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You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.

I just want to express how much I thoroughly enjoyed the FBFI Regional Meeting in Morgantown on Monday and Tuesday. Of all the meetings I have attended over the years, I feel that this was one of the best. Each message I heard . . . was so timely and helpful. It was amazing how God used that band of brothers to touch my heart. My spirit was indeed refreshed as I enjoyed both the fellowship with other men and the preaching of God's Word. Thank you for a great meeting.

. . . Like Elijah, I feel as though I could go on in the strength of the meat I received from the regional conference for many days. Keep up the good work and know that I pray for you.

*Dr. Daryl S. Jeffers
Pastor, Calvary
Baptist Church
Clymer, PA.
and FBFI-Endorsed
Civil Air Patrol
(CAP) Chaplain*

Thank you for the FBFI Pastor's Study Tour in

Israel. It was our dream for decades, and we were not disappointed! We saw and learned so many things that brought light to what we have read in the Bible for years. Now I see it: I'll never read the Bible the same again!

Standing at the Sea of Galilee, you see what Christ saw as He walked those shores so many years ago. The amazing calmness, quietness, and peace you experience is unmistakable, hinting at the peace Christ brings to your soul. Standing in the ruins of the synagogue at Capernaum right where Christ spoke . . . to review all we took in would take pages, and yet even then I could never fully explain it. A trip to Israel simply makes the Bible come alive. So much so that I'm helping put a group together to go back in May 2011 with Dr. Vaughn. I hope every reader of *FrontLine* can make a trip like this. You won't be disappointed!

*Daryl Kopp
Greenville, SC*

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As the journal of the FBFI, *FrontLine* Magazine provides a forum for God's people to reverently express a conservative Christian perspective on pertinent issues. In an effort to keep readers informed, quotes and references to many different individuals and organizations will appear. This does not imply the endorsement of the magazine or its board. Unsolicited manuscripts and artwork accepted for review.

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The Blessed Hope

John C. Vaughn

While speaking at a large retreat for Fundamentalists near London a few years ago, we were awakened at 2:00 A.M. to the sound of the fire alarm. The orderly exit and modest gathering at the appointed place by happy, sleepy people seemed almost rehearsed. “Is this a drill?” I asked my host. He yawned and replied, “Well, no, but we have come to expect it, you see, because it happens every year.” A well-known preacher who will remain anonymous had awakened hungry for toast and had somehow brought on the “alarming” event. “I suppose we would be more surprised if it didn’t happen,” he said. In our own alarming times, let’s try to keep our heads in confident expectation.

The appearance of Frank Gaffney’s article “Stealth Jihad” on this page may alarm some, but it offers a needed context for the stabilizing truth of the Blessed Hope. News like this can leave us asking, “What can we possibly do? Is this further evidence of the soon coming of the Lord?” Trust and obedience must hold steady when these questions cross our minds—“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

We live with a blessed hope that transcends uncertainty. The imminent return of Christ requires no intermediate event. Stealth Jihad is happening, portending events that sound like the Tribulation. We agree with Gaffney that “American people . . . need to become knowledgeable about the threat of Shariah,” and Christians must be knowledgeable of the Word to hold steady not only in their hope but in their habits. Behaviors formerly known to be destructive or distracting to those holding to Bible doctrine are now considered open for discussion. We believe it is necessary to reiterate some things said before which need to be said again.



Frank J. Gaffney Jr.

For the first time in its history, the United States is trying to wage and win a war without accurately identifying the enemy or its motivations for seeking to destroy us. That oversight defies both common sense and past military experience, and it disarms us in what may be the most decisive theater of this conflict: the battle of ideas.

Such a breakdown may seem incredible to veterans of past military conflicts. Imagine fighting World War II without clarity about Nazism and Fascism, or the Cold War without an appreciation of Soviet Communism and the threat it posed.

Yet today the civilian leaders of this country and their senior subordinates—responsible for the US military, the intelligence community, homeland security, and federal law enforcement—have systematically failed to fully realize that we once again face a totalitarian ideology bent on our destruction.

That failure is the more worrisome since the current ideological menace is arguably more dangerous than any we have faced in the past, for two reasons. First, its adherents believe their mission of global conquest is divinely inspired. Second, they are here in the United States in significant numbers, not just a threat elsewhere around the world.

Shariah: Authoritative Islam

What, then, is this ideology? It has been given many names in recent years, including political Islam, radical Islam, fundamentalist Islam, extremist Islam, and Islamofascism. There is, however, a more accurate

descriptor—the one its adherents use. They call it “Shariah.”

Perhaps the most important thing to understand about Shariah is that it is authoritative Islam, which presents itself as a complete way of life—cultural, political, military, social, and religious, all governed by the same doctrine. In other words this comprehensive program is not simply the agenda of extremists hunkered down in caves in Afghanistan or Pakistan. Neither can its directives be attributed to deviants hijacking Islam.

Rather, Shariah—which translates from Arabic as “path to God”—is actually binding law. It is taught as such by the most revered sacred texts, traditions, institutions, top academic centers, scholars, and leaders of the Islamic faith. Fortunately, hundreds of millions of Muslims around the world do not wish to live under a brutally repressive, woman-demeaning, barbaric, and totalitarian program. Such Muslims are potentially our allies, just as those who do adhere to Shariah are our unalterable foes.

The immutability of Shariah-adherent Muslim hostility toward the rest of us derives directly from the central tenet of Shariah: Muslims are explicitly required to seek the triumph of Islam over all other faiths, peoples, and governments.

The ultimate objective of Shariah is the establishment of a global Islamic state—Sunni Muslims call it “the caliphate” governed by Shariah. The means by which this political outcome is to be achieved is called “jihad.”

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A Certain Sound

“For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (1 Cor. 14:8).

We live in theologically confusing days. In less than two centuries the world witnessed the birth of theological liberalism and its replacement, neoliberalism. Neo-Orthodoxy arose in opposition to liberalism, but refused to return to true orthodoxy. Various theological positions have developed within that part of Christendom that is characterized by nonorthodox theology. Significant changes also took place in conservative theology in roughly that same time frame.

The Fundamentalist movement coalesced over a fifty-year period (from about 1870 to 1920) as a response to theological liberalism. The period from the 1920s to the 1950s witnessed the Modernist-Fundamentalist conflicts, both inside and outside of the mainline denominations. Then Harold John Ockenga led a movement of disaffected Fundamentalists in the formation of a new kind of evangelicalism after World War II. Ockenga and his followers took the term “New Evangelical” to identify themselves.

The New Evangelicals repudiated the Fundamentalist emphasis on Biblical separation from apostasy.¹ This repudiation of Biblical separation resulted in the New Evangelical twin strategies of infiltrating liberal denominations and ecumenical evangelism. Fifteen years after Ockenga’s statement, Kenneth Kantzer noted that this difference over separation became a “practical cleavage as to strategy” between the two groups.²

Over time most within the New Evangelical camp began to identify themselves simply as “Evangelicals.” In 1991 Kenneth Kantzer, himself an Evangelical, noted that there were many in the movement whom he could not vote to ordain.³ There were and are significant doctrinal and theological aberrations within the Evangelical camp: a rejection of inerrancy, open theism, evangelical feminism, gender neutrality in Bible translation, Charismatic theology, rejection of eternal retribution, and more.

Today there is a new group of leaders within the Evangelical movement who have distanced themselves from many of the liberalizing elements that developed in the New Evangelicalism. They mostly identify themselves as “Conservative Evangelicals.” Kevin Bauder has observed,

Conservative evangelicalism encompasses a diverse spectrum of Christian leaders. Representatives include

John Piper, Mark Dever, John MacArthur, Charles Ryrie, Bruce Ware, Bryan Chapell, Wayne Grudem, D. A. Carson, Al Mohler, Tim Keller, John D. Hannah, Ed Welch, Ligon Duncan, Tom Nettles, C. J. Mahaney, Norman Geisler, and R. C. Sproul. Conservative evangelical organizations include Together for the Gospel (T4G), the Gospel Coalition, the Master’s Seminary, the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors, the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals (at least in its better moments), and Ligonier Ministries. These individuals and organizations exhibit a remarkable range of differences, but they can be classed together because of their vigorous commitment to and defense of the gospel.⁴

The Fundamental Baptist movement has seen its own divisions and deviations as well. Perhaps the battle over Bible texts and translations, specifically the King James Version, with attendant debates over inspiration and preservation, is the most notable.

Some of the divisions in the Christian world have transcended the previously cited movements. These issues include music, the “worship wars,” Covenant Theology and Calvinism, and a broader debate over Bible translation philosophy.

We certainly live in a day of theological confusion. Steering the ship of our churches and ministries through these treacherous waters presents a challenge to pastors and institutional leaders.

A ministerial student recently asked if it would be possible, in the midst of all this confusion, to articulate in a positive manner those things for which we stand. He seemed to be voicing Paul’s statement that the trumpet needs to give out a “certain sound.”

David Doran has offered some guidelines that seem helpful. In a recent post he led three successive paragraphs with these statements: “The real issue of our day is theological and ministerial agreement, not label or membership card in some club. . . . Fellowship means you share something and the more you share the stronger the fellowship. . . . Throw away the labels and ask these two questions: Of what are you in favor? To what are you opposed? Agreement on those two items will more likely produce workable partnerships and real fellowship.”⁵

One brief article cannot deal with all the issues, but it can at least enunciate some very basic Biblical truths for which

the FBFI has always stood. We must give a “certain sound” on these issues.

Conservative Evangelicals

It is important to evaluate our Conservative Evangelical brethren. They are our brothers in the Lord, and at the same time they are a diverse group within themselves. Phil Johnson, part of the MacArthur ministries, calls himself a “paleo-evangelical” and has given an incisive analysis and indictment of historic New Evangelicalism.⁶

Some actions of the Conservative Evangelicals look no different from the actions of the older New Evangelicals. Some of the leaders within the new grouping signed the Manhattan Declaration. The authors of this declaration, which primarily focuses on social concerns, strongly sought and obtained the support and signatures of numerous leaders within the Orthodox Church and Roman Catholicism. The declaration itself is political rather than theological, but it states in part,

We are Christians who have joined together across historic lines of ecclesial differences to affirm our right—and, more importantly, to embrace our obligation—to speak and act in defense of these truths. We pledge to each other, and to our fellow believers, that no power on earth, be it cultural or political, will intimidate us into silence or acquiescence. It is our duty to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in its fullness, both in season and out of season. May God help us not to fail in that duty.⁷

This statement is inconsistent at best. As leaders in the Together for the Gospel movement some of those signatories will defend the gospel against a gospel of works and sacramentalism. They will do so on the basis of the authority of Scripture. Yet they signed a declaration that contradicted their own doctrinal affirmations, identifying their Orthodox and Catholic cosignatories as “Christians.”

