

EXAMINE YOUR PROFESSION OF FAITH • THE ERROR OF INCLUSIVISM • STANDING ON COMMON GROUND?

FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2002

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Words of Warning



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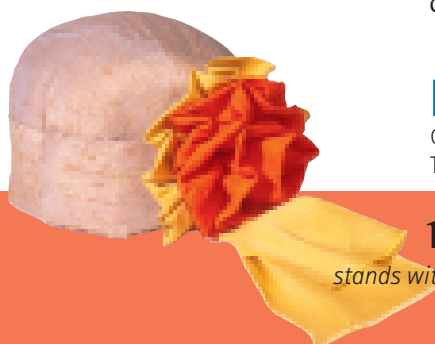
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Contents

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2002

FRONTLINE MAGAZINE

VOLUME 12 • NUMBER 1

12 Standing on Common Ground?

Jeff Straub

A Report on "Pilgrims of the Sawdust Trail: Evangelical Conversations."

15 Book Review: *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God*

Layton Talbert

21 Our "Christian" Movie Rating System

Cynthia Blake Simmons

Just because old movies are tame in comparison to what is seen today does not mean that they meet God's approval.

23 How to Detect a Con Man

Terry K. Hagedorn

Instead of giving, are we being taken?

32 Hardly Any Poison at All

Frank Hall

Satan always wraps his poison in something pleasant, interesting, humorous, attractive, or entertaining.

36 The Christian Athlete

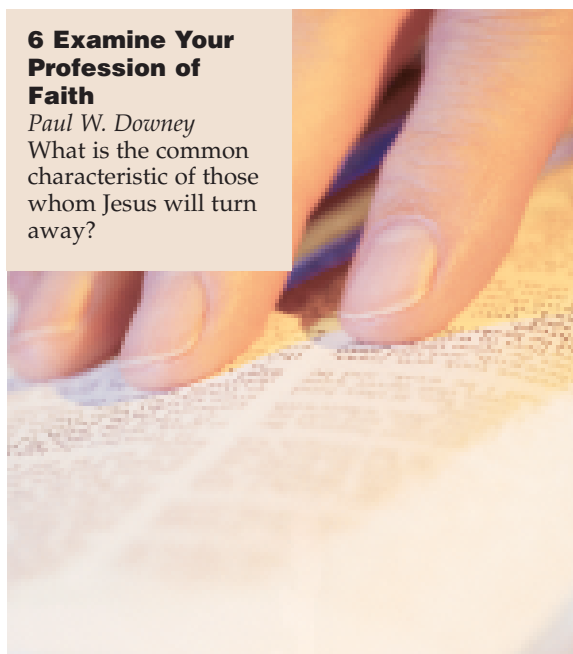
Morris Hunsucker Sr.

There is still a need for Christian athletes on the field of competition.

6 Examine Your Profession of Faith

Paul W. Downey

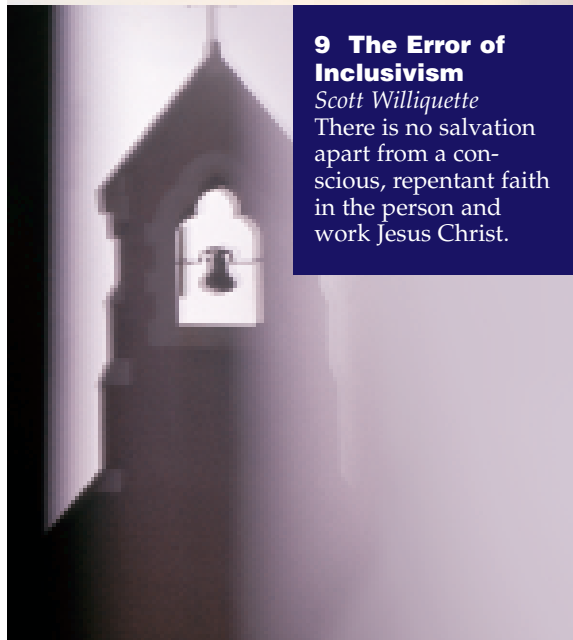
What is the common characteristic of those whom Jesus will turn away?



9 The Error of Inclusivism

Scott Williquette

There is no salvation apart from a conscious, repentant faith in the person and work Jesus Christ.



Departments

4 Mail Bag

5 On the Front Line

Some New Things for a New Year

Rod Bell

19 On the Home Front

20 Dr. Ehud's E-mail

25 Wit & Wisdom

26 Ladies' Circle

Fuzzy Gums

Carolene Esayenko

29 The Evangelist's Corner

Winter

Phil Shuler

30 At a Glance

The Book of Philemon

Layton Talbert

33 Newsworthy

38 Behind the Lines

Words of Warning Indeed

John C. Vaughn

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www.fbfi.org

I greatly appreciate Sam Horn's article "The Ultimate Motivation for Missions" [September/October 2001]. I only wish he would have resolved how that the urgent need for missions in John 5:35 actually supports the "God-centered approach to missions." The harvest of whitened fields of grain is for the benefit of the farmer. The Lord actually uses the conversation with the woman at the well to reveal that God is seeking worshippers when reaching the lost in John 5:23—"for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

*Pastor Ken Woodard
Dade City, FL*

I thought that you would like to tell your readers that the Bible reading schedule that Warren N. Stuber recommends in his November/December 2001 *Frontline* article is available on the Internet for all to use, print, or download. . . . The URL for the Bible reading schedule is www.christianbeliefs.org/brs/biblereadingsch-00.html. The schedule is tied to an online Bible so that you can go to the website each day, and read the Bible online if desired. Or, you can print out the pages and read the Bible in a more traditional manner.

*John C. Lewis
www.missionaries.org*

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You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.

Thanks for the work you do in compiling the articles for the magazine. It is greatly appreciated.

*Rev. Bob Keller
Brea, CA*

We look forward to receiving and reading *Frontline*.

*Mike Furtney
mike@xcelsoft.com*

I am compelled to congratulate you on your November/December 2001 front cover. The portrayal of an apparently Scriptural rather than a "politically correct" family was impressive. I went on to enjoy and I trust profit from the excellent content. Thank you!

*Pastor Allen Harman
Pulaski, VA*

First let me thank you for publishing an outstanding magazine. I especially appreciate

the thematic approach of each issue. One of the most frustrating things about articles in papers, magazines, etc., is how to file them for future reference. I work a full-time job while doing church planting work in Salina, Kansas. The time it would take for a subject and Scripture reference card catalog for every article I read is simply nonexistent. With *Frontline* I can often time file almost the whole magazine into a single file. In support for *Frontline* and for the benefit of God's flock I would like to have a "Frontline Sunday."

*Pastor Steve Prickett
Salina, KS*

Thank you for the helpful and godly magazine. We appreciate your ministry.

*William Bruck
Erie, MI*

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Some New Things for a New Year

With this issue, *Frontline* begins its 12th year of publication. By faith, we have seen the magazine continue to be a blessing and expand over the years. We praise the Lord for the prayers of God's people for *Frontline* and the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International.

By the time you read these words, the new year will be well under way. There are some great opportunities for fellowship and soul-stirring meetings coming up. Don't miss the regional meetings in your area. You'll be glad you went. Especially, don't miss the National Meeting at Bethel Baptist Church in Schaumburg, Illinois, hosted by Pastor Brad Smith, coming up in June. He is planning a great meeting with speakers who will challenge and convict our hearts. The times and places of all the meetings are listed here in *Frontline* or you can check our web site for updated information.

Perhaps you have noticed a couple of small changes in the magazine this month. This column has been called "Behind the Lines" for quite some time. Our editor, Dr. Vaughn, writes a column that appears in the back of the magazine that has been called "Biblical Viewpoint." Since mine is in the front and his is in the back, we are going to call this one "On the Front Line" and the one in the back will become "Behind the Lines." From time to time, in addition to writing on Bible truth and great doctrines that need to be honored again, I'll be sharing my heart about the Fellowship.

In a day when the word

"Fundamentalist" has practically taken on a new meaning (and not a good one in the minds of most) and when the liberal media have caved in to those who would use current events to portray Bible-believers as radicals similar to the terrorists they also call "fundamentalists," the need for the FBFI is greater than ever. We are what we have always been, even though some would join the world in attacking and trying to undermine us. If the unbelievers want to tar us with the same brush as the Taliban, while estranged believers want to try to make us look like theological liberals, then we must be in balance. Our job is just to run the flag of truth up the pole, and let those who believe it rally around it.

For years, friends of the FBFI and *Frontline* have urged me to use this column to answer what has become an increasing attack on us from fellow believers. But we are not going to allow those who want to drag us into their own arguments to set the agenda. There are far more important things to do than to spend all our time reading what others are saying or trying to chase down every misrepresentation of our stand, and then inviting the next round of sparring by a serious reply. In fact, much of what some are becoming so upset about seems to be nothing more than a straw man argument designed to get sincere believers to take sides that wouldn't even exist if men would seek Biblical reconciliation over bitter divisions based on personal jealousy.

Although we are not

going to invest precious time on responding to bitterness, we are introducing a new column this month that will provide an excellent forum for some humorous discussion of the various controversies that wash over our movement like the waves of the sea. Now that the whole world is wired for the Internet and e-mail is the best way to "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," even the folks up in the mountains are online.

One mountain man who says he is my friend, who insists on remaining anonymous, calls himself Dr. Ehud. Now, he might be pulling my leg, but even if the e-mail he has been forwarding to *Frontline* is not really genuine, Dr. Ehud's observations make about as much sense as anything else in circulation and are a lot more fun to read. Those who don't know what he is talking about can just scratch their heads and move on through the magazine, but those who do might benefit from the medicine of a merry heart if Dr. Ehud provokes a chuckle. If anyone takes offense—well, that won't be anything new either.

So whether you are a member of the FBFI or not, whether you agree with the position of the Fellowship, this magazine, or this preacher, we

hope you will continue to read *Frontline* and encourage others to subscribe and benefit from it. From what I've seen so far, Dr. Ehud has all of our numbers and may be calling on any of us in the days ahead. You wouldn't want to miss the issue where he talks about you!



DR. ROD BELL

Examine Your Profession of Faith

One of the longest recorded sermons preached by the Lord Jesus is found in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew. The immediate audience to whom Jesus spoke included the scribes and Pharisees—the scrupulously religious experts of the Law who assumed they were perfect in righteousness. Also present were many ordinary Jews who assumed they were acceptable to God because they were the children of Abraham. Everyone who heard Him thought he was on his way to heaven. But Jesus challenged his hearers' views on the Law and God's Kingdom. He demanded humility, repentance, and the forgiveness of sins

that can only be found by following Him. Then, as He was concluding the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus added this warning:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23).

This should strike us today as a profoundly startling announcement. Christ's statement here should encourage a careful self-examination. These words present us with a dreadful warning that we ignore at our peril.

The Scriptures do not give us much insight into how large a group may be refused entrance to heaven, other than to say that it is "many." It will include the ones represented in a later parable by the seed that sprouted in stony ground but withered in the heat, and the ones that sprouted in thorny ground but were choked out by other concerns (Matt. 13:3-9). It will also include those who are represented as the tares sown among the wheat, which cannot be distinguished and separated out until the harvest at the Lord's return (Matt. 13:24-30). Within the context of the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord warns about wolves in sheep's clothing that come in to destroy. So these would also include those who masquerade as believers for their own destructive and self-seeking purposes. The common characteristic of those whom Jesus will turn away will be that each presents an outward appearance of faith without possessing the reality of it.

Who Will Be Refused Entrance to Heaven?

The Intentionally Insincere

These include the wolves in sheep's clothing that are among us by stealth, seeking to harm God's people. But there may be many who are merely behaving according to the expectations of others. Young people from Christian homes often grow up in church doing what parents, youth leaders, pastors, or teachers expect but never trusting Christ themselves. We must remember that attending Sunday school, memorizing verses, singing songs, or conforming to grooming standards never saved anyone. We can be sure that most congregations include teenagers and adults who are putting on a front simply because someone else expects certain behavior from them.

Others of the intentionally insincere may be seeking personal gain. They may have joined a church in order to impress someone, to fit in with a particular group, or to get permission to date or marry someone. There are places and situations in which church membership can boost one's political, business, or social standing. Some people make a profession of faith in order to get a job or a promotion, receive economic relief from the church, or even to make a living. There may be members, adherents, employees, or even ministerial staff members in any church who are there merely for what they can get out of it.

The Sincere Followers of a False Theology

Obviously, those who are purposefully hypocritical will be among those who are refused entrance to heaven. But it would be dangerous to assume that these are the only ones who will be there. Actually, Christ's warning implies that a large percentage of this group will be *surprised* by the news that they are not acceptable. There will

be *many* who think that their outward appearance of belonging to Christ guaranteed its reality. They will protest, "I was sincere; I tried to please You."

These would include people who sincerely follow a false theology. Mormons believe they will inherit eternal life, but the Christ they claim to follow is not the Christ of the Bible. Likewise, the Jehovah's Witnesses make Jesus less than God and believe their salvation depends upon their own efforts. The followers of such cults may be surprised to be turned away when face-to-face with the risen

Lord. But the shock may go deeper for the devout Roman Catholic who has trusted his destiny to the intercession of the Roman Church, performance of the sacraments, recitation of prayers, worship of Mary, and the repetitive sacrifice of Christ in the Mass. It is significant that this same Roman Church is now embracing much of the modern charismatic theology of miraculous sign gifts. Many who are claiming to heal and cast out demons and do many marvelous works in the name of "Christ" have been deluded. They are following "another Christ," not the Christ of the Bible. Those who follow such false theologies may be very sincere in their trust of their system to save them, but they are sincerely wrong.

They will be among those surprised to hear Jesus say, "I never knew you: depart from me."

The Sincere Followers of a Distorted Gospel

Similar to the error just described, but more subtle, is the danger of following a distorted gospel. For instance, much of the true gospel is missing in the modern charismatic movement. There is such a strong emphasis on works and experience that many people in charismatic churches routinely ignore or even flatly deny what is written in the Word of God. Many seek extra-Biblical revelations and spiritual "promptings" for their guidance, rather than relying on the Bible. While they may have amazing experiences or witness apparent displays of power, these do not prove that they are Christ's. Many have been deluded and led astray to their own condemnation by a gospel that must be validated by some ecstatic experience, "power encounter," or "word of truth."

How Can We Avoid a False Profession?

This is a very serious question, and one that the Scriptures challenge us to consider carefully: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor. 13:5). When asked how one knows he is saved, most professing believers will respond by describing something they *did*, not something they *believe*. While insisting that they do not believe one can be saved by his works, many base the certainty of their salvation on their response to an "altar call" and their repetition of the words of a "sinners' prayer." On the other hand, many doubt their salvation because they are not sure they *did* something correctly. We must be certain that we do not teach people to base their confidence in their salvation on saying

Many have been deluded and led astray to their own condemnation by a gospel that must be validated by some ecstatic experience, "power encounter," or "word of truth."

the right words in the right order or in the right place.

According to the Scriptures, before a person can be saved he must *admit his personal sinfulness*. Paul asserts, "There is none righteous" (Rom. 3:10) and that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). A person must also *recognize his personal helplessness*. Paul also tells us, "there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:11), that we "were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), and that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Our condemnation is certain, and we are helpless to prevent it.

That is the *bad* news. But the *good* news is that God has provided a remedy for us. A person must *believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died and rose again to pay the penalty of our sin*. Nothing less will do. Paul tells us that "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). This is not simply believing that Jesus loves you, but that Jesus is the Christ of God, and that He died as the innocent substitute for the guilty—each of us. But even if one will acknowledge this, he still must *ask God's forgiveness and place his confidence in what Christ has done for him*, not in what he can do for himself.

One's salvation is a matter of his heart attitude of belief prompting him to call upon the Lord Jesus Christ in confidence that He can and will save him from his sins (Romans 10:9, 10).

However, there is one final matter to consider. A true believer should *look for signs of spiritual growth*. As Jesus said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father." Further explanation is found in 2 Peter 1:5-10 and in Hebrews 12:5-11.

One's salvation is not directly related to his actions. Many will give outward evidence of submission to the Lordship of Christ and still be turned away. However, if a person truly believes, it will be reflected in his actions and attitudes as the image of Christ is formed in him through the inner working of the Holy Spirit. A person is in Christ if he can say, based on his own heart's belief, "I acknowledge that my sin makes it impossible for me to please God, who is my holy and righteous Judge, and that I deserve everlasting punishment. I believe that Jesus was and is the Son of God, who died and rose again to save me from my sins. I have asked Him to forgive me and make me a new person in Him." There should be evidence, however imperfect, of the fruit of the Spirit being developed in his life. This is confirmed by the experience of great conviction for sin.

Immediately following His warning about false professions, Jesus made the analogy about the wise man who built his house on the rock and the foolish man who built his house on the sand to illustrate real faith (Matt. 7:24-27). The

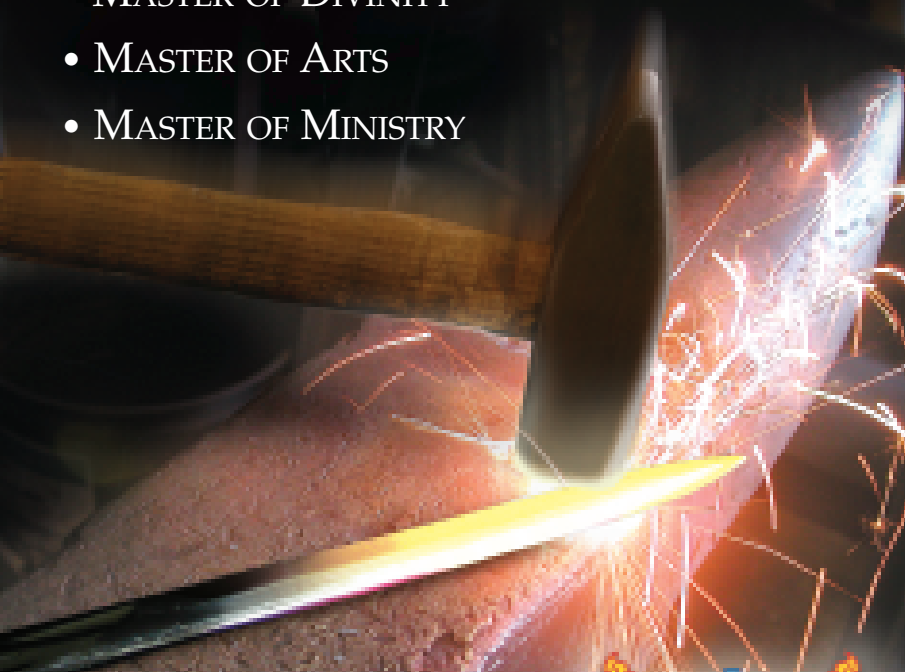
two structures look alike. The only difference is in their foundations, which become evident only by their responses to the storms. When the storms come and beat on the house that is one's life, the house will stand if it is built on the solid rock of Jesus Christ, or it will collapse if its only foundation was shifting sands. God wants the believer to be confident of his salvation. But many have a false sense of confidence. We each benefit from careful examination of our own hearts. And we answer to God for the integrity of our ministry. Are we trying to build a ministry on quick and easy professions? Or are we willing to challenge people to be genuinely transformed by the grace of God through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Dr. Paul W. Downey is pastor of Temple Baptist Church in Athens, Georgia.

