd all my sins away.

Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its pow'r;
Till all the ransom'd church of God
Be sav'd, to sin no more.

E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply:
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

Then in a nobler sweeter song
I'll sing thy pow'r to save;
When this poor lisping, stamm'ring tongue
Lies silent in the grave.

LORD, I believe thou hast prepar'd
(Unworthy tho' I be)
For me a blood-bought free reward,
A golden harp for me!

'Tis strung, and tun'd, for endless years,
And form'd by pow'r divine;
To sound, in GOD the Father's ears,
No other name but Thine.

Vicki Johnson is a freelance writer living in Madison, Alabama.

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FBF National Meeting Report

This year's national meeting held June 13–15 at Faith Baptist Church in Taylors, South Carolina, was one of the best-attended in recent memory, with attendance nearing 1000 people. There were several hundred paid registrants from all over the U.S. and many foreign countries. More than 300 attended the Leadership Luncheon on June 14 to hear FBF chaplain Gary Fisher give an exciting report of the opportunities the Lord has given him in the Army, and to be challenged by Dr. Dave Jaspers, president of Maranatha Baptist Bible College.

On June 13 three men received special recognition from FBF President Dr. Rod Bell. Dr. Bob Jones III received an "In Defense of Religious Liberty" award for "courage while defending religious liberty in the face of overwhelming hostility and antagonism, and for the gracious spirit with which he has represented Fundamentalists all over the world." A "Torchbearer's Award"

was presented to Dr. Phil Kissinger "in appreciation for his strong Scriptural leadership, his faithfulness to the fundamentals of the faith, and his personal sacrifice in contending for the faith." Dr. James Singleton was recognized "for his faithfulness and perseverance through adverse circumstances, having been a testimony to all who have known and observed him."

Using the FBF Directory

Many are finding the FBF directory to be a wonderful tool. People use it for contacting friends, to find good churches when traveling, and for many other purposes. Missionaries also use it to contact pastors when doing deputation work. A few, however, have apparently contacted everyone in the directory, assuming that they were all pastors. This has resulted in some people asking that their names not appear in the directory because they received letters from missionaries wanting meetings. Remember, FBF membership is not limited to pastors or other full-time workers, so please use discretion when contacting those listed in the directory.

Other people are using the directory for commercial purposes. They contact FBF members with sales promotions and may even mention their own FBF membership. The FBF, however, does not endorse any business or service. If you are using the FBF directory for business purposes, please do not mention the FBF in any of your sales promotions.

Directory Errata

Under "Ministry Resources" on page viii of the FBF directory, "Catholics Evangelizing Catholics" should be "Christians Evangelizing Catholics."

Meetings

October 24

Northeast Region

Marriott Hotel, Farmington, CT
For information call
Trinity Baptist Church
Concord, NH
(603) 225-3999

October 30–31

Satellite Meeting

Bible Baptist Church
3109 Sweeten Creek Road
Asheville, NC 28803
(828) 684-1397

November 2–3

Southwest Region

Northwest Baptist Church
402 San Clemente N.W.
Albuquerque, NM 87107
(505) 450-2556

November 9–10

California Region

Calvary Baptist Church
160 Seaside Court
Marina, CA 93933
(831) 384-7743

November 13–14

California Region

Fundamental Baptist Church
111 N. Ash Street
Escondido, CA 92907

November 13–14

Mid-America Region

Bethel Baptist Church
200 N. Roselle Road
Schaumburg, IL 60194
(847) 885-3230

November 16–17

Southwest Region

Northwest Valley Baptist Church
4030 West Yorkshire Dr.
Glendale, AZ 85308
(623) 581-3115

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Maranatha Baptist Bible College
745 West Main Street, Watertown, WI 53094
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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

Rising Above Familiarity with the Sublime

Early morning . . . the warm glow of the lamp falls on the opened Bible in my lap. Steam curls up invitingly from the mug in my hand. It's the quietest it will be all day, and something deep in my spirit reaches out expectantly toward these treasured moments with my Bible. But the pages to which I've turned seem almost too familiar today. I could quote some of their verses perfectly. Others I could finish with just a word or two out of place. Some I've taught or preached through more than once. All of them I've read over many times.

In his classic on the ministry, *The Preacher: His Life and Work*, John Henry Jowett called what I'm struggling with this morning a special peril of the preacher. He termed it a "deadening familiarity with the sublime."

I think this is one of the most insidious and perhaps the predominant peril in a preacher's life. A man may live in mountain-country and lose all sense of the heights. And that is a terrible impoverishment, when mountain-country comes to have the ordinary significance of the plains. The preacher . . . lives almost every hour in sight of the immensities and the eternities. . . . But here is the possible tragedy: he may live in constant sight of these tremendous presences and may cease to see them.

Several years ago I came across a message preached by the English pastor Thomas Watson that solves this problem: "How We May Read the Scriptures

with Most Spiritual Profit."

It amounts to a kind of personal inventory of the factors necessary to be able to really feed on even very familiar passages. It proved to be so helpful that I condensed its points down to a single

Bible-page-sized sheet for my people at church. Some subsequently laminated the sheet and have resorted to it regularly for readjusting a frequently skewed focus. Here, with some editing and additional applications to preachers, are the ways Watson gave his people fresh eyes for the Bible's familiar passages.

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

The Heart's the Place to Start

(1) **Prepare your heart.** A heart is an instrument which needs conscious tuning. This is particularly the case when it is employed in any spiritual discipline. The hymn writer felt himself constrained to plead, "Tune my heart to sing Thy praise." Part of my problem this morning, therefore, may lie more in an untuned heart than in an overly familiar Bible. How can I adjust it to embrace God's Word?

Over 2400 years ago a scribe enjoyed God's good hand upon his life to an unusual degree (Ezra 7:9). The Holy Spirit was concerned that preachers know why. "For," He informs us in the next verse, "Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD." The word translated "prepare" means to form or fashion something so that it is fixed and firm. Picture this man, this devoted scribe, rising with the dawn and taking, as it were, his heart in his two hands to form and fashion it for ransacking an ancient scroll of Deuteronomy or a parchment page of one of David's psalms.

This kind of fashioning, according to Watson, consists first in summoning our thoughts together to attend to that solemn work we are going about. Thoughts are stragglers; therefore, rally them together. Secondly, we must purge out those

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unclean affections which indispose us to reading. Before we come to the water of life, let us cast away the poison of impure affections. This purging is so critical that it must be developed in a major point of its own.

(2) Remove those things which will hinder. Evict the love of every sin. A physician may prescribe ever-so-good remedies, but if the patient takes poison, it will hinder the virtue and the operation of the medication. In addition, we must weed out those thorns that choke the Word. These thorns our Savior expounds to be the cares of this world (Matt. 13:22). A man with such cares, Watson explains, has his eye upon the Bible but his heart upon the world.

What are the “cares of this world”? In His magisterial Sermon on the Mount our Lord was specifying these when He warned against “taking thought” (a form of the same word “care”) for our food, drink, clothing, and future (Matt. 6:25–34). Our morning Bible reading is the acid test of the extent to which we practice conscious obedience to this simple command. If we are worrying over earthly things, even in

with the commands I find there,” he decided when he was finally at the end of himself. “God who revealed it, and sees my sincerity . . . will undoubtedly assist me, and enable me to understand it by degrees.” We all know God’s response to Newton. We must likewise come, Watson said, as Naaman to the waters of Jordan, to be healed of our leprosy.

(5) Leave not reading until you find your heart warmed. Let it not only inform but inflame you. Go not from it until you can say with the disciples, “Did not our heart burn within us?” (Luke 24:32).

This was George Mueller’s own spiritual secret. Once he saw the critical need for reading until his heart was affected, it changed his approach to the morning devotional hour.

It has pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, the benefit of which I have not lost for more than fourteen years. The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever that the first great primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord. . . . My practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing, to give myself to prayer after having dressed myself in the morning. Now, I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God, and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov’d, instructed; and that thus, by means of the Word of God, whilst meditating on it, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord.

The Dependence to Have

(6) Pray that God will make you profit. Pray David’s prayer, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Ps. 119:18). Implore the guidance of God’s Spirit. “Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them” (Neh. 9:20). Though the ship has a compass to sail by, and a store of tackling, yet without a gale of wind it cannot sail; though we have the Word written as our compass to sail by, and make use of our endeavors as the tackling, yet unless the Spirit of God blow upon us, we cannot sail with profit. When Philip joined himself to the eunuch’s chariot, then he understood the Scriptures (Acts 8:35). When God’s Spirit joins Himself to the Word, then it will be effectual.

The Matter of Mood

(7) Read with seriousness. If one go over the Scripture cursorily, said Erasmus, there is little good to be obtained by it; but if he be serious in reading it, it is the savor of life (Deut. 32:47). Some have light, feathery spirits; they read over the most weighty truths in haste. Read with a solemn, composed spirit. Seriousness is the Christian’s ballast which keeps him

If we are worrying over earthly things, even in the secret place, we most surely are struggling for faith every other waking hour as well.

the secret place, we most surely are struggling for faith every other waking hour as well. Devotional time nagged by thoughts of unpaid bills, broken appliances, or declining health is the sure sign of a heart not at rest in the Lord. Perhaps it is His gentle chastisement for faithlessness that, as an inevitable consequence, we are rendered constitutionally incapable of feeding on His Word in such a state.

(3) Come to the reading with a humble heart. This conscious act of humbling ourselves is an antidote to worry, for humility includes submission to future providence. Therefore, acknowledge how unworthy you are that God should reveal Himself in His Word to you. God’s secrets are with the humble.

(4) Come to the reading with an honest heart. This is the test of our heart’s humility. Watson is referring to a heart that is willing to know the whole counsel of God. When men pick and choose in religion, when they will do some things the Word enjoins them, but not others; these are unsound hearts and are not benefited. These are like a patient who, having a bitter pill prescribed and a julep (a sweet syrup drink), will take the julep but refuse the pill.

John Newton (author of “Amazing Grace”) testified to the gracious effect of this honesty even prior to conversion. “I will study the promises, and comply

from being overturned with vanity.

It would simply be impossible to underscore this point sufficiently. There is something impressive and commanding about the preacher who is deeply earnest. He brings a hush to the restless stirring of the usual congregation. They instinctively sense that his seriousness is real, not assumed for the moment. Such genuine earnestness comes only out of a spirit nurtured in the secret place of the most High.

(8) Give credence to the words. Believe it to be of God. See the name of God in every line. Unbelief enervates the virtue of the Word and makes it abortive. Who will obey truths he does not believe? “The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith” (Heb. 4:2).

It is one level of response to believe the words we read, but a higher plane to treasure them. The higher is reached by intensifying the lower. The more any particular statement of Scripture is depended upon the greater it will be valued. Thus Watson’s next point.

(9) Highly prize what you read. The Psalmist could testify, “the law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver” (Ps. 119:72). Prize this book of God above all other books. Gregory calls the Bible the heart and soul of God.

(10) Love what you read. Here Watson draws a distinction between the “prizing” he just encouraged and the “loving” which he now adds. Prizing relates to the judgment; love, to the affections. In other words, “prizing” is a matter of estimation. It is the product of sober calculation. Love, however, has advanced to engaging emotion. All the disciples prized the Lord. They left all to follow Him. But when the unnamed woman kissed and wept over His feet, dried them with her hair, and anointed them with costly ointment, the disciples’ devotion was surpassed (Luke 7:36–47).

There is likewise a loving of the Word much because it gives us much. Our estimation of how much (prizing) is revealed by our affection (love). O to be like David, whose conscience did not protest when he called upon God to “consider how I love thy precepts” (Ps. 119:159).