We speak kindly but on the basis of Biblical authority. The gospel is the message revealed by God. It is the message of salvation by grace without any work of man (Gal. 1:9–12; 2:16). Our Catholic and Orthodox friends affirm that salvation is by grace but that it is received by the sacraments. By the standard of the Scriptures, a sacramental gospel must be judged to be a false gospel.

When men who believe, affirm, preach, and unite together to defend the gospel sign a declaration that proclaims Catholics and Orthodox as “Christians,” they betray the very gospel they affirm, and they negate the good they are attempting to accomplish. This kind of action is no different than the compromise we witnessed in the New Evangelical movement forty years ago.

Dr. Albert Mohler serves as president of Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville. We applaud his accomplishments of ridding Southern Seminary of theological liberalism. Yet Mohler signed the Manhattan Declaration, chaired a Billy Graham evangelistic crusade in his city, cooperated with theological liberals in that effort, and he honored one of his liberal predecessors, Duke McCall, by naming a new building after him. Obedience to Scripture on one hand and disobedience on the other sends an “uncertain sound.”

A Certain Sound

The Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International has stood for the Word of God and for Baptist Fundamentalism since its inception in 1920.⁸ It began as a protest within the Northern Baptist Convention, functioned as a fellowship of preachers within the Conservative Baptist movement, and since the early 1960s has been an independent fellowship of like-minded Baptist individuals. It has attempted to mark out a consistent, Biblical, Baptist, and separatist course. As independent, Fundamental Baptists, we seek to “sound the trumpet” in a way that will encourage Baptist brethren in their service for Christ.

Bible Based

Our doctrinal statement⁹ declares our belief in the inspiration, inerrancy, and preservation of God’s Word. Though brief, the statement reflects the clear teaching of Scripture and our identification with historic Bible-believing, orthodox Christianity. Our other theological affirmations flow from the inspired Word and our belief that it is our sole authority in matters of faith and practice. This fellowship has spoken by resolution against the extreme positions in the version debate on at least ten occasions since 1985. Those resolutions are available at the FBFI website. In addition, several within the FBFI frame of reference have written extensively against the aberrant theology of the King James Only position.¹⁰

Dispensationalist

Because we affirm the sole authority of Scripture in all matters of faith and practice, we recognize its teaching concerning the church. Sections 1 and 9 of our statement affirm our commitment to a dispensational understanding of Scripture. In Ephesians 3:1–11 and Colossians 1:25–29 the Bible unequivocally states that the church is a mystery, not revealed to the world until God revealed it in the New Testament era. God has a future plan for Israel (Rom. 11:2). Israel and the church are distinct entities, and the church has not replaced Israel in God’s plan. Those who are committed to Covenant Theology base their system upon supposed covenants of works and grace, which are not found in Scripture.

Baptist

The sole authority of Scripture leads us to affirm that we are unashamedly Baptists. Our Baptist Distinctives come directly from the Word of God. Because the church is a New Testament phenomenon, the New Testament is the authority for church practice.¹¹

Scripture teaches that the members of a New Testament church should be those who have believed the gospel and have testified of their faith in Christ by believer’s baptism—that is, immersion in water (Acts 2:41; 8:38, 39).

The same authoritative New Testament teaches us the truth of the autonomy of the local church. Acts 15 describes the independent yet fraternal relationship between the churches at Jerusalem and Antioch. Paul repeatedly stressed to the Corinthians that what he taught them by apostolic authority was common practice among the churches he planted.¹²

It is the Word of God that teaches the priesthood of the believer (Eph. 3:12; Heb. 10:19–25). This also includes the priesthood of *all* believers (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).

We affirm that this same inspired, authoritative book teaches us the truth of individual soul liberty. All believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who teaches God's truth (1 John 2:27), and all will give an individual account to God (Rom. 14:12). "Everyone to whom it [Scripture] comes is bound to study it for himself, and govern his life by it."¹³

The Bible teaches two ordinances for the local churches, and they are believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper. We practice these two ordinances in obedience to the command of our Lord (Matt. 26:26–29; 28:19).

We believe in the separation of church and state because Christ established the principle that we live in two realms and have responsibility to Caesar and to God (Matt. 22:21).

Separatist

No one who believes the Bible can reasonably question that it teaches believers in Christ and Bible-believing churches to separate from theological unbelief: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). Paul warned the elders of the Ephesian church about false teachers (Acts 20:29, 30). The New Testament is replete with clear commands to separation from unbelief.¹⁴ We are imperfect servants of Christ, but we have endeavored to maintain a testimony of separation from unbelief. We know the history of New Evangelicalism and acknowledge that a rift between brethren occurred over this issue. We recognize that Conservative Evangelicals are brothers in Christ. It is a mystery that some of these brethren today, by whatever name they are called, can maintain ministry ties with unbelievers. As Fundamental Baptists we must commit ourselves again to two issues. We must consistently expose and refute false teachers and their doctrine (2 Tim. 2:16–23). We must also consistently maintain the godly attitude that Scripture mandates separatists to exhibit (2 Tim. 2:24–26). We must not neglect or forsake either Biblical instruction.

We must never forget that Biblical separation is at the same time personal separation from sin and the flesh. Several of the separation passages cited teach separation from both false doctrine and the sins of the flesh.¹⁵ Great debates go on about standards for personal Christian conduct,¹⁶ but it is enough to say that the Biblical commands (both positive and negative) in Colossians 3:1–17 and Ephesians 4:17–5:21 are from God and are binding upon believers today.

Conclusion

One brief article cannot address every important matter. Some theological issues need more attention than they have received here. Certainly issues of a philosophy of ministry and preaching need to be addressed. Those topics do receive regular attention in this publication.

We live in confusing and uncertain days. Let us fix our attention on the revealed Word and chart our course by it as we pray "come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

Dr. Fred Moritz serves as a seminary professor at Maranatha Baptist Seminary and as executive director emeritus of Baptist World Mission.

¹ Harold John Ockenga, Introduction to *The Battle for the Bible* by Harold Lindsell. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), p. 11. Ockenga twice uses the word "repudiated" in reference to the ecclesiology, social theory, and separatism of Fundamentalism.

² *Know Your Roots: Evangelicalism Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Madison, WI: 2100 Productions, 1991), videocassette.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ <http://www.centalseminary.edu/resources/nick-of-time/169-lets-get-clear-on-this>; accessed March 18, 2010.

⁵ <http://gloryandgrace.dbts.edu/?p=290>; accessed March 18, 2010.

⁶ Phil Johnson, "Where Evangelicalism Went Astray," March 18, 2009. Adapted from Johnson's seminar at the Shepherds' Conference, entitled, "What Is an Evangelical?"

⁷ <http://manhattandeclaration.org/read.aspx>. The declaration articulates commendable positions on life, marriage, and religious liberty. As Bible believers we preach about those crucial matters. Many Fundamentalist churches involve themselves in activities to promote those issues. Individual believers can and should be politically active to promote those good issues in the public square. It is to ecumenical religious cooperation in connection with these goals that we object.

⁸ Curtis Lee Laws coined the term "Fundamentalist" when reporting on the first meeting of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship in 1920.

⁹ The FBFI Doctrinal Statment is part of its constitution. It may be viewed at: <http://www.fbfi.org/content/view/3/3/>.

¹⁰ See the books *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man* and *God's Word in Our Hands*, both edited by J. B. Williams and Michael D. Sproul; and *God's Word Preserved: A Defense of Historic Separatist Definitions and Beliefs*, available from Tri-City Baptist Church, Tempe, Arizona.

¹¹ Robert Delnay ("The Unnoticed Baptist Distinctive" in *Faith Pulpit*, Ankeny, IA: Faith Baptist Theological Seminary, February 1987, 1) said, "It is the truth that while the whole Bible is verbally inspired and that the two Testaments harmonize perfectly, in any seeming conflict between the Old and New Testaments, in this age of grace it is the New Testament rule that prevails." He goes on to say, "The church is not Israel, and those of us who are dispensational have already assented to this basic idea. We have accepted the principle that in any seeming conflict, we take the New Testament rule. Often we have accepted the corollary that Old Testament rules apply to the church only to the extent that the New Testament repeats them."

¹² See 1 Corinthians 1:2; 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33–38; and 16:1, 2.

¹³ Francis Wayland, *Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches* (Watertown, WI: Roger Williams Heritage Archives, 2003 electronic copy of 1857 edition), 132.

¹⁴ These include but are not limited to 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1; Galatians 1:8, 9; 2 Timothy 2:16–26; 2 John 7–11; and Jude 3, 4.

¹⁵ As examples, see 2 Corinthians 7:1 and 2 Timothy 2:22.

¹⁶ Peter Masters has addressed this issue among the Conservative Evangelicals. See "The Merger of Calvinism with Worldliness" from *Sword & Trowel* 2009, No. 1. Available at <http://www.metro-politiantabernacle.org/?page=articles&id=13>.

Will America Stand with Israel?

The Truth about the Ramat Shlomo Incident

Perhaps more than any other time since Israel's rebirth in 1948, we who trust in the Word of God can see events in the world unfolding in a manner consistent with prophetic Scripture with implications that are somewhat frightening. The recent tension in the relationship between the United States and Israel has caused many to take notice, and the incident presents facts that make some of the Biblical descriptions of the end times seem rather realistic for us. Things do not appear to be as far off as they may have even a few years ago.

These recent events may prove to be extremely significant for the future, so it is very important that we understand them and the ramifications that may follow from them. To do so it is important that we have some background on the general problem and then look more closely at the specifics surrounding the most recent media uproar.