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The Error of Inclusivism

Scott Williquette

A person can be saved even if he has no knowledge of Christ. Faith in God saves regardless of how much of the Biblical gospel one understands. It matters little what a person believes as long as he believes in a god.

Is that the message of the New Testament? Is that what Jesus taught? Is that what John, Paul, and Peter teach in their epistles?

In his book *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, Clark Pinnock writes,

If God really loves the whole world and desires everyone to be saved, it follows logically that everyone must have access to salvation. There would have to be an opportunity for all people to participate in the salvation of God. If Christ died for all, while yet sinners, the opportunity must be given for all to register a decision about what was done for them (Rom. 5:8). They cannot lack the opportunity merely because someone failed to bring the Gospel of Christ to them. God's universal salvific will implies the equally universal accessibility of salvation for all people. . . . In my judgment, the faith principle is the basis of universal accessibility. According to the Bible, people are saved by faith, not by the content of their theology. Since God has not left anyone without witness, people are judged on the basis of the light they have received and how they have responded to that light. Faith in God is what saves, not possessing certain minimum information. . . . A person is saved by faith, even if the content of belief is deficient (and whose is not?). The Bible does not teach that one must confess the name of Jesus to be saved. Job did not know it. David did not know it. . . . It is not so much a question whether the unevangelized know Jesus as whether Jesus knows them (Matt. 7:23). One does not have to be conscious of the work of Christ done on one's behalf in order to benefit from that work. The issue God cares about is the direction of the heart, not the content of theology.¹

Pinnock and many others in evangelicalism are preaching a damning message known as inclusivism. Inclusivism teaches

that “God’s forgiveness and acceptance of humanity have been made possible by Christ’s death, but . . . the benefits of this sacrifice are not confined to those who respond to it [Christ’s death] with an explicit act of faith.”² “Inclusivists affirm the particularity and finality of salvation only in Christ but deny that knowledge of his work is necessary for salvation.”³ In other words, man’s salvation and forgiveness of sin are based upon Christ’s death, but you do not have to believe in Christ in order to possess that salvation. That is why it is called inclusivism—people who believe in religious teachings other than that of Christianity are included in the salvation that Christ provides even though they do not believe in Christ.

Christian publishers are printing books by inclusivists, and Christian bookstores are making them available to unwary Christians. According to inclusivist John Sanders, a survey conducted at the 1975 Urbana missions conference indicated that of the 5000 evangelicals who responded, 25 percent could be classified as inclusivists. Sanders believes that number to be much higher today.⁴

The Bible clearly teaches, however, that in this dispensation there is no salvation apart from a conscious, repentant faith in the person and work Jesus Christ. The message of inclusivism will damn the soul.

Salvation Has Always Been Secured by Faith in Christ

The main argument used by inclusivists is that in the Old Testament people received forgiveness of sins apart from faith in Jesus Christ. According to them, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not have to repent and believe in Christ, and we don’t either. Therefore, as long as someone has faith in a god, his sins are forgiven. It makes no difference which so-called god their faith is in, as long as they have faith. Pinnock writes,

When Jews and Muslims, for example, praise God as Creator of the world, it is obvious that they are referring to the same Being. There are not two almighty creators of heaven and earth, but only one. We may assume that they are intending to worship the one Creator God that we also serve. The same rule would apply to Africans who recognize a high God, a God who sees all, gives gifts to all, who is unchangeable and wise. If people in Ghana speak of a transcendent God as the shining one, as unchangeable as rock, as all-wise and all-loving, how can anyone conclude otherwise than that they intend to acknowledge the true God as we do? . . . People fear God all over the world, and God accepts them, even where the gospel of Jesus Christ has not yet been proclaimed.⁵

In order to hold their position, inclusivists teach that there is a difference between believers and Christians. “Believers can be defined as all those who are saved because they have faith in God. Inclusivists contend that

all Christians are believers but not all believers are Christians. They define a Christian as a believer who knows about and participates in the work of Jesus Christ.”⁶ So heaven will be populated by both Christian and non-Christian believers.

Is their contention true? Were people in the Old Testament saved by just believing in God? No! Those in the Old Testament did not secure salvation and the forgiveness of sins simply by believing in any god. They were required to trust in the Creator God and the message of salvation He had ordained for that period of time. There were many other religions and gods worshiped in the Ancient Near East during the Old Testament period, but we are told over and over that forgiveness came only through faith in Israel’s God and His message.

What message did the Old Testament saint believe in order to have his sins forgiven? He believed in the God of Israel who created all things and who promised that He would send a Messiah someday. Jesus said, “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me” (John 5:46). In John 8:56 Jesus says, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad.” The point is that Abraham did not simply believe in any god. He believed in the Creator God who had revealed Himself to Israel and who promised to send a Messiah. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob believed in God and the message of a coming Messiah that God

proclaimed. One of the biggest differences between the Old Testament saint and the Christian today is their perspective regarding the Messiah. The Old Testament saint trusted in God and His message of a coming Messiah. We trust in God and His message of a Messiah who has already come. Either way this is different from just trusting any god that man worships.

Is belief in any god enough to bring about forgiveness of sin? Does the true God forgive no matter what you believe?

In Isaiah 43:11, God said, “I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.” And again, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am GOD, and there is none else” (Isa. 45:22).

Salvation Is Only Through Faith in Christ

Salvation is secured by a committed, repentant faith, not good works or religious activity. According to Galatians 2:16, it is faith in Christ alone that saves from eternal punishment. The religious activities associated with the Law of Moses do not, never have, and never will justify a sinner. All religious activity, regardless of its value to society, has no merit before God.

There is a common misconception that the Old Testament believer was saved by keeping the Law, and the New Testament believer is saved by faith. This is clearly wrong. Salvation in every dispensation is by faith. “For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God,

In order to hold their position, inclusivists teach that there is a difference between believers and Christians.

and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3), which is a quote from Genesis 15:6. Old Testament saints had to believe in and commit themselves to the only true God who would someday send a Messiah. In the present dispensation we must place our faith in God as the one who sent His Son as our Sin-bearer and Master.

According to Sanders, "Saving faith . . . does not necessitate knowledge of Christ in this life. God's gracious activity is wider than the arena of special revelation. God will accept into his kingdom those who repent and trust him even if they know nothing of Jesus."⁷ "Inclusivists claim that it is not necessary to understand the work of Christ in order to be saved."⁸ The message of the New Testament, however, is just the opposite (John 14:6; Acts 4:10-12; Gal. 2:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 10:9-13).

Conclusion

Fundamental Christian doctrine is being attacked from many sides. Secularists, evolutionists, and feminists—to name a few—are taking every opportunity to assault Biblical Christianity. Inclusivism is in our bookstores and in our schools. If we do not stand and fight for God's truth, it will not be long before it is in our pulpits and our pews. If God is to be glorified in our lives, ministries, and churches, we must heed the words of Jude 3, 4:

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to

write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Scott Williquette is pastor of First Baptist Church in Rockford, Illinois.

¹ Clark Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy* (Zondervan Publishing House), pp. 157-58.

² John Hick, "The Philosophy of Religious Pluralism," in *The World's Religious Traditions: Current Perspectives in Religious Studies. Essays in Honour of Wilfred Cantwell Smith*. Quoted by Ronald Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* (Zondervan Publishing House), p. 103.

³ John Sanders, *No Other Name* (Eerdmans Publishing Co.), p. 215.

⁴ Sanders, *No Other Name*, footnote #1, p. 216.

⁵ Pinnock, pp. 96-97.

⁶ Sanders, *No Other Name*, pp. 224-25.

⁷ John Sanders, "Is Belief in Christ Necessary for Salvation?" *Evangelical Quarterly* 60 (1988) 252-3; Quoted in Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* p. 123.

⁸ John Sanders, *No Other Name*, p. 223.

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Standing on Common Ground?

Jeff Straub

A Report on "Pilgrims of the Sawdust Trail: Evangelical Conversations" a conference at Beeson Divinity School, October 2-3, 2001

Seated beneath the beautifully painted Trompe l'oeil balustrade of the chapel of Beeson Divinity School of Birmingham, Alabama, nearly 300 men and women listened to impassioned calls for greater unity among Christians of all faiths. Speakers, alluding to the high priestly prayer of Jesus (John 17), called for Roman Catholics, mainline denominationals like the United Churches of Christ, United Methodists, Episcopalians, American Baptists, Anglicans, Presbyterian Church of the America, Evangelical Lutheran Churches of America and various Pentecostal representatives, to work together to create a new ecumenism, beyond an "ecumenism of the trenches"—the joining together as co-belligerents in such arenas as anti-abortionism, gender bias, and racism. The old ecumenism of the National and World Council of Churches is irrelevant. It is time for a new, grassroots ecumenism.

What is remarkable about this meeting was not its message, for ecumenism has been alive and well (though some participants suggested it has been failing for at least the past ten years) since the founding of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam (1948). The catalyst for this meeting and one of its most vocal proponents was Timothy George, the founding dean of Beeson, an inter-denominational seminary affiliated with Samford University, which holds loose ties with the Alabama Baptist

Convention, that in turns affiliates with the Southern Baptist Convention. George is no stranger to ecumenical gatherings. He was a signatory of the second *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* document, "The Gift of Salvation," and was its chief architect. He continues to appear on ecumenical platforms representing, albeit unofficially, "conservative" evangelicalism and works tirelessly to promote a greater ecumenism based on the common commitment to historic confessions such as the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds.

The conference, entitled "Pilgrims on the Sawdust Trail: Evangelical Conversations," derived from the book, *The Smell of Sawdust—What Evangelicals Can Learn from their Fundamentalist Heritage* (Zondervan, 2000), by Richard J. Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary and self-confessed ex-Fundamentalist, brought together a broad spectrum of professing Christians to foster "new friendships" and "new relationships." "We do not seek easy solutions to deep divisions, nor do we assume unanimity of opinion on important issues of difference. But we do wish to foster greater mutual understanding among Christians of different backgrounds and perspectives. We need to talk—and listen—to one another and not merely snipe at one another."¹

The conference began with Joel Carpenter, author of the widely acclaimed *Revive Us Again—The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (Oxford, 1997), offering an historical overview of the

Fundamentalist-Evangelical milieu out of which contemporary evangelicalism has arisen. Carpenter, who has GARBC roots, was influenced during his student days at Calvin College by the young professors, and soon to become Fundamentalist historians, George Marsden and Richard Mouw.

Then Mouw passionately summarized the essence of his book, *The Smell of Sawdust*. Through his book and presentation, he attempted to credit Fundamentalism with some positive influences on the evangelical world that needed to be reclaimed, despite Fundamentalism's three "unfortunate features"—anti-intellectualism, other worldliness, and ecclesiastical separatism. For instance, Fundamentalism's emphasis on personal conversion is something positive evangelicalism should appreciate. Still, Mouw's tone both in the book and in his public participation was condescending. He spoke of a "Fundamentalist" evangelist with whom he traveled as a young man whose opening crusade sermon was a fanciful message that suggested both Hitler and Roosevelt, both of whom were buried in closed coffins, were still alive, living in South America, and plotting for a new world order. Fundamentalist Kevin Bauder, of Central Baptist Theological Seminary of Plymouth, Minnesota, was invited to respond both to Mouw's book and his presentation. In his stellar response, he raised the issue of the nature the gospel, which if Biblically defined, should delimit who would make up the visible church. Bauder questioned Mouw's story of "Sister Helen," a teacher whom Mouw had as a youth and whom he challenged in youthful Protestant arrogance for her devout Catholicism. Despite his anti-Catholic upbringing, Mouw became convinced of the genuineness of her faith. For Bauder, it was not a matter of judging her heart relationship with God, for God alone could do that, but of evaluating her (or other professing "believers") on the basis of doctrinal affirmations. When Mouw was given an opportunity to respond to Bauder, he dismissed him out-of-hand, because, despite Sister Helen's denominational affiliation, his experience of her piety was all he needed to convince him that she was a genuine believer. In the end, the exchange was between one man's experience and another man's theology, with theology coming in a distant second. Happily, some attenders sought Bauder out privately to express appreciation for his position and concern over the tenor of the conference.

After an elegant luncheon at Birmingham's prestigious *The Club*, where Catholic Richard John Neuhaus spoke of a Christian America, the gathering returned to the chapel to hear Gabriel Fackre, of Andover Newton Theological Seminary, offer evangelicalism a mild rebuke for being *too* separatistic, that is, for failing to remain in the mainline denominations to work for renewal and revival. This became the implicit message that hovered over the remainder of the conference. Richard John Neuhaus rebuked the gathering for "the scandal of Christian divi-

sion"—while we are "brothers and sisters in Christ," we live as though we are not. There is one head—Jesus Christ, and there must be, of necessity, one body—the Church. Nothing short of full communion, the goal of *ECT*, is be envisioned. But, he challenged, the issue of Petrine authority (the papacy) still needs to be taken seriously.

Timothy George called for an ecumenism along four lines—the "ecumenism of the trenches" where Christians of all faiths work together in the trenches for things like the right-to-life. Second, there needs to be an "ecumenism of conviction" rather than an "ecumenism of accommodation," *ECT* being George's example. Furthermore, there needs to be an "ecumenism of fellowship" where all "true believers" reach out to one another across visible (implied—denominational and theological) boundaries. Finally, George plead, there needs to be an "ecumenism of common witness" so that the world can see the triune God lived out in the lives of people of faith.

On Wednesday morning Pentecostals spoke of the unifying power of the Azusa Street revival of 1906—a trans-racial, trans-gender, trans-cultural, and trans-denominational unifying force within broad Christianity. One woman Pentecostal challenged the gathering to understand that the concept of salvation is understood more broadly in the two-thirds world than in evangelicalism—salvation is about life and the relief from the dehumanizing elements in society.

What must have been considered a highlight of the gathering for its organizers was a "worship" service that was the epitome of the *new* ecumenism—Catholics and Protestants, men and women, whites and blacks sharing together in the service of worship. Certainly trans-racial worship is Biblical, but trans-denominational is at best theologically confusing and trans-gender, contrary to clear Pauline instruction.

In the final session, United Methodist, liberal-turned-evangelical Thomas Oden called for a new grass-roots ecumenism, analogous of "public-domain" software. He described the old ecumenism—the World Council of Churches variety—as defunct and a failure due to its pandering to modernity. The new ecumenism would be committed to ancient ecumenical teaching, reclaiming the courage of the martyr and the faith of the church.

The two-day gathering ended with George and Mouw offering brief assessments. Mouw praised the dominant role of Billy Graham in fostering this kind of an ecumenical dialogue because of his "missional ecumenism"—working with a wide array of "Christians" for the purpose of evangelism. George suggested that while there is still a long way to go to reach full ecumenism (implied—eucharistic ecumenism where all "believers" sit down at the table of the Lord in full and free fellowship), this conference is a small step, a tiny baby step toward the achievement of that goal.

Several observations of this conference are in order.

Personal experience must ever be tested by the truth claims of the Scripture, and where the two are at variance, the Scripture needs to be given the ascendancy.

First, the mindset displayed at Beeson must be seen as a powerful force in contemporary evangelicalism. While the attendance was relatively small (about 195 of 275 registered were Beeson students and faculty, as per a telephone conversation with a Beeson staff member on October 4, 2001), the breadth of representatives is noteworthy. In addition to those already cited, also featured was John Armstrong, president of Reformation and Revival Ministries of Wheaton, Illinois, who has been promoting evangelical ecumenicity for some time now. His October 2001 conference was entitled “One Holy Catholic Church—Evangelical Unity in Faith and Practice” and includes *ECT* signatories, J. I. Packer and Timothy George. It seems that Armstrong will bring the evangelicals to the ecumenical table, and he and George will work together drawing them into partnership with the mainline denominations. As this movement grows, it will continue to attract prominent evangelicals who will be seduced by the pietism of the participants and may ignore, either purposefully or unconsciously, theological differences.

Second, this movement will doubtless influence younger evangelicals in a profound way. The Beeson students seemed captivated by the aura of the gathering. At the Tuesday luncheon, students were heard rejecting the Fundamentalism of Bauder and affirming the spirit of the gathering. One student stated that he had recently read a biography of the current pope, John Paul II, and believed him to be a warm and devoted Christian. Yet when asked what he knew of Roman Catholic theology that the pope must surely affirm, he admitted his ignorance. However, of the pope’s piety, he had no question.

Third, theological precision gave way to pious expression. Bauder and Neuhaus were alone in raising serious theological differences—Bauder raising the nature of the gospel and Neuhaus, Petrine authority. On the other hand, Richard Mouw spoke fondly of Sister Helen’s devotion to Christ despite her theological affirmations. He spoke privately about a wonderful revival within Roman Catholicism, yet when confronted with the theological error of the Church of Rome, simply suggested we all are in error on some things. This primacy of experience over theology is reminiscent of German liberal Friedrich Schleiermacher’s *The Christian Faith* and American Baptist liberal Harry Emerson Fosdick’s *The Modern Use of the Bible*. The one voice little heard at this conference was God’s voice. Aside from Richard Mouw’s sermon at the Wednesday worship service from the text of Titus 2:11-14 on the Blessed Hope, few of the conference speakers made any effort to ground their arguments in the text of Scripture. One ELCA pastor raised, from the floor, John 17:17 and the place of truth in the discussions, but his point went nowhere and his remarks were passed over.

Fourth, while Neuhaus represents an *evangelicalized*² Roman Catholicism, he still stands firmly on the side of classic Catholic dogma. He spoke of his offering up of Christ anew in the Mass in midst of the bombing of the World Trade Center on September 11 and clearly supported Petrine authority or the supremacy of the pope, whom Catholics called *the* Vicar of Christ.

Fifth, this new ecumenism is fertile ground for “*Biblical feminism*.” In his concluding remarks, Richard Mouw laud-

ed Biblical feminism, and the meeting platform offered women an equal place at the pulpit. Beeson Professor of Spirituality, Patricia Outlaw, led the daily prayer meetings. This is most curious in that Timothy George is a well-respected Southern Baptist, whose denomination has recently strengthened its doctrinal creed to narrow the role of women in pastoral leadership. At Beeson, an interdenominational and non-affiliated seminary, that stricture does not apply.

Sixth and perhaps most significant, is that this ecclesial ecumenism was clearly seen as the outcome of the “ecumenism of the trenches.” Jerry Falwell, founder of the now defunct Moral Majority, long ago wrote favorably of this kind of broad-based coalition assembled to protest the moral decline in America. Describing the Moral Majority, he wrote, “We are Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Mormons, Fundamentalists—blacks and whites—farmers, housewives, businessmen and business women.”³ Bible believers have been joining hands with Roman Catholics and mainline denominationalists in the name of anti-abortion, anti-pornography, humanism in the public schools, and a host of other societal issues. But these quasi-theological efforts serve as stepping-stones for more serious theological ecumenism. One Pentecostal attendee testified privately how he changed his mind on Roman Catholics after having stood with some in the abortion battle. Furthermore, Billy Graham’s missional ecumenism “broke the ice” for fuller ecumenical dialogue among evangelicals. *ECT* may be seen as Graham’s ecumenism “come of age.”