Understandest Thou What Thou Readest?

(11) Labor to get right understanding of what you read. The knowledge of the Scripture’s sense is the first step to profit. Get what knowledge you can by comparing Scriptures, by conferring with others, by using the best commentaries. Without knowledge, the Scripture is a sealed book; every line is too high for us, and if the Word shoot above our head it can never hit our heart.

Early in his ministerial life, George Whitefield made it his daily practice to read through a portion of Scripture in his English Bible, to follow this by comparing its wording with a Greek Testament, and

then to finish by reading Matthew Henry’s comments. (He had paid the equivalent of four weeks’ wages to own this coveted set!) Henry’s example is not only inspirational, but instructional, when one takes seriously Paul’s emphatic statements that no one is edified by what he does not understand (1 Cor. 14:6–19).

(12) Let your thoughts dwell on the most material passages of Scripture. By “material” Watson means the most “substantive.” Sometimes we fail to be nourished by the Word because we are confining our reading to its less substantive passages. Reading the names of the tribes or the genealogies of the patriarchs is necessary, Watson said, but is not of the same importance as other portions dealing with faith and our being a new creature in Christ. Though the whole texture of Scripture is excellent, yet some parts of it may have a greater emphasis and be more lively and pungent. The bee fastens on those flowers where she may suck most sweetness.

(13) Take special note of the examples of Scripture; make them living sermons to yourself. Observe the examples of God’s judgments upon sinners. They have been hanged up in chains, as a terror. How severely has God punished proud men! Nebuchadnezzar was turned to eat grass; Herod eaten up with vermin. How has God plagued idolaters (Num. 25:3, 4, 9; 1 Kings 14:9–10)! What a swift witness has He been against liars (Acts 5:5, 10)! These examples are set up as seamarks to avoid (1 Cor. 10:11; Jude 7).

Observe the examples of God’s mercy to saints. Jeremiah preserved in the dungeon; the three children in the furnace; Daniel in the lions’ den. These examples are props to faith, spurs to holiness.

Though the whole texture of Scripture is excellent, yet some parts of it may have a greater emphasis and be more lively and pungent. The bee fastens on those flowers where she may suck most sweetness.

(14) Observe the preceptive part of the Word as well as the promissory. Such as cast their eye on the promise, with a neglect of the command, are not edified by Scripture, as they look more for comfort than for duty.

(15) Compare yourself with what you read. See how the Scripture and your heart agree. See how your dial goes with this sun. Is the Word copied out in your heart?

(16) Learn to apply the Scripture. Take every word as if spoken to you. When the Word thunders

against sin, think thus, "God means my sins." When the Word presses home a duty, think, "God intends me in this." Many put off Scripture from themselves as if it concerned only those who lived in the time when it was written; but if you intend to profit by the Word, bring it home to yourself. The saints of old took the Scripture as if it had been spoken to them by name. When King Josiah heard the threatening written in the book of God, he applied it to himself: "he rent his clothes" (2 Kings 22:11) and humbled his soul before the Lord.

(17) Take special notice of those Scriptures which speak to your particular case. Watson illustrates this principle in three special cases: (1) Affliction: Has God made your chain heavy? (2) Desertion: Are your spiritual comforts eclipsed? (3) Sin: Are you drawn away with lust? Are you under the power of unbelief? Thus, in reading, observe those Scriptures which do touch upon your particular case. Although all the Bible must be read, yet those texts which point most directly to your condition, be sure to put a special star upon.

This approach is vital. Frequently I discover that it has not occurred to troubled believers to seek out passages written explicitly to counsel their case. Just recently a young man in great despair testified to

the dark.

Watson's advice here is directed to lay people, but has its application to preachers too. Brothers, we need one another's preaching. Our sermons are the iron against which our people put a fresh edge on their lives every returning Lord's Day. But what will sharpen the iron? Iron sharpens iron (Prov. 27:17). So preachers show other preachers what to find in the Bible and how to understand it aright. I personally listen to taped messages of a wide variety of preachers constantly while driving. If I'm driving, someone is preaching. It would be impossible for me to exaggerate the benefit of this practice to both my heart and my head.


After Reading

(19) Labor to remember what you read. Satan would steal the Word out of your mind. The memory should be like the ark where the law was put. If the Word stays not in the memory it cannot profit. Some can better remember a piece of news than a line of Scripture; their memories are like those ponds where the frogs live, but the fish die.

(20) Meditate upon what you read. Reading brings the truth into our head, meditation brings it into our heart. The bee sucks the flower and then works it into the hive, and so turns it into honey; by reading we suck the flower of the Word, by meditation we work into the hive of our mind, and so it turns to profit. Meditation is the bellows of affection. "While I was musing the fire burned" (Ps. 39:3). The reason we come away so cold from reading the Word is because we do not warm ourselves at the fire of meditation.

(21) Set upon the practice of what you read. "I have followed thy commandments" (Ps. 119:66). The lifeblood of religion lies in the practical part. David calls God's word a "lamp to his feet" (Ps. 119:105). It was not only a light to his eyes to see by, but to his feet to walk by; by practice we trade the talent of knowledge and turn it to profit.

Watson drew his sermon to its conclusion with several encouragements. One is an especially fitting closing for preachers.

If you have profited by reading the Holy Scriptures, adore God's distinguishing grace. Bless God that He has not only brought the light to you, but opened your eyes to see it; that He has unlocked His hid treasure and enriched you . . . that the Scripture, like the pillar of cloud, should have a dark side to others, but a light side to you; that to others it should be a dead letter, but to you the savor of life. . . . How should you be in a holy ecstasy of wonder, and wish that you had hearts of seraphims burning in love to God, and the voices of angels to make heaven ring with God's praises! 

Frequently I discover that it has not occurred to troubled believers to seek out passages written explicitly to counsel their case.

feeling that God was always angry with him—always condemning him. No assurances I could offer brought any comfort whatsoever. Finally I inquired about his daily Bible reading. "Well," he said, "I've been reading the Minor Prophets." When I asked for how long, he replied that as they were hard to understand he had been forced to slow his regular pace of reading and had, in fact, been laboring through them for several months. My counsel was a healthy dose of Psalms and the Gospels!

(18) Tread often upon the threshold of the sanctuary. Wait diligently upon a rightly constituted ministry. Ministers are God's interpreters; it is their work to open and expound dark places of Scripture. Ministers are earthen pitchers (2 Cor. 4:7). But these pitchers have lamps within them, to light souls in



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Bring . . . the Books

Seven Vital Volumes for Baptist Pastors

One of the joys of an itinerant ministry is visiting pastors' libraries. I have occasionally discovered books for which I have long searched. Usually, one of my first questions to a host pastor is, "Where is your Baptist section?" On many such occasions pastors appeared confounded. It is apparent that many have never considered the matter. To be sure, these men are Baptists by conviction, but their libraries are usually weak in the area of Baptist history.

Historic Baptist tomes are not easily obtained in this day. Interdenominationalism grew of necessity during the Fundamentalism-modernism debates and has created a camaraderie with many Fundamentalists of other denominations. This phenomenon has, however, subjugated historic Baptist distinctives to a position of dispensable paraphernalia, and our history and distinctives are rarely presented to the lay folk in Baptist churches. Tragically, many of the current generation of Baptist pastors have begun to wonder if it is needful to continue to carry the very name Baptist—a name that has been revered by our godly forefathers and has set us apart from Protestantism.

As I conduct "Baptist Heritage Conferences," pastors often ask two questions: (1) "Where can one obtain Baptist books of historic value?" and (2) "What books would you recommend?" I trust this article may be used of the Lord to stimulate a renewed interest in knowing something of our wonderful history.

Due to a limited market, such books are rather costly. As a fundamental, premillennial Baptist, I must issue a disclaimer in regard to some publishers. I do not recommend everything that comes from the presses mentioned here, but I am delighted that there are some today who are attempting to maintain annals of historic worth. I believe that every Baptist pastor ought to purchase and carefully read books of historic value. Here are seven of my choices which I believe will strengthen Baptist convictions.

I am persuaded that the finest overall Baptist history is Thomas Armitage's *The History of the Baptists*. Currently this classic work is printed in two 8.5" x 11" hard-back volumes. These volumes are sold as a set for \$75.00 and may be obtained from The Baptist Standard Bearer (1 Iron Oaks Drive, Paris, Arkansas 72855). If these books are too pricey, John T. Christian's *A History of the Baptists* would be my second choice. Volume one presents a wonderful panorama of our early history, while volume two deals primarily with the Southern Baptist movement. Christian's volumes may be obtained individually for \$8.95 from the Baptist Sunday School Committee, 4605 N. State Line, Texarkana, TX 75503-2928.

Unfortunately, the sets by Armitage and Christian deal with history primarily through the 19th century. Perhaps the most complete volume that deals with 20th century matters is *The Baptist Heritage* by H. Leon McBeth. This lengthy volume is published by the Broadman Press in


Nashville, Tennessee. Historians are admittedly biased, and Dr. McBeth reveals his bias as he honors the Southern Baptist Convention while showing little respect for fundamental Baptists of the last century. The book is available in most bookstores for \$49.99.

Baptist Piety is an interesting paperback volume by Edwin S. Gaustad. The book contains a review of the early Baptists of America. One will find great delight in the most interesting account it provides of Obadiah Holmes, who was severely beaten for his faith. The account includes his last will and testimony. The book sells for \$12.00 from the Baptist Sunday School Committee, 4605 N. State Line, Texarkana, TX 75503.

I believe every pastor ought to possess a history of the moving of God among Baptists in an individual state. *The History of North Carolina Baptists* by George Washington Pashcal is currently available. This is a two-volume hard-back history that gives rich insight into the impact of the Separate Baptists, who were born amid the Great Awakening. The histories of states often provide invaluable material as they deal with all the major problems confronted by our forefathers: the issues of slavery, anti-missionism, the Masonic Lodge, conventionism, liberalism, and a host of others. (Price: \$54.00, from the Baptist Sunday School Committee, 4605 N. State Line, Texarkana, TX 75503-2928.)

Two missionary books conclude my suggestions. Every Baptist should read *To the Golden Shore* by Courtney Anderson. This thrilling review of the life of Adoniram Judson is reprinted from time to time. The volume is published by Judson Press in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and is available in major book stores for \$17.00.

Another worthwhile reprint available today is *Lives of the Three Mrs. Judsons* by Arabella W. Stuart and available from Particular Baptist Press (2766 W. Weaver Road, Springfield, Missouri 65810). Ann, Sarah, and Emily Judson each made tremendous sacrifices for the cause of Christ in Burma, and the account of their lives is thrilling. The cost of the volume is \$14.50.

Wise is the pastor who frequents used book stores, keeping his eyes open for used Baptist volumes. The Baptist Archives, housed in the Rochester-Colgate Seminary in Rochester, New York, boasts 80,000 hardback Baptist books of every description. It is the finest Baptist library in the world and is available for research. In the meantime, every Baptist pastor ought to begin to build his own "Baptist Section." 

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

Dr. David L. Cummins is Deputation Director of Baptist World Mission in Decatur, Alabama.

Everyone agrees that Romans 7 expresses intense frustration and despair. The person portrayed in Romans 7:7–24 obviously is feeling the pain of his own inability to keep the law. (The word “law” occurs 23 times in this chapter and encompasses a wide range of meanings.) There is vast disagreement, however, over the identity of the speaker. Are these the words of a frustrated believer or the cry of a convicted unbeliever? The question is not a new one.