Four Key Issues

Generally speaking, the Middle East conflict is really comprised of four key issues that have not yet been resolved. These are (1) the borders of Israel, (2) the control of Jerusalem, (3) the settlements, and (4) the refugees. Each of these issues has been implicated in recent events. The first two issues are somewhat obvious. The third issue, settlements, refers to Jewish neighborhoods or residences that are on disputed territory: the Palestinians (and people who side with them) do not recognize them as legitimate. Refugees (issue four) are people of Arab

descent who, after the War of Independence in 1948–49 and the 1967 war, did not accept Israeli citizenship (though it was offered to them, and many Arab people did accept it) and were not accepted back by their home countries—so they “await the resolution of the conflict” so they can live in their homeland. Some presently live in places such as the West Bank, and some actually live in Arab lands.

Prior to the 1967 war the area known as the West Bank, including the eastern portion of Jerusalem, was under Jordanian control. When Israel won that war, the city of Jerusalem was united under Jewish control for the first time in approximately two thousand years. However, since then claims made by the so-called Palestinians to the West Bank as their homeland have resulted in a “disputed” status for that part of Israel. An arbitrary line runs through Jerusalem and marks the western boundary of the West Bank. This line also marks the portion of Jerusalem that is within the West Bank and is consequently claimed by the Palestinians to be part of their territory, though, in fact, the Palestinian leadership has clearly indicated that it wants all of Jerusalem as its capital, not just half of it.

The Palestinians hope to be granted autonomy over the entire West Bank so any activity around the boundary line is watched carefully. Any construction in the disputed territory, especially near the border, gets attention because the Palestinians view those people as unlawful squatters on their land. It is, therefore, claimed that these settlements are an obstacle to peace because their existence or increase

will make the area harder to reclaim for the Palestinians. Consequently, any time Israel builds new housing in that area, the Palestinians react loudly.

Because of the way the line marking the West Bank is made, there are areas inside the West Bank that are very close to existing neighborhoods that are not in the West Bank. There are also neighborhoods that are so close to the line that any expansion of those neighborhoods will cross over the line, or is already over the line. Such is the case of the neighborhood in the center of the most recent firestorm, Ramat Shlomo.

Planned Expansion

Several years ago, discussion began within the Israeli government regarding the expansion of this neighborhood. It is actually a very religious neighborhood, and on the day the vice president of the United States was visiting Israel a decision was finally made to build approximately 1600 additional housing units in that neighborhood in a part of Jerusalem that is over the border—and thus part of what the Palestinians claim is a part of Jerusalem that therefore really belongs to them.

Now, setting aside for a moment whether the timing of the announcement was appropriate, it was simply an announcement of an intention to build. *No building had begun, and no building will begin for a couple more years!* Effectively all that happened was that permits for future building had been granted at the local level.

The Palestinians erupted in response, and the United States claimed that Israel was out of line for making such an announcement while the vice president was there. Very strong words were said and repeated by a number of American politicians. Israel has apologized for the timing of the announcement and has said it will look into the process that allowed for the announcement. However, let's remember that what we are talking about here is that Israel is being scolded for a decision to build Jewish housing for Jewish people in the Jewish capital, and it is in a neighborhood that many agree would stay in Israeli hands even if the West Bank were given to the Palestinians. In other words, the people actually negotiating the peace acknowledge that the neighborhood at issue, though creeping over the current line, will remain under Israeli control under all discussed options. So what is the fuss?

This is an overreaction by our country to say the least, but it gets worse. After Joe Biden accepted the apology of the prime minister, Hillary Clinton got involved. No doubt she was directed by the White House, since sources have confirmed that her message was agreed to by the president (and later repeated by him), and the demands for retribution are interesting. They include Israel releasing hundreds of prisoners who are violent criminals and are a danger to Israelis; a pull-back of Israel defense forces; and the removal of several border crossings. In other words, the US government is accusing Israel of being opposed to peace (for building within its own capital) and wants it to be vulnerable to attack as a way of proving that it wants peace. Is that how we are to dictate to our allies?

This is ground that we as a country have never tread before. Relations between the two countries may be at their worst ever. It was so difficult in the midst of this problem that the Israeli ambassador to the US called on Americans to pressure their congressmen to ask the administration to cool down the rhetoric. Aside from being unfair, it is unwise and has certainly emboldened our enemies and put lives at risk. We should not be surprised by the trouble on the Temple Mount that erupted just a few days later in which people were injured. In the days that followed there was more unrest, and several lives were lost.

Honoring a Terrorist?

Now let's contrast other events that took place the same week, because lost in the noise of the commotion over Ramat Shlomo is the fact that just a couple of days after the announcement of the intended building in that neighborhood, the Palestinians planned to name a square in the town of Ramallah (a Palestinian neighborhood in the West

THE THING TO KEEP IN MIND HERE IS THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES IS REALLY PROVING ITSELF TO BE TAKING SIDES WITH THE PALESTINIANS.

Bank) for a terrorist named Dalal Mughrabi (the daughter of refugees living in Lebanon) who was responsible for leading the deadliest single terrorist attack in Israel, in which thirty-seven innocent Israelis were killed (including at least ten children). In the last few years schools, tournaments, and camps have been named for this mass murderer in a society that claims to want peace. Among those who laud the praises of Dalal is the "moderate" Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas. The Ramallah incident, slated to take place on the thirty-second anniversary of her death/martyrdom, is just the latest in the long and bloody history of Israel's enemies.

In the end, due to outside pressure, the naming of the square was quietly postponed, but it was not cancelled. Leaders there are still planning to do that at some point in the future, and they did have a dedication ceremony there that day. They actually intend to raise a statue to Dalal in that spot someday. Again, we are talking about one of the most notorious terrorists to attack Israel, and almost nothing about this has been carried in the American media. Certainly there was no call from the White House that the Palestinians are acting in a manner that requires they be branded as being against peace.

So what the world is being asked to accept is that Israel is *against* peace for wanting to build places for people to live in a growing neighborhood in its own capital, while the Palestinians are the ones who *want* peace even though they make heroes of terrorists. And the US government is joining in with the chorus of lies.

The thing to keep in mind here is that the government of the United States is really proving itself to be taking sides with the Palestinians. That is a new role for the United States. Until now, this position has been somewhat veiled under the current administration, but now it is obvious. We have now come to the place where America is actually turning its back on Israel right before our very eyes, and the Ramat Shlomo incident was used opportunistically by our leaders to begin to push Israel in a way that the country has not pushed her before.

It is a fascinating contrast when we consider the difference between celebrating new places to live (life) and the mass murderer of innocent people (death). It is a contrast of a culture of life and a culture of death. No doubt Satan is alive and well and actively involved in the process.

Bible Prophecy

Beyond that, though, it reveals a deeper and potentially more frightening reality—Israel standing alone in the world as the nations rise up against her. The prophet Zechariah tells us that there is coming a day when that is precisely what will happen as all the nations of the world gather against Jerusalem (Zech. 12:3; 14:2). Those who think about prophecy know this well, but it is still quite unsettling when we watch it actually happening

before our eyes. Things could change, of course, but we are all getting a sober glimpse into the future. We praise God that He will intervene and deliver Israel, though at a very high price (Zech. 13), the Lord will rule and reign over the earth, and Israel will finally be at peace. Peace will come to the Middle East only when Messiah is ruling from there.

The blessed hope of our Lord appearing to take us unto Himself guarantees us that we will not participate in that terrible day upon the earth. However, the reality of current events must impress upon us the looming imminence of that moment when we are snatched from this wretched sphere before the wrath of God is poured out upon it. Our thrill at that reality ought to be sobered by the reality that awaits those who will remain. That is what must move us to zealous gospel outreach and is the greatest way of showing our belief in the reality of our Hope as we await His appearing. Maranatha, come Lord Jesus!

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The Blessed Hope and the Believer

In the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 much has been made of the failure of intelligence agencies to “connect the dots” that would have given effective warning of the threat. Assessing and coordinating national security data is an extraordinarily difficult task. It could be likened to randomly selecting jigsaw puzzle pieces to assemble without the benefit of the picture on the box. Likewise, believers in Christ often struggle to see the eternal view. The victorious Christian life may seem to us a jumble of facts, promises, obligations, and precepts that fail to form a coherent picture. We know that we have been saved by grace through faith, and that the Lord is coming again to set everything right, but we often fail to grasp what that means for us today.

When facing some problem, perhaps you have been reminded by someone of Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Perhaps you have been tempted to think, “That’s easy for you to say.” More often than we would like to admit, these words of encouragement do not always improve our outlook. Perhaps we fail to benefit as we should from this glorious truth because we fail to see it within the grand sweep of God’s plan for His entire creation. In Romans 8 Paul makes it plain that the promise of present blessing is an undeniable outgrowth of God’s eternal program, culminating in the blessed hope of the believer, the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice the first, essential words of Romans 8:28: “And we know.” Paul is not merely asserting that everything that happens to believers contributes to their ultimate happiness, but that believers *know* this to be so. Paul uses this phrase several other times in Romans. In 2:2 he says that we know that God judges sinful people “according to truth,” in other words, righteously and impartially. This fact is inherent in the nature and character of God—self-evident to those who know Him. In 3:19 Paul says, “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law.” This assertion also must pass without objection. Law by its very nature speaks to those who are subject to it. In 7:14 we read, “For we know that the law is spiritual.” In all these cases Paul uses the expression “we

know” when introducing propositions that an informed believer would view as unquestionably true.