Fundamentalists need to be very cautious about entering into secular, trans-denominational efforts, as these are being credited with advancing the cause of ecclesiastical ecumenism. Theology must tenaciously be communicated in Fundamentalist churches, and the importance of discernment proclaimed lest laymen and women be seduced by the warm atheological pietism that is characteristic of this new ecumenism. Personal experience must ever be tested by the truth claims of the Scripture, and where the two are at variance, the Scripture needs to be given the ascendancy. We must work tirelessly to ensure, in so far as we are able, that our churches remain communities of genuine believers who clearly articulate their conversion experience. Separatism, the hallmark of Biblical Fundamentalism, needs to be carefully and courageously practiced lest the clear light of the gospel be dimmed among the fragmented and weak reflection of ecumenical confusion. Finally, we must clearly communicate Biblical truth to the next generation of soldiers for Christ who will be called upon to face the ever-darkening days until Jesus comes.

Jeff Straub spent 19 years in pastoral work as a missionary in Canada. He now resides in Acworth, Georgia, while pursuing a Ph.D. in Baptist history.

¹Undated introductory letter found in conference notebook signed by Timothy George.

²Neuhaus converted to Roman Catholicism from the Missouri Synod Lutheranism.

³*The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: The Resurgence of Conservative Christianity* (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 188.

A Danger of Extreme Arminianism: Openness Theology

Layton Talbert

Review of *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* by Gregory A. Boyd. Baker Books, 2000. 175 pp.

Any position carried to an extreme—even a logical extreme—predictably bristles with problems. A position becomes extreme when its proponents carry one or more of its views to a logical conclusion that extends beyond the explicit statement of Scripture, so that it actually ends up contradicting other Scriptural statements.

“Openness theology” (also known as free will theism), a logical extreme of Arminianism, is a theology in which the heart leads the head on a quest to discover texts that seem to confirm what “feels right” to the heart and what “makes sense” to the head. Its two main pillars are the absolute freedom of the human will and the preeminence of love as God’s primary attribute.¹

Promoted by theologians such as Clark Pinnock and John Sanders, openness theology has garnered increasing attention in academic circles over the past decade. The debate, however, is no longer merely academic. Gregory Boyd—a theology professor at Bethel College and senior pastor of the Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, Minnesota—has become the most popular exponent of open theism. His express aim in his latest book is to “include as many laypeople as possible” in the debate. That means warnings about openness theology must also be taken to the pews, and can no longer be confined to theological journals.

Openness theology is driven by several interrelated factors: (1) a *philosophical presupposition* that prescience (foreknowledge) equals determinism—in other words, if God foreknows human decisions then our choices are, for all practical purposes, predetermined by God and not really free choices at all, so that God’s foreknowledge of future human decisions would effectively nullify free will; (2) a *theological motivation* to preserve their view of free will in a way that “makes sense”; and (3) a *hermeneutical concentration* on passages which seem to cast doubt on the traditional view of God’s omniscience. Openness advocates seek to root their position not in logic but in Scripture. But the openness view sprouts not from Scripture, but from a philosophically qualified theological position.

To preserve the integrity of free will, Boyd insists it is logically necessary to maintain that God cannot fore-

know our future free actions. If God already knows what we will do, then what we do is already settled and we can do nothing to change it—in which case we are no longer “free.” But, he argues, this in no way attacks God’s omniscience. “If God does not foreknow future free actions, it is not because His knowledge of the future is in any sense incomplete. It’s because there is, in this view, *nothing definite there for God to know!*” (original emphasis). As free moral agents, we create future reality as we make our decisions, so “until we make them, they don’t exist.”

Boyd appeals to the analogy of a photograph. Take a snapshot of the past, and everyone agrees that nobody can change any choice or action or event in that snapshot. If God foreknows the future as certainly as He knows the past, then the future, too, is like a snapshot—no one can change anything about it. Such a view, he argues, strips us of our ability to make free choices or change anything about our future. But this misses the deeper point which even proponents of free will make. The point is not that you *couldn’t* change anything about the future; the point is that you *wouldn’t* change anything, since those choices are freely made at the time.

The future is not *entirely* open-ended, however. Boyd concedes that God *does* foreknow *certain* future events that He Himself has decreed. Boyd cites only two passages as foundational to the traditional view that God absolutely and completely foreknows every future decision and event. According to Boyd, Isaiah 46 and 48 do not necessarily teach God’s exhaustive omniscience of every future detail. God’s ability to “[declare] the end from the beginning” is contextually clarified by the remainder of the verse—“My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isa. 46:10). All this passage is saying, then, is that God can declare with certainty all His purposes from the beginning. The next verse seems to further fortify Boyd’s point: “I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.” The context itself, he concludes, does not support God’s detailed knowledge of all future events, including man’s future choices.

But he skips a crucial contextual detail in verse 11—God’s reference to the human means (Cyrus) by whom He will accomplish His purposes: “calling . . . the man that executeth my counsel from a far country.” God addi-

Continued on next page

tionally predicts of Cyrus (naming him two centuries before his existence), "I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city and he shall let go my captives" and "shall perform all my pleasure" (Isa. 45:13; 44:28). What is more fraught with human choice than five generations of marriages leading to the birth of a pre-named son who would make decisions that fulfilled God's purposes for Israel? These predictive statements have profound and multiple ramifications for the very specific decisions Cyrus (and others) had to make in order to fulfill God's counsel.

Passages which Boyd asserts undermine the historic view include references in which God repents/regrets (Gen. 6; 1 Sam. 15), asks questions (Num. 14:11; Hos. 8:5), confronts unexpected situations (Isa. 5), expresses frustration (Exod. 4:10–15; Ezek. 22:30, 31), tests people's character (Gen. 22; 2 Chron. 32:31), and speaks of what may or may not happen (Exod. 13:17; Ezek. 12:3). Boyd fingers some genuinely challenging passages for the serious literalist. *But he fails to interact meaningfully with any of the historic orthodox explanations of these passages.* This leaves the reader (the targeted layperson) to assume that the historic view *has* no answer or explanation—and artificially strengthens Boyd's argument. His interpretations require a radical realignment from historic Christian theology, again, purely on the basis of a philosophical presupposition (foreknown decisions cannot be genuinely free decisions).

Though Boyd argues that openness theology explains such passages more satisfactorily than the historically orthodox view, in reality it only raises its own new set of questions. For example:

If free human choices are unknowable by definition and, therefore, unknown to God until they are actually made, how could God forewarn Moses with such certainty exactly what Pharaoh's response would be (Exod. 3:19, a passage Boyd does not address)?

How could God intervene to constrain men to pursue a course of action which was expressly contrary to a free decision they had already made (Matt. 26:1–5)?

If future decisions of free moral agents are categorically unknowable, and if God is the Supreme Free Moral Agent, how could God be certain even of His own future decisions, which are often contingent on the future choices of people? A myriad of successive individual human choices impinge on every event of any significance. "Indeed," theologian A. H. Strong objected to a similar view in 1907, "since the course of nature is changed by man's will when he burns towns and fells forests, God cannot on this theory predict

even the course of nature."

This incongruity proves insurmountable even for Boyd. He is forced to contradict his own operational assumption—that all future choices, in order to be genuinely free choices, are unknowable—in order to explain how God could predict His people's captivity in a foreign land for a specified duration (e.g., Gen. 15 or Jer. 25, 29). God, he says, would not "have to control and/or foreknow *every* future decision to ensure this." Either these foreknown decisions were not free, or these free decisions were foreknown. Either way, Boyd's structure collapses. If a single future decision is foreknown and yet free, then any and all future decisions can be foreknown without infringing on the freedom of those decisions.²

A severe liability to the openness view is Boyd's own acknowledgment that "the incarnation and crucifixion

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were part of God's plan from 'before the foundation of the world' (1 Pet. 1:20; cf. Rev. 13:8)." The event of the crucifixion was predestined, he notes, but not necessarily "the individuals who participated in this event." Focusing on a tree or two, he misses the forest. How or why would God predestine the event unless He knew that as-yet unmade human choices would make it necessary? Such a settled, certain, and costly decree could be made only if God foreknew with certainty (not foreguessed with probability) the Fall—the epitome of free choice.

Prophecy in general is a major obstacle for the open view to explain consistently. Indeed, Boyd admits that the only way to fit the prophecies of Revelation with the open view is to adopt the preterist interpretation that the events described had already taken place by the time John wrote.

Though openness proponents profess to ground their view solely in Scripture, and in a more consistently literal interpretation of Scripture than the historic orthodox view, at bottom openness theology is logic looking for a text, a theology in search of exegetical justification. The hinge upon which the openness view turns is not exegetical analysis but a philosophical assumption: foreknowledge nullifies freedom. Millard Erickson pinpoints this "view of human freedom" as "the very center of the open theist view."³

Part of Boyd's concern is to resolve theological difficulties inherent in the historic view: "Theologically, several unsolvable problems inherent in the classical view can be

avoided when one accepts that God is the God of the possible and not simply God of eternally static certainties." But as we have seen, openness theology only answers some questions at the expense of raising more new ones.

A key recurring flaw in Boyd's chain of logic is rooted in his man-centered point of reference—in what "makes sense," in what "is difficult to suppose," in what we are able to "conceive," and in measuring God by our experience and ability. Human experience and perception become, for all practical purposes, the measure of what God must do or be like. He constantly appeals to a human intuition of what is good, righteous, or appropriate. This anthropocentric point of reference is preoccupied with eradicating paradoxes and mysteries.

At the same time, he artificially strengthens his position by overstating the traditional view in inflexibly stiff terms; it sees the future as an "unalterable" arrangement of "eternally static certainties" which reduces mankind to "a world of pre-programmed automatons." Boyd decries the historic view as portraying a God capable of "ordaining" evils which sometimes victimize even His own children, and consequently producing a God who cannot be trusted.

Boyd welcomes the shift in modern philosophical thought to a more open-ended view of reality. This shift (which has bestowed on our society, among other things, the postmodern dogma that the only dogma is that there are no dogmas, no absolutes) has "freed us to recognize just how dependent our theology had been on

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paganistic thought and thus to rediscover the marvelously open and dynamic dimension of God proclaimed in the Word." "God," Boyd gushes in a bizarre flight of poetic fancy, "is an eternal triune dance of love who eternally displays structure and freedom" and who "invites" His creation "to join his dance."

C. S. Lewis remarked that "a great many of the ideas about God which are trotted out as novelties today are simply the ones which real theologians tried centuries ago and rejected." Boyd asserts that the openness view has never been mainstream only "because almost from the start the church's theology was significantly influenced" by paganistic Platonic philosophy. But most systematic theologians, Calvinistic *and* Arminian, address the paradox of God's foreknowledge of the free actions of men.⁴

Boyd regrets that "some people are beginning to toss around the alarmist label 'heresy,'" and seeks to strike a conciliatory tone. Viewed alongside "the central doctrines of the Christian faith," the openness view "is relatively unimportant." (Five pages later, however, he insists that the issue is "too important and too practically significant to be limited to academic circles," and devotes an entire chapter to those practical ramifications.) "Compared to our common faith in the person of Jesus Christ and the importance of our loving unity in him, this issue and most other theological issues are peripheral." Manifesting a New Evangelical mindset in which tolerance trumps truth, Boyd argues that "the love with which believers debate issues is more important than the sides we take." Such a dichotomy between love and truth is a fuzzy figment of human emotion and rationalization, not a distinction derived from Scripture (Eph. 4:15).

Theology must steer a Scriptural course between two faults. "The first fault positions God as a mysterious object of worship, divesting Him of relational qualities. The second accommodates our ability to relate with Him, sacrificing His mystery. . . . This generation wants a user-friendly God."⁵ Openness seeks to remove the mystery and reconstruct God in a way that "makes sense." But if

human logic is the measuring stick, He never will. He's already told us that (Isa. 55:8, 9).

Dr. Layton Talbert is a *Frontline* Contributing Editor and a member of the faculty of Bob Jones Memorial Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina.

¹ For a brief but concise overview and analysis, see Millard Erickson, *The Evangelical Left* (Baker, 1997), pp. 91-107.

² Interestingly, one of Boyd's own proof passages undermines his larger philosophical assumption that future choices cannot be known because they do not yet exist. If God foreknows with certainty what *would* happen but does not happen (as in 1 Sam. 23:12), then clearly pre-science does *not* equal predetermination.

³ "God, Foreknowledge, Bethel, and the BGC: Questions and Answers" at <http://www.bgc.bethel.edu/4know/-apndx1.htm>, p. 7.

⁴ More recently, Jon Tal Murphree has offered thoughtful and compelling arguments against openness theology in *Divine Paradoxes: A Finite View of an Infinite God* (Christian Publications, 1998).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

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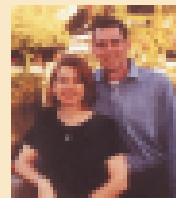
INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST MISSIONS

A Board for the New Millennium



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Dues Are Due!

FBFI membership dues must be paid by April 1 if you want to be included in the next directory. Annual dues are \$29, which includes a one-year subscription to *Frontline* and a copy of the membership directory, which will be released at the national meeting in June. If you are unable to attend, your directory will be mailed to you. Renewing your membership can be done online at the FBFI web site—www.fbf.org. And remember, you don't have to be a pastor, missionary, evangelist, or male to become a member. Anyone who agrees with the FBFI statement of faith (which may be read at the web site) may join.

Web Site Making Progress

We are slowly re-posting materials that were lost in our web site crash last March and updating old material as well. If you haven't visited in a while, drop by to see what's new at www.fbf.org. We will soon be up-to-date posting all issues of *Frontline*. If you subscribe to the printed version, you may also get *Frontline* at the web site at no additional charge. Sometimes the online version gets posted even before the printed one goes in the mail, which our overseas subscribers especially appreciate. Issues less than one year old are password protected, but all that current subscribers have to do get a password is contact our office at info@fbf.org.

E-mail Address Change Reminder

Please note that the e-mail address for *Frontline* and the FBFI has been changed to info@fbf.org.

2002 Meetings

March 4-5

Mid-Atlantic Region

Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church
2717 Greene Road
Baldwin, MD 21013
(410) 557-6963

March 19-21

Northwest Region

Galilee Baptist Church
11517 SE 208 Street
Kent, WA 98031
(253) 854-5828

March 26-27

Northwest Region

Berean Baptist Church
PO Box 742
Ashton, ID 83420-0742
(208) 624-4840

April 8-10

Southeast Region

Bethany Hills Baptist Church
11701 Leesville Road
Raleigh, NC 27613
(919) 846-5483

June 11-13

National Meeting

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

July 30-August 6

Alaska Region

Hamilton Acres Baptist Church
138 Farewell Avenue
Fairbanks, AK 99701
(907) 456-5995

October 28-November 1

Caribbean Region

Calvary Baptist Tabernacle
P. O. Box 3390
Carolina, PR 00984
(787) 750-2227

October 29

Mid-America Region

Pillsbury Baptist Bible College
315 S. Grove Avenue
Owatonna, MN 55060
(507) 451-2710

November 19

Northeast Region

Trinity Baptist Church
80 Clinton Street
Concord, NH 03301
(603) 225-3999

November 19-20

Southwest Region

Fundamental Baptist Church
1111 N. Ash St.
Escondido, CA 92027
(760) 743-1600

Dr. Ehud's E-mail

OCCASIONAL CONVERSATIONS OVERHEARD ONLINE

Ehud, an anonymous friend of Dr. Bell's (who sounds like he might be from the mountains, too), is online. He has been forwarding some of his instant messages to *FrontLine*, and we thought you might enjoy his homespun observations of some of the issues and controversies of the day. In this issue, we introduce you to "Dr. Ehud's E-mail" and a conversation he had with a concerned man named Hedu.

HEDU "Hey, Ehud, don't you know the FBF's gone?"

EHUD "Gone where?"

HEDU "Plumb gone. Don't believe in the inspiration of the Bible."

EHUD "No foolin'?"

HEDU "No foolin'."

EHUD "Don't they say they do?"

HEDU "Don't matter; they don't believe in preservation, so they must not believe in inspiration."

EHUD "Go on."

HEDU "If ya don't have a perfect translation, it ain't preserved, so it can't be inspired."

EHUD "So they're gone?"

HEDU "Yup. Some of 'em want to debate the text of the Bible."

EHUD "Debate! Too bad."

HEDU "Not surprisin'; most of 'em went to that liberal school."

EHUD "You mean the one where most of the teachers in the other schools went?"

HEDU "Well, yeah, but the preachers are the problem, not the teachers. They got their own denomination, ya know."

EHUD "Can't have that."

HEDU "My no. Can't have a college telling a pastor what to do."

EHUD "Who would ever think such a thing?"

HEDU "Besides, they called me a hairytick!"

EHUD "Not that, shorely."

HEDU "Yep, right there in that resolution. Must have been talking about me."

EHUD "I heard they were talking about that feller online."

HEDU "What feller?"

EHUD "The one who said they were 'committed to modern versions' because the feller where they had their meetin' had said some things about a new translation, even though they always use the old one."

HEDU "I think I know that feller. . . ."

EHUD "Seems the online feller musta said that goin' to that other feller's church was proof positive that the FBF was gone for good; pushing them translations and all that."

HEDU "Well, they had it coming, probly."

EHUD "Heard the pastor feller tried to explain, but the online feller was having too much fun with it and wouldn't back down."

HEDU "A man needs to take his stand I always say, specially when he goes to the market. Time those troublemakers got some of their own, I reckon."

EHUD "You think?"

HEDU "Why, sure, they're plumb gone."

EHUD "So you said."

HEDU "They lie too, called me a 'schismatic brothern.'"

EHUD "Brothern? I thought they called you a hairytick."

HEDU "Well, they didn't say 'hairytick,' but they used the hairytick verse. I know it means a feller who sets up a

faction, but it don't matter what it means, look what it says! That's a pretty mean word. Besides, I am a factious man; I always try to get the facts."

EHUD "Greek to me. They use any other verses?"

HEDU "The ones about everybody having to answer for hisself—didn't figger it applied to me, since they said I was a 'hairytick.' If they figger I'm one of their brothern, the whole thing don't make no sense, but I know how mean and unfair they can be."

EHUD "Said that way, that don't seem fair."

HEDU "Not fair atall. If a man won't play fair in this here debate, he's got a bad spirit."

EHUD "You mean it IS a debate?"

HEDU "Only unless you're right, then it's contending for the faith!"

EHUD "So, what's the debate?"

HEDU "It's about them bein' wrong, of course; we can't both be right."

EHUD "I reckon you got 'em there."

HEDU "Finally."

EHUD "One question?"

HEDU "Shoot."

EHUD "What if they do think you're one of the brothern, or if they were talking about some other brothern?"

HEDU "Well, who else could it be?"

EHUD "Maybe the online feller."

HEDU "Tell me again what he said."

EHUD "Said there were thunderstorms brewing in the FBF!"

HEDU "Serves 'em right."

EHUD "Turns out it was just a brief cloud-burst."

SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

Moule's Secret Walk With God

It's that sluggish time of year when I go looking for spiritual stimulation. Generally that means rooting around in the quiet closet off of my study into which part of my library spilled over many years ago. The sorts of books in there are just the type for gray days and a listless spirit. There are whole shelves of titles on revival, personal prayer, the devotional life, hymn histories, and best of all, the preacher's life and ministry. Many of them, chanced upon years ago in some out-of-the-way used bookshop, I've barely, if ever, even opened, let alone read. They were snatched up as a happy discovery and squirreled away for rainy days.