Some claim that this is the cry of the unbeliever who realizes that he can’t keep the law. Statements such as “when the commandment came, sin revived and I died” (v. 9), “sin deceived me, and by it slew me” (v. 10), “I am carnal, sold under sin” (v. 14), and “who shall deliver me from the body of this death” (v. 24) do not seem to fit someone who has been delivered from sin. The whole tone of despair seems incompatible with the deliverance and victory that are part of our salvation in Jesus Christ. The anguish of Romans 7, it is argued, is that of the unregenerate, while the victorious tone of Romans 8 expresses the joy of a born-again believer.

Others claim that Romans 7 describes the agony of the believer who struggles to obey God. The expressions of frustration are merely the consequences of the process of sanctification. They point to the impossibility of an unsaved man’s responding so favorably to the law—calling it “holy and just and good” (v. 12) or “delighting in the law of God after the inward man” (v. 22). Some regard Romans 7 as describing a carnal believer and Romans 8 a victorious believer. Others assert that the frustration in Romans 7 is the normative state of the believer and portray Romans 8 as an almost unattainable ideal. In either case, Romans 7 is seen as the expression of the regenerate.


The question is, must Romans 7 necessarily refer only to one or the other? Is the frustration delineated here broad enough to encompass both saved and unsaved? Perhaps taking a step back and looking at the context will provide some help.

Romans 6 reminds us that, though God’s forgiveness is full and free, sin continues to have grave consequences and cannot be taken lightly. Where do people (saved or unsaved) naturally turn to deal with sin in their lives? They naturally turn to law. The reason for Romans 7 is to counter the thought that law alone, whether God’s law or a self-imposed legal code, can conquer sin. Even believers need the reminder that no law, in and of itself, has power to

conquer sin. Romans 7 portrays the miserable despair that results when someone recognizes his lack of obedience and tries to correct it with law alone. “The one point of the passage,” remarks W. H. Griffeth-Thomas, “is that it describes a man who is trying to be good and holy by his own efforts and is beaten back every time by the power of indwelling sin. This is the experience of any man who tries the experiment, whether he be regenerate or unregenerate.”

Biographies brim with examples of those who tried to use the law to deliver themselves from sin and found it to be futile. Luther, Bunyan, Wesley, and others tried to save themselves by the law. Bunyan’s Pilgrim went to Mr. Legality’s house for help with the weight of sin, but as he approached his house “his burden now seemed heavier to him that while he was in his Way.” An unsaved person who looks to law to deliver him finds only that his sin becomes worse. “Sin by the commandment [becomes] exceedingly sinful” (v. 13). As Evangelist says, Legality “is not able to set thee free from thy burden. No man was as yet ever rid of his burden by him.”

This frustration is sometimes shared by believers as well. As God’s children progress in sanctification, they continue to see their own sinfulness and often try to correct it by the use of law. Typically, law takes the form of some self-imposed legal code. Christians in search of help may turn to a book or seminar that offers a formula or series of steps to take. We make resolutions and impose restrictions upon ourselves. However, the sin still repeats itself, and we are worse off than before we turned to law. We now have the additional guilt of broken promises and a renewed sense of failure. This is not to say that resolutions, restrictions, or the law is wrong (v. 7). *The error addressed in this chapter is that law is the wrong method of dealing with sin.* It is the thought that I can change myself if I just know the right steps to take. This self-sufficient approach to battling sin is doomed to fail and will always lead to despair.

The closing question of Romans 7 is not “How can I change?” but “Who can deliver me?” (v. 24). The answer—for believer and unbeliever alike—is the same when it comes to dealing with sin. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can deliver us (v. 25). Chapter 8 goes on to describe how the Lord through His Spirit accomplishes what no human effort can. People struggling with sin in their lives need the reminder that salvation and sanctification alike come only from the Lord. 

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

The words of Christ cited by Paul in his instruction to the Ephesian elders are as difficult to believe and practice today as they must have been then: "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." A brief examination of the situation in many Christian homes today quickly dispels the notion that we are practicing that philosophy widely.

The Christian brings up the family in a house with a thirty-year mortgage. The Christian drives an automobile with a five-year loan. The Christian buys new clothes with plastic credit cards that charge as high as 21 percent interest per year. The Christian sleeps on a mortgaged bed, sits on mortgaged furniture, and watches color television on a set which will hopefully be paid off before it breaks down. Vacations are paid for with convenient monthly payments. The Christian ends up owing his or her soul to the god of personal debt. Instead of working for God, the Christian works for the god of personal debt (J. Alfred Smith Sr., *Basic Bible Sermons on Christian Stewardship* [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992], p. 32).

Our assistant pastor saved all of the credit offers that he received in the mail over the period of one year. In that time, he had been extended the opportunity of getting over \$3 million of credit on a salary of less than 1 percent of that amount. It is easy to be a taker and not a giver in today's culture.

Christian millionaire Stanley Tam defines stewardship as

a special responsibility between a man and his God. A good steward is not one who has a given sum of money to dispense and then waits for people to tell him where to dispose of it. No, a good steward is a man to whom God has entrusted time and materials, a man who subsequently looks to God Himself for direction as to the best utilization of that which he has to give (*God Owns My Business* [Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1969], p. 110).

Tam demonstrated this truth early in his life by making God (through a nonprofit corporation) the legal senior partner in his businesses (States Smelting and United States Plastic).

Someone has said, "There are three kinds of givers—the flint, the sponge, and the honeycomb. To get anything out of a flint you must hammer it. And you get only chips and sparks. To get water out of a sponge you must squeeze it, and the more you use pressure, the more

you will get. But the honeycomb just overflows with its own sweetness. Which kind of giver are you?" May the Lord help us to be the right kind of givers. Let's look at a few principles the Bible communicates about giving.

Priority and Giving (Prov. 3:9–10; Acts 20:35; Rom. 12:8)

Perhaps one of the best-known stories of Hudson Taylor demonstrates how putting God first early in life sets the course all through life. After finishing his work for the day, Taylor was asked by a poor man to visit and pray for his sick wife. It was in a part of town where Hudson Taylor had often been mistreated as he distributed gospel tracts. The man led him to a pitiful house where his wife and children were starving. Hudson Taylor reasoned, "If I had two shillings and a sixpence, instead of half-a-crown, how gladly should they have one-and-sixpence of it." The half-crown was all the money he had in the world, but before the visit was over it had been given (not without great strivings within) to the poor family. Hudson Taylor writes of that early event, "Not only was the poor woman's life saved; but my life, as I fully realised, had been saved too. . . . I cannot tell you how often my mind has recurred to this incident, or the help it has been to me in circumstances of difficulty in afterlife" (Frederick Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor in Early Years*, Vol. 1 [Singapore: OMF Books, 1998], pp. 134–135).

Often the unsaved put us to shame by their dedication to their religion or cause. A friend of mine in India related to me the experience of a missionary. The missionary was observing the heathen throwing their children into the holy river as an act of worship to their gods. He noticed one mother with twins, one of them healthy and beautiful and the other malformed, diseased, and likely to die soon. He watched in astonishment as the mother threw the healthy and beautiful child in the river, giving as her reason that her god deserved the best. Does not our true and good God deserve our best (Mal. 1:6–8, 12–14)?

Prayer and Giving (Luke 11:1–10; 2 Cor. 9:10–14)

One of the great promises of the Bible is Jeremiah 33:3: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." Time after time God's people have put this promise to

"To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, 'A window shalt thou make in the ark.'"

Charles Spurgeon

the test. Certainly the Lord invites us to ask for our daily needs (Matt. 6:11). As we pray, the Lord touches the hearts of those who can and will give. Dallas Billington relates the story of how the Lord provided a special need when they were building the Akron Baptist Temple. The work had come to a halt, and they desperately needed \$5,000 (a lot of money in the hard days of the late '30s). He was extremely busy and had a funeral, but took time to visit an elderly lady who had been trying to get him to come to her house. After seating him in her front room, the lady proceeded to give him an old shoebox tied with calico strings. "Amazed, I listened as she said, 'Brother Billington, in this shoe box is \$5,500. I heard your prayer [on the radio] for \$5,000 to finish your building. Here is the money and \$500 more'" (Dallas F. Billington, *God Is Real* [Akron, Ohio: Akron Baptist Temple Print Shop, 1962], p. 58).

People and Giving (Matt. 25:14–30; Luke 6:38)

According to some occasional surveys I have made with pastors, the percentage of those who tithe in fundamental churches seems to be about 50 percent. Imagine what could be done at home and abroad if each member would tithe. Down through the years some have really caught the vision. There are quite a few famous Christian millionaires who tithed their millions (some went far beyond the tithe) but started with tithing their nickels: Henry P. Crowell (Quaker Oats), 60–70 percent; William Colgate, eventually 100 percent; R. G. Le Tourneau, 90 percent; Robert A. Laidlaw (New Zealand businessman), 50 percent; Albert Hyde (Mentholum), 10 percent (started tithing in debt); Stanley Tam, 51 percent; J.C. Kraft, 75 percent; Kenneth S. Keyes (Florida Realtor), 30 percent.

The key is to first give ourselves to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:5). Again, Hudson Taylor is an outstanding example.

"Well do I remember that occasion," he wrote long after, "how in the gladness of my heart I poured out my soul before God, and again and again confessing my grateful love to Him who had done everything for me—who had saved me when I had given up all hope and even desire for salvation—I besought Him to give me some work for Him, as an outlet for love and gratitude; some self-denying service, no matter what it might be, however trying or however trivial; something with which He would be pleased, and that I might do for Him who had done so much for me. Well do I remember, as in unreserved consecration I put myself, my life, my friends, my all upon the altar, the deep solemnity that came over my soul with the assurance that my offering was accepted. The presence of God became unutterably real and blessed, and I well remember . . . stretching myself on the ground, and lying there before Him with unspeakable awe and unspeakable joy. For what service I was accepted I knew not. But a deep consciousness that I was not my own took possession of me, which has never since been effaced" (Taylor, pp. 70–71).

William Borden, a wealthy young man who did not

allow his money to keep him from total surrender to the Lord, also learned to first give himself to the Lord.


He won that greatest victory of all, the victory over himself. . . . He won the victory over his environment. By some the victory has to be won over poverty; by others over heredity, or over shame and temptation; but Borden won the victory over an environment of wealth. He felt that life consisted not in "the abundance of things a man possesseth," but in the abundance of things which possess the man (Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Borden of Yale '09* [Philadelphia: China Inland Mission, 1930], p. 279).

Borden died a young man before reaching his desired mission field in China, but not before leaving a worldwide impact because of his total dedication to the Lord. May God give us some wealthy businessmen in fundamental churches who will give themselves to the Lord and use their money for the spread of the Gospel around the world.

Do you know what God wants? He wants all you have. How much money do you have in the bank? Think about it a minute. Would you sign your check in blank and let God fill it in and have anything He wants? "Oh . . .," you say. Wait a minute! What kind of a God do you serve? If you can trust Him with your soul's destiny for eternity, you can sign blank checks and lay them on His altar. You haven't surrendered to God until everything is on the altar—everything! (Bob Jones, *Do Right Daily* [Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1993], Dec. 19).

For about a year and a half now our church has been praying for "Big Money" for missions. Recently a businessman who had heard of the financial need to build a girls' dormitory in India approached one of our missionaries and dear friend, Dr. P. D. Cherian of the South India Baptist Bible College. He gave the entire \$100,000 needed, to the glory of God. Perhaps deputation trails could be shorter and larger numbers would be on their way to the fields if large sums of money were made available for such purposes. I am not saying, of course, that money is the answer, but God uses people to give that others may go. May more who have God's money catch the vision.