How then do believers know that all things work together for their good? The answer, at least in part, rests on the compelling logic of Paul’s argument concerning the nature and extent of our salvation. The theme of Romans is the gospel, God’s power unto salvation to everyone who trusts Jesus Christ. Chapters 5–8 expand upon the wonderful salvation that is found only in this gospel. The essence of this salvation is given in 5:1, 2, where we are told that because we have been justified by faith we have peace with God and have been ushered into the permanent enjoyment of God’s favor. We have been forgiven. Our entire relationship with God has changed and with it our relationship to sin, the Law, and the rest of Creation. After a summary of the blessings of reconciliation (5:1–11), God shows us that we have been removed from the jurisdiction of death in Adam and placed in the jurisdiction of life in Christ (5:12–21). Because we died and rose again with Christ we have been freed from the dominion of sin and from bondage to the Law. We are, therefore, free to serve Christ and bring forth the fruit of righteousness in union with Him (6:1–7:13). In 7:14–25 Paul expresses with great poignancy that the Law could not sanctify us because, even after salvation, sin lives in us as a kind of parasite (7:17, 20). It is no longer identified with our true self, but it is constantly frustrating our desire to live according to the moral principles set forth in the Law (7:23). The believer along with Paul therefore cries out, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (7:24). The answer comes immediately: it is God through Jesus Christ who will deliver us (7:25).

This context is critical to understanding chapter 8. Although we live on a fallen planet in sin-infested and dying bodies, we are assured that we are no longer under any form of condemnation (8:1). We have been placed under new management (8:2–11). Before salvation we were under the dominion of sin, which controlled us by means of our sinful flesh; however, the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, who came in sinless human flesh, pronounced final judgment on sin in human flesh (8:2, 3). Although sin is still alive within us, it is under a death sentence. Sin and flesh have been dethroned in our lives, and we are now led by

the Spirit of Christ. As a result we are now able in the Spirit to live in a way that brings pleasure to God and that is in accord with His righteous requirements (8:4, 13). Moreover, even though our physical bodies are in the process of dying because of the sin that still resides in them, the Holy Spirit will one day gloriously reanimate our physical bodies to be free even from the presence of sin (8:11).

Not only does the Holy Spirit lead us, He guarantees our status as children of God. Whereas before, we were condemned criminals, now we have the assurance that we are beloved children (8:14–16). This is a necessary inference from our justification and identification with Christ. Believers are justified *in Christ*, based solely on His merits. Just as the Father said to Jesus, “You are my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased,” He says to those in Christ, “You are my beloved sons and daughters with whom I am well pleased.” The blessedness of our sonship goes even further. Paul points out that as children of God we are also His heirs. Because we are in Christ (as witnessed by the indwelling Spirit of Christ), we are coheirs with Christ of all His rights and privileges as Crown Prince of the universe (8:17a). When He comes in His glory to claim the kingdom that He has rightfully won to Himself, we will inherit with Him. Seeing this great truth of our heirship gives us confident joy here and now. When inevitable suffering with Christ comes, it confirms our confidence that we shall be glorified together with Him at His coming (8:17b). The sufferings of the present time are not even in the same class with the great glory that God will reveal in us (v. 18).

These wonderful truths are proof that God, as a loving Father, will cause all things to work together for the ultimate good of His beloved children. But Paul does not stop here. Our sonship has not only personal implications but profound cosmic ramifications. Romans 8:19–22 presents the entire creation as eagerly awaiting the day when we shall come into our inheritance. When the Lord made the creation subject to futility by means of the Curse, He did so for a purpose—that the creation might long for restoration. The created order currently lies under the painful burden of sin and death, a burden that came because of the sin of Adam. Now that the Second Adam has come, He has broken the power of sin and death and is simply awaiting the day in which He along with His coheirs will receive the kingdom prepared for Him by His Father. For now the world must continue to bear its allotted pains and sorrows until the Lord has finished calling out a bride for His Son. When that day comes, the creation will be delivered “into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (v. 21).*

Paul powerfully illustrates this truth in 8:22: “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” The universe is pictured as an expectant mother in labor, groaning in pain while hopefully awaiting the birth of her child. The truth that Paul expresses by this metaphor is a key reason that believers know that all things work together for their ultimate good. The intense pain of childbirth is part of the process of new life. Paul regards the

present curse as part of God’s plan to bring glorious restoration of all things. And at the center of this restoration is the presentation in glory of God’s children, who are to be rulers of all things with, in, and under Christ—with Him as coheirs, in Him as His body, and under Him as His joyful servants. The painful longing of the believers to be free from the presence of sin and corruption is evidence of our ultimate glorification, as we “groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (8:23). We had this ultimate hope of final glory when we first trusted Christ, and although we do not yet experience its reality, we patiently wait for it (8:24, 25). To give us the hope from day to day, the Holy Spirit, following Paul’s metaphor, translates our inarticulate longing for a better day into the language of Heaven so that we may be confident that God will respond to our groanings in furtherance of His perfect will for our lives (8:26, 27).

With this wonderful picture in view, how can we possibly doubt that everything that occurs has been arranged by God for our good? God’s plan for the ages is to prepare for the re-creation of the heavens and the earth as the everlasting stage upon which He can manifest the riches of His grace in His kindness toward us who trusted in Christ (Eph. 2:7). The entire cosmos is anticipating that great day when Jesus Christ claims that which is rightfully His and that which He intends to share with us. This background helps us understand the significance of Romans 8:29: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” The Lord has determined that Jesus Christ have many brothers and sisters conformed to His image with whom He can share His glory throughout eternity. For this purpose He set His affection upon us. Our lives are not some divine afterthought or cosmic coincidence. Just as a business owner might groom sons and daughters to take over the family business, so God is grooming us as Christ’s brethren to rule and reign with Him in the new heaven and the new earth.

GOD ... WILL CAUSE ALL THINGS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR THE ULTIMATE GOOD OF HIS BELOVED CHILDREN.

For this reason we can have absolute confidence that everything that happens to us in this life, whether pleasurable or painful, is part of God’s program to prepare us for an eternity of blessing, joy, fruitfulness, and service in Christ. For this reason we can freely serve Him, rejoicing even in our tribulations. For this reason *we know* that all things work together for our good as we look for that “blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

* The word used by Paul for “creation,” *ktisis* (8:19, 20, 21, and 22), can refer (among other things) to an individual created being, “creature,” or to all that is created, “creation.” In the context Paul’s argument makes more sense with the entire creation in view. See the distinction between “the whole creation” in v. 22 and “ourselves” in v. 23.

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A Separatist Evaluation of the New Calvinism

In March of 2009 *Time* magazine ranked “The New Calvinism” as one of the “10 Ideas Changing the World Right Now.” There is no doubt that the influence of Calvinism is increasing today.

In *Young, Restless, Reformed: A Journalist’s Journey with the New Calvinists* (Crossway, 2008), Collin Hansen documents the resurgence of Calvinism in American Evangelicalism.

The Southern Baptist Convention has fought its share of battles in recent years over a Calvinist resurgence.

Many Fundamentalists have noted the rise of Calvinism within their ranks.

What unifies New Calvinists such as John Piper, Mark Driscoll, Al Mohler, Wayne Grudem, and C. J. Mahaney? How should a committed Biblical separatist respond to their influence?

The New Calvinists represent the most conservative circles within broader Evangelicalism. They are by no means a monolithic movement; yet a separatist observing this influential group will recognize several common characteristics, some of which he can rejoice over and learn from, and some of which may give him cause for concern.

What Defines a New Calvinist?

Above all, these men share a Calvinist perspective of the gospel. Specifically, they believe that God absolutely controls every aspect of His creation, including salvation, which leads them to emphasize the sovereignty and glory of God. These men do not agree on other aspects of fully-orbed Reformed theology such as baptism, ecclesiology, or eschatology. Among these men you’ll find Baptists, Presbyterians, Premillennialists, Postmillennialists, and Amillennialists. What they primarily share in common is a particular soteriology and emphasis upon the glory of God. Some Fundamentalists may not agree with their soteriology, but we can certainly be thankful for their renewed emphasis upon God’s glory in all things.

Yet these emphases are not what make New Calvinists “new.” Theology that stresses the sovereignty of God has always had a presence among Biblical Christians, most popularly systematized by John Calvin and espoused by influential Christian leaders such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Charles Spurgeon, William Carey, and B. B. Warfield.

Rather, other common characteristics unique in the current Evangelical landscape manifest the attractiveness of New Calvinism to many Christians today. Several characteristics are quite commendable. First, New Calvinists decry the weakened theology that permeates contemporary Evangelical churches. These men are committed

to recovering a robustly Biblical orthodoxy and a God-centered gospel.

New Calvinists are fervently evangelistic, yet they reject the man-centered, seeker-sensitive philosophy of the Church Growth movement. Rather than watering down the gospel in order to attract and appeal to unbelievers, New Calvinists unashamedly proclaim the clear, unadjusted gospel. They boldly condemn the Prosperity Gospel, soundly denounce theological liberalism, and brilliantly defend important doctrines such as the inerrancy of Scripture, substitutionary atonement, Biblical gender roles, and justification by faith alone.

Finally, New Calvinists stress the importance of gospel-living, that is, a kind of living that manifests true life in Christ. Several New Calvinists have recently published books warning against worldliness and urging believers to live set apart unto Christ.

These are all priorities for which separatists can be thankful. New Calvinists are intent upon defending Biblical orthodoxy, reaching lost souls with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and promoting godly living.

Should New Calvinists Concern Separatists?

However, some characteristics shared by New Calvinists should give separatists reason for concern. Each of these issues differs to some degree among those who would be considered New Calvinists, but each is important as separatists evaluate the influence of these conservative Evangelicals.

First, while New Calvinists proclaim the gospel as the center of orthodox Christianity, they do not present clear boundaries for Biblical orthodoxy. They are uncompromising as to what constitutes the gospel, but they are less explicit about what doctrines or practices preclude Christianity. This is what Iain Murray referred to as “The Unresolved Controversy” for Evangelicals (Banner of Truth, 2001).

Second, while New Calvinists stress Biblical holiness, they nevertheless promote cultural relativism. They assume that culture in and of itself cannot be unholy. Ironically, New Calvinists soften the doctrine of total depravity in their assumption of cultural neutrality, ignoring the fact that cultural expressions are products of sinful humans. Essentially any cultural form can be adopted as a legitimate expression of Christian sentiment for New Calvinists. This makes them much more open to the use of pop culture in worship. Even the most conservative among them have praised the increasingly popular “Reformed Rap” of artists such as Curtis Allen and Shai Linne. As Mark Driscoll read-

ily admits, New Calvinists are “theologically conservative and culturally liberal” (Hansen, 138).