One that I see from the note on the flyleaf came into my hands more than 20 years ago is entitled, *To My Younger Brethren*. It consists of counsel on pastoral life and work offered by the saintly H. C. G. Moule, a 19th-century (1841-1920) English clergyman. Moule is best known now for his conservative, evangelical commentaries on some of Paul's epistles, most notably Romans. In his own day he was associated most of his ministerial life with the various colleges of Cambridge University, including a 19-year tenure as Principal of Ridley Hall. It was during these Ridley Hall years, occupied largely with training men for the ministry, that *To My Younger Brethren* was written. The "younger brethren" were the newly ordained curates taking up their first responsibilities in Church of England parishes. Much of Moule's counsel, therefore, is

specific to their circumstance and denomination. But enough is universally applicable to make the book valuable, especially the first three chapters on a minister's secret walk with God.

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

It had been so many years since I first read these chapters that I'd all but forgotten about them until a recent rummage through the closet. My old highlighting was faint enough that rereading them was like making a new acquaintance. And my heart was so greatly warmed that I wished others could hear from Moule as well.

So, what I'm including here condenses the best of 75 pages of earnest appeal for ministers to really exert themselves at developing a nourishing devotional walk with the Lord. Moule called it the secret walk with God because it takes its steps out of men's sight. He testified to meeting with others at Ridley Hall one day a week for special prayer for those of their graduates who had entered the ministry, concentrating in that prayer, first of all, on those men's inner life of communion with the Lord. "I pray," he revealed, "that in secret devotion, and in secret habits, Jesus Christ may be intensely present with the man." *Intensely present*. Oh for more of that blessed experience.

For any who need a lifting up, here are Moule's choicest admonitions. I send it out with the prayer that I myself may be more earnest in the pursuit of the secret walk in this new year.

Pastor, for the round of toil
See the toiling soul is fed;
Shut the chamber, light the oil,
Break and eat the Spirit's bread;
Life to others would'st thou bring?
Live thyself upon thy King.

My brotherly reader will not need any long

Inside

Bring . . . the Books—Key books for the pastor's study	5
Straight Cuts—An exegetical study	6
Windows—Themed sermon illustrations	7

explanation or careful apology from me here. He knows as well as I do, that a close secret walk with God is unspeakably important in pastoral life. He also knows that pastoral life is often allowed to hinder or minimize the real, diligent work (for it is a work indeed) of that close secret walk. He finds all too many possible interferences with the inner working on the part of the outer.

Such interferences come from very different quarters. Services, sermons, visits to homes and to schools, with all the miscellanies that attend an active and well-ordered organization—these things are sure to have a special and exciting interest for most pastors. It will be almost inevitable that you will find them threatening rapidly to absorb so much, not of time only but of thought and heart, that the temptation will be to abridge and relax very seriously indeed secret devotion, secret study of Scripture, and generally secret discipline of habits, that all-

Do not drift into the night. Have a settled hour when, as a habit, you lay other interests down, and turn unhurried to the holy interview, spreading open your Bible by the lamp . . .

important thing. Let me plunge into the midst at once, with a few simple suggestions on Secret Devotion.

I ask my younger Brother, then, to keep sacred, with all his heart and will, an unhurried time alone with the Lord, night and morning at the least. I do not intrusively prescribe a length of time. But I do most earnestly say that the time, shorter or longer, must be *deliberately spent*; and even ten minutes can be spent deliberately, while mismanagement may give a feeling of haste to a much longer season. Do not, I beseech you, minimize the minutes; seek for such a fullness of “the Spirit of grace and of supplications,” (Zech 11:10) as shall draw you quite the other way. But if the time any given night or morning, *must* be short, let it nevertheless be a time of quiet, reverent, collected worship and confession and petition.

One thing assuredly you can do: you can, if you will, secure a real “Morning Watch” before your day’s work begins. I do not say it is easy. Most ingenious, not to say amusing, are some of the

devices which friends of mine have confided to me; schemes and stratagems to get themselves well awake in good time. Anyhow, I do say that the fresh first interview with the all-blessed Master must at all costs be secured. Do not be beguiled into thinking it can be arranged by a half-slumbering prayer in bed. Rise up—if but in loving deference to Him. Appear in the presence chamber as the servant should who is now ready for the day’s bondservice in all things but in this, that he has yet to take the day’s oath of obedience, and to ask the day’s “grace sufficient,” and to read the day’s promises and commands, at the Master’s holy feet. At any cost, my dear friend and Brother in the Ministry, we must have our Morning Watch with God, in prayer and in His Word, before all the day’s action.

It is obvious to add that punctuality and early hours in the morning will bring into your life another rule; that of punctuality and reasonably good hours at night. No temptation is greater, perhaps, than to ignore or break such a rule. And no doubt the exigencies of pastoral life, sometimes, but surely not often, make it hard to keep it. But it is extremely important, for the man who would walk closely and humbly with his God, to end the day deliberately at His feet. And here accordingly is another occasion for watchfulness, and for method, and for will. Do not *drift into the night*. Have a settled hour when, as a habit, you lay other interests down, and turn unhurried to the holy interview, spreading open your Bible by the lamp, the Bible marked and scored with signs of past research, and then kneeling, or standing, or *pacing*, for your prayer—your prayer which is to be the very simplest (while most reverent) speech with the Lord.

In such acts of worship, morning and night, thought for others, for dear ones, for parishioners, for colleagues, will have its full place of course. Let it be so, with an ever-growing sense of the preciousness of the work of intercession. But I do meanwhile say to my Brother in Christ, take care that no pre-occupation with things pastoral allows you to forget the supreme need of drawing out of Christ’s fullness, and out of the treasures of His Word, for *your own soul* and life, as if that were the one and solitary soul and life in existence.

We ministers are in danger of becoming too official, too clerical, even in our prayers. We *are* the Lord’s ministers; we have a cure and charge of souls as the unordained Christian has not; and let us daily remember it, humbly and reverently. But also we are, all the while sheep of the flock, absolutely dependent on the Shepherd, men

who for their own souls' acceptance, and holiness, and heaven, must for themselves "live at the Fountain." We have to serve others, and "lay ourselves out" for them, daily and hourly. But on that very account, that "our selves" may be, if I may say so, worth the laying out, we must see that "our selves" are, in their own innermost life and experience, filled with the Spirit of God, filled with the presence of an indwelling Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit. And so we must worship Him, and draw on Him, and abide in Him, and acquaint ourselves with Him, just as if there were no flock at all, that we may the better be of use to the flock.

Do you so live, by His grace and mercy? Is your sitting-room and bedroom the place where you habitually hold communion in this holy simplicity with Him who has loved you and given Himself for you? Then I venture to say that all the more for this, by that same grace and mercy, you shall be enabled to "lay yourself out" for others, in your pastoral charge. You shall understand other men better, by thus securing for your own soul a deeper understanding of the Lord Jesus and a fuller sympathy (if the word is reverent) with Him. I hardly care to analyze how, but somehow, you shall more readily and closely "get at" men through this direct, simple, unofficial, unclerical drawing very near indeed to God in Christ. The more you know Him thus at *first-hand* the more shall you understand alike the needs of the human heart (of which all individual hearts are but various instances), and the supplies that are laid up for all its needs in Him. And so you shall go out among your people armed, equipped, with a truly heaven-given sympathy and tact. True personal fellowship with the Lord, the very closest and deepest, is the very thing to open the whole man out for others, and to teach him how, with a loving intuition, to look into them and "upon their things" (Phil. 2:4).

I know not how to get away from this subject; not only because of its intense connection with the most blissful experiences of the believing soul, but because of its unspeakable important bearing on the work of the ministry. Never was there a period when the cry for activity and practical energy was louder; and God knows there is occasion enough for the cry, and for the answering resolve. But never was there a time when the need was greater to distinguish true from false secrets of energy, and to be content with nothing short of the deepest and most divine as our ultimate secret. Do you not well know what I mean?

Nothing is more wanted at present in the sphere of "Church life and work," unless I am greatly mistaken, than a generation of ministers who shall conspicuously combine the best forms of practicality with an unmistakable chastened personal spirituality which is seen to be "the pulse of" their busy "machine." And if the spirituality is to be indeed genuine (away with it if it is anything but genuine to the center), I am deeply sure that its only secret and preservative is a fully maintained secret walk with God.

So this is my plea, dear Brother in the Ministry, cultivate, as for your life, secret communion with God.

And with this view, I now say specially, cultivate such communion laying *His holy Word open before you*. With all my heart I mean to press that thought. I would entreat you to be a Bible student at whatever cost of other religious reading.

We ministers are in danger of becoming too official, too clerical, even in our prayers. . . . We have to serve others, and "lay ourselves out" for them, daily and hourly.

I put in my plea for such a secret study of the word of God as shall be unprofessional, unclerical, and simply Christian. Resolve to "read, mark, and inwardly digest" so that not now the flock but the shepherd, that is to say you, "may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life." It will be all the better for the flock. Forget sometimes, in the name of Jesus Christ, the pulpit, the mission-room, the Bible-class; open the Bible as simply as if you were on Crusoe's island, and were destined to live and die there, alone with God. You will be all the fresher, all the more sympathetic and to the point, when you do come to speak to the listening people about the book. The discoveries which we make in it for our own souls are just the things which we cannot help reporting so as to interest and attract our brethren; at least, that is the sure tendency of things.

"In thy Orchard, Pembroke Hall," wrote Nicholas Ridley within a few days of his fiery martyrdom, "(the wals, butts, and trees, if they could speake, would beare me witness), I learned without booke almost all Paules epis-

ties, yea, and I weene all the Canonically epistles, save only the Apocalyps. Of which study, although in time a great part did depart from me, yet the sweete smell thereof I trust I shall cary with me into heaven; for the profite thereof I thinke I have felt in all my lyfe tyme ever after."

And so shall it be with us also, if we go and do likewise in our "lyfe tyme," our period, not at present of martyrdom but, God knoweth it, of need.

How then shall I read my Bible so as at once spiritually and mentally to know it, or rather, to be always getting to know it? The answer must be—"at sundry times and in divers manners." I must make time to read often, however brief each time may be. And I must use methods of study, more than one, in parallel lines.

Then, practise also a diligent spade-husbandry in your Bible study. Dig as well as plough. In each narrow plot of the great field there are treasures hid. . . . You are quite sure, under the blessing of the Master of the Field, to bring up rich results, more or less.


As a sort of ground-work to all other methods I venture first to say, be always reading the Bible *through*, however slowly, or rapidly. For certain purposes, for instance in order to grasp the scope of a book, as perhaps an Epistle, or the Revelation, or St. John's Gospel, or the latter half of Isaiah, or the Book of Genesis, rapid reading may be quite reverently done. In any case, get as soon as you may, and as often as is practicable and practical, over *the whole surface*. I aim to read the Bible over carefully within every few years.

Then, practice what I would call the *plough-husbandry* of the book. "Make long furrows." Investigate what the Scriptures have to say by

topics, by doctrines, by leading words, over great breadths of their surface; keeping *that* subject, *that* word, all along in view. Bring all your mind to work that way, in the light of the Presence sought by prayer.

Then, practise also a diligent *spade-husbandry* in your Bible study. Dig as well as plough. In each narrow plot of the great field there are treasures hid. Dig a verse sometimes, using perhaps the spade of parallel references. Dig a paragraph at other times; a chapter; a short book. You are quite sure, under the blessing of the Master of the Field, to bring up rich results, more or less.

Take one of the holy Books, or a section of one of them; and for this purpose shorter is better. By a certain exercise of imagination suppose yourself to be reading a *newly discovered* fragment of the apostolic age. Treat it somewhat as many of us have recently sought to treat Bryennius' discovery, *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. What microscopic attention has been brought to bear upon that little book, just because good evidence gives it a place in the first century, and because it speaks of Christ, and of Christians; of faith, worship, ministry, and life, in a part of the primeval Church! Now I attempt from time to time, reverently but very simply, to treat some inspired Epistle somewhat in the same way. I place myself before it as much as possible as if it were new to me and others. I seek, with something of the curiosity which such conditions would create, to collect and arrange its theology and its ethics. And then I bring in upon the results of my study the fact that it is God's Word, the Word which I am to embrace, and live upon, and act upon, today.

Such a study does not demand long hours. It demands only the interest, purpose, and painstaking effort such as we must, yes *must*, make and take for the Bible, if we are not to starve our people and ourselves. Suffer me to repeat it with deep earnestness; we must, we absolutely must, not merely devotionally read but devotionally search and penetrate this divine book. And what shall come of the effort? By the grace of God, sought in the deep joy of a profound submission, it shall come that we shall each one realize, with a vernal newness and delight, that Christ is mine; that the springs and secrets of this life in Him are mine. For the realities of my home, my parish, my study, my soul I go (it is for each one of us to say it) with renewed thirst and certainty to Him the eternal Fountain; I live, I live, yet not I; and therefore I can work. 



Dr. Mark Minnick is the pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, where he has served on the pastoral staff since 1980. He speaks frequently in churches and at conferences across the nation and ministers regularly on mission fields around the world.

Bring . . . the Books

Getting Serious about Holy Living

A review of William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*

Earlier this year while browsing in a Christian bookstore I encountered a copy of this little-known work by William Law. Law was acknowledged by his peers as a brilliant scholar with a bright future in both ecclesiastical and academic circles. However, all of this changed in 1714, when at the age of 28 he lost his teaching fellowship at Emmanuel College for refusing to swear fealty to the new monarch of England. Nor was he alone in his beliefs or unaware of their consequence. He summarized his position by observing, "No defense could be given for people swearing contrary to what they believe." Many who objected equally strongly decided to conform for the sake of expedience, but Law was made of sterner stuff (p. 6). This little-known preacher devoted his life to challenge indifferent believers in his unbelieving age to make a serious effort to live up to what they professed to believe. His challenge was taken up more recently by a pastor and group of businessmen in a local assembly in Fort Wayne, Indiana. This small group met weekly to read and meditate together over the contents of Law's unabridged work. So transformed were they by this exercise that they determined to undertake the task of editing and abridging the work so that other churches could be likewise profited. The project resulted in a very readable abridged version of Law's original work put out by Westminster Press.


Law begins his challenge to the indifferent Christian by observing that spiritual devotion starts with an intentional commitment to live and espouse holiness in all arenas of private and public life. The importance of the depth and extent of this commitment are set forth in Law's statement, "For if the doctrines of Christianity were practiced, they would make a man as different from other people as a civilized man is different from a savage" (p. 20). He goes on to observe that often Christians who are casual in their approach to the Christian life are this way not due to lack of ability, knowledge, or power but simply because they have never considered the importance of intentionally committing to this way of life. Throughout the book the reader is introduced to different fictitious Christians who model those who either succeeded or failed at living an intentional Christian life extending beyond the Lord's day. One such account is the story of a very prosperous business

man named Penitens who, dying of an incurable illness at 35 years of age, lamented that while he had given intentional diligence to the affairs of his business and prospered, he had neglected the prospering of his soul. His conclusion has profound impact.

Law proceeds to unfold in a practical fashion exactly how to go about avoiding the very thing Penitens lamented at the end of his young life. He argues that intentionally living for God involves a commitment to the diligent personal care of our souls; a commitment to live wholly unto God and to expend our lives and energies in service to the same; and a theological perspective that understands spiritual devotion as extending to the use of everyday things such as time, talents, and treasure. He has a very helpful section on understanding Biblical humility as a being more than just declarations against pride but rather a virtue that is to be expressed tangibly in our everyday life as we interact with others around us. It is this virtue coupled with prayer that will enable us to act upon our intent to live a devout and holy life in a deceptively hostile world.

The last section of Law's book is perhaps the most helpful. He details a daily prayer plan designed to structure throughout each day a repeated reminder to devout and holy living. The final prayer session of the day is made at bedtime. Law's words are worth repeating here and merit our individual attention as a sure motivation to an intentional approach to a holy life.

Represent to your imagination that your bed is your grave; that all things are ready for your interment; that you are to have no more to do with this world; and that it will be owing to God's great mercy if you ever see the light of the sun again. . . . Then commit yourself to sleep as one that is to have no more opportunities of doing good, but is to awake among spirits that are separate from the body and waiting for the judgment of the last great day. Such a solemn resignation of yourself into the hands of God every evening, and parting with the world as if you were never to see it any more is a practice that will soon have excellent effects on your spirit.

Those who take the time to give serious attention to William Law will find his little work contains great help in working out our salvation with fear and trembling in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. 

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

Dr. Sam Horn is Executive Vice President of Northland Baptist Bible College in Dunbar, Wisconsin.

Many consider James 4:5 to be one of the most difficult passages to interpret within the entire epistle. Some believe it is one of the most difficult verses to interpret within the entire New Testament. While every Bible student will wrestle with this challenging verse, interpreting and applying its content provides both intellectual stimulation and spiritual insights for God's people. James 4:5 reads, "Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?"

The Context of James 4:5

James writes to a group of believers struggling with various internal issues. Their lives are frustrated because of unfulfilled desires, petty jealousies, and personal emptiness (James 4:1-3). Their underlying problem is rooted in worldliness. They are divided between the ways of God and the pull of the world (James 4:4). In James 4:5, the writer asks a carefully worded question. The question forces the readers to think deeply about God's desire for their lives.

The Interpretation of James 4:5

Accurately interpreting this verse requires the reader to exegete carefully almost every word. Disagreement exists regarding the meaning of the phrase "the scripture." Does this phrase refer to a specific Old Testament reference, or does it refer to a general principle found throughout the Bible? Since a specific passage does not exist, it is best to interpret the phrase as referring to the general tenor or a principle within Scripture. There is also debate regarding the sentence structure of the verse. Edmond Hiebert believes the first part of the verse forms a question and the last part of the verse makes a statement (*The Epistle of James*, pp. 252-54). Most writers, however, believe the entire verse forms a question (e.g., Homer Kent, Jr., *Faith that Works*, p. 146).

One interpretive key is determining the subject of the sentence. Grammatically, two possible subjects exist: (1) an implied subject (God), or (2) the spirit. If God is the subject of the sentence, then the phrase "the spirit that dwelleth in us" becomes the object of God's lusting. Thus, God lusts for the spirit in us. With this interpretation, two additional difficulties surface: (1) To what "spirit" does James refer? (2) Who is the "us" in this passage? Does God lust for the

Holy Spirit within us (the believers), or does God lust for the human spirit in us? God's lusting for the Holy Spirit seems improbable, and God's lusting for the human spirit within us seems unlikely.

If "the spirit that dwelleth within us" is the subject, the identity of "the spirit" becomes the primary focus. Authors differ regarding the identity of "the spirit." Some believe it is the Holy Spirit; others believe it refers to the human spirit. Differences of opinion seem tied to the meaning of the word "lusteth." Normally, the English word "lusteth" contains a negative connotation. Therefore, writers are reluctant to interpret "the spirit" as a reference to the Holy Spirit. These words should not limit the interpretation to the human spirit, however. The word "lusteth" is not an evil word. Its primary meaning is "to long for" or "desire" (Joseph H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 241). The context determines the nature of the desire. For example, in Romans 1:11 Paul writes to the Christians in Rome, "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established." Obviously, in this context Paul's longing is positive in nature (cf. 2 Cor. 5:2; 9:14; Phil. 1:8; 1 Thess. 3:6; 2 Tim. 1:4; 1 Pet. 2:2). Writers interpret the words "to envy" in two ways: (1) as a prepositional phrase indicating direction; or (2) as an adverbial phrase translated "jealousy" or "enviously" (Hiebert, p. 255). If the phrase indicates direction, it refers to the Spirit's longing towards the direction of envy or zeal. If it is interpreted adverbially, it speaks of the Spirit's longing zealously for God's people.