Among the CNN headlines for April 6, 1999, was this one: "Armed Robber Holds Up Church During Easter Service." It happened in a Louisiana church of about one hundred worshipers. A gunman wearing a ski mask entered a suburban New Orleans church fifteen minutes into the morning service. Holding a gun to one member's head, he ordered most of the members to lie on the floor while the remaining handful were forced to walk through the room taking the 'offering.' But he was disappointed with the results. He left grumbling that there were too many one-dollar bills (Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, and Quotes* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000], p. 347; a very helpful book of new illustrations).

May the Lord greatly increase the surrender of self and substance to the Lord in our fundamental churches. 

Dr. John Mincy pastors Heritage Baptist Church in Antioch, California.

As Jonathan Edwards and his wife traveled together on horseback, their conversation was frequently of sermons and spiritual truths. What a delight it must have been for them, this mutual sharing of the love of God and His Word. Although we don't have those conversations on horseback (I'd probably be too busy hanging on for dear life!), my husband and I have a lively exchange of ideas as we take long walks together. He will share with me a particular point from his sermon preparation, and perhaps I will ask him a question about an assertion that an author is making about a Scripture passage. I'm always sorry when the walk is over!

How vital it is for a pastor's wife to select good reading material! Knowing that the Bible should occupy the central focus of reading, even above devotional books, careful attention should then be given to reading books that are of eternal value. With all the demands made upon our time in any given day, when we pick up a book, it ought to be a book that sets forth truth and edifies. It was a blessed day, indeed, when I realized that my husband's library was full of books that invited my attention. I shall never forget the first book with which I began a personal Bible study. It was G. Campbell Morgan's *The Four Gospels*. The notes I jotted down in the margins of my Bible, gleaned from this wonderful book, are with me today, and I refresh my memory of them each time I read through the Gospels.

After finishing each book study, I would approach my husband with the query, "What book do you recommend next?" He lovingly cautioned me that I should read with discernment, as not every author was accurate in his explanations of the text. If I had any questions, I was to ask him. Out of these times of personal Bible study grew material for speaking and counseling.

Two years ago while on deputation, my husband recommended that I study Robert Candlish's *First Epistle of John*. As we traveled thousands of miles, my Bible along with Robert Candlish provided a way to look above and beyond the bone-numbing weariness of those long hours. I have to say that the notes written in the margins of my Bible in 1 John reflect the state of the bumpy roads! I did not know it at the time, but the Lord had led in that study; the following

year, I was asked to speak for three one-hour sessions at a ladies' seminar, and I found, during my time of preparation, that for two of those sessions the study of 1 John proved invaluable.

Of course, I want to heartily recommend reading books other than commentaries! Here are just a few of the books I've enjoyed over the last 15 years, with a brief comment on how each touched my heart. I enjoyed reading *The Christian Ministry* by Charles Bridges, because it helped me to understand better just what God had called my husband to do. It filled me with a reverential awe for the task set before him.

Memoirs of McChesney, compiled by Andrew Bonar, was a great blessing to me, for it showed the heart of a minister for his people. I took a yellow highlighter and marked many passages. It seemed as if Robert McChesney was speaking directly to me as he talked of the deceitful heart and of Christ's provision for cleansing. I labored over *The Glory of Christ* by John Owen. I use the word "labored" because he explores each thought more deeply than we, with our shallow 20th-century minds, are accustomed to doing. As he set forth each one of the offices and the work of Christ, my mind was filled with a clearer knowledge of Him.

Just recently, while in a Christian bookstore with my husband, I picked up a copy of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones's *Faith on Trial*. I added my own penciled markings to the ones already placed in the book by the previous owner. I wept my way through *The Diary of David Brainerd*, edited by Jonathan Edwards, as I contemplated how careful Brainerd was to give no occasion whereby the Holy Spirit might be grieved. It caused me to examine my own

life along that line.

Exercising watchfulness as to the right reading material will provide the reader with nourishing mental food upon which to meditate throughout the day. It will aid the pastor's wife in being a source of encouragement to her husband. It will provide just the right thought for a mom to share with her child or teen during a quiet moment. And it surely pleases the Lord as He sees us feeding our souls with material that edifies and points us to Him.

Deborah Quattlebaum lives in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, where her husband, Jerry, pastors Cornerstone Baptist Church.

Reading That Edifies

Deborah Quattlebaum

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The Strange Case of Robert Robinson

Doug Kutilek

We all have sung,

Come Thou Fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing Thy praise!
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise!
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it,
Mount of Thy redeeming love!

This centuries-old hymn was written by English Baptist pastor Robert Robinson (1735–1790). Having been educated in a grammar school (which in those days meant Latin grammar and usually Greek as well), Robinson was apprenticed at age 14 to a London hairdresser for seven years. During this time, in 1752 (age 16), he came under the preaching of George Whitefield, whose sermon on Matthew 3:7 brought deep conviction upon him. This resulted in Robinson's religious conversion in December 1755. For the next two years, Robinson regularly attended Whitefield's London tabernacle.

In 1758, Robinson left London, returning to his home region, where he began to preach. His hearers were soon numbered in the hundreds and his converts by the score. When challenged on the matter of infant baptism, which he had accepted as a matter of course (being raised an Anglican and later associated with the Methodists), personal study led him to the view that believer's baptism alone was Biblical, and he was subsequently immersed.

Robinson began preaching in a declining Baptist church in Cambridge in 1759, where, after a two-year probationary period, he was called as pastor. He remained in this pastorate until his death in 1790. Under his ministry, the congregation soon outgrew its run-down premises and a new building was erected. His hearers regularly numbered 600–700, including not a few of the students from nearby Cambridge University.

It was no small accomplishment for an unschooled Baptist pastor to draw the hypercritical college crowd to hear him, but Robinson was ever the diligent student (he learned four or five languages) and a zealous reader, even from his youth, and he was an able public speaker. Besides his Cambridge congregation, Robinson had some 15 preaching stations in the villages around Cambridge. Weekdays found him evangelizing the residents in these locations.

For a time, Robinson had been engaged by the Baptist pastors of London to undertake research at the British Museum with a view to writing a history of the Baptists. When the theological drift of Robinson away from

orthodoxy toward the end of his life was discovered, this sponsorship was quickly withdrawn. Robinson continued these labors on his own behalf after he obtained permission to make use of the university library at Cambridge. The fruit of this research was two immense volumes, both published posthumously, namely, *The History of Baptism* (1790), and *Ecclesiastical Researches* (1792), the latter of which is highly prized by Landmark Baptists, though it is throughout a defense of the orthodoxy of Unitarianism.

Though Robinson had published a vigorous defense of the deity of Christ in 1776, he soon became enamored with Socinian and Arian errors (denials of the deity of Christ and of the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit), influenced in part by Joseph Priestly. Once having abandoned Trinitarianism, Robinson became increasingly brazen in his attacks on this orthodox doctrine. The last sermon he ever preached was in Priestly's meetinghouse in Birmingham, in which sermon Robinson ridiculed and mocked the doctrine of the Trinity with sarcasm and invective far stronger than anything Priestly, by his own admission, had ever said or written. The following Tuesday, Robinson was found dead in bed in the home of William Russell, a prominent member of Priestly's church, where he had been staying. God thereby said, "Enough of your blasphemy!"

What shall we say of Mr. Robinson? Was he a saved man who fell into grievous error, or a wolf in sheep's clothing whose true nature was at last exposed? I am inclined to believe that his conviction and conversion under Whitefield's influence were genuine, but the pride of life and the allurements and siren song of "intellectual" speculations loosed him from his theological moorings until he drifted far from shore and became shipwrecked in heresy. Perhaps the last verse of the hymn is Robinson's own testimony:

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be
Let Thy goodness like a fetter
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love.
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.

May his sad end and marred legacy be ever a warning to us that we are to bring every thought into submission to God and that we must never abandon the revealed and written truth of God for the empty and vain speculations of men.

Doug Kutilek is a commuting missionary to Romania based in Wichita, Kansas.

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Fellowship with known and vital error is participation in sin.
—C. H. Spurgeon

A company is known by the people it keeps.—Unknown

Vision without integrity is not mission—it's manipulation.
—Howard Hendricks

No person was ever honored for what he received.
Honor is the reward of what one gives.
—Calvin Coolidge

Ninety-nine percent of failures come from people who have the habit of making excuses.
—George Washington Carver

The Devil has an old policy: to displace a greater good by a lesser good.
—Nehemiah Rogers

Those who are too merry when pleased are commonly too angry when crossed.
—Philip Henry

Many a man's tongue has broken his nose.
—Unknown

Screw the truth into men's minds.
—Richard Baxter

The extent of a man's virtue ought not to be measured by his extraordinary efforts but by his usual behavior.
—Blaise Pascal

This is the negation of God erected into a system of Government.
—W. E. Gladstone

God judges what we give by what we keep.
—George Mueller

Hypocrites are certain to miscarry at last; so true is that proverb, "Frost and fraud have dirty ends."
—Thomas Adams

Don't expect anything original from an echo.
—Unknown

As the heresies exist, doctrinal teaching is a necessity.
—John Duncan

Unless we do have deep awe of the Word we shall never have high joy over it. Our rejoicing will be measured by our reverencing.
—C. H. Spurgeon

Life well spent is long.
—Leonardo da Vinci

Bad laws are the worst sort of tyranny.
—Samuel Burke

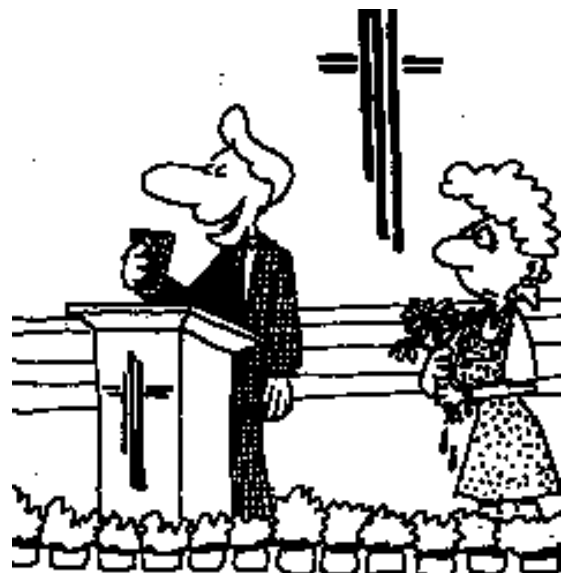
A nation creates music—the composer only arranges it.
—Mikhail Glinka

I had rather be right than be President.
—Henry Clay

The worst form of inequality is to try to make unequal things equal.
—Aristotle

Do not try to imagine God, or you will have an imaginary God.
—A. W. Tozer

The last words of Noah Webster probably were: zyme, zymosis, and zymurgy.
—Unknown



"I want to thank the person who was thoughtful enough to leave me the glass of water on the podium."

Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.

Church History in First Person

by Edward M. Panosian

ShowForth

Bob Jones University Press

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5 videocassettes

Reviewed by Layton Talbert, *Frontline* Contributing Editor

Those who have never had the pleasure of sitting under the lectures of this much-loved Professor of Church History at Bob Jones Seminary and Division of Graduate Studies can get a brief taste of the experience through these newly released videos. Each video highlights one of five great pillars of church history: Martin Luther (1483–1546), William Tyndale (1492–1536), John Knox (1505–1572), John Bunyan (1622–1688), and C. H. Spurgeon (1834–1892). Indeed, given the far-reaching nature of their life accomplishments and the overriding sacred purposes of God in all of history, it is not too much to say that such men are among the pillars not only of church history but of human history.

Panosian skillfully carries the viewer back in time, recounting each character's life story in the first person, as he adopts their persona and becomes the Great Reformer, the Martyred Translator, the Thundering Scot, the Beloved Puritan, and the Prince of Preachers. The first-person style of delivery effectively fleshes out the principle of Hebrews 11:4, "he being dead yet speaketh."