Third, while New Calvinists stand strong in their defense of the sole sufficiency of Scripture, they are open to the continuation of miraculous gifts. Most New Calvinists either strongly believe in or are ambivalent toward present works of the Holy Spirit such as tongues, healings, and prophecy. Even strong cessationists such as John MacArthur find common cause with continuationists—which leads to the final concern.

What is that concern? While New Calvinists urge the recovery of rich, Biblical doctrine, they tend to minimize the importance of some significant doctrinal issues for the sake of unity or cobelligence. They are correct in insisting that the gospel is central, but this leads them in practice to imply the unimportance of other significant doctrines such as mode of baptism, ecclesiology, and cessationism. It appears that for the New Calvinists other doctrinal issues remain in the background as long as someone believes in a Calvinistic understanding of the gospel.

So Who Are They?

Essentially, New Calvinists are Evangelicals who hold to the Doctrines of Grace. They are concerned about the erosion of the gospel in Evangelical churches, yet they are uncertain how to relate to other compromising Evangelicals, and they remain committed to the New Evangelical mission of cultural engagement. These characteristics that make New Calvinism “new” are not in themselves new. Their hesitance to separate and the way they approach culture is inherited from the strategy of New Evangelicalism.

For separatists evaluating the New Calvinist movement, the problematic issue is not Calvinist dogma but lack of separation from indifferent Evangelicals and cultural relativism. There have always been Calvinistic Fundamentalists, but Fundamentalism ceases to exist when separatism ceases. The divide between New Calvinists and Fundamentalists is not over Calvinism, although many Fundamentalists do not hold to the Doctrines of Grace, but over separation.

How Should Separatists Respond?

Separatists have reason both for rejoicing and concern with New Calvinism, yet we must be certain that our concerns are rightly founded. Some accurately note that many young Fundamentalists are rejecting their separatist heritage and flocking to the Evangelicalism of New Calvinists. Collin Hansen himself expressed hope that young Fundamentalist Calvinists

would “rebuild the bridges burned generations ago between evangelicals and fundamentalists.”*

Yet we must remember that it was primarily the New Evangelicals who burned those bridges, and they did so as a rejection of separatism, not because of Calvinism. A rebuilding of those bridges would involve a reclaiming of separatist convictions by Evangelicals. Therefore, it is not Calvinism that Fundamentalist leaders should set their sites on as they watch their children run to Piper, Driscoll, and Mahaney, but failure to consistently apply Biblical separatism.

So what should be the response of separatists to New Calvinism? First, separatists can learn from and emulate the God-centeredness, commitment to actively defending Biblical orthodoxy, and unashamed gospel proclamation of the New Calvinists. Second, separatists should carefully explain the doctrine of Biblical separatism as essential to the preservation and purity of the gospel. Third, separatists should give careful thought to how positions such as credo-baptism and cessationism impact the integrity of Biblical orthodoxy and lucidly defend them. Finally, separatists should carefully teach the impact of human depravity on the world’s cultural expressions and explain how some cultural forms do harm to God’s truth.

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*<http://www.reformation21.org/articles/reflections-on-young-restless-and-reformed.php>

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Regardless of the issue—be it music, media, dress, etc.—the child of God must be ever wary of the gravitational pull of a culture that is intentionally opposed to the Biblical mandate of holiness. Unless one resists its force and actively and persistently seeks the mind of God, gravity will do what gravity does: pull us downward into conformity with a world that does not acknowledge God's unique and supreme authority or recognize His absolute standard of holiness.

Recently I read a book by R. Kent Hughes, senior pastor of College Church in Wheaton, Illinois, entitled *Set Apart: Calling a Worldly Church to a Godly Life*. Although he and I may differ on some points of application, I found Dr. Kent's call to Biblical separation both refreshing and encouraging. In chapter seven of his book he discusses the need within the Evangelical church for a return to Biblical modesty. I must confess, when a New Evangelical brother clearly sees modest apparel as a Biblical mandate, I am amazed at an ever-increasing number of my Fundamentalist brethren who seemingly, at least in practice, believe that when it comes to the matter of how we are to attire our bodies, the Scriptures are silent or unclear.

In the Pentateuch God took great care in His instructions concerning the tabernacle in which He was to dwell on earth. It was beautiful, orderly and a shadow of the true tabernacle in the heavenlies. Does it not follow that what God has to say about how we are to adorn the "temple of the Holy Ghost" is of equal importance and deserves thoughtful consideration?

As with many standards of holiness in the New Testament, God rarely delineates specific dos and don'ts; He gives us principles, then relies upon our knowledge of Him and His character and our knowledge of our magnetic pull toward sin to direct our application. So what does the

Bible have to say, both explicitly and principally, concerning our outward adorning?

Our Adorning Should Be Modest

First, modesty applies to both genders. When the Lord instituted the tabernacle duties, He required the priests to wear modest clothing (Exod. 28:42, 43) and to approach the altar by use of a ramp rather than steps "that [their] nakedness be not discovered thereon" (Exod. 20:26). Even though his outer garment was a long robe, underneath the priest was required to wear linen breeches so that while ministering at the altar in an elevated position, he would be modest. Immodesty by the high priest was punishable by death!

Secondly, our view of modesty should be an outgrowth of the character and pleasure of God. First Peter 1:14, 15 tells us, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [behavior]." Notice the contrast: obedient children do not fashion themselves after the pattern of their former lusts; rather, they pattern their conduct after God's holiness. In 1 Timothy 2:9, 10 Paul exhorts women to "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh [is fitting for] women professing godliness) with good works." In other words, if a woman professes to know God and follow Him, she will dress in a way that reflects godliness. When a Christian is considering purchasing a garment, he or she should be thinking, "If I buy this article of clothing, will it communicate godliness or worldliness?" Everything one does should be founded upon God's revelation of Himself as given in His Word. This is not a matter of personal taste.

Thirdly, *modesty can be defined by association*. In Proverbs 7:10 a young man met a woman who was dressed “with the attire of an harlot.” That’s all the Bible tells us about her appearance. Nothing else need be said. A harlot dresses in the sensual manner associated with harlotry. The specific clothing may change with the styles, but regardless of the time or culture, a harlot dresses to accentuate what she is selling.

Not long ago I was given a nonreligious FoxNews article. It began:

You see them at the mall, waiting for the school bus, *even in church* [emphasis mine]; preteens wearing tight T-shirts that say “naughty” and low-slung flared pants that expose their pierced belly buttons. America’s pre-pubescent girls continue to emulate the dress styles and attitudes of their older role models: Britney, Christina and Paris . . . and they’ve even got a name for [such girls]; they’re called “prostitots.” . . . It’s those girls at the mall with the tight jeans and belly shirts. They’re in between the age group of 10 to 13 or 14.

Please note that even a secular news source associates tight jeans and belly shirts with prostitutes! Yet if a pastor were to speak against tight jeans and label them as sensual, he would more than likely be labeled a legalist. Men, we should not be afraid to communicate God’s directives (on *any* subject) to those entrusted to our care, be it a congregation or a family. Fathers, we need to teach our children how their appearance associates them with either Christ or the world.

Anna Sofia and Elizabeth Botkin, under the guidance of their father, effectively communicate this principle in their book *So Much More*. They describe the dress style of the average girl on the street and the obvious statement she is making: “I am a shameless hussy. . . . I am not worth much. . . . I just want to get attention. . . . I live for myself. . . . I need to be noticed. . . . I need to look like everyone else.” They then contrast this with the dress a Christian *should* communicate—just the opposite. “I am loved, I am cherished, I am protected, I am a woman of virtue, I am submitted to God. . . . I am worth more than rubies, there is a part of me that is not to be stared at by strangers because it belongs to my future husband,” and not to mention I *belong* to my holy God (p. 83).

Lastly, modesty should reflect an attitude of shamefacedness. This word literally means “downcast eyes” and refers to modesty or bashfulness. When Adam and Eve sinned and the glory of God departed, they immediately had a sense of shame in regard to their nakedness, and they hid themselves. This sense of shame is the natural response to nakedness. When God clothed Adam and Eve with the coats of animal skins, He was not only teaching them of His redemptive plan but also of the need for the modest clothing that their shame required.

Our Adorning Should Be Gender Distinctive

Deuteronomy 22:5 says, “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.” It is not my intention in this article to discuss whether or not slacks of all varieties are “that which pertaineth to a man,” but God clearly desires for there to be a difference in men’s and women’s attire. “Abomination” is a strong word; the first synonym offered

in Strong’s is “disgusting.” If God uses strong language when referring to how he perceives men and women who attempt to take on the appearance or role of the opposite gender, one ought to give careful consideration to God’s intent when He breathed this admonition. No one can deny that one of the characteristics of the culture is to erase the distinctions between male and female. How refreshing to meet a woman who delights in her God-given femininity and enjoys looking and acting like a godly woman.

Our Adorning Should Be Orderly

First Timothy 2:9 gives us another principle of a godly appearance. The Greek word from which “modest” is translated is the word *kosmios*, which means “orderly” or “decorous.” “Decorous” is a word that has fallen out of common usage. It means that which is characterized by or showing propriety or good taste; suitable or proper. Current styles tend toward disorderliness—hair is purposely disheveled, clothing by design is manufactured to look worn and/or ill fitting. Comfort rather than appropriateness dictates wardrobe choices—even among many Christians. This disorderliness is yet another way in which many Christians have followed the world’s cues.

Our Adorning Should Not Be Defrauding.

Romans 14:13 addresses the matter of things that are doubtful (those things not being clearly defined by Scripture): “Judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.” Immodesty *is* a stumbling block to men. Men, this is where we need to be honest with our wives and daughters. Women need to realize that *every* normal man fights a continual battle to bring every thought (as well as his eyes) into captivity. Many Christian women have no idea how their appearance affects men. What a woman may think is simply “stylish” may in fact be defrauding, drawing attention to the sensual parts of her body rather than to her radiant face. When a wife sees another woman showing too much attention to her husband, she expects her husband to trust her judgment. In the same way, when a husband expresses concern over the defrauding power of his wife’s or daughter’s attire, she should trust his judgment whether she understands fully or not.