The Application of His Question

Apparently, James instructs his readers in James 4:5 that the Holy Spirit strongly longs to be jealous for the affections or devotion of God's people. This interpretation finds support throughout the Old Testament where God reveals Himself as a jealous God who wants the total devotion of His people (Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 6:15; 32:19-21). Here, James reveals to God's people that the Lord will not be satisfied with a divided following. The Holy Spirit of God that dwells within the bodies of those who know Christ as their personal Savior possesses a strong yearning to be zealous over them. God wants their undivided devotion. He will not be satisfied with anything less. ☞

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

The gospel is “good news.” It is the good news of God. God sent His Son, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to bear our sins in His body on the tree (Isaiah 53) so that we might be reconciled to God through Him (2 Cor. 5:18). In a world filled with bad news, the Christian carries good news that needs to be shared faithfully, prayerfully, and lovingly.

Spread the Gospel Faithfully

Havenwood is the name given to a retirement community run by the United Church of Christ (Congregational) in Concord, New Hampshire. For the past five years, I have hosted a Saturday morning Bible Study at the Havenwood Home.

Our Bible Study began in a small, poorly lit room located in the basement level of this large, heavily populated complex. Just a few people sat in a circle when we first gathered, but I discovered that three remarkable individuals were in attendance. There was a gentleman by the name of Phil. Widowed for nearly 40 years, Phil was in his 95th year. As a young man, working with the Salvation Army, Phil worked as an usher for Gypsy Smith when the Evangelist conducted his crusades in Boston decades earlier. Now Phil was ushering his neighbors to come and hear the gospel.

A second resident in attendance was a dear Christian lady by the name of Grace. Grace was 92. She had never married. For years Grace labored as a missionary to children in the north woods of Maine. It was evident that Grace wanted to continue carrying the message of the gospel to the aged residents of her retirement home.

A statuesque, white-haired bachelor by the name of Louis also came to our inaugural meeting. Louis was 91 years young five years ago. His beautiful baritone voice seemed unaffected by age. In his youth Louis traveled with a gospel quartet, shared his testimony as a lay-preacher, and organized Sunday schools. I'm sure that everyone at Havenwood could hear the joy in Louis' voice on that first Saturday when he declared his testimony in song, “Be not dismayed what'er betide, God will take care of you.”

Phil is now being ushered by the angels through the streets of gold, but Grace and Louis continue faithful in ministry with me at Havenwood. Though they are in their 97th and 96th years, they show by their faithfulness that there is no greater privilege, responsibility, or mystery in life than to proclaim the gospel of Christ. The faithfulness of these prayer-warrior evangelists has filled the Center's newly built chapel to capacity. On a typical Saturday over 50 will gather to hear the gospel preached and to hear Louis sing. Some have been saved. Many have been strengthened. God has been glorified, and I have learned through the example of three senior saints to be a vigilant witness. The gospel

is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1:16) regardless of his age. As Louis says, “Preach Christ, Pastor. He promised to draw all men unto Himself.”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “Any Christian has a right to disseminate the gospel who has the ability to do so; and more, he not only has the right, but it is his duty so to do as long as he lives” (*Lectures to My Students*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1981, p.19).

Spread the Gospel Prayerfully

When Ford Porter turned 25, on the 5th of February in 1918, he was impressed of God to begin a practice of praying each morning. (It was a practice that he would continue for the next 68 years.) It was winter in Indiana. The temperature was five below zero. As Mr. Porter began climbing the stairs into his attic, he carried a pillow upon which he would kneel when he prayed. He placed the pillow very near the chimney and fell on his knees. Then, he prayed, “Oh God, give me a ministry that will reach souls for Christ, encircle the world, and be carried on long after I am gone.” He had no idea how his prayer would be answered.

Fifteen years after Mr. Porter began his practice of daily prayer, the Lord put a burden on his heart to place a gospel tract in every home in Princeton, Indiana, where he now pastored the First Baptist Church. Ford began to look for a suitable piece of literature. Not being satisfied with the message of the tracts that he examined, he decided that he would write a tract of his own. He sat down and wrote a tract that he entitled, “God's Simple Plan of Salvation.”

After praying over his manuscript for several days, he carried it to his friend, Dale Skelton, owner of the Standard Printing Company. Pastor Porter placed an order for 2,000 tracts to be printed. Mr. Skelton suggested that printing 5,000 tracts would not cost much more. “No,” said Mr. Porter, “there are 1800 homes in Princeton, and I want to put one in every home. Two thousand is all I'll ever need.”

As the Lord would have it, Mr. Porter was able to distribute those tracts in Princeton. The leftovers were used as inserts in some of Mr. Porter's personal correspondence. As Christian friends received letters from Ford, they began to write requesting additional copies of the little tract. Soon Mr. Porter was back at Standard Printing asking that more tracts be printed; first 5,000, then ten, then ten more.

Today, “God's Simple Plan of Salvation” is available in 108 languages. Over 500 million copies have been print-

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

Charles Spurgeon

ed. Multiplied thousands have trusted Christ as Savior because of the message contained in Mr. Porter's little leaflet.

In Romans 10:1, Paul says that "his heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Ford Porter's prayer to God for Princeton, Indiana, and the world continues to be answered through a simple tract that has been profoundly used of God. The power behind the power of the gospel is the power of prayer.

Success

I tried to win a soul for Christ;
How earnestly I pleaded
That he had sinned and gone astray
And Christ was all he needed.
I begged him to forsake the world,
Repent and be forgiven -
I tried to coax him to the Lord,
To woo him into Heaven.
And then I realized that Christ
Longed for him more than I,
That He alone could make one care,
Who cared enough to die.
Upon my knees I fought the fight -
My friend was born again that night.
—Barbara E. Cornet

Spread the Gospel Lovingly

Henry Moorehouse was born in 1840. Dubbed the "puny lad from Lancashire," Moorehouse was a cocky little bantamweight prizefighter who battled men when he was in the ring and alcohol when he was not. By the time Henry was 19, he was a "has-been" fighter who had been knocked out once too often by the bottle. Moorehouse had no money, no future, and no hope.

One night, Henry Moorehouse, the washed-up prizefighter, stood in the darkened hallway of his boarding house. His blood was filled with alcohol, his mind was filled with pain, and his hand was filled with a pistol. As he stood in the hallway building up the necessary nerve to end his short life, Henry unexpectedly heard a voice. Upstairs, someone's door was opened. Henry could clearly hear someone talking. As he listened, he heard words that gripped his desperate soul. The upstairs resident was reading the story of "The Prodigal Son." Convicted in heart by what he heard, Henry's arm dropped to his side. Moorehouse put his gun away deciding to live another day.

A few weeks later Henry was in the basement of a warehouse in Manchester. There he met a Christian firefighter. The firefighter opened the Blessed Book to Romans 10:9-10. How precious the words were to Henry Moorehouse as he heard the faithful witness of the Spirit of God for the first time. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God

hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Here was a message that could melt the hard heart of Henry Moorehouse. The "puny lad from Lancashire" believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sadly, Henry had no one to tell him more of Christ. He knew of no church to attend. Henry acquired a Bible and began reading it on his own. Within four years Moorehouse was so saturated with Scripture that folks from near and far were sitting spellbound before him as he preached.


It was while passing through England that D.L. Moody met Henry Moorehouse. Without much thought or much sincerity, Mr. Moody said, "If you ever come to Chicago, we will have you preach for us."

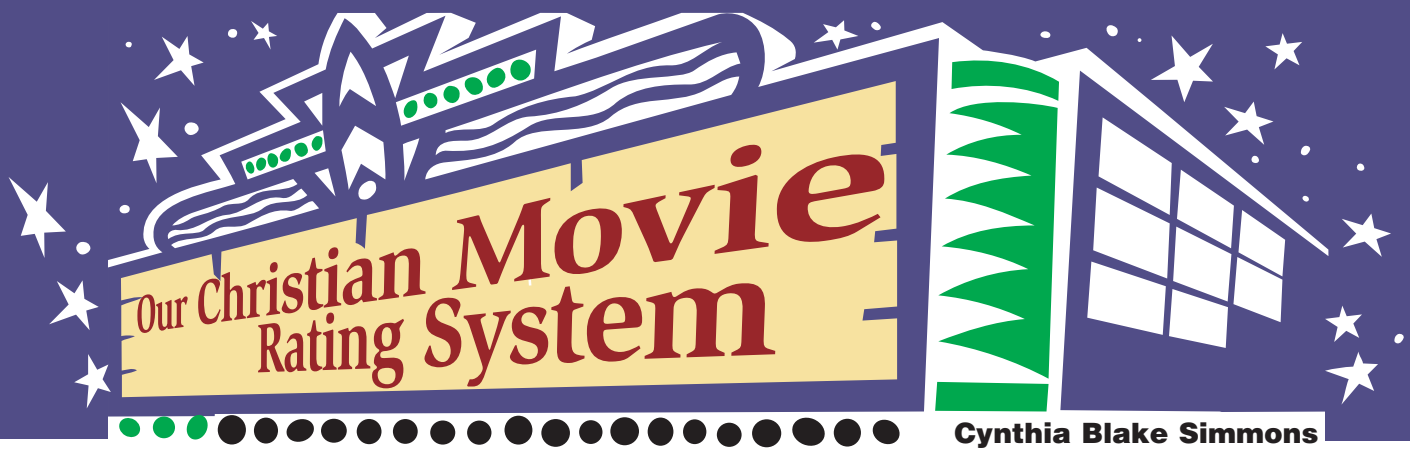
Upon returning to Chicago, Moody received a letter from Moorehouse. "I have come to New York," Moorehouse reported, "I will gladly come and preach for you." Moody tersely responded, "Call upon me if you ever come west."

A few days later another letter from Moorehouse arrived. Henry wrote, "I will be in Chicago next Thursday." Moody did not know what to do. An invitation without substance was now being received sincerely. Dwight gathered the officers of his church together and said, "There is a man coming from England, and he wants to preach. I am going to be absent Thursday and Friday. If you will let him preach on those days, I will be back on Saturday and will take him off your hands."

When Moody returned on Saturday, he was eager to hear how his flock had responded to the young man from England. "How did they like him?" Moody asked his wife. "They liked him very much, but he preaches a little different from what you do," she responded. "He tells people that God loves them. I think you will like him." Flabbergasted, Moody quipped, "I'm sure I will not!" (After all, how could the great evangelist enjoy a man who did not preach as he preached?)

When Moody went to hear the young Moorehouse, his heart was moved by the love of God expressed by the little minister. Moody invited Moorehouse to continue his series of messages. Moorehouse preached seven nights on the love of God as expressed in John 3:16. On the seventh night he said, "I have been trying to tell you how much God loves you, but this poor stammering tongue of mine will not let me. If I could ask Gabriel how much love God has for the poor lost world, all that mighty angel could say would be that 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'"

It has been said that Henry Moorehouse was "the man who moved the man who moved millions." He moved Moody's heart with seven messages that centered on the greatness of God's love as revealed in the gospel message of John 3:16. The gospel is most moving when it is shared lovingly. 



Cynthia Blake Simmons

Scripture instructs us that our time is valuable and given to us for a purpose. The minutes and hours entrusted to us upon this earth require faithful stewardship as do our talents and financial resources. If we are guiding our lives with an eternal view, then we will not be haphazard in the way that we spend this valuable commodity. The activities that we choose to occupy our time should have eternal merit—they should contribute to the overall goals we have established for our lives and should not violate Scriptural command or have a detrimental effect upon our character. With this in mind, consider an area that is robbing vital time from Christians of all ages while influencing them greatly.

When my mother's aunt went to Wheaton College in the 1950s she signed a statement saying she would not attend movies. I signed a similar promise when I entered a fundamental Christian university in 1972. In these earlier days when movie censors were more select in what they allowed to be seen and heard, it was an accepted fact that Christians did not watch movies.

When did this change and how?

When movie viewing was confined to theaters, Christians had many reasons that they did not attend. The Hollywood industry was considered to be wicked and corrupt, and the lives and philosophies of those involved were deemed immoral. The pulpits of fundamental churches thundered with messages denouncing the evils of the theaters, and no God-fearing believer considered associating in any way with this questionable area.

Before television sets were commonplace in homes, the only place you could view a movie was in the theater, so most Christians never saw them. As people began to acquire TV sets for personal use, the barriers began to be broken down. Now all people had access to Hollywood entertainment in the privacy of their own homes. They could watch whatever was available, and no one else would be able to check up on them. At this time programs were still subject to conservative cultural mores. The philosophies were definitely of the world, but traditional American values prohibited the questionable language, violence, or sexual scenes.

Then came the time when the VCR was available to the common household, and the viewing habits of Christians began to change drastically. Christians had been gradually anesthetized and were now accepting programs on the screen they would have previously decried. The thirst for entertainment began to breed a new type of rationaliza-

tion. Christians began to change the criteria with which they had previously evaluated movies. Before, movies were judged by an absolute principle. That principle stated that movies were made in Hollywood and portrayed the world's view and the ungodly lifestyle that went with that philosophy; therefore, movies were wrong for separated and holy believers to support either with their money or their time. Although sex and violence were not pictured as graphically as they are in today's movies and TV programs, they were major themes of the "old" movies. Drinking, adultery, lawlessness, violence, and immorality were presented over and over again, and there was no debate at that time: the movies were an unacceptable form of entertainment for believers.

As Christians began to enjoy and accept this new form of entertainment, they began to change the rules. Now movies were evaluated by comparison, not by absolute principle. This pragmatic code rated movies into "good" movies and "bad" movies. The "good" movies were ones that represented traditional values, for the most part, or animated films, of which Walt Disney films were the most popular. The "bad" movies had profanity or blatantly sexual themes. The problem with this new system is that it is subjective and vague. Often the criterion that merits acceptability is if "everyone else has seen it." Some believers seem to be skilled at combing through the old movies and finding ones that can be considered acceptable for Christian viewing. But be careful! Just because a movie is older or comes in the form of a musical does not mean that it is void of questionable elements. Many of these films that make the "Christian circuit" contain drinking, suggestive dance scenes and songs, and characters clothed in ways that should offend a sensitive believer. Hollywood has a way of making that which Scripture says is wrong seem right and acceptable, and many times sincere believers are fooled. Just because the old movies are tame in comparison to what is seen on the screen today does not mean that they measure up to God's standard of purity and holiness. Fundamental Christians living in the days of these "old movies" did not think so.

In the beginning years of Hollywood, there were strict guidelines governing what could and could not be shown on the screen. As the years went on, directors pushed repeatedly at the boundaries, and little by little, under the cry of "creativity" and "artistry," the taboos and restrictions were stretched and eliminated, until today there is very little that cannot be said or displayed in a movie or on

the television. The emergence of cable and satellite TV has broken down the last barriers to the corruption that can be brought into a home with the turn of a dial. As these barriers were eliminated, even the "good" movies began to contain questionable words and elements. Christians again changed their "rating" system. It was still a "good" movie if it only had a "few" words of profanity or only one or two "bad" scenes. We applaud ourselves as we are always careful to explain that we fast-forwarded past the offensive parts or turned down the rock music.

Even Walt Disney films have changed drastically in the last several years as they strive to appeal to older audiences and to present material that is "politically correct." Christians should remember that every time they contribute money to rent or purchase a Walt Disney film, no matter what vintage, they are helping to support one of the major champions today of homosexual rights.

Even as large numbers of Christians began to purchase and rent movies to view in their homes, it was still taboo to enter a movie theater. The younger generation quickly saw the inconsistency of this. Why were movie theaters wrong, they asked? Adults quickly rattled off their pat list of reasons. They mentioned that it was wrong to give money that would support Hollywood by purchasing your ticket, and it could hurt your testimony if you were seen entering a movie theater. (After all, who would know if you were watching G-rated or R-rated films when they saw you enter?) And then any honest and thinking teenager would ask: what was the difference between those reasons and entering a video store? No one had a good answer, so many Christian teens became cynical at the obvious hypocrisy and began sneaking off to theaters. Eventually Christian adults began to rationalize that if they were just going to rent the video later, they might as well see it on the big screen.

And this is where we are today. We have changed the standards by which we judge whether or not a movie is acceptable, and those standards vary greatly from individual to individual. To many the only criteria for evaluating a movie are the amount of profanity and sex. Some people add violence to this list, although everyone seems to differ greatly as to what constitutes acceptable violence. And

very few people seem to consider philosophy or agreement with Biblical principles when they determine the appropriateness of a film. Many believers are amazingly naive when it comes to recognizing the agenda behind certain movie plots or the "statement" that the producers are trying to make. The main qualifying point, even for Christians, seems to be the degree of entertainment achieved. If the movie scores a high rating in this area, then most people will rationalize their right to a viewing.

Even if TV or movie viewing could be justified from the standpoint of content, what about the time it involves? Can a believer who is obedient to the instructions in the Word of God concerning worldly associations and the preciousness of our time honestly invest much of his life in this activity? Many Christians who desire God's best are now coming to the conclusion that total abstinence from TV and movie viewing is the desirable choice for them and their children. Often these believers are looked upon as being extreme and fanatical, but we have come to a sad place in our fundamental churches when those who choose to exercise a sensitive conscience and develop convictions they believe to be true to the Word of God are ridiculed for their stand by other believers. One of the signs of being addicted to a habit or pastime is the inability to give it up at will. Many people are so addicted to their viewing habits that they get very emotional and even hostile when challenged in this area. If you find yourself in this category, or if you begin to come up with extensive rationalizations to justify your viewing of those things that violate Scripture, then you should seriously consider whether you are addicted to this entertainment. Those who choose to watch must be very selective and prayerfully discerning. Consider the admonition of these passages from God's Word as you make your choice:

I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me" (Ps. 101:3). "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord (Isa. 52:11).

Cynthia Blake Simmons is a freelance writer living in Troy, Michigan.



Trusted Voices on Translations

If you are searching for help on the translation issue, a sampling of testimonies from some trusted voices of the past is available in this insightful 12-page pamphlet. In it you will find chronologically arranged testimonials from the translators of the King James Version to the 1995 resolution of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International. Included are quotes from C.H. Spurgeon, D.L. Moody, G. Campbell Morgan, F. B. Meyer, Alexander Maclaren, C. I. Scofield, and more than 20 others.

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How to Detect a Con Man

"Wherefore by their fruits shall ye know them" (Matthew 7:20).

Con-man detection is an absolutely essential ministerial ability. Yet most ministers do not know beans about the subject! Bible schools and seminaries just don't teach much about the subject, because of two reasons: good Bible schools have so few exemplary con men (or con women) on staff or faculty (there are exceptions); and there are some things that can only be learned by on-the-job training.

Definition of Con Man

A con man is one who obtains money or property by fraud—after obtaining the victim's confidence. Remember this: Con men can be con women or con kids, as well. However, we will use the generic term "con men" here.