Hear Luther tell of his frantic vow to become a monk (made while cowering terror-stricken under a tree during a thunderstorm), which led him to a rare exposure to the Bible that not only revolutionized his own life but shook the very foundations of Romanism and led him to make God's Word, for the first time in centuries, accessible to the common people in their own language. Listen to Bunyan relate how God providentially spared his life as an unconverted soldier when—on two occasions—the substitute who replaced him on a mission was killed. And Tyndale describes how a Roman Catholic bishop of London, by surreptitiously purchasing copies of Tyndale's "illegal" translation of the Bible into English in order to burn them, actually unwittingly financed more and better copies of Tyndale's work.

Each tape presents an abbreviated version (about 20 minutes) of the fuller live presentations (typically 40–60 minutes) that Panosian gives for churches, schools, and other groups. His live offerings also include John Calvin, Hugh Latimer, and others such as John Wesley and George Whitefield as he has time to develop them. The videos offer a glimpse of this ongoing ministry which engages two of his God-given strengths—his superlative command of history along with his communicative skill

and acting ability (not to mention his delightfully distinctive voice). It is also a ministry which carries a message he is burdened to communicate to God's people. "I have long felt," he says, "that our people are less widely familiar with those whom the Lord has used in other days, and can benefit by seeing how He has made ordinary people, extraordinarily given to Him, a blessing to thousands."

Former students will enjoy these tapes as a brief step back into the classroom (without the exams). Christian school and home educators will find them a valuable supplemental resource. But everyone will profit from the inspiration and illustration communicated through the lives of these outstanding heroes of history who, in the words of Daniel's prophecy, knew their God, were strong, and did exploits.

The normal price is \$49.95. However, until 12/31/00 the set is on sale for \$38.96. The campaign code for this offer is VOI0600 and should be mentioned when ordering. Those who wish to order the set should call BJU Press at 1-800-845-5731 or write to:

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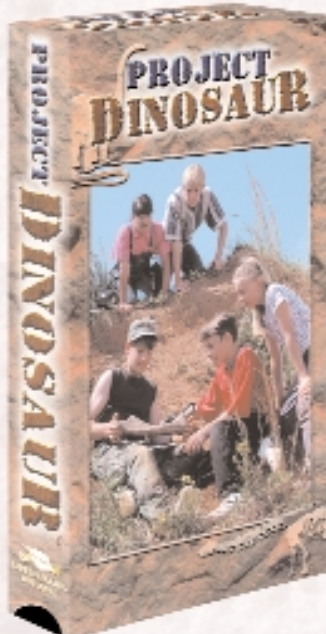
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Content to Go, Content to Wait

Mary Lynn Bushong

Everywhere we turn, we are bombarded with messages to get more, want more, accumulate more; but is that what God wants for His children? How do you reconcile your wants and dreams with what God wants for you? That's easy: get your priorities right. So how do we learn what our priorities should be? It's very simple, as the children's Sunday school song says: "Read your Bible, pray every day, and you'll grow, grow, grow." When our Bible reading and prayer time becomes important to us, so will God's will for our lives. The more time we spend with God, the more like Him we will become.

Saying it is easier than doing it, however, and until you make up your mind that contentment with God's will is what you want, you will not find it. I had to learn this lesson personally. During a time of family stress, I sat down and made up my mind that I needed the daily guidance that the Scriptures offer. Until that point, I thought I could get along just fine by pretending more spirituality than I had. I was wrong. I was dissatisfied, and I wanted most of all to be content—not just content with less money, but content to wait on God's timing, content to know that our lives are in the hands of a God who loves us. I have found that finding contentment does not happen immediately. It's a process of growth that takes time. To me, Isaiah 26:3 says it all: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee."

I started by making a definite time for reading my Bible. I also chose a regular schedule that allows me to read through at least once a year. A set time for prayer is helpful as well, but that should not stop you from praying about things all day long.

I have found that my sense of contentment grows as my trust in God increases. The hardest part is setting aside my own personal feelings. While there are many things I would like to have, they do not consume me as they have in the past.

I used to worry about not having enough money for what I wanted. Over time, God has helped me see that I have what I need. If He chooses to give me more, He will. In the meantime I must learn to properly use that which I already have. After all, He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and nothing is too hard for God.

Recently our family faced many difficult decisions. My father-in-law died, and the family farm was to be sold. My mother-in-law could not live alone, and a place had to be found for her. Emotions, wants, and

desires conflicted as we looked for the right path to follow. Our dream to own the farm seemed both within our grasp and hopelessly out of reach. We agonized over whether to try to buy it and offer a home to my mother-in-law, or just to let it go and help her in other ways. We discussed all the possibilities for hours and prayed earnestly over the direction to go. God tested our resolve to wait on His timing. We made up our minds to be content to live where we were and content to move if God willed it. We decided to have our house appraised. If God wanted us to move north, He would need to provide the money.

Our patience was tested day by day. We waited and waited for an answer to the money issue. Could the house bring enough money to make the move possible? What would we do about schooling our children? How would we ever move the junk we had accumulated over the years? What about a new job? At times it was hard not to take the burden and put it back on our own shoulders. Part of being content though is being willing to wait. I think that God tests how willing we are to be content by not giving us what we want right away.

We thought for sure that a noble purpose such as caring for a family member would automatically get the nod. We were wrong. We discovered the house would not bring enough to make the move possible. It seemed obvious to us that God had made His will known to us.

Even though it was difficult, we have been glad we stayed and waited on the Lord. Right after we acknowledged our willingness to stay, we learned some things which we would not have known otherwise until it was too late. A job my husband had planned on evaporated, and unforeseen internal family stresses suddenly increased. I am sure that had we moved at that time, it could very well have inflicted severe damage to our marriage and our family. It was only through the goodness of God's leading and teaching that we resisted the desire to follow our own way.

We will not be moving . . . today. Tomorrow, God may have another direction for us to go. We still have a dream of living on a farm. Maybe someday He will give us that opportunity. I am secure in the thought that if He chooses to give us one, it will be in just the right place at the right time. Until that time comes, we will be content.

Mary Lynn Bushong is a freelance writer living in Taylors, South Carolina.

Almost

Phil Shuler

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian"
(Acts 26:28).

Here is a word freighted with significance. Its value is borrowed from its setting. Its strength lies in the fact that it represents the greatest contrast possible in any context into which it enters. It is a picture word, often describing an agony of feeling, frequently associated with frustration and failure. It tells the story of near-achievement and total loss.

Society has been crowded with people who "almost" succeeded only to live and die unnoticed and unsung. Like Moses in one respect, they blazed a good trail, climbed high enough to overlook the Promised Land, then, having received no more than a glimpse of the reward, languished upon their Mount Nebo. It is a maxim no less true than severe: almost to succeed is to fail utterly!

In Cincinnati I recently heard the story of the early progress of Kroger, the chain-store magnate. When a young man, he and a fellow named Scovanner met in the back room of a little roadside grocery store and drew straws to determine who would run the store and who should haul the produce. Scovanner made the choice that caused him to enter the trucking business and miss wealth and fame by a straw.

The word "almost" sometimes determines the difference between life and death. Years ago, a West Coast newspaper carried front-page stories about two airplane tragedies. One told of an army transport that went down in mid-Pacific. The other concerned a commercial plane that crashed less than a mile from San Francisco airport. One went down in sight of the landing field, the other a thousand miles from land. Yet in one vital respect there was no difference, for all aboard both planes perished.

So reads the account in the 26th chapter of Acts. Scholars differ in their interpretation of Agrippa's words. Some say his retort to Paul was one of scorn. Others insist that for an instant he halted very close to a decision for Christ. Regardless of interpretation, it is safe to conclude that never a more powerful preacher or convincing sermon was witnessed by this man in kingly garb. Paul, who so recently had caused Felix to tremble beneath the impact of a Spirit-propelled sermon, pressed the claims of God's throne upon another dignitary. His persuasion overpowered the king's intellect, commanded his conscience, arrested the attention of his entire

being. But the pride of a haughty heart threw up a last barrier which would not yield to the onslaught of God's battering-ram of conviction.

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Peace and pardon were just within reach.

The hand of mercy beckoned. Eternal issues weighed for one short moment in the balance, and all the glories of the gospel of redeeming grace availed themselves to be claimed. Yet, like a distressed ship that in sight of harbor turns back out to sea, Agrippa decided to take his chances with the storm. He who was "almost persuaded" chose to remain without God.

Agrippa is but one of many whose destiny turned upon an "almost." Pharaoh, who contradicted his stand repeatedly before Moses; Herod, who heard John gladly, yet ordered him decapitated; Judas, who sat at meat with Christ and afterward betrayed Him; Pilate, who would have let Christ go but for his friendship with Caesar; Felix, who quaked as he shrank from the wooing of the Holy Spirit—these are but a few of those who went far, but not far enough. For these, "almost" and "not" had equivalent meanings. They discovered that to be less than fully persuaded was to be as infinitely removed from salvation as though they had never been persuaded at all.

Almost. In one respect it is an empty word, without profit or advantage. Of what avail is it if it "almost" rains, or if the sun "almost" shines? Can a man overcome hunger by "almost" eating, or thirst by "almost" drinking, or fatigue by "almost" sleeping? A sailor not fully persuaded to escape a sinking vessel only becomes a victim to the devouring sea. Just so, the man who is "almost persuaded" to turn from sin to Christ not only slights God's mercy but chooses God's wrath and the final sentence of damnation.

A near-decision is in reality no decision at all. Lips that once spoke in the judgment chamber a sentence that sounded almost hopeful can now only moan, "Once I was at the very gate of heaven and was about to enter in; but now I am in the lap of hell!"

The little bit more, and how much it is;
The little bit less—and what worlds away;
To be almost saved is to be altogether lost!

Dr. Phil Shuler is an evangelist based in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. You can contact him by sending e-mail to philshuler@juno.com.

Melchizedek appears three times in the Biblical record. Curiously, about 1000 years elapses between each appearance. And with each occurrence, the theological significance of this mysterious man grows.

Melchizedek's First Appearance (Genesis 14:17-20)

It is one of the fascinating surprises in Scripture that an obscure, curious, and apparently insignificant event becomes the basis for one of the most theologically profound developments in all the Bible: a "chance" meeting between Abraham and Melchizedek.

About 2000 B.C. Abraham, returning from a successful rescue operation on behalf of Lot, met Melchizedek. His role combined both royal and priestly functions—he reigned as "king of Salem" (ancient Jerusalem, which is prophetically significant) and ministered as "priest of the Most High God."

The appearance of Melchizedek is the first and most visible hint that Abraham was *not* the exclusive recipient of God's revelatory activity. God even taught Abraham something new about Himself *through* this stranger. After Melchizedek blessed Abraham in the name of "the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth," Abraham adopted that identical phraseology of the Lord for the first time in his recorded life (Gen. 14:22).

The respective actions of Abraham and Melchizedek also dispel the notion that Abraham was the preeminent figure in the earth in his day. Melchizedek's superiority is demonstrated by his blessing of Abraham and Abraham's offering of tithes to Melchizedek. Melchizedek then vanishes from the record as suddenly as he appeared.

Melchizedek's Second Appearance (Psalm 110)

Some 1000 years later (about 1000 B.C.), the Holy Spirit directed King David's attention to this unlikely character. Melchizedek again rises abruptly and briefly out of obscurity into a position of profound theological prominence in the Messianic Psalm 110—quoted more frequently in the NT than any other passage, and always in direct relation to Christ.¹

"YAHWEH said to my Sovereign," penned David, "'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.'" Verses 1-3 herald God's official installment of Christ as King. In verse 4, He swears irrevocably to this One (whom King David acknowledged as his Superior), "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (in other words, according to Melchizedek's priestly line and manner of priesthood).