We Christians should attire our bodies in a manner that brings glory and pleasure to the Lord. Everything we do should be founded upon God’s revelation of Himself as given in His Word. Our body is the Holy of Holies where the *Holy* Ghost resides. We are not our own because we have been bought with a price; “therefore glorify God *in your body*, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

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For the past twenty years Terry Hamilton has been the pastor of Friendship Baptist Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He and his wife, Nancy, have four sons, two daughters, and two grandchildren.

May Christians Drink in Moderation?



Chuck Phelps

In 1979 a drunk driver veered off the road, tore across a well-manicured lawn, and struck a parked car. In that car, tucked safely into her baby seat, was my friend's infant daughter. While the little girl's mother was escorting her brother and sister into her grandma's house, the drunk driver struck, and the baby's short life ended.

One person dies every twenty-two minutes in the United States because of an alcohol-related accident.¹ Americans ages seventeen to twenty-four are more likely to die from drinking and driving than from any other single cause.² "An estimated 310,000 [Americans are] injured in [alcohol-related accidents] each year"—a rate of one injury "every 2 minutes."³ Alcohol can also lead to violence. The United States Justice Department reports that "4 in 10 violent" crimes "involve . . . alcohol."⁴ "The abuse of alcohol is present in 70% of all murders."⁵ "Victim reports show [that] on average each year . . . 183,000 rapes and sexual assaults involve alcohol use by the offender, as do just over 197,000 robberies, about 661,000 aggravated assaults, and nearly 1.7 million simple assaults."⁶

The Bible is right! Though God's words have long been ignored and forgotten in our culture, accident and crime statistics attest that what He says is true: "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder" (Prov. 23:31, 32). "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1).

Where Is the Voice of the Christian Community?

Not long ago the Christian community stood united in its opposition to the use of alcohol. On April 24, 1965, *Christianity Today* warned the Christian reader to abstain. "People must be informed that the use of alcohol is not unlike Russian roulette: every tenth person becomes automatically hooked. The only solution is total abstinence."⁷ Yet on April 3, 2000, the same magazine published this statement by J. Lawrence Burkholder, president emeritus of Goshen Christian College in Indiana:

Christians who do not commit to a principle of total abstinence should follow a guideline that would represent both discernment and Christian freedom by allowing limited use, now and then, and within the context of family, friendship, religious celebration, and diplomatic protocol. These limits need not imply the strictness of an absolute principle. Still, they should be taken seriously. Such a policy offers the practical advantages of sobriety, the personal advantages of responsible maturity, and the theological advantages of biblical wisdom.⁸

As moderation and toleration replace abstinence and intolerance as the common view held by our Bible-teaching churches and schools, warnings like that printed by *Christianity Today* in 1965 are seldom heard.

Could the present silence and ambivalence of the Christian community in America be partially responsible for our nation's ever-increasing alcohol-related tragedies? It is especially disquieting that a Christian college president would suggest such a policy, given the state of secular cam-

puses across the nation. Scientific studies have shown that secular college campuses are overrun by alcohol-related problems. "Between 2% and 3% of the current American college population will die from alcohol-related causes."⁹ "Thirty percent of college failure is alcohol related."¹⁰ The United States Department of Health and Human Services has reported that "each year, more than 696,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking."¹¹

Such chaos is spreading to those even younger. According to the University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future project, 43% of eighth graders, 65% of tenth graders, and 73% of twelfth graders used alcohol in the previous year. Eight percent of the eighth graders, 24% of the tenth graders, and 32% of the twelfth graders were drunk in the last thirty days.¹² Yet Christian college presidents such as Joseph Stowell of Cornerstone University¹³ and Duane Litfin of Wheaton College¹⁴ have opened the door to these same problems by modifying policy to allow faculty, staff, and graduate students the liberty to drink. As the conscience of the Christian community is cauterized by her leaders the toll that alcohol is exacting continues to rise.

The Bible Has Much to Say about Alcohol

The King James Version of the Bible refers to wine, drink, and drinking 637 times. Most American readers read "wine" and assume it means a drink containing alcohol. However, "the word wine has a wide range of meaning in the Bible. Thirteen different [Hebrew and Greek] words are translated wine" and can include "everything from grape juice to concentrated grape syrup to alcoholic wine" (Gen. 40:9-11; Prov. 3:10; 1 Sam. 25:18; Prov. 31:4, 5; Luke 10:34).¹⁵

It is apparent that some of the wine in the Bible contains alcohol. In Luke 10:34 wine is used as a cleansing agent for an open wound. Nonalcoholic wine would not be much help in such a case. In 1 Timothy 5:23 the apostle Paul encourages Pastor Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake. This recommendation was clearly made for medicinal reasons and reminds us, incidentally, that if Timothy were in the habit of "taking wine," the advice would be unnecessary. Genesis 9:21, Proverbs 23:29-35, and Ephesians 5:18 all speak of wine's power to intoxicate. While there are those who will argue that the ancients knew how to preserve fruits and keep the juice of the grape from fermentation,¹⁶ it would seem clear that some Bible "wines" had the ability to intoxicate.

The Wine of the Bible Was Not Like Wine Sold Today

Having noted that some wines in the Bible could intoxicate, we need to understand how they become intoxicating. Natural fermentation occurs when the juice of the grape comes into contact with the yeast released when the grape skin is broken. Under normal circumstances, naturally fermented wine contains 2% to 14% alcohol.¹⁷ Ordinary wines in Palestine contained 2% to 6% alcohol,¹⁸ and wines that neared 14% sacrificed taste for strength because their

sugars turned into vinegar.¹⁹ Many modern table wines contain 14% alcohol due to temperature regulations and the addition of extra yeast during the fermentation process. Modern fortified wines such as port or sherry have alcohol added, which increases the alcoholic content to 18% to 24%. Hard liquor produced by distillation, such as vodka or gin, has as much as 40% alcohol, with stronger products reaching levels of 75%. The distillation of spirits is a fairly modern process, dating back to around AD 1200; it was totally unknown in Bible times.²⁰ Since wines of Bible times could not have more than 14% alcohol and modern wines seldom have less, it is clear that comparing ancient wines to modern wines is not comparing grapes to grapes. "You cannot defend wine drinking today on the basis of the wine drinking in the Bible times because the two are totally different."²¹

The Wine of the Bible Was Diluted

Though ancient wine was far less potent than today's table wine, the ancients avoided drinking undiluted wine. According to secular authorities, people in Bible times would dilute their wine with at least "3 parts water"²² (sometimes with as much as 20 parts water²³), reducing the alcoholic content to 2.5%. It would require nearly a gallon of this mixture to intoxicate the average person.

Innumerable scholars, many impressively credentialed, testify of the ancient custom of mixing wine with water. R. Forbes, professor of History of Pure Applied Sciences in Antiquity at the University of Amsterdam, says, "In all these countries [Syria, Palestine, Egypt], wine was always diluted with water, a long standing custom in Mediterranean regions, where pure potable water is not very common"²⁴ Maynard A. Amerine notes that "the wine

THOUGH ANCIENT WINE WAS FAR LESS POTENT THAN TODAY'S TABLE WINE, THE ANCIENTS AVOIDED DRINKING UNDILUTED WINE.

of classical antiquity . . . was very different from modern wine. They . . . always diluted it with water before consumption. . . Only barbarians drank undiluted wine."²⁵

Whereas people in ancient times sought to reduce the alcoholic content of their wine, people today do the opposite. This is exactly what the Bible forbids in Proverbs 23:31: "Look not thou upon the wine, when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright." Norman Geisler, former dean of Liberty Center for Christian Scholarship, Liberty University, affirms such an application of this passage: "Many wine-drinking Christians today mistakenly assume that what the New Testament meant by wine is identical to wine used today. This, however, is false. In fact, today's wine is by biblical definition strong drink, and hence forbidden by the Bible. What the Bible frequently meant by wine was basically purified water.

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6953 West 92nd Lane
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June 15–17, 2010 90th Annual Fellowship

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July 26–28, 2010 Alaska Regional Fellowship

Immanuel Baptist Church
855 South Trunk Road
Palmer, AK 99645
907.746.0402
<http://home.earthlink.net/~akbeb/akfbf.html>
akfbf@earthlink.net

October 18–19, 2010 North Central Regional Fellowship

Abilene Bible Baptist Church
409 NE Van Buren
Abilene, KS 67410

October 21–22, 2010 South Central Regional Fellowship

Westside Baptist Church
3883 Lakes of Bridgewater Drive
Katy, TX 77449

October 25–26, 2010 New England Regional Fellowship

Cornerstone Baptist Church
415 U.S. Route 1
Scarborough, ME 04074
207.885.5123
cbcscarborough.org

November 2, 2010 NYC Regional Fellowship

Grace Baptist Church
798 Hempstead Turnpike
Franklin Square, NY 11010-4321
516.564.1038

November 8–9, 2010 Southern California Regional Fellowship

Camp Ironwood
49191 Cherokee Road
Newberry Springs, CA 92365
760.272.1350 (Ron Smith)

November 15–16, 2010 Northern California Regional Fellowship

Calvary Baptist Church
PO Box 889
160 Seaside Court
Marina, CA 93933
831.384.7743

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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

The Christian in Complete Armor

One of the saddest facts about today's Christians is that they are unacquainted with so many older but valuable writers. *There arose up a new king . . . which knew not Joseph.* You could almost say that our ignorance of some of these authors and their works amounts to something bordering on the tragic.

Without the theological perspective obtained from familiarity with history, even the most sincere man or woman suffers from tunnel blindness. His only points of reference are the narrow slice of the half century or so through which he is presently living, combined with a superficial acquaintance with select facts or anecdotes from the relatively recent past.

One harmful consequence is that it is difficult for such people to follow and correctly process debates between their more historically versed peers. C. S. Lewis explained, *If you join at eleven o'clock a conversation which began at eight you will often not see the real bearing of what is said. Remarks which seem to you very ordinary will produce laughter or irritation and you will not see why.*

Understandably, this provokes frustration. But more seriously, it tempts a man to dismiss altogether the significance of the conversations he doesn't entirely understand. That in turn makes him susceptible to becoming increasingly provincial, even sectarian in his outlook. If he is a leader, his influence can become divisive. Tragic.