Description of a Con Man

Christians are swamped with people making pleas for help. We are all touched by true need. But beware of charity con men who take us into a false confidence by playing on our Christian sympathies and empathies. They come in all sizes and shapes.

In Juarez, Mexico, my wife and I were approached by a little boy who handed my wife a small slip of paper that read, "Please give dollar me hungry by bread." I gave him two dollars—which made us feel warm and fuzzy. Later as we walked past a bar, there was that little ragamuffin smoking a cigarette and playing pinball—with my "bread"!

There are some people to whom we must say, "No!" In fact, if every now and then you just said no, the odds are you will be right more often than you are wrong. Even when you say yes, do not give cash—instead, buy the food, diapers, medicine, or fuel.

Deception of Con Men

Most con men want only cash. Limit cash gifts to a maximum of \$25 or so.

Regretfully, this writer has not always obeyed that advice. One hot August Sunday morning, I opened the adult Sunday school class in prayer. When I looked up, the class had been increased by two: a middle-aged man and a young man. As soon as class was over, I went back



Terry K. Hagedorn

and welcomed them. After greeting them, I asked, "Are you from the area?"

The older man answered matter-of-factly, "No, we're from North Carolina. I pastor a church there. This is my son." He nodded toward the direction of the younger man. "I came up to conduct my sister's funeral yesterday. She and my brother-in-law were killed in a head-on crash in Oakland, Maryland," he said, and then recounted the whole tragic incident.

I actually had to choke back the tears, especially when I remembered hearing about just such an accident earlier that week.

He continued somberly, "Last night, we were heading back home when the car broke down. We had to spend the rest of our money, \$75, to fix it. So, we had to sleep in the car last night. But we didn't want to miss being in the Lord's

house on the Sabbath. We're sorry we were late and for disturbing the class. Please forgive our sloppy appearance, as well."

"Don't worry about that," I comforted him, "you're welcome here, and, I know the Lord understands. I'm so very sorry about your sister."

"Thank you, brother. Just pray that we can get back in time for the revival services in our home church. It was supposed to start tonight. I've got a full tank of gas. With the good Lord's help, we can just make it back in time," he said as he bit his lower lip. His "son" took out a hanky and blew his nose and wiped away a tear.

I swallowed hook, line, sinker, rod, reel, boat, lake, and fish. I called the deacons and a few other men together to an impromptu meeting near the pulpit. "We've got to help them," I said.

"I'll give \$20," one man said as he reached for his wallet. "Let's just give them a check for \$100," someone else suggested. Someone else said, "Let's just give them all the cash that comes in the offering because they can't get a check cashed today."

As we all stood watching and waving as the alleged North Carolinians pulled out of the parking lot with our \$192, our warm and fuzzy feelings of practical Christianity came to an abrupt end because someone observed, "Hey, they have a West Virginia license plate!"

After we picked our jaws up from the ground, stopped kicking ourselves, and recovered some measure of composure, we prayed, "Lord, you know our hearts.

We sincerely desired to help these people. If they are lying thieves, then please stop them before they can hurt anyone else."

Within the next few days, we heard numerous reports of other churches being bilked out of offerings. Later that week, at my jail ministry, I asked the prisoners gathered for the service, "Is this everyone?"

"No!" one inmate announced, "There're two guys back here, but they ain't gonna come out 'cause they're the ones that's been robbin' churches. Did they git your church too?"

A hard lesson is a good lesson. We owe those West Virginia "tarheels" more than \$192 worth of thanks for making us develop *and use* a policy on giving. Also, they taught us some things about identifying con men.

Defense Against Con Men

These suggestions are neither the complete answer nor intended to be a diatribe against poor and needy people. The best defense is the Word of God and prayer.

1. Anything or anyone who seems to be too good to be true probably is. Don't trust everyone.

2. If you have spiritual "gut feelings" about a matter, listen to your gut—not just your head or your heart—especially not just your heart.

3. Ask your wife what she thinks. Women seem to have an ability to see through most con men—especially con women. I am a sucker for crying women. However, my wife sees through what she calls "crocodile tears."

4. Ask the person about his salvation. Most con men will profess salvation. However, asking will be an opportunity to witness; maybe he will get saved.

5. If he says he is saved, then ask him of what church he is a member. If he names a church, ask if he has called his pastor, since any pastor would want to know that one of his members is in trouble. Explain how you would be offended if one of your church members did not call you *first*. Offer to call—a long distance call is cheaper than getting taken; however, nine times out of ten there will be no long distance call. Eventually, most con men or women

give up and move on to an easier victim. If you give in by giving out, you will be swamped with con men—word gets around. That is the reason for the questions. We do not owe con men anything except the gospel.

6. If he claims to be saved but not baptized or a tithing member of a church, then ask him whether he thinks that God may be chastising him for his disobedience. Ask him to return at the next service to make a public testimony of his faith, be baptized, and join the church. Read Malachi 3:8–10 to him. Ask if he is willing to "prove God in this matter." A truthful person is willing to do whatever it takes to do the right thing. A con man will go for easier "pickin's."

Please do not think that I am being too hard or that I am encouraging you to be harsh. Proverbs 19:17 states, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."

However, we have too many people who abuse the church. Instead of being giving, we are being taken. Paul gave warning in 1 Timothy 5 about

making certain that those who were getting help were qualified and deserved the help. He said that we should make sure that a widows is "a widow indeed." In fact, he uses that admonition two times in 1 Timothy 5:3–5. Christ spoke to those who were following Him only for the bread. He warned them that they were following Him for the wrong reasons. He told them that they needed to feed on the Bread of Heaven to have eternal life. When He emphasized the spiritual, they were offended and left Him (John 6:26–27, 53–65).

A part of our stewardship is to administer carefully that which the Lord gives us. We will give account of that administration at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). We need to give wisely. We must guard against being taken and watch out for con men.

Terry K. Hagedorn is pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Reedsville, West Virginia.

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There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow.
—William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act 5, Sc. 2

Religion is the best armor in the world, but the worst cloak.
—Thomas Fuller

I haven't taken my Christmas lights down. They look so nice on the pumpkin.
—Winston Spear

The errors of faith are better than the best thoughts of unbelief.
—Thomas Russell

The sum of all sums is eternity.
—Lucretius

The chief trouble with the church is that you and I are in it.
—Charles Heimsath

The Church that compromises Truth today will compromise Morals tomorrow.
—H. D. Bruce

It is a poor sermon that gives no offense, that neither makes the hearer displeased with himself nor with the preacher.
—George Whitefield

Loss of sincerity is loss of vital power. —Christian Bovee

I should not dare to call my soul my own.
—Elizabeth Barrett Browning

If you begin to think you're a person of some influence, try ordering somebody else's dog around. —Unknown

The way to love anything is to realize it might be lost.
—G. K. Chesterton

A man who cannot lead and will not follow, invariably obstructs.
—Unknown

The greatest fool may ask more than the wisest man can answer.
—C. C. Colton

Those having torches will pass them on to others.
—Plato

Always take a good look at what you're about to eat. It's not so important to know what it is, but it's critical to know what it was.
—Unknown

The Church has many critics but no rivals.
—Anonymous

Money will buy a fine dog, but only love will make him wag his tail.
—The Ulster Post

God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination.
—Augustine

The chief pang of most trials is not so much the actual suffering itself as our own spirit of resistance to it.
—Jean Nicolas

Blessed is any weight, however overwhelming, which God has been so good as to fasten with His own hand upon our shoulders.
—F.W. Faber

If everyone is thinking alike then somebody isn't thinking.
—George S. Patton

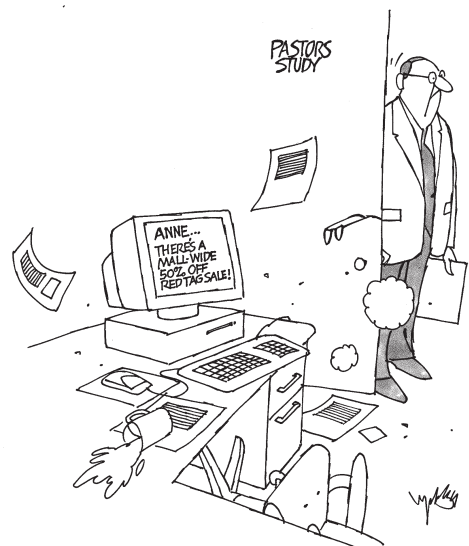
Back in the '20s, Will Rogers had an answer for those who believed that strength invited war. He said, "I've never seen anyone insult Jack Dempsey" (world heavyweight champion at that time). —Ronald Reagan

The ultimate result of shielding men from the effects of folly is to fill the world with fools.
—Herbert Spencer

Our Adversary majors in three things: noise, hurry and crowds. If he can keep us engaged in "muchness" and "manyness," he will rest satisfied. —Richard J. Foster

The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith; and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety.
—George Mueller

One sword keeps another in the sheath.
—George Herbert



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

Fuzzy Gums

Carolene Esayenko

Several years ago I went to college to study fashion merchandising. Even though most of my classes involved sewing and related subjects, I was required to take a public speaking course. Every week the instructor would assign a new speech. One day we were asked to prepare a demonstration speech. The speech involved demonstrating a technique while explaining the steps involved. The assignment was not difficult, but I couldn't imagine what I would demonstrate. I puzzled over what I could do. Finally I settled on a subject. I would demonstrate the proper method of brushing teeth!

I set out to work on my project. Using markers and cardboard I made a huge set of teeth and a large toothbrush. I purchased string to use as dental floss. Even though I felt foolish demonstrating such a simple concept to a group of college students, I prepared my speech. Diligently I searched for information on my subject matter, but to no avail. Brushing teeth was pretty basic. I decided to spice up my speech with humor.

The week passed, and the time came for me to demonstrate to my classmates the correct way to brush their teeth. I hauled my tacky props to the front of the classroom. As I set up my props, I glanced at my audience. My classmates were watching me seriously, while my instructor looked rather amused. I took a deep breath and began talking. I explained to my audience the proper methods of brushing and flossing while demonstrating the techniques on my beautiful set of cardboard teeth. My audience listened intently as though I were a qualified professional.

As I began to close my speech I tried the humor. I warned my audience to be careful not to use too much toothpaste; otherwise they may end up with a condition known as fuzzy gums. While my teacher went into convulsions of laughter, the rest of the class never cracked a smile. I finished my speech and sat down. I was shocked. Here I had told a blatant lie, and the whole class believed me. Only the teacher understood my feeble attempt at humor.

Most of us would have the discernment to realize that "fuzzy gums" was plain foolish and not take it seriously. Tooth brushing was a subject that a classroom of college girls should know thoroughly. Probably all of them had used too much toothpaste at some point in their lives. None of them had ever gotten fuzzy gums as a result. Yet here was a classroom of girls who believed what I told them because I presented my material in an

authoritative manner. They were gullible.

As I reflected on the fuzzy gums speech, it occurred to me that I have been fooled by equally silly stories. Each one of us would have to admit that we have been the victim of such a prank at some time or another. While most of us laugh off such pranks as harmless jokes, deceit is no laughing matter. Satan has used deceit as a method to destroy lives since the serpent beguiled Eve in the garden. The Bible tells us that Satan walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may destroy (1 Pet. 5:8). Believers are not immune to his lies. Several books in the New Testament deal with problems that were caused by sects such as the Judaizers and Gnostics. Deceivers are still in the church today. Their lies turn people away from the truth.

The book of Proverbs refers to the gullible individual as simple (14:15). A simple man believes everything that he is told. One who is prudent carefully weighs the information that he is given and comes to a well-thought-out conclusion based on truth.

The Bereans were a group of people who studied Scripture diligently (Acts 17:10-12). When Paul and Silas came to Berea, they went to the synagogue and began to preach. The people listened carefully. The Bereans were not content to listen to what was being said. After they heard Paul and Silas preach they went to their Scriptures and studied them. They wanted to be sure that Paul and Silas were not teaching heresy. The Bereans were not simple; they were prudent.

Study of God's Word is imperative for the believer. It equips us to live the Christian life (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Scripture contains doctrine necessary to ground us in our faith. It rebukes and corrects us if we are sinning, and it instructs us on how to live a righteous life. When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to Timothy, he exhorted him to diligently study God's Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Paul knew that Timothy needed to study God's word in order to teach properly. He also understood that if Timothy followed his instructions and studied God's Word diligently, he would not be ashamed to stand before God.

Even though Paul's letter is addressed to Timothy, the instruction he gives is important for us as well. Study of God's word is not only important for pastors. Every believer should be diligently studying the Bible. Sadly, many believers avoid the study of

Continued on next page

Scripture and expect to grow by hanging on the coat-tails of others. How many times have we avoided our personal devotions knowing that our husbands are the spiritual leaders in the home and expecting them to answer any difficult questions our kids may ask? How often have we expected our pastor to teach proper doctrine yet not understood it ourselves?

The example of the Bereans should inspire us to study God's Word. The Jews in Berea were so concerned with correct doctrine they were checking up on the apostle Paul!

Too often we make excuses for not studying the Bible. Our days are busy, and our kids wear us out. It could be that we work outside the home, and we just want to relax. Often our desire for relaxation is the very thing that draws us away from the important task of Bible study. None of us, however, has any excuse not to study. Yet careful study of Scripture is the only thing that will keep us from error.

In the book of Ephesians we find instructions for putting on spiritual armor (6:11-17). A large portion of the armor is put on by studying God's word. Scripture contains the truth that we gird about our loins. Its pages contain the gospel of peace that we shod about our feet. The Bible is the Sword of the spirit. When we put on the whole armor of God we will be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Carolene Esayenko is a freelance writer in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, where she and her family attend Bridgeland Baptist Fellowship.

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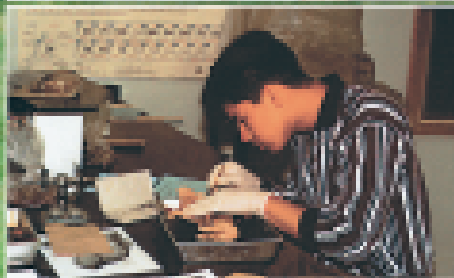
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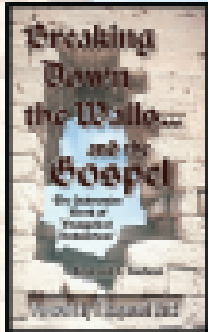
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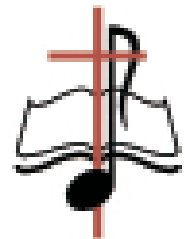
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Winter

Jack Shuler

Just how much is involved in the words "Come before winter" is to some extent a matter of speculation. The letter is addressed to Timothy and written from the prison at Rome. Paul is concerned that his young friend remember to bring the cloak he had left at Troas, and that he do so before the long cold sets in. Something about the dry gusts from the north, the swirling leaves of varied color seen through the passage windows, warns that autumn will soon be running out. Bleakness will settle over Rome, and the apostle sees the need for such preparation as can be afforded. He writes also for books, and especially the parchments. They will help him pass the time. The entire message has a note of urgency about it. It is almost winter!

As we stand 2000 years removed from the writing, a broader picture is ours than appeared to Timothy at the letter's reception. We now understand that Paul was in the midst of his valedictory message. He was giving vent to dying words of triumph. We venture that the winter of which he wrote was not merely that season which touches earth with a wand of ice and, having put the green herb to sleep, covers its frozen bed with a blanket of soft white. In the silent hour he has heard the muffled tread and sensed the encroachment of a dim, shadowy figure upon his solitude. Terrible persecutions have come to all the church, and their leader has been singled out for martyrdom. The cloak, the books, the parchments are not enough. Paul must have his friends. He will have company to brighten the last sad hours of earth. "Come before winter."

There is something about winter that speaks of approaching death. If man's life may be likened to the seasons of the year, it is that season which finds him covered with hoarfrost, pinched and withered, shivering at the verge of the grave. His threescore years and ten have taken him through the budding orchards of infancy's spring, the perfumed meadows of youth's summer, the ripened harvest fields of manhood's autumn. Then comes the chilled breath of age upon his reddened cheek, making it blanch. Frosty fingers pinch the forehead into furrows as gelid hands pile glacial snows upon the brow. These are those lonely years of waiting for inevitable decease, when to look ahead or back is to be reminded that earth has no enduring goal and all time's trophies are perishable. Yesterday the green fields faded and died; tomorrow a human form

will likewise wither and die and lie at last in the same crude grave with the herb that gave it shape and visage. Amid such reflection man most needs the comfort of his remaining friends. "The time of my departure is at hand," writes Paul to Timothy. "Come before winter."

But there is something written here that makes Paul's letter glorious. The apostle sees beyond the grave. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day," he says. The last somber hours have taken on a mysterious beauty. Beneath the snow and ice of winter lies the embryo life of spring awaiting royal birth. Soon will come the time of deliverance when warm breezes shall kiss the barren hills and fruitless boughs, and every field and forest and stream shall come to life and join in a glad anthem of resurrection. With full faith in Christ, Paul awaits such awakening in the spiritual kingdom. The grave shall not keep its prey. That which is sown in corruption must be raised in incorruption to bear no more the marks of the earthly, but the image of the heavenly. "This mortal shall . . . put on immortality." "Death is swallowed up in victory." Heaven is ahead. Reward awaits. The King and the kingdom beckon. Small wonder Paul wrote in an earlier letter; "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain!"

One finds himself wondering at the conversation which ensued when Timothy came to Paul, bringing the cloak, the books, and the parchments. There must have been shouts at the hope of heavenly reunion. But one possibility seems most certain. I have fancied that the elderly man embraced his spiritual son, and, in words charged with Spirit power, admonished; "Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season." Precious to his heart was that gospel that graced the cold winter with hope and made of death a gateway to everlasting life!

"Come before winter." It is the call of a dying world. It is a challenge to every Christian among us to share the gospel of redeeming grace to all men of all nations, lest, coming to that "time of departure," some shall discover that the winter of life is all.

Jack Shuler passed away at age 45 in 1963, having served his Lord in city-wide evangelism for 25 years. He was the brother of evangelist Phil Shuler, who may be reached at philshuler@juno.com.

Philemon is the neglected child of the New Testament. Rarely is it read, preached, and adequately understood or appreciated. Yet it carries its own unique charm as an unparalleled appeal from the pen of the apostle Paul. It furnishes an intriguing insight into an intimately personal, historical occasion within the early church, and it communicates inspired illustrations of profound theological realities. In fact, given its value and function as vividly illustrating theological truth through an historical incident, Philemon could be called the Ruth of the New Testament.

Opinions on Philemon

- "We have here only a few familiar lines, but so full of grace, of salt, of serious and trustful affection, that this short epistle gleams like a pearl of the most exquisite purity in the rich treasure of the New Testament" (Sabatier).
- "A true little chef d'oeuvre* of the art of letter writing" (Renan).
- "Nowhere can the sensibility and warmth of a tender friendship blend more beautifully with the loftier feeling of a commanding spirit, a teacher and an Apostle, than in this letter, at once so brief and yet so surpassingly full and significant" (Ewald).
- "The single epistle of Philemon very far surpasses all the wisdom of the world" (Franke, quoted by Bengel).
- "This epistle shows a right noble lovely example of Christian love. Here we see how Paul lays himself out for poor Onesimus and with all his means pleads his cause with his master, and so sets himself as if he were Onesimus, and had himself done wrong to Philemon. Even as Christ did for us with God the Father, thus also does Paul for Onesimus with Philemon. . . . We are all his Onesimi, to my thinking" (Luther).