Christ is proclaimed universal King in verses 1-3 and eternal Priest in verse 4. This King-Priest combination itself is reminiscent of the King-Priest Melchizedek, who swayed both scepter and censer, though it is Christ's priestly connection to Melchizedek that this prophetic psalm primarily emphasizes.

Melchizedek's Third Appearance (Hebrews 5-7)

Another 1000 years pass before Melchizedek's name surfaces once more in the Book of Hebrews (ca. A.D. 68), where Christ is declared to be the fulfillment of the prophetic oracle of Psalm 110. Hebrews contains *six* direct citations of Psalm 110:4 regarding Christ's priesthood "after the order of Melchizedek" (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11, 17, 21). We are accustomed to seeing Christ as both King and Priest. Yet to a Jewish convert of the first century, this was an eye-opening revelation indeed. An examination of Hebrews 7:1-10 yields even further revelation about this mysterious figure—and his Christological significance—which God intends for our spiritual growth and maturity.

The Significance of His Designations (7:2). The writer first draws attention to the significance of Melchizedek's name, which means "king of righteousness," and of Melchizedek's royal position as King of Salem (Jerusalem), which means "king of peace." This combination of Messianic significance could not fail to impress the Jewish readers. ("Behold, a king shall reign in *righteousness*. . . . The work of *righteousness* shall be *peace*, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever," Is. 32:1, 17. Cf. Ps. 85:10.)

The Significance of His Description (7:3). The writer finds as much interest in what is *not* said about Melchizedek as in what *is* said. Genesis includes no genealogical or biographical information about him. The absence of such data does not mean the data does not exist. It was intentionally omitted by the Spirit to illustrate a point He would make two millennia later about Christ. Christ's real eternity (like Melchizedek's *apparent* eternity) implies an eternal and unchanging priesthood (7:23-24) which, in turn, means He alone is able to save fully and forever those who come to God through Him (7:25).

Some see Melchizedek as more than a mere man who pictures Christ, and regard him as a Christophany—a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ Himself. While that is certainly possible, several exegetical factors seem to suggest otherwise: the writer of Hebrews (1) plainly calls him a "man" in 7:4; (2) chooses a significant participial phrase in 7:3 ("*made like* unto the Son of God")—instead of a simple comparative adjective ("like the Son of God")—which points to the Biblical *account* of Melchizedek, drawing the parallel between Christ and Melchizedek's portrait not Melchizedek's person;² and (3) maintains language throughout that repeatedly implies that they are distinct persons, rather than identifying Melchizedek *as* Christ.

The Significance of His Deeds (7:4-10). First, *Priest* Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham—an action signifying the priestly superiority of Christ over the Levitical priesthood (7:4-6a, 8-9). The Levites descended from Abraham were honored and authorized by God to receive tithes from the people. Yet those Levites themselves ("in the loins" of Abraham) paid tithes to Melchizedek—indicating the superiority of his

MAN OF MYSTERY

priesthood and that of his priestly “heir,” Christ, to the Levitical priesthood. Second, *King Melchizedek* blessed Abraham—an action suggesting the royal superiority of Christ over even Abraham, the grand Patriarch of the entire nation (7:6b–7). This is hinted at in the subtle mention that Melchizedek “blessed him that had the promises.” What promises? The promises that, among other things, Abraham’s seed would “possess the gate of [i.e., rule over all] their enemies” (Gen. 22:17) and Abraham “would be the heir of the world” (Rom. 4:13)—both ultimately fulfilled through the universal domain of the sovereign reign of Christ.

That sinful man needs a priest—a mediator between himself and his holy God—is self-evident throughout Scripture. The Holy Spirit’s point in Hebrews is both the superiority and the indispensability of the Priesthood of Christ—the final and full replacement of the Divinely inaugurated, temporary Levitical priesthood by the Divinely decreed, eternal Melchizedekan priesthood of Christ. The remainder of Hebrews 7–10 elaborates on the many distinctive qualities and ramifications of Christ’s Melchizedekan High Priesthood.

Melchizedek: A Call to Christian Maturity

The topic of Melchizedek is first raised in Hebrews 5. But at 5:11, the reader hits a bump in the epistolary road and does not land again on Melchizedek until 6:20, where the subject is resumed and carried into chapter 7. Hebrews 5:11–6:12 is a personal, parenthetical exhortation to the reader—whom the author, verbal belt in hand, takes to the woodshed for a stern “talking to.” What is going on in this passage? And what does it have to do with Christian maturity?

5:11. His curiosity whetted by this startling reference to Melchizedek, the reader is suddenly shamed by what he reads. “There is much I’d like to say about this Melchizedek, but it is hard to explain.” Why? Because the *writer* doesn’t know how to explain it? Because the *material* is so theologically sophisticated and uselessly above the heads of his readers? No. “Because *you* have become dull of hearing.” The lecture begins.

5:12. Are the readers dolts? Simple laypeople unable to comprehend such exalted material? Babies in Christ unequipped to wade through such weighty matters? Hardly. Given the amount of time they had been exposed to Scripture, they *ought* to have been *teachers* who could explain these things to others. Instead, they need someone to teach them all over again the most basic principles of God’s Word till it takes root in their lives. They are not mature enough for doctrinal meat; all they can handle is milk. How long have you been a Christian?

5:13. There is no shame in feeding exclusively on milk, if you are a baby. Every Christian starts out that way. Still, anyone for whom milk is the steady diet is “unskillful” in the Word. No one expects new converts to be skillful in the Word.

The shame lies in being spiritual infants feeding on milk “*when for the time*” we ought to have matured enough not only to handle meat ourselves but to feed it to others.

5:14. The meat of God’s Word is for those who have attained “full age.” How long does that take? The determining factor for Christian maturity is neither spiritual nor chronological age. Maturity is not even determined by how much one “knows” about Bible doctrine or theology; it is measured by the consistency of one’s practical application of the Scriptures to one’s personal life. Those who have attained “full age” are *those who habitually exercise their senses to discern both good and evil*. The mature believer educates himself in the Scriptures then absorbs it and fleshes it out in mind, spirit and body—consciously *exercising* his faculties to distinguish right from wrong (in doctrine and behavior), making decisions and governing his behavior *by what he knows the Bible teaches*. Christian maturity is *Biblical thinking and behavior*—spiritual discernment honed by practical obedience. How mature are you?

6:1–3. The readers are exhorted to pursue the maturity they lack: “let us go on unto perfection”—not sinlessness, but completeness, *maturity*. Some of the “first principles of the oracles of God” listed are impressively hefty topics! These are some of the basic principles of Christianity which believers, having understood and settled in their hearts, are to *move beyond!*

6:4–20. After a last sober warning, the writer finally returns to Melchizedek (6:20) and to at least some of the things he intended to say regarding him in chapter 7 (briefly explored above).

Remarkably, the writer of Hebrews gauges his readers’ spiritual maturity by whether they can handle doctrine about Melchizedek’s Christological significance! How long *have* you been a Christian? How much do you know, not just about the Bible, but about God? Given the time, how much should you know? How serious are you in pursuing and practicing the truth of God in your Bible? Serious study of God’s Word is not just for preachers, teachers or seminary students. You do not need a theology degree to become a mature Christian. All you need is serious devotion to God, loyal commitment to His Word, and a sanctified grace-dependent determination to practice what you already know and what you learn day by day. God forbid that we should be uninterested, Biblical ignoramuses who have grown “dull of hearing.” Let’s grow up into mature Christian men and women who ransack our Bibles in order to know, trust, and obey God’s Word.

¹ I am indebted in this section to Michael P. V. Barrett’s helpful treatment of Psalm 110 in *Beginning at Moses: A Guide to Finding Christ in the Old Testament* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador, 1999), 315–319.

² Westcott, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, loc. cit.

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Music Should Teach Theology

Dr. Daniel Zager, University of North Carolina professor of music, said, "Just as our theology ought to be counter to our popular self-help culture, so too music in the church ought to be counter-cultural." Zager, citing Luther as an example, noted that music is to teach theology to people in a most powerful way; in short, to proclaim the Word of God. Regarding music to increase attendance or copy the world, Zager believes it is a "mistaken conclusion" that Luther used popular barroom tunes. "There is no evidence whatsoever that he did so," Zager said. (*Baptist Bulletin*, March 2000)

Falwell BBC'S Outstanding Student

Drs. James O. Combs, J. Curtis Goldman, and W. E. Dowell affixed their signatures to a document declaring Liberty University chancellor Jerry Falwell the outstanding student to attend Baptist Bible College during its first 50 years of existence. The award was made during the Founder's Breakfast held at BBC on Tuesday, May 16, during the national fellowship meeting of the BBFI, held in conjunction with commencement exercises at BBC. (*Fundamental Baptist Times*, 7/5/00)

Divorced SBC Leader Remains as Pastor

"Given the already high divorce rate among Baptists, the last thing we need to do is to give one of our own leaders a pass, no matter how much we may respect him," said Prison Fellowship's Charles Colson on his June 13 *BreakPoint* radio broadcast. Colson was referring to Dr. Charles Stanley, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta since 1972. Stanley was recently divorced after 44 years of marriage but continues as pastor. Some members and several senior staff members, including Stanley's son, have resigned from the church in protest. Stanley said at a 1995 congregational meeting, "If my wife divorces me, I would resign immediately." (*World*, 7/1/2000)

Liberal Presbyterians Criticize Southern Baptists

On June 28, a day they dedicated to a celebration of ecumenical Christian unity, the Presbyterian Church (USA) passed a resolution condemning the Southern Baptist Convention for refusing to let women be pastors. (*Christian News*, 7/17/2000)

GARBC Drops Approval System

At their recent national conference in Ames, Iowa, the GARBC dropped their approval system for para-

church ministries. A 2/3 vote (66 percent) was required; the system was dropped by a 67 percent vote. (*Fundamental Baptist Times*, 7/5/00)

Justice Department Sides with Pornographers

At a hearing before the U.S. House Commerce Committee on May 23, several witnesses complained that children have ready access to obscenity online, but the Clinton Justice Department refuses to enforce existing federal laws against companies that target children. When pressed by Rep. Chip Pickering (R-MS) to name even one case prosecuted under this law, Clinton Justice Department officials could not name one. Nor could they name one major distributor of Internet obscenity when pressed by the committee. "The obvious fact is the Clinton Justice Department sides with pornographers rather than children when it comes to the Internet," said Patrick Trueman, director of governmental affairs for American Family Association. (*AFA Action Alert*, 5/25/2000)

State Trooper Fired for Convictions

When Indiana state trooper Ben Endres was ordered to serve as a gaming agent on the Blue Chip Casino riverboat, he refused, explaining it was against his Christian beliefs. Endres offered to transfer to another district

and even pleaded to do janitorial duty instead, but supervisors promptly fired the eight-year veteran for disobeying. (*World*, 7/1/2000)

House Fails to Ban Internet Gambling

The U.S. House of Representatives has rejected legislation that would have prohibited most gambling on the Internet. Supporters of the Internet Gambling Prohibition Act failed to garner the two-thirds vote necessary to pass the bill. The vote was 245-159 in favor of the ban, leaving the bill 25 votes short of a two-thirds majority present. Thirty members did not vote. There are at least 650 gambling websites, many of those operated without regulation from foreign countries or offshore locations, that generated \$1.2 billion in revenue last year. Most sites offer casino-style games. The National Gambling Impact Study Commission recommended a ban on Internet wagering in its June 1999 report. The commission reported online gambling is "especially enticing to youth, pathological gamblers, and criminals." (*Baptist Press*, 7/18/2000)

Alarming Facts about Pornography

- This year, "adult entertainment" on the Internet is expected to generate revenues of \$51.5 million, the third largest sector of sales, surpassed only by computer products and

travel.