But another, even more spiritually stunting consequence of not knowing older writers is the loss of their really extraordinary wisdom. A case in point is

William Gurnall, author of *The Christian in Complete Armor*, first published in three volumes (1655, 1658, 1661).

The Christian in Complete Armor is unarguably the most sweeping meditation on Ephesians 6:10–20 ever written. More importantly, its rare insights are as relevant today as they were in the seventeenth century. *It is a spiritual war you shall read of, wrote Gurnall in his dedication, and that not a history of what was fought many ages past and is now over, but of what now is doing . . . and that not at the furthest end of the world, but what concerns you and every one that reads it. The stage whereon this war is fought is every man's own soul.*

How many readers know this book? One in fifty? One in a hundred? Yet John Newton said that if he could read only one book besides the Bible it would be *The Christian in Complete Armor*. It was often recommended by the powerful eighteenth-century pastor-evangelist Rowland Hill (whose new and excellent biography, *The Life of Rowland Hill*, has just last year been published by Evangelical Press). Augustus Toplady (author of "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me") frequently referenced it in his own works, and I can't resist repeating just one of Toplady's quotations of it. It's taken from a section in which Gurnall is assuring Christians that their Heavenly Father graciously receives even their poorest offerings and services. *He accepts thy bent sixpence, and will not throw away thy crooked, broken mite, Gurnall writes. Love refuses nothing that love sends.*

C. H. Spurgeon's estimate of Gurnall's book was that it is *peerless and priceless; every line is full of wisdom; every sentence is suggestive. The whole book has been preached over scores of times, and is, in our judgment, the best thought-breeder in all our library.* J. C. Ryle said of it, *You will often find in a line and a half some great truth, put so concisely, and yet so fully, that you really marvel how so much thought could be got into so few words.*

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

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William Gurnall: Obscure Pastor

J. C. Ryle is our best source of information about the author of *The Christian in Complete Armor*. In the early 1860s Ryle investigated every known source of facts about William Gurnall's life and ministry, but he was forced to conclude, *Perhaps there is no writer who has left a name so familiar to all readers of Puritan theology, but of whose personal history so little is known.*

The broad outline is this: Educated at Cambridge, minister at Lavenham (about forty miles east) for thirty-five years, Puritan in spirit and in preaching, but conformist to the Church of England in practice.

One of Gurnall's few surviving letters, dated November 21, 1644, reveals his view of his pastoral responsibility. *At length my frail bark, after a difficult navigation, has safely reached the port of Lavenham. Nothing now remains for me but . . . with sound principles to imbue, and with paternal care to instruct, the numerous people. . . . My only solace in this world will now be to preserve, by earnest and continued prayer, this my congregation, pure and unspotted amongst so many corruptions.*

The fifteenth-century church building in which Gurnall preached, St. Peter and St. Paul, rises dramatically from the top of a slight hill in the middle of hilly country. Just a stone's throw outside the church's massive weathered oak doors, round, wooly sheep graze contentedly. The scene must be much the same as in Gurnall's day, when wool and weaving were Lavenham's chief industries.

Inside the church today an early edition of *The Christian in Complete Armor* lies displayed under glass. But every trace of Gurnall himself has long ago disappeared. Neither his home nor any personal possessions remain. Even in Ryle's day his burial plot was unknown, though it is thought likely that he lies beneath one of the slabs of the church's stone floor.

The Christian in Complete Armor: Comprehensive Counsel

The Christian in Complete Armor (CCA hereafter) is one of those occasional books which legitimately throws light on the entirety of Christian living through the prism of a single theme—in this case, spiritual warfare. Gurnall's subtitle introduces his work as *a magazine opened, from whence the Christian is furnished with spiritual arms for the battle, helped on with his armor, and taught the use of his weapon; together with the happy issue of the whole war.* One might react that spiritual warfare is too narrow a lens through which to see all of the Christian life, but actually, this was generally the Puritan viewpoint. William Haller explains: *The Puritan imagination saw the life of the spirit as pilgrimage and battle. . . . [The] soul was a traveler through a strange country and a soldier in battle. He was a traveler, who, fleeing from destruction, must adhere through peril and hardship to the way that leads home. He was a soldier who, having been pressed to serve under the banners of the spirit, must enact faithfully his part in the unceasing war of the spiritual against the carnal*

man. . . . Few sermons lacked and many abounded to such allusions to spiritual wayfaring and warfaring (The Rise of Puritanism, 142).

CCA, then, is comprehensive counsel on Christian living. I've been reading it off and on for over twenty years, and I'm constantly struck with its universal scope. There appear to be few if any significant topics that don't surface. And yet there is a textual naturalness with which they do. Gurnall counsels within the parameters of the actual words and expressions of Ephesians 6:10–20. This can be seen most clearly by scanning the lengthy table of contents. For instance, let's take the phrase *the breastplate of righteousness*. Here is a portion of the contents for that phrase.

Second Piece Of The Armor—The Christian's Breastplate

The Development of this direction extends in three branches.

Branch First—Some reasons why the Christian should have special care to keep on his breastplate.

Branch Second—Some instances wherein, specially, every Christian is to express the power of a holy and righteous life.

First instance. The Christian must maintain the power of holiness in his contest with sin: and in these particulars.

1. He must shun the appearance of it.
2. He must do so on noble principles.
3. Seek to mortify it.
4. Must grow and advance in the contrary grace.
5. Have a public spirit against the sins of others.
6. Renounce all confident glorying in this.

Second instance. The Christian must express the power of holiness in the duties of God's worship.

1. In making conscience of one duty as well as another.
2. In a close pursuance of those ends for which God hath appointed them.

Third instance. The Christian must express the power of holiness in his particular calling and worldly employments. In these holiness in the Christian thus appears:

1. When he is so for conscience' sake.
2. When he expects the success of his labor from God, and gives thanks accordingly.
3. When he is content with the portion God allots him.
4. When his particular calling does not encroach on his general calling.

Fourth instance. The Christian must express the power of holiness in his behavior towards others.

1. To those within doors—family relations.
2. To those without doors—our neighbors.

Notice how Gurnall applies the Scriptural admonition comprehensively by progressing logically through the various categories of personal, ecclesiastical, occupational, domestic, and civic holiness. His entire work is marked by this same methodical and universal treatment of the successive phrases of the passage.

Spiritual Wisdom: Representative Samples

Looking at this sample from the table of contents, one might conclude that one of the strengths of CCA, its comprehensiveness, is at the same time one of its unbearable weaknesses—that it proceeds laboriously. But Gurnall's style throughout is attractive and pithy. Almost always a page will contain something expressed with such crisp wit that it is instantly memorable. For example,

God's wounds cure, sin's kisses kill.

One Almighty is better than many mighties. All these mighty sins and demons do not amount not one almighty sin or one almighty Devil.

Humility is a necessary veil to all other graces.

Compare Scripture with Scripture. False doctrines, like false witnesses, agree not among themselves.

The sins of teachers are the teachers of sin.

But perhaps the best way of sampling Gurnall's style and substance is to take a portion of the outline we've already looked over and to fill it out now with selections from his development of the points.

Branch Second—Some instances wherein, specially, every Christian is to express the power of a holy and righteous life.

First Instance. The Christian must maintain the power of holiness in his contest with sin: and in these particulars.

1. He must shun the appearance of it.

The dove doth not only fly from the hawk, but will not so much as smell a single feather that falls from it. It should be enough to scare the holy soul from any enterprise, if it be but badly colored. . . . Liberty is the Diana of the times. O what apologies are made for some suspicious practices!—long hair, gaudy garish apparel, spotted faces, naked breasts. These have been called to the bar in former times, and censured by sober and

solid Christians, as things at least suspicious, and of no "good report;" but now they have hit upon a more favorable jury that find them "not guilty." . . . Professors are so far from a holy jealousy, that should make them watch their hearts lest they go too far, that they stretch their consciences to come up to the full length of their tether; as if he were the brave Christian that could come nearest the pit of sin and not fall in; as in the Olympian games, he wore the garland away, that could drive his chariot nearest the mark and not knock on it.

2. He must do so on noble principles.

Here lies the power of holiness. Many forbear to sin upon such an unworthy account, that God will not thank them for it another day. . . . Oh how many are there that go on to sin, for all that God says to the contrary! But when their credit bids, for shame of the world, to give over such a practice, they can knock off presently. When their profit speaks, it is heard and obeyed. Oh sirs! take heed of this; God expects his servants should not only do what he commands, but this, at his command, and his only.

3. Seek to mortify it.

A wound may be hid when it is not healed—covered and yet not cured. Some men, they are like unskillful physicians, who rather drive in the disease, than drive out the cause of the disease. . . . I have read that the opening of a chest where some cloths were laid up—not very well aired and cleared from the infection that had been in the house—was the cause of a great plague in Venice, after they had lain many years there without doing any hurt. I am sure we see, for want of true mortification, many who, after they have walked so long unblameably as to gain the reputation of being saints in the opinion of others, upon some occasion, like the opening of a chest, have fallen into abominable practices. . . . He that is inclined to a disease must not only take physic when he hath a fit actually upon him, but ever and anon should be taking something good against it.

4. Must grow and advance in the contrary grace.

Every sin hath its opposite grace, as every poison hath its antidote. He that will walk in the power of holiness must not only labor to make avoidance of sin, but to get possession of the contrary grace. . . . God will not ask us what we were not, but what we were.

5. Have a public spirit against the sins of others.

A good subject doth not only labor to live quietly under his prince's government himself, but is ready to serve his prince against those that will not. True holiness, as true charity, begins at home, but it doth not confine itself within its own doors. . . . He that is of a neutral spirit and . . . cares not what dishonor God hath from others, calls in question the zeal he expreseth against sin in his own bosom.

6. Renounce all confident glorying in this.

They who climb lofty mountains find it safest, the higher they ascend, the more to bow and stoop with their bodies; and so does the Spirit of Christ teach the saints, as they get higher in their victories over corruption, to bow lowest in self-denial.

Some Personal Favorites

At the beginning of this year I determined to read a few pages of Gurnall each morning until someday I finish him completely. Hardly a day goes by without my highlighting or even copying out for further meditation some choice thing that I've happily discovered.

For instance, just this morning I was reminded by Gurnall of the need to resist the tendency to be concerned over little more than one's own ministry.

Take heed of a private spirit. Let not only your particular safety, but of the whole army of saints, be in your eye and care. That soldier who can see an enemy in fight with his brethren, and not help them, he makes it but the more easy for the enemy to slay himself at last. Say not therefore, "Am I my brother's keeper?" God would not keep him that cared not to keep his brother. Watch over one another, not to play critics on your brother's failings, and triumph when he halts, but to help him up if he falls, or if possible, to keep him from falling by a timely rescue, as Abishai came to David's succor.

Very early on in my reading I came across a truly striking passage having to do with the necessity of great courage and resolution to be successful in spiritual warfare. Gurnall argues that *it requires more prowess and greatness of spirit to obey God faithfully, than to command an army of men; to be a Christian than a captain.*

As proof of this, Gurnall points out that the Christian's greatest battle is with himself. *The Christian is to proclaim and prosecute an irreconcilable war against his dearest sins, those sins which have lain nearest to his heart must now be trampled under his feet. Now what courage and resolution does this take?*

The way in which he develops this thought is powerful.

You think Abraham was tried when he was called to take his son, his only son, Isaac, and offer him up with his own hands. Yet what was that to this? Soul, take your lust, your only lust, which is the child of your dearest love. Your Isaac, the sin which has caused you the most joy and laughter, from which you have promised yourself the greatest return of pleasure and profit. As ever you look to see My face with comfort, lay your hands on it before Me. Run the sacrificial knife of mortification in the very heart of it, and do this freely, joyfully, for it is no pleasing sacrifice which is offered with a cast down countenance. Do all this now, before you have one more embrace from it.

Truly this is a hard demand. Flesh and blood cannot bear this command. Our lust will not lie so patiently on the altar as Isaac, or as a "lamb that is brought to the slaughter is dumb." Our lust will roar and shriek, and even shake and rend the heart with its hideous outcries.

Here the valiant swordsmen of the world have showed themselves mere cowards, who have come out of the field with victorious banners, and then lived, yea, died slaves to a base lust at home. As one could say of a great Roman captain who, as he rode in his triumphant chariot through Rome, had his eye never off a courtesan that walked along the street: "Behold, how this goodly captain, that had conquered such potent armies, is himself conquered by one silly woman."

Yet another passage that spoke to my heart was Gurnall's observation on the admonition to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." Gurnall notes,

The strength of the general in all other armies lies in his troops. He flies upon their wings. If their feathers be clipped, their power broken, he is lost.

But in the army of the saints, the strength of every saint, yea, of the entire host of the saints, lies in their commander, the Lord of hosts. God can overcome His enemies without their hands, but they cannot so much as defend themselves without His arm.

I truly hope that not only Gurnall, but many of the older authors will be rediscovered and savored by a growing percentage of contemporary Fundamentalists, especially pastors and other leaders. A. W. Tozer observed of these classics, *Publishers dutifully reprint their books and in due time these appear on the shelves of our studies. But the whole trouble lies right there: they remain on the shelves.*

Perhaps a good start at correcting this problem would be to follow some counsel from C. S. Lewis in his introduction to reading Athanasius. *It is a good rule, he advised, after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one till you have read an old one in between.* ☞☞

Bring . . . the Books

A Faithful Watchman: The Life and Times of Jonathan Edwards

At the present time the Evangelical world seems overly enamored with all things “Edwardsian,” and so another biography on the life of Jonathan Edwards was not met with enthusiastic anticipation on my part. However, the more I read, the more I was caught up, and before I knew it I had turned the last page and was disappointed to have arrived at the end. Written by Douglas Sweeney, a church history professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word* (IVP, 2009) is a concise and captivating summary of the life and ministry of one of the most influential Protestant theologians to appear in America.

Sweeney concedes that an abundance of material has been written on Edwards’ life and ministry. “He remains one of the best-studied figures in our past. But few have written books on Edwards aimed at fellow Christians, people looking for a state-of-the-art discussion of his life in order to use him as a model of Christian faith, thought and ministry. This is such a book.” And indeed it is!

I found the introduction to be uncommonly interesting and of great help in understanding both Edwards and his ministry context. Sweeney sets out to describe what life was like in Edwards’ world in an effort to show how religion in general and Protestant theology in particular were much more integrated into the warp and woof of the culture and daily life of society in that day. This played a significant role in the success of Edwards’ varied ministry in the Word.

In sum, Puritan New England may have been the most biblically oriented and literate society in the world before the time of Edwards’ ministry. Its inhabitants owned no televisions, went without the Internet, and had no access to cell phones or video games. Their skies were dark at night, pitch-black on cloudy nights. They had no light bulbs, gas lights or even the means to power them. Most would spend their evenings reading or socializing by candlelight, or huddling round the fire, ruminating about the things that mattered most. Moreover, even during the day, while working hard to make ends meet, Puritans thought about the Bible and the challenges of faith.

I was personally struck by the innovativeness of Edwards’ ministry and its radical departure from what had come to pass for preaching in the pulpits of his day. While his sermons may seem obtuse to our modern ear (or eye), they were vibrant, engaging, and relevant messages that powerfully impacted his hearers.

The most valuable chapter in the book in my opinion is titled “Try the Spirits.” Sweeney has captured the essence of the religious awakenings for which Edwards is so well known. He presents multiple facets of those awakenings in a wonderfully concise manner while managing to provide the reader with the information necessary for properly evaluating them. I was captivated

by this chapter. It felt as though I had a ringside seat to the joy, the concern, and the disappointment that Edwards felt at different points during these strange and marvelous doings of the Lord. Sweeney’s summary of Edwards’ assessment of the marks of a true work of God as opposed to a false work is worth the price of the book. Sweeney helpfully explains Edwards’ long-standing opposition to Arminianism in a way that helped me to set Edwards’ strong statements against Arminianism in a more defined context.

Edwards probably never met an evangelical Arminian. He would later hear of the Wesley brothers’ Methodist Arminianism. His own neck of the wood, though, was dominated by Calvinists. New Englanders associated Arminianism with liberalism—broad-minded, moralistic, rationalistic liberalism. “Arminian,” to Edwards, meant opposed to the Reformation and its glorious doctrines of grace, opposed to the biblical truth that sinners are saved supernaturally—and only supernaturally—by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Sweeney also surveys and explains the basic tenets of several of Edwards’ most important literary contributions. I have not read a clearer or more helpful summary of Edwards’ famous work *The Freedom of the Will*. The illustrations that Sweeney pulls out to show what Edwards means as well as what he doesn’t mean are priceless!

Sweeney makes a compelling case for Edwards’ theology as the fountain of the modern missions movement. In a day when some are questioning the gospel fervor of those who are more Calvinistic than they, this chapter stands as a strong testimony that both Calvinists and Arminians have been greatly used to advance the gospel in spite of their theological differences.

Sweeney ends this wonderful little biography by posing seven theses to his readers in an effort to get them to bridge Edwards’ world and their own. These observations cut through the theological and ministerial distance and bring home valuable and indispensable lessons from Edwards’ life and ministry that are of great benefit to modern ministers and their congregations. While we are not called to duplicate Edwards’ ministry, we can profit from it. So I would encourage you to pick up your own copy of Sweeney’s biography and read for yourself what has been such a wonderful blessing to me. ☞

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

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Straight Cuts


Laying Down the Law of Love (Mark 12:28–34)

Following a battery of questions designed to entrap the Lord, one of the scribes asked Him, “Which is the first commandment of all?” (Mark 12:28). The Lord quoted two Old Testament passages, one from Deuteronomy (6:4, 5) and the other from Leviticus (19:18) when He said that the greatest command is to love the Lord your God and the second is to love your neighbor as yourself. Of the 613 commandments in the OT (according to the rabbis), Christ picked the two commandments that contained the word “love.” When explaining the law, the Lord spoke in terms of love. Jesus is not claiming that love and law are mutually exclusive. Quite the contrary, He shows that love and law are inseparable in His kingdom. The command to love does not negate all other laws but rather explains and provides the reason to keep them. The command to love is the most basic feature of all the commandments in the Bible. All law “hangs” (Matt. 22:40) on the commandment to love, as it is the basic law of His kingdom. Any believer who forgets the most basic law of Christ’s kingdom will soon find himself at odds with the Word of God. Love is the most basic feature of all God’s laws.

A basic law expresses the paramount concern behind more specific laws. In California, like other states, we have traffic laws that are very specific regarding moving vehicles. There are specific rules for stopping, right of way, speed limits, etc. Many of these laws are posted on signs, and all are found in the motor vehicle code book. There is, however, *the basic traffic law* that trumps all other laws. The basic traffic law is “never drive faster than is safe.” Failure to heed this basic law can prove disastrous. For example, driving the posted speed limit in a dense fog or with children playing on the streets could result in a disaster. Though the specific law allowed you to go a certain speed, it would be foolish to insist on doing so. Should an accident occur, you could not claim innocence just because you were keeping the posted speed limit. The basic traffic law is always in force, and it was violated. There is more to govern the velocity of the vehicle you drive than just the speed limit on street signs. Everything gives way to the basic traffic law. And in a similar fashion an individual Christian who tries to operate without the “basic law of love”

endangers himself and others as well.

One church that failed to practice these first commandments was the church at Corinth. They really didn’t understand what it meant to love, so Paul had to give them a lengthy explanation in 1 Corinthians 13. It is here we see what an unloving church (or Christian for that matter) really looks like. While one might expect a loveless church to be preoccupied with external rules, that is not the case here. Their lack of love was characterized by laxity rather than strictness. Among other problems in the church Paul spends two chapters dealing with friction caused by eating food offered to idols (1 Cor. 8, 9). While Paul acknowledges there is a lack of specific revelation regarding this matter, he steers them back to the basic commandments to love God (1 Cor. 10:31) and to love your brother (1 Cor. 8:13; 10:33). Their problem was not a lack of knowledge (1 Cor. 8:1) but a lack of love. Love manifests itself with a willingness to deny ourselves for the sakes of others (1 Cor. 9:24). While the