The Uniqueness of Philemon

The pastoral epistles to Timothy and Titus, while technically addressed to individuals, nevertheless discuss important matters of general church life, discipline, and government. Philemon, however, occupies a unique place in the canon of Scripture as the only strictly private letter addressed entirely to an individual. In addition, Philemon

- is probably addressed not to a minister but to a layman (see below)
- touches directly upon no issue of general public interest
- is wholly occupied with a domestic incident of personal concern
- is the only extant "sample of numberless letters" which Paul, given his "eager temperament and warm affections," must have "written to his many friends and disciples" (Lightfoot)

Despite its very personal nature and subject, however, "nowhere is the social influence of the Gospel more strikingly exerted," and "nowhere does the nobility of the Apostle's character" shine more clearly (Lightfoot).

The Characters of Philemon

- Philemon—possibly a convert of Paul's (v. 19), although Paul did not personally plant the church at Colossae

- Apphia—apparently Philemon's wife
- Archippus—generally presumed to be Philemon's son, as this seems to be a letter addressed to a household, and one that hosted a local fellowship of believers (v. 2). Paul's description of him as a "fellow soldier" and his exhortation in Colossians 4:17 suggests that Archippus may have assumed a pastoral role in that church.
- Onesimus—Philemon's runaway slave. The name Onesimus was a common slave name meaning "useful" or "beneficial"—ironic, since in this case he had proved to be neither. But he had become something else that changed the complexion of everything; he had become a convert of Paul's.

Lightfoot colorfully describes the scene: "Rome was the natural cesspool for these offscourings of humanity. In the thronging crowds of the metropolis was [Onesimus'] best hope of secrecy. In the dregs of the city rabble he would find the society of congenial spirits. . . . How he first came in contact with the imprisoned missionary we can only conjecture." A chance meeting in the street with Epaphras, a fellow Colossian who ministered to Paul in Rome? Did Onesimus recall overhearing past conversations between Paul and Master Philemon, perhaps along with Apphia and Archippus—memories that compelled him to find Paul in his hour of desperation and need? The providence of how it happened is not unfolded to us—only the providence that it happened.

The Plot of Philemon

Lightfoot again comments: "Onesimus had repented but he had not made restitution. He could do this only by submitting again to the servitude from which he had escaped. . . . By returning he would place himself at the mercy of the master whom he had wronged. . . . The alternative of life or death rested solely with Philemon, and slaves were constantly crucified for far lighter offences than his. A thief and a runaway, he had no claim to forgiveness." This is the crisis underlying the Book of Philemon: the risk of doing righteousness—of fulfilling one's obligations within the authority structure in which God places one, whatever the consequences might appear to be. Onesimus must return "to fulfill all righteousness." So Paul pens an accompanying letter of intercessory exhortation to Philemon.

An extrabiblical comparison to the subject and aim of Philemon has been observed in the ancient Letter of Pliny the Younger written under similar circumstances. The differences are as striking and significant as the similarities. Here is an excerpt:

Your freedman, with whom you told me you were vexed, came to me, and throwing himself down before me clung to my feet, as if they had been yours. He was profuse in his tears and in his entreaties . . . In short, he convinced me of his penitence. I believe that he is indeed a reformed character, because he feels that he has done wrong. You are angry, I know; and you have

PHILEMON

reason to be angry, this I also know: but mercy wins the highest praise just when there is the most righteous cause for anger. You loved the man, and, I hope, will continue to love him: meanwhile it is enough that you should allow yourself to yield to his prayers. . . . I am afraid lest I should appear not to ask but to compel, if I should add my prayers to his. . . . Farewell.

The Structure of Philemon

The structure of Paul's letter is anything but haphazard. His appeal to Philemon is skillfully crafted and reflects a Spirit-inspired combination of tact, emotional appeal, and subtle pressure.

- 1-3—Paul opens with a warm greeting
- 4-7—He builds an effective and sincere rapport before ever broaching his request
- 8-14—He finally makes his request: "Receive him" (v. 12; cf. v. 17)
- 15-19—He adds an element of personal persuasion, followed by
- 20-21—an emotional appeal, including a mildly amusing "reminder," before closing with
- 22—a delicately deft, almost incidental gentle compulsion, also mildly amusing in its subtlety ("I have every confidence you will do as I say. [But, Paul here seems to think to himself, *just in case he is tempted to do otherwise...*] And oh, by the way, prepare a guest room for me, for I plan to visit you soon, Lord willing.")

Some Textual Remarks

- Verse 5 furnishes an instructive example of chiasmic construction. Chiasm, a literary device common in Biblical literature, is a kind of concentric arrangement. In this case, the phrase "thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints" sounds as if Philemon has love and faith toward both Jesus and all saints. However, the terms are connected to one another "from the outside in" so to speak. Paul is expressing Philemon's love toward all saints (the first and last, or outer, terms of the phrase) and his faith toward Christ (the second and next to last, or inner, terms of the phrase).
- Verse 11 is sometimes described as an example of a play on words. *The MacArthur Study Bible* fumbles uncharacteristically here when it asserts of "unprofitable/profitable" that "this is the same Greek root from which Onesimus comes. Paul was making a play on words which basically meant, 'Useful was formerly useless, but now is useful.' There is no play on words here, since there is no linguistic connection between "Onesimus" (*Onēsīmon*) and either "unprofitable" (*achrēston*) or "profitable" (*euchreston*). If there is any intended literary ploy here, it is a play on the similar meaning of linguistically unrelated words.
- Verse 20, on the other hand, is an example of wordplay, paronomasia (a pun using similar sounds with a different sense), or more technically, *annominatio* (a play on words where the sense and sound are alike). The phrase "let me have joy" is the Greek word *onaimēn* (2nd aorist optative of

oninēmi, "to receive profit or benefit"), which clearly plays off of the name and meaning of Onesimus (*onēsīmon*, "profitable"). It is almost as if Paul is subtly restating the desire he expressed in verses 13-14, that he might receive Onesimus as a personal helper in ministry ("let me have Benefit [i.e., Onesimus] from you in the Lord").

The Function and Message of Philemon

- *Literal*—Its most obvious and immediate function was to secure from Philemon what Paul requested: the reception, forgiveness, and commissioning (if not outright release) of Onesimus to Paul. F. F. Bruce asks and answers three central questions in this regard:

1. What is Paul asking for? He is asking Philemon of Colossae, one of his own converts, not only to pardon his slave Onesimus and give him a Christian welcome, but to send him back so that he can go on helping Paul as he had already begun to do.
2. Did he get it? Yes; otherwise the letter never would have survived [for] if Philemon had hardened his heart and refused to pardon and welcome Onesimus he would certainly have suppressed the letter.
3. Why was the letter preserved? [B]ecause Onesimus treasured it as his charter of liberty. And there is much to be said for the view that Onesimus did not remain a private Christian, but became in due course one of the most important figures in the life of the province of Asia—bishop of Ephesus, no less.

- *Illustrative*—Philemon furnishes a vividly illustrative model of several theological truths and Christian virtues:

Deference—Paul's appeal rather than demand, despite his apostolic authority

Duty—fulfilling the protocol of righteousness

Brotherhood—equality in Christ regardless of station

Forgiveness—dismissing the offenses of another on basis of intercession

Substitution—paying the debts of another

Servanthood—the reality of a new and greater master to which all are subject

Reconciliation—an inspired illustration of the Christian's experience of reconciliation to God, the offended Master, through the intervention and intercession of Christ (as Abigail is an illustration of propitiation, or Ruth of loyalty, or Boaz of redemption). Luther summed it up best: "Even as Christ did for us with the Father, thus Paul does for Onesimus with Philemon. We are all Onesimi, to my thinking."

*Chef d'oeuvre (sheh-durve') literally means a "chief work" or what we would call a "masterpiece" (cf. hors d'oeuvre, literally "outside a work" and thus what we call an appetizer). The quotations in this section are cited by Lightfoot in his commentary on Philemon. Other sources for the material in this column include Arthur Rupprecht (EBC) and F. F. Bruce (Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free).

Hardly Any Poison at All

Frank Hall



When I was a boy, I had a dog named Prince. He was a funny-looking critter. Half greyhound and half St. Bernard, he wasn't just big—he was huge! He had one brown eye and one white eye; the epicanthic fold on his white eye was a brilliant pink. People who had never seen him before invariably did a double-take and then made some comment such as, "He's so ugly he's cute" or, "Does he always look like he has the pink eye?"

In five months Prince was the best-trained dog my neighbors had ever seen. He could heel, stay, sit, lie down, play dead, fetch, speak, and jump over sticks and through hoops. He didn't just do the stunts, he did them with such a flare, with so much joy, that it was a delight to watch. He clearly loved the opportunity to display his love and adoration for me by responding instantly and totally to my every command. I often held a "circus" for the neighborhood kids to watch me put Prince through his repertoire.

My dad was a firm believer that dogs should never inhabit the same space as humans. They must stay outdoors at all times and in all seasons. Somewhere I had heard about a boy whose dog slept on the foot of his bed, and I wanted Prince to sleep on my bed. My dad compromised a bit and agreed that Prince could come in at night and sleep on the back porch.

I decided that if I couldn't bring Prince to my bed, I would take my bed to Prince. I moved my bed to the back porch. When the temperatures got down below zero in the winter, my dad thought I would give it up and move my bed back inside. Instead I would bring Prince under the covers with me, and we would snuggle and keep each other warm.

I could tell you dozens more anecdotes to illustrate the deep two-way love that developed between Prince and me, but I will let one more suffice. Prince had an incredible sense of time. My school was just across the street from our house, and I always came home for lunch. Every day Prince would meet me at the schoolhouse door at lunch time and again when school was out at 3:00, and we would romp home together. I never had the problems some kids experience from older bullies making their lives miserable on the way home from school. Prince would have torn them to pieces, and they knew it.

Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving in 1935, when I came out of the schoolhouse door, Prince was not there waiting for me. First I was disappointed, then alarmed. When I got home and he wasn't there, either, I was devastated. I went around the neighborhood whistling and calling for him. Some of the other neighborhood kids helped me hunt. When it got dark, my mom said I had to come in for supper. I was so upset I could hardly eat.

Just as supper was ending I heard Prince whimper out back. I rushed to his side, my dad right behind me. Prince's

hind legs seemed to be paralyzed. He was dragging himself through the dirt with his front legs. "Don't get too close. He might bite you. He's been poisoned," my dad said.

Prince went into convulsions, twisting in pain and agony. I longed to hold him in my arms, to tell him how sorry I was, to show him one more time how much I loved him, but Dad said I mustn't. Then he was still. I ran to my bed on the back porch and cried my heart out.

The next morning we held a funeral service, and then we buried him. I was grateful that I didn't have to return to school until Monday. By that time I had begun to get my emotions under control so that I didn't burst out crying every time I thought about him.

Later I heard a rumor that a sheep farmer had poisoned Prince because he thought Prince was the dog who killed one of his sheep a few days prior. Possibly he was right, but I doubt it. Prince was never gone from home long, and never came home bloody.

What if I could have been present when Prince saw the poisoned food and started to eat it. What if I had said, "Prince, don't eat that. It has poison in it."

What if Prince could talk and tell me what he was thinking? "Why not, Master? Just look at all that nice, wholesome, fresh food. Why, there is hardly any poison there at all. There is a hundred times more good, wholesome meat than there is poison."

I frequently hear people offering that kind of logic to justify their choice in reading material, in TV programs, in movies, even in the schools they choose to attend. First John 1:5 says, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Bible reading, good preaching, good Bible teaching—these things will not poison your mind. You can't say that, however, about a multitude of other things. Every book, article, story, movie, and TV program has a theme, an essence, or you might call it a spirit. Some of these come straight from the pits of hell. Like the sheep farmer who wrapped his poison in good food, Satan always wraps his poison in something pleasant, interesting, humorous, attractive, or entertaining. John tells us that we should try (test) the spirits to see whether they are of God (1 John 4:1). If they come from God they are healthful; if not, they very well might contain that little dab of poison. If you love them, you wouldn't poison your dog, or your family, or yourself.

Here is another "what if." What if Prince had somehow conducted himself in such a way that the sheep farmer would never think that he was a sheep killer? The sheep farmer would have taken his poison elsewhere, wouldn't he? Maybe that's why the apostle Paul told us, "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess 5:22).

Frank Hall is a freelance writer living in Greenville, South Carolina.

New Pinnock Book Promotes "Openness of God"

For several years, Clark Pinnock, professor of theology at Canada's McMaster Divinity School, has advocated a view known as the "openness of God." Pinnock's newest book, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Baker Book House) seeks to explain further exactly what Pinnock means by this. Pinnock also makes the frank claim that God's limited knowledge of the future causes Him sometimes to get prophecies simply wrong. "God is free in the matter of fulfilling prophecy and is not bound to a script, even his own," Pinnock argues. "The world is a project and God works on it creatively; he is free to strike out in new directions. We cannot pin the free God down." In the 1960s Clark Pinnock was a young professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary who took on the leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention for its lack of commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture. Another leading defender of the evangelical authenticity of the "open" view is Roger Olson, professor of theology at the Baptist General Convention of Texas' George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University. Olson has endorsed books promoting open theism by authors such as Bethel Seminary professor

Gregory Boyd and has declared himself "open" to open theism. (Baptist Press, 10/26/2001)

ETS Rejects "Open Theism"

After three days of heated debate, the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), a professional society of Biblical scholars and theologians, voted November 16 to affirm that God knows everything, including the future decisions of his creatures. The organization brought the issue to the floor after a group of ETS charter members charged that the "openness of God" view being articulated by some society members is outside the boundaries of evangelical conviction. The non-binding resolution stated that the society believes "the Bible clearly teaches that God has complete, accurate and infallible knowledge of all events past, present and future including all future decisions and actions of free moral agents." The resolution passed on a vote of 253 in favor to 66 opposed with 41 abstentions. The resolution takes issue with the concept of "open theism" held by scholars such as Clark Pinnock, Gregory Boyd and John Sanders. Sanders, a professor of religion at Huntington College in Indiana, presented the open theist case before the society, arguing that an attempt to rule the idea out of bounds could result in an evangelical

"Taliban," enforcing doctrinal orthodoxy within the society. The resolution was also opposed by Clark Pinnock, who argued that the ETS should not condemn open theism. The ETS debate was preceded by a flurry of papers presented on both sides of the issue, and by an address by ETS President Darrell Bock, a New Testament scholar at Dallas Theological Seminary, who argued that sharp boundaries should not be drawn for the evangelical movement. Instead, he argued, evangelicalism may be likened to a "village green," which is defined more by the center than by the boundaries. (Baptist Press, 11/20/2001)

Judge Rules Against Online Porn Statute

A federal judge has rejected Virginia's online porn law. In his October decision, James Michael Jr. ruled that the statute aimed at protecting children from harmful material on the Internet is unconstitutional, marking another setback in a nationwide effort by conservatives to shield minors from online pornography. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 10/19/2001)

Salvation Army Waffles

The Salvation Army's Western Corporation, encompassing 13 states, decided in early November to begin extending domestic partner benefits to the sex part-

ners of its homosexual employees. Colonel Philip D. Needham, the Chief Secretary for the organization's western corporation, defended the Salvation Army's decision, saying the new policy was "made on the basis of strong ethical and moral reasoning," and that the change in benefits policy was necessary due to "the dramatic changes in family structure in recent years." The organization came under intense pressure in 1997, when San Francisco passed a law that required companies and non-profit groups doing business with the city to extend domestic partner benefits to homosexual employees or lose their contracts. The Salvation Army at that time refused to compromise and promptly lost its \$3.5 million contract. (*AFA Action Alert*, 11/7/2001) On November 12, after receiving intense pressure from Christian and pro-family groups, the Salvation Army rescinded its newly made policy allowing the extension of health benefits to the partners of its homosexual employees. The new statement says any review of the Salvation Army's health benefit policy "has always centered on service to people and we deeply regret the perception that the Commissioners' Conference surrendered any biblical principles in making the original decision. Today, November 12, 2001, the Commissioners'

Conference established a national policy to extend health benefit access to an employee's spouse and dependent children only." (*AFA Action Alert*, 11/12/2001)

Procter & Gamble Grants Benefits to Homosexual "Domestic Partners"

In a statement issued to its employees, P&G said the company "will broaden the eligibility requirements for dependents to include domestic partners and their children" beginning on January 1, 2002. Furthermore, the company said the policy change is consistent with P&G's "commitments to valuing diversity" and "promotes equal opportunity related to marital status or sexual orientation." (*AFA Action Alert*, 10/16/2001)

Supreme Court to Rule on Jehovah's Witnesses Home Visits

The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to decide whether a local government can require members of a religious group to obtain permits that include their names before taking their message door to door. The justices will review a ruling by the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals that found an Ohio community could regulate the home visitation of the Jehovah's Witnesses cult and other organizations. The Jehovah's Witnesses challenged the ordinance in Stratton, Ohio, as a violation of the First Amendment rights of both speech and religious expres-

NOTABLE QUOTES

Greens everywhere are mobilizing in an anti-war movement to force an end to the cycle of violence. The Green Party USA has officially endorsed anti-war protests that will occur in a number of cities . . . and our members are participating in numerous efforts to stop these bombings and save people's lives.—Green Party media coordinator Mitchel Cohen

For mere vengeance I would do nothing. This nation is too great to look for mere revenge. But for the security of the future I would do everything.—James A. Garfield

I've called for whatever it takes to be so strong that no other nation will dare violate the peace. If that means superiority, so be it.—Ronald Reagan

When principles that run against your deepest convictions begin to win the day, then battle is your calling, and peace has become sin; you must, at the price of dearest peace, lay your convictions bare before friend and enemy, with all the fire of your faith.—Abraham Kuyper

Liberals are up to their old tricks again. Twenty years of treason hasn't slowed them down. Earlier prescient advice from the anti-American crowd has included: dismantling government intelligence agencies "brick by brick"; toppling the Shah of Iran and giving Islamic fundamentalism its first real foothold in the Mideast; turning the U.S. armed forces into a feminist consciousness-raising session; demanding continued dependence on Arab oil in order to preserve mud flats in Alaska; indignantly opposing a missile defense shield; promoting endless due process rights for aliens who are illegal, diseased or criminal; disarming the public; and purging the nation of insidious references to God. Most people would be embarrassed at a track record like that, especially after Sept. 11. But instead of hanging their heads in shame, liberals have boldly returned to their typical hysteria and defeatism.—Ann Coulter

When writing about terrorism, remember to include white supremacists, radical anti-abortionists and other groups with a history of such activity.—Society of Professional Journalists content guidelines for providing "balance" in terror reportage.