- There are computer bulletin boards set up specifically for the seduction of children. They lure kids in with games and establish relationships with them on-line. Then they arrange to meet face-to-face.
- The Playboy Web site averages 4 million hits per day.
- An amazing 87% of convicted molesters of girls and 77% of the convicted molesters of boys admit to use of pornography in the commission of their crimes.
- There are now many more hard-core pornography outlets in America than there are McDonald's restaurants.
- A staggering 86% of convicted rapists admit regular pornography use.
- It is estimated that hard-core pornography is available in 80% of the 26,000 neighborhood video stores in America.
- The pornography industry grosses \$10-\$12 billion per year. (Liberty Alliance, 7/20/2000)

AT&T Dials Up Pornography

The decision by AT&T Corp. to carry a pay-per-view X-rated channel for its cable division is one more reason for consumers to look elsewhere for their long distance business, the American Family Association says. "AT&T has long been a major promoter of the homosexual lifestyle, and now it is promoting out-and-out hard-core pornography," said AFA Vice President Tim Wildmon. According to an article in the *Dallas Morning News*, AT&T will be carrying "The Hot Network," a hard-core porn channel that other cable operators like Time Warner, Inc., and Comcast Corporation have refused to touch. The decision by AT&T was made to boost profits for its underachieving cable unit,

NOTABLE QUOTES

The object of all music should be the glory of God.—Johann Sebastian Bach

America's women have a right to choose [abortion], and no one will ever steal that right away. The right to choose is fundamental, lodged in our Constitution, affirmed by our Supreme Court. And, on behalf of President Clinton, I vow to you here, and to all listening, that we will never ever let anyone take that right away.—Vice President Al Gore, in a speech to the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), January 22, 1997

It should be a serious business with us to be thoroughly purged of every error which may have a tendency to foster the spirit of Popery, and when we have made a clean sweep at home we should seek in every way to oppose its all too rapid spread abroad in the church and in the world. This last can be done in secret by fervent prayer, and in public by decided testimony. We must warn with judicious boldness those who are inclined toward the efforts of Rome; we must instruct the young in Gospel truth, and tell them of the black doings of Popery in the olden times. We must aid in spreading the light more thoroughly through the land, for priests, like owls, hate the daylight. Are we doing all we can for Jesus and the Gospel? If not our negligence plays into the hands of priestcraft. What are we doing to spread the Bible, which is the Pope's bane and poison?—C. H. Spurgeon

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, in whom, by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order or government of the church, is invested in a supreme and sovereign manner; neither can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God; whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. —London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689

I have lived in prison a long time now and I've met a lot of men who were motivated to violence just like me. And without exception, every one of them was deeply involved in pornography, without a question, deeply influenced and consumed by an addiction to pornography.—serial killer Ted Bundy, just before his execution

There is need of a great revival of spiritual life, of truly fervent devotion to our Lord Jesus, of entire consecration to His service. It is only in a church in which this spirit of revival has at least begun, that there is any hope of any very radical change in the relation of the majority of our Christian people to mission work.—Andrew Murray

and was justified as a way to meet the demands of viewers who want "adult" programming. (*AFA Action Alert*, 5/31/2000) "We hear a lot about 'corporate responsibility' when it comes to pollution and the environment," wrote columnist Cal Thomas in *World* (6/24/2000). "What about some corporate responsibility when it comes to polluting the soul? Don't AT&T executives have children, wives, and mothers? Are they proud to carry this filth? Would they show it to their closest relative?"

Evolution Disclaimer Fails to Get Supreme Court Review

Decrying that the Supreme Court has allowed a federal appeals court to further promote the "secular legend" of the Scopes Monkey Trial, Associate Justice Antonin Scalia criticized the high court's June 19 rejection of an appeal by a Louisiana school board over its policy requiring teachers to read a disclaimer before teaching evolution to their students. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 6/21/2000)

Don't Question Darwin

The faculty at Baylor University, a Baptist school in Waco, Texas, wants to shut down a new center on campus because it questions Darwinism. The Michael Polanyi Center, founded in October 1999, explores questions about the relationship between science and religion. Its director, William Dembski, has Ph.Ds in both mathematics and philosophy. In April a star-studded conference at the Center addressed the question whether nature yields evidence of something *beyond* nature. Speakers included Christian and non-Christian

leaders in many scientific fields who hold a wide spectrum of views. Yet many of the Baylor faculty refused to attend. Instead, they denounced the intelligent design theory, which proposes that nature's empirical data is best explained by an Intelligence beyond nature. The faculty told local media that design theorists are "stealth creationists," whose "pseudo-science" threatens to undermine the university's reputation. Days later, the faculty senate voted 26-2 to ask the president to dissolve the center, but he refused. (*What In The World!*, Vol. 28, No. 1)

Teachers Encouraged to Create "Safe Zones" for Homosexuals

A handout distributed to all faculty of the Springfield High School of Science and Technology in Massachusetts encouraged teachers to "work on [their] own biases" against homosexuality in order to create a "safe zone" for students struggling with sexuality issues. The handout listed 11 suggestions "to protect the most maligned victims in today's society." The handout was accompanied by two news articles and a cover letter from advisers to the Gay-Straight Alliance, a student club. (*Christian News*, 7/17/2000)

Supreme Court Upholds Limits On Sidewalk Counseling

States were given more authority to restrict pro-life demonstrations outside health clinics by a June 28 Supreme Court ruling upholding Colorado's

limits on sidewalk counseling. The Court ruled that the imposed restrictions are a legitimate way to protect the right of abortion patients to avoid unwanted speech. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 6/30/2000)

Same-Sex Couples Line Up for Civil Union Licenses

An estimated two dozen same sex couples obtained civil union licenses from city and town clerks in Vermont on July 1, in some cases only minutes after the law took effect at midnight. However, clerks in at least five communities have either resigned, threatened to resign, or have insisted they would refuse to issue the licenses. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 7/3/2000)

FCC Prevented from Restricting Religious Speech

A bill to prohibit the Federal Communications Commission from restricting religious speech on noncommercial educational channels passed the House of Representatives by a 264-159 vote June 20. Rep. Chip Pickering, R.-Miss., sponsor of the Noncommercial Broadcasting Freedom of Expression Act, called the HR 4201 vote a victory for religious freedom. The bill makes sure that "the FCC will never again try to regulate religious speech," Pickering said in referencing the FCC's controversial Cornerstone/WQED decision last December restricting religious speech on noncommercial educational TV stations. Strong public outcry against the FCC's Dec. 29 restrictions prompted the agency to rescind its

action Jan. 28. (Baptist Press, 6/23/2000)

Evangelism Outlawed Under Proposed French Law

Missionaries and other Christians who share their faith could be imprisoned for up to two years under a proposed French law that accuses religious proselytizers of "mental manipulation" of the public. Members of France's Socialist party suggest there are 173 religious groups that they label as dangerous sects. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 7/3/2000)

Persecution of Sudanese Christians Continues

The militant Islamic government of northern Sudan bombed a hospital on March 7 for the second time in a week. No fatalities have been reported in the attack on the Samaritan's Purse hospital in the southern city of Lui, but a raid on March 1 killed two people and injured many others. The National Islamic Front (NIF) government bombers killed 13 children in February in a bombing raid that destroyed a school in the Nuba Mountain region. Large concentrations of Christians reside in the Nuba region. A British Broadcasting Company correspondent reports no military targets exist nearby. Nearly 2 million people have died since 1983 in the war against Christians and animists in the country's south. (*World Evangelical Defender*, March 2000)

India Proposes Law to Control Foreign Missionaries

India's Bharatiya Janata

Party (BJP)-led coalition government will propose new controls over the flow of foreign money to religious organizations, partly in a bid to curb the activities of foreign Christian missionaries.

Commissioners also have proposed amendments to the Citizenship Act and the Foreigners Act to control terrorist activities and foreign Christian missionaries in the country. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 4/2/2000) In response, Christian members of India's Parliament have formed a committee to focus attention on growing intolerance of religious minorities throughout the country and have demanded that the government take immediate steps to stop the attacks on Christians. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 4/17/2000)

Training to Resist Christian Evangelism

Hindus, Muslims, and Jews are training to resist Christian evangelism in the United States. National religious leaders are asking local congregations to teach members about the "threat" of Christian evangelists, Knight-Ridder News Service reports. These minority religions became concerned after the Southern Baptist Convention published prayer guides to help Christians evangelize other faiths. (*What In The World*, Vol. 27, No. 8)

We are grateful to Current Trends and Updates for portions of this news. CNT is a fundamental e-mail news service. Contact CT_N_U@dmci.net for more information.

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

What Is at Stake in the Music Debate?

Nothing seems to provoke dogmatic statements like dogmatic statements. Solomon said in Proverbs 15:1, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." The thoughts in this column are a sincere attempt at a soft answer, but they may still touch a nerve. Most of our controversies involve three groups that don't seem to be very helpful. Some that don't really know the subject; others who have a limited understanding of theology; and some who just aren't godly. But as much as we would love to do our arguing out of earshot of those we are trying to reach for Christ, we may have to admit that these three groups force us to think about the issues.

Music matters. When fundamental churches have resolved this issue and moved on to some new controversy, we will all have a better understanding for having gone through the debate. Without repeating what has been written elsewhere—even in this issue of *Frontline*—may we suggest some other areas on which the debate has impact. A generation is growing up listening to what we are saying and watching what we are doing. Many of them couldn't care less about this fuss over church music and just follow their personal tastes and interests. Others want to do right but are either confused or developing convictions that will bring them leadership in the future.

The articles in this issue have raised some serious questions that

suggest there is more at stake than many realize. Someone needs to ask how the current debate on music will effect our claim to believe in the sufficiency of Scripture. Some years ago I wrote in the forward to Tim Fisher's book, *The Battle for Christian Music*, words to the effect that God is the audience of the music we use in worship and we should, therefore, be more concerned about what He enjoins rather than what lost men enjoy. That statement has been batted about by pundits with statements such as, "And just how are we supposed to know what kind of music God likes?"

The man who claims to believe 2 Peter 1:2-3 shouldn't be so sarcastic. We should rather be making statements that support Peter's prayer that "grace and peace be multiplied unto

you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." This statement is true or it isn't. The Scriptures are sufficient or they aren't. We can't have it both ways. Either we can know what God expects us to do about music, or we must abandon our claim to the sufficiency of Scripture.

Also, a generation of future leaders is learning how to discern the will of God. Those of us who settled the big decisions of life long ago—who to marry, what career to fol-

low, where to go to college, where to live, etc.—forget how difficult it looks from the other side. The teenager who must decide what kind of music he will listen to is learning how to make decisions about the will of God. The way we make our decisions will influence the way they make their decisions. Do we really want to teach them to make all of their spiritual decisions the way some are making decisions about music? Do we really want to support a theological dualism that holds that some things are rooted in theology and other things are just "cultural?" What must they be thinking when they listen to a sermon on "How Lot Caved in to His Culture!" after sitting through shallow songs not far removed from what their friends are listening to at the charismatic church around the corner? If God has no will about music, can we be sure He has a will about other things?

It is not just the sufficiency of Scripture and the will of God that is at stake; it is the very use of the Bible to bring change into our lives. At the heart of the doctrine of sanctification is the fact that God has given us His inspired word to teach us doctrine, bring conviction, and give us grace for change and growth. Second Timothy 3:16-17 make this perfectly clear. If ongoing discussions about music do not begin with the Bible, then continue with the demand for

obedience to the Bible, we are engaged in folly. Call it alarmism if you will, but dismissing the possibility of a theology of music plants the seeds of the destruction of pastoral theology itself. There is more at stake in the music debate than what we decide on music.

**A generation
is growing up
listening to
what we are
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watching
what we are
doing.**



DR. JOHN C. VAUGHN

What's on the Web

Bob Whitmore

In keeping with our music theme, I want to share with you a couple of sites suggested to me by *Frontline* reader (and writer!) Vicki Johnson. The first is the Hymn Links page (<http://members.aol.com/jweaver303/hymn/link.htm>). It is a simple list of links to other hymn sites. Under the Denominational Links category were links to Lutheran, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, and Church of God web sites. (I clicked on the link to Al's Baptist Hymnal and found midi sound files for more than 500 hymns.) The Hymn Links site also categorizes links by music and singing styles, such as sacred harp singing, southern harmony, gallery singing, and psalmody. But I must warn you about a button at the bottom of this page, Return to New River Notes. If you like history, you could spend a lot of time reading the articles on this link!

The second site Mrs. Johnson suggested was An Online Christmas Songbook (<http://remember-josie.org/carols>), a listing of more than 100 Christmas songs. You can listen to them online or print out the music and text to play or sing later.


In the May/June issue I mentioned an Internet source for church bulletin clip art. Since then I have come across two more sites with Christian graphics. ChristArt (www.christart.com) contains free Christian graphics for your web page. Free Graphics (www.freegraphics.com) lists links to other graphics sites. The category for web graphics alone has 115 links. Among the 11 other categories are links for holiday art, fonts, tutorials, and free graphics software.

I frequently get e-mails from foreign readers, and sometimes they are

in a language other than English. At other times the e-mails express a desire to read *Frontline* articles or view the FBF web pages in another language. The solution to these problems is on the Internet! I use two web sites that can translate e-mails and even web pages from (and to) Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, German, or Norwegian. The first is FreeTranslation.com (www.freetranslation.com), and the second is called Babelfish (<http://babelfish.altavista.com/translate.dyn>), provided by the Internet search engine AltaVista. These sites are similar in the way they work and are very easy to use. Of course, their translations are not entirely accurate, but they are usually close enough to be understood.

The next two sites will be of special interest to Baptists. The Baptist Board web site (www.baptistboard.com) claims to be "the largest Baptist discussion forum on the Internet." The Baptist Top 1000 (www.baptist-top1000.com) is a list of Baptist hyperlinked sites ranked by the numbers of hits received daily. When I checked the site in mid-May, only 64 sites were ranked. The number one site had a previous day's total of 238 hits. (By comparison, the FBF site averaged 957 hits per day in June.) Nevertheless, you may find some interesting sites in the list.

One last site I want to share with you is "The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth" (www.xmission.com/~fidelis). Here you'll find an online version of *The Fundamentals*, the series of booklets that outlines the basic doctrines of Biblical Fundamentalism.




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Young, Cool and in Love

Steve Skaggs

I remember being a college student and looking at certain families with disdain. Old married couples who had been together ten or even fifteen years (imagine!) seemed to have so many kids. Their cars looked so crummy. Their clothes were, like, way out-of-date. It was certainly difficult to imagine them ever having been young and cool and in love like I was. They couldn't have been! They must have always been nerds!

I vowed that I would never turn into one of those people. I would always be young and cool and in love.

As I look at my life now, having been married more than 15 years, I realize I have become one of those nerds! I do have a bunch of kids. Our clothes aren't really all that bad, but I'm sure 22-year-olds would call them way out-of-date. (Although, ironically, if I had saved some of my 1970s clothes, they might be cool again!) My wife, Cindy, takes great pride in shopping yard sales and thrift stores. She and her friends enjoy telling each other how little they paid for clothes. I've been slightly embarrassed more than once by having Cindy run into one of her friends and making a statement such as, "Do you like the shirt Steve is wearing? You do? Got it on sale at Goodwill for 50 cents!" You get the idea.

My cars do look crummy. I have a 1989 Chevy Cavalier station wagon that still runs but makes funny noises. It

used to be a bright shiny maroon color. It's now an odd splotchy maroon color. Also, being a five-passenger vehicle, it's too small for all seven of us. (Strapping a couple of the kids to the roof is illegal in all fifty states, I believe.) So we also have a 1983 Chevy van. It's a little rusty around the edges, but it's big enough for all of us. Oh, let's face it—it's huge. In fact, I call it The Behemoth. And it has its share of quirks.

The Behemoth has one of those huge sliding doors on the side. To open it, you grasp the handle with two hands (or three, if you have an extra), yank the door toward you (hoping it won't jump off its track, which the kids will tell you always puts Dad immediately into a Very Bad Mood), and then slide it backwards. It is impossible for any child under the age of nine to operate. The space shuttle hatch probably has a simpler opening/shutting mechanism.

The front passenger's door works fine, although you do have to slam it pretty hard to get it to stay shut. The front passenger's window does not work fine. Some previous owner attempted to seal the edges of the little triangular vent window with some kind of sticky black stuff. I don't know why; maybe it leaked air and made a shrill screaming noise if your speed exceeded 35 mph—as the one on the driver's side does. But more on that one later.

If you endeavor to open this vent (which an occasional

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unwitting passenger has attempted to do in order to get a breath of air, since the AC is shot), tarlike black spiderwebs of goop will string out from it and just might land on your right leg. The regular-sized passenger window doesn't open at all.

The driver's side door opens perfectly—from the outside. If you want to open it from the inside, you first have to "roll" the electric window down. The window, however, doesn't want to go down; it hiccups and stammers the whole way. But by grabbing it and pushing on it, you can get it to open entirely. Then you wait until no one in the parking lot is watching and you reach your arm out, twisting it backwards to work the latch on the outside of the door so that you can exit the van. If I ever get the door fixed, I fully expect to catch myself still opening it in this fashion, having been conditioned to do so by months of inconvenience.

Remember how the little triangular vent window on the passenger side doesn't really open? Well, the one on the driver's side doesn't really shut. It used to, but the little metal thingy that makes it shut tight fell off the other day. Now the window makes that shrill, screaming noise I referred to earlier.

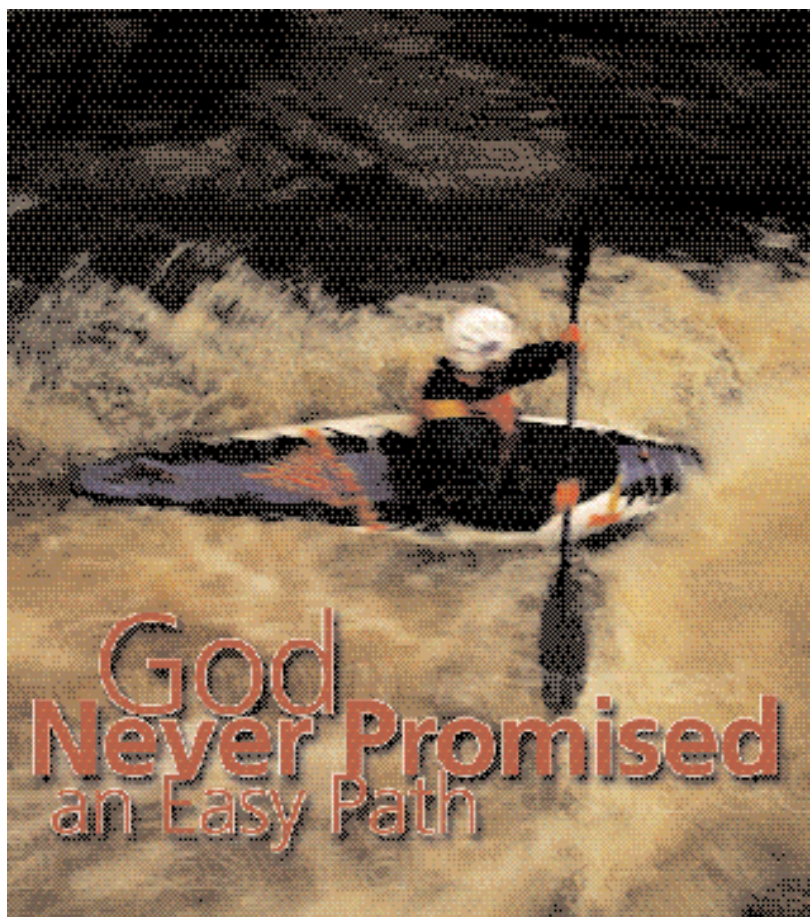
*I'm thankful
that the things
I see now as
important . . .
are the truly
important
things.*

Incidentally, I keep the little metal thingy in the van, rattling around between the front seats, expecting that one day I'll clamber into The Behemoth and find that it has re-attached itself. So far this has not occurred. If it does, maybe I will write an article about it.

What's the point of all of this? Well, I hope I have learned since my college days to look at others with humility. Whenever I look at another person with disdain (or, face it, pride), the problem is with me, not with him.

More importantly, it struck me recently that my marriage began in 1983, the same year my van was built. There are plenty of people running around now with sparkling new vehicles and classy clothes but marriages that are wrecked. I'm thankful to drive clunkers and wear thrift-store clothing but to be in a marriage that's lasted. I'm thankful that the things I see now as important—my relationships with the Lord, with my wife, and with our children—are the truly important things. Much more important than being young and cool.

Steve Skaggs is a member of the Secondary Authors department at Bob Jones University Press. He says he sold the van a while back, so now it's safe to publish this article.



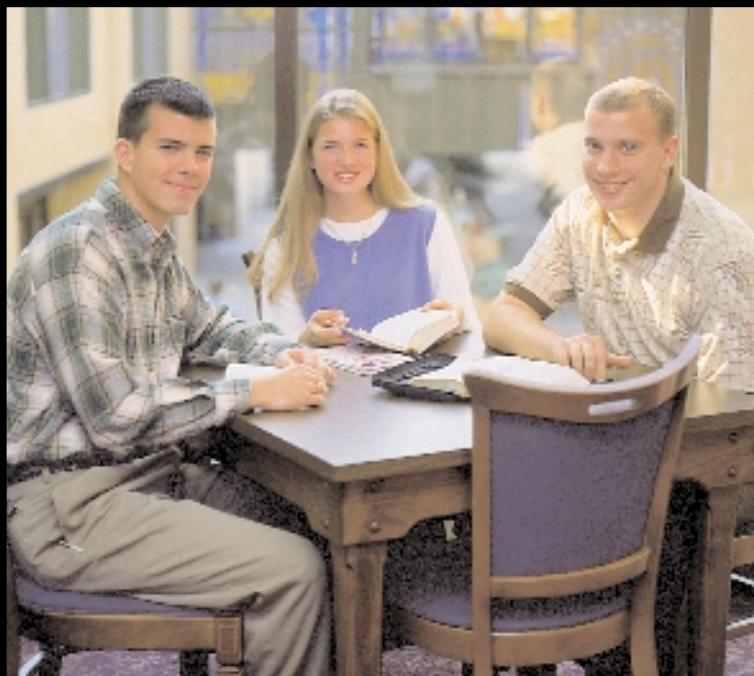
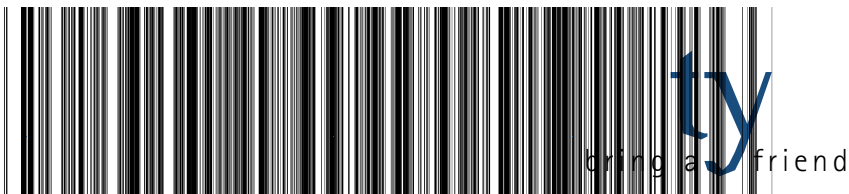
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