Various media outlets apparently feel a need to give equal time, if not moral equivalence, to Osama bin Laden and others in the terrorist organizations. Would anyone have thought of giving Hitler free time to broadcast his propaganda on networks during World War II?—Thomas Sowell

sion. The ordinance applies to people planning to visit residences for the "purposes of advertising, promoting, selling and/or explaining any product, service, organization or cause." It requires an individual to register with the mayor's office and to explain his cause and his reason for home visitation. (Baptist Press, 10/18/2001)

Columbine High Violates First Amendment

A Colorado federal judge ruled Columbine High School in violation of the First Amendment after it forced the removal of four-inch ceramic tiles depicting Christian symbols, which were displayed in the school in memory of two slain students in the 1999 shooting. The judge ordered the school to restore the tiles after relatives and friends of the students filed a suit arguing that the school's policy violated free speech and showed hostility toward religion. (*The Federalist*, 10/26/2001)

God Bless America

Several schools in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, have removed "God" from "God Bless America" signs, leaving the words "Bless America," because of complaints to the school district. When the district asked the Oklahoma State School Boards Association about the complaints, the association told principals that the references to God were illegal. (*What in the World!* Vol. 30, Num. 8)

Texas Governor Ignores Supreme Court

Last October Texas Governor Rick Perry ignored the Supreme Court ruling on school-sponsored prayer as he invited a minister to open an east Texas middle school assembly with prayer. He defended his decision, saying, "Any time you have a crisis that faces you either in your personal life or as we have now in our country, reaching out to a supreme being is a very normal act." Perry further explained he is eager to debate free religious exercise issues, including school prayer, as campaign issues during his first run for a full term as governor in 2002. (*The Federalist*, 10/26/2001)

Abortion Clinic Workers File Criminal Charges

Mark Crutcher's Life Dynamics organization has just launched a new web site to encourage abortion clinic workers to file criminal charges against their employers. Many clinic leaders are involved in insurance fraud, harassment of patients, and tax evasion. This new web site shows clinic workers how to hold their employers accountable. For more details on this new effort, go to: <http://www.ldi.org> or <http://www.Clinic-Worker.com>. (*TVC News*, 10/26/2001)

Ashcroft Restores Federal Threat to Doctors Assisting in Suicide

U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft has acted to reverse a ruling by his predecessor, Janet Reno, that allowed the use of federally regulated drugs by doctors assisting patients in committing suicide. The November 6, 2001, decision by Ashcroft immediately affects the state of Oregon, which has permitted physician-assisted suicide since a 1997 vote. While Ashcroft's ruling does not overturn Oregon law, it means physicians who prescribe or pharmacists who distribute federally controlled substances to aid in suicide may have their licenses to prescribe and dispense such drugs rescinded. Oregon Attorney General Hardy Myers filed suit November 7 to block implementation by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency of Ashcroft's ruling, according to *The Oregonian* newspaper. (Baptist Press, 11/8/2001)

Southern Baptists and Charismatics

In dealing with potential conflicts with Pentecostalism, it is necessary to take note of the movement's strengths and weaknesses, said Max Turner, the keynote speaker at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's 2001 Pastors' Conference October 9–11. "The challenge for Pentecostals is to

accept that the Spirit is not merely a second blessing, but the presence and power of salvation, too," Turner said. "The challenge for the more traditional evangelicals is to accept that . . . the Spirit will inevitably be connected with revelations, charismatic wisdom and prophetic utterings." Turner, who described himself as "essentially evangelically ecumenical in spirit," is director of research at London Bible College and professor of New Testament at Brunel University. (Baptist Press, 11/12/2001)

Bill Bright and Charismatics

Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, was featured on the cover of the October 2001 issue of *Charisma*. The magazine notes that Bright's friendship with Benny Hinn "is indicative of his widely recognized role as a tireless and effective bridge-builder across church streams." Bright says he welcomes the maturing he has seen in the charismatic movement: "In music, evangelism, [and] prayer there have been many wonderful things that have come from the charismatic movement. They've infiltrated—and I'm using that in a good sense—the Catholic and mainline denominations [and] Orthodox." Commenting on the possible perception that he has "gone charismatic" in his new novel, *Blessed Child*,

Bright said, "I just say I have felt that God led me many years ago to build bridges. I'm a Presbyterian. I'm the 'frozen chosen,' and yet I work with everybody who loves Jesus, whether they be charismatic or Catholic, Orthodox or mainliners." (*What in the World!* Vol. 30, Num. 7)

Graham Calls Islam "Wicked, Violent"

Evangelist Franklin Graham is not backing away from his statements aired on a national news program that Islam is "wicked, violent and not of the same god." Graham initially made the remarks in an interview at the October dedication of a chapel in North Carolina; the remarks were broadcast by NBC News November 16. "I don't believe this is a wonderful, peaceful religion," Graham said. "When you read the Koran and you read the verses from the Koran, it instructs the killing of the infidel, for those that are non-Muslim." Asked by NBC News to clarify his statement, Graham told NBC, "It was an attack on this country by people of the Islamic faith." NBC News released the Graham interview on the first day of Ramadan, the holiest season of the Muslim year, and it has drawn fire from Muslims as well as the White House. (Baptist Press, 11/20/2001)

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

The Christian Athlete

Morris Hunsucker Sr.

In a day when it seems like almost every venue of athletic competition has been spoiled by scandal, tainted by drug abuse, or hamstrung through contract negotiations, more and more sincere men of God who seriously question the wisdom of Christians participating in sports. I am not one of those men. I still believe there is a real need for Christian athletes on the field of competition. I am convinced that we need more men and women who boldly stand for the principles of honesty and fair play. There is a great need for dedicated athletes who live by the old motto, "A cheater never wins, and a winner never cheats."

Participation in a properly supervised athletic program can be beneficial to young people in three specific ways. First, participation in an athletic competition is still one of the best methods available for teaching the value of teamwork and discipline. Because of our selfish, carnal nature, all men must be trained to work with others. Any pastor or missionary will tell you that unity and teamwork are vital for the growth of every ministry that seeks to glorify the Lord and carry out the Great Commission (Ps. 133:1; Eph. 4:1-3).

Second, participation in an organized sports program can be an effective means of teaching young people how to properly handle victory and defeat. Young people need to understand that it is just as wrong to gloat over a victory as it is to pout over a loss. Sports programs provide teachers, coaches, and parents with many opportunities to teach the principles of good sportsmanship. Good sportsmanship is, after all, nothing more than good conduct. This should be the testimony of the Christian on or off the field. I have often said, "You may not always win, but you can always be a winner" (Phil. 4:12).

Finally, I believe that there are some very positive health benefits associated with regular bodily exercise. Dedicated, faithful service to the Lord often requires that a person remain in good physical condition. Few people today would argue that most Christians need to take better care of their physical

temple (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Tim. 4:7-8).

Here are some of the principles that I believe should be taught through the sports program of a Christian school or church.

1. *A good sports program should teach young people how to recognize and develop their individual talents.* God has given specific talents and abilities "to every man severally as he will" (1 Cor. 12:11), and we are to use those talents and abilities "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12). I believe that everyone has a role on the team and everyone has a place of service in the church (Rom. 12:6-8).

2. *A good sports program should teach young people the wisdom of preparedness and the benefits of practice and hard work.* As Christians we must always be "prepared" and "ready to every good work," "ready to preach the gospel" and "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you" (2 Tim. 2:21; Titus 3:1; Rom. 1:15; 1 Pet. 3:15). In our "instant access" society we need to make sure that we are teaching our young people that physical abilities and spiritual growth both take time and effort.

3. *A good sports program should teach young people the value of instruction and reproof* (Prov. 12:1; 1 Tim. 5:20; Heb. 12:5-6). I believe the best place to learn the value of instruction is on the battlefield. The second best place is on the playing field. I have seen several young men who would not listen to their parents learn the value of instruction through the patient ministry of a dedicated and faithful coach.

4. *A good sports program should teach young people the principle of personal responsibility.* Every man is responsible for his own actions (Jer. 31:30; Job 19:4). Shifting the blame does not shift the responsibility.

5. *A good sports program should teach young people the certainty of accountability.* Responsibility has to do with actions. Accountability has to do with

gifts. We are responsible for the things we have done, and we are accountable for the things we have been given (Rom. 14:12; Matt. 12:36; 1 Peter 4:4-5).

6. *A good sports program should teach young people the techniques of problem-solving.* There are some things God allows us to escape, but there are many others that we must bravely face, faithfully engage, and sometimes patiently endure (2 Tim. 2:24-25; Prov. 3:30, 20:3; Phil. 2:3).

7. *A good sports program should teach young people the necessity of obedience and submission to authority* (Titus 3:1; Heb. 13:17; Col. 3:22; Rom. 13:1-5). I personally believe that the younger a man learns to submit to the authority of those above him, the more likely he is to surrender to the call of God for ministry.

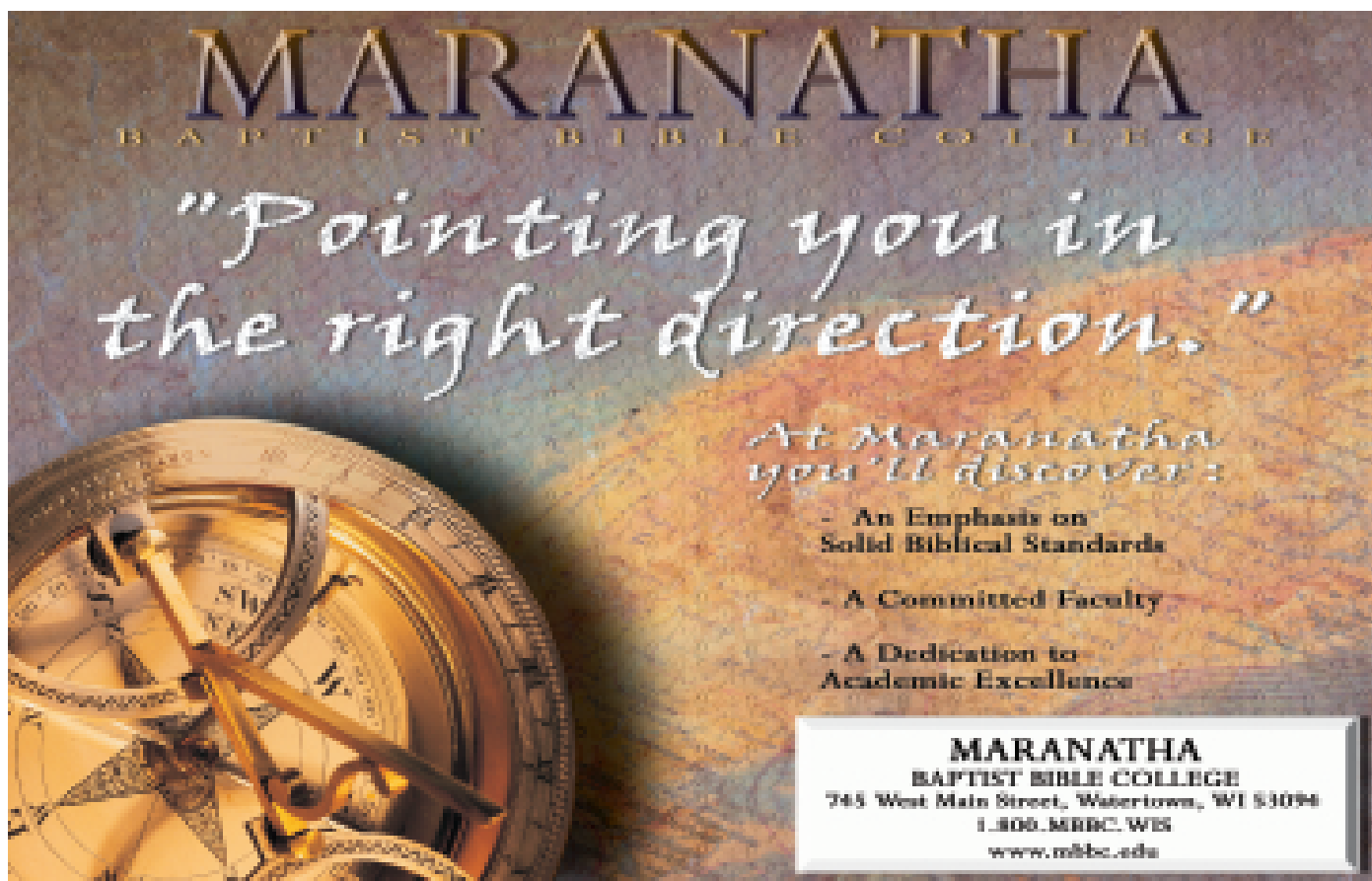
8. *A good sports program should teach young people the rewards of serving others* (1 Cor. 10:33, 13:5; Eph. 5:2). There is no place in sports for selfishness. I have always thought that the two most Christlike words for team members are "sacrifice" and "assist."

9. *A good sports program should teach young people the importance of persistence, diligence, and endurance.* Many young people today have a tendency to give up at the first sign of difficulty. A good sports program will teach them to persevere. Quitting always creates more problems than it solves. (Gal. 6:9; James 1:12; Prov. 10:4, 22:29)

10. *A good sports program should teach young people the virtue of self-control* (Prov. 16:32; Rom. 6:12; 2 Peter 1:5-7). If a young person is not taught self-control before he leaves his parents' control, he may live his life out of control.

A properly directed sports program can become a practical teaching tool in helping young people to gain a clearer understanding of many other Biblical principles, and sporting events provide young people with the opportunity to put the principles they learn into practice. I believe that we need more men and women who think the team is more important than the individual and that every player has a duty and a responsibility to honor and respect the official, the opponents, and the game.

Morris Hunsucker Sr. is an assistant pastor at Eagledale Baptist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana.



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Words of Warning Indeed

Lord willing, the next issue of *Frontline* will feature several articles on Islam. Just after September 11th, every kind of publication addressed this subject from its own perspective. Some boldly declared the connections between the clear statements of the Qur'an and the shocking behavior of its believers. Others tried to explain away this previously obscure religion's darker side. Words of warning have come from both groups.

On one hand we are told that we must not take offense at the Islamic "fundamentalists" who are only the lunatic fringe of this great religion. On the other, chilling words of experience offer words of warning. On September 20th, former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said to the United States Government Reform Committee, "What is at stake today is nothing less than the survival of our civilization. There may be some who would have thought a week ago that to talk in these apocalyptic terms about the battle against international terrorism was to engage in reckless exaggeration. No longer."

After a number of supportive arguments and a recap of 50 years of history in the Middle East, he further said, "But the ultimate goal remains the same: Destroy America and win eternity." That was September. This is January. In four months, we have gone from being duly warned about what radical Islam must seek if it is to obey the Qur'an literally to the kind of nonsense we are hearing from the liberal left. Who has not seen reports of children in California's public schools "required to attend an intensive three week course in Islam, study the important

figures of the faith, wear a robe, adopt a Muslim name, and stage their own Jihad."

Radical Islam is not the only system that seems to be dedicated to the mission, "Destroy American and win eternity." A wise preacher once said of his own eroding denomination, "We have more to fear from the termites on the inside than the woodpeckers on the outside." The President of the United States is not the Pastor of America. Perhaps he cannot ask what true pastors must, "Is it likely that an immoral society will sustain the moral outrage necessary to see this fight to the finish?"

Certainly not when the unionized guardians of the minds of our youth consider it clever to violate every phony claim they have made about "separation of church and state." God has been evicted from our schools, our courtrooms, and our culture. Our nation drinks from a river of lies that has flooded its banks. Decent people cry out against the violence and vulgarity of this flood, oblivious to the absence of God in its currents. We seek Godless civilization, nothing more.

Fundamentalism was born in response to the spreading deception about Christ within the major denominations. Unbelieving professors, seeing Christianity as nothing more than a fascinating field of study, laid the foundation for the denial of its saving grace. A few brave men said, "No." Our movement began. In the 80 years that have followed, a new wave of compromised evangelicals eviscerated the pulpits of America. The prophetic voice of her pulpits silenced, within

a decade America saw "rock and roll," the music of immorality, anesthetize the consciences of her youth. There followed a decade of drugs, then a decade of depraved sensuality, then a decade of covetousness, and a decade to end the century under the pornographic presidency of the Clintons. A generation now humbled calls on God to bless America, when not in that generation's lifetime has America blessed God.

James Carville thinks it cute to use the recent attack as a means to regain the White House and Congress for those who think themselves consistent to welcome Allah into the classroom while barring Christ at the door. He sees a kind of "Taliban in America"—the "fundamentalists" among us who are the extremists who bring our woes. The Religious Right is doing to America what those fanatics have done to Afghanistan. And George Bush is their hero! It will be interesting to see how Tom Brokaw will explain how the remnant of the "Greatest Generation" of which he wrote is now somehow the enemy.

It is time again for a few brave men to say, "No." We have an invader who has declared himself our enemy. But there is an enemy within us that will destroy us more surely than the other. The enemy of human will that flies in the face of a

Sovereign God has doomed more souls than any plane that flies into the towers of our national security. America is shocked that our enemies hate us. The devil has always hated us. We should rather be shocked that our own flesh is his ally.



DR. JOHN C. VAUGHN



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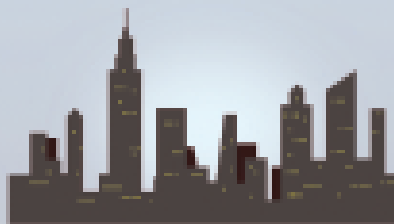
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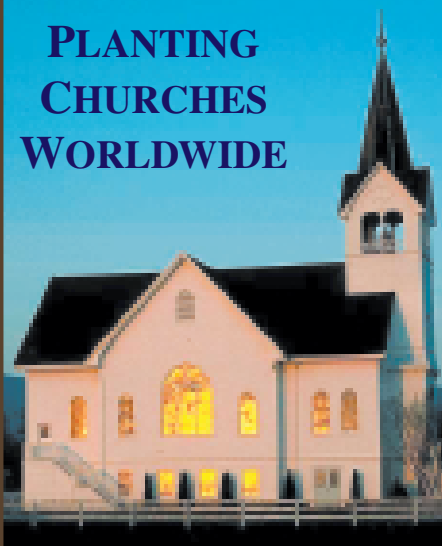
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3. **Jonathan Edwards**—Pastor, Marysville Baptist Church, Marysville, UT
4. **Jim Efaw**—Pastor, Beth Eden Baptist Church, Denver, CO
5. **Tom Farrell**—Evangelist, Independence, MO
6. **Paul Harsh**—Pastor, First Baptist Church of Lady Lake, Lady Lake, FL
7. **Wally Higgins**—Director, Northwest Baptist Missions, Salt Lake City, UT
8. **Dan MacAvoy**—Pastor, Hanover Baptist Church, Glen Allen, VA
9. **Ed Nelson**—Pastor, Bethel Baptist Church, Tucson, AZ
10. **Matt Olson**—Pastor, Tri-City Baptist Church, Westminster, CO
11. **Brian Parrish**—Pastor, Cedar Forest Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, NC
12. **Craig Pendl**—Pastor, Hillcrest Baptist Church, Logansport, IN
13. **Adrian Pugh**—Pastor, Fayetteville Street Baptist Church, Asheboro, NC
14. **David Scudder**—Pastor, Bethel Chapel Church, Philadelphia, PA
15. **Ed Simpson**—Pastor, Harvester Baptist Church, Columbia, MD
16. **Eric Sipe**—Pastor, Grace Bible Church, Moore, SC
17. **Don Strange**—Pastor, Winkler Road Baptist Church, Fort Myers, FL
18. **Jim Van Gelderen**—Director, Minutemen Ministries, Menomonee Falls, WI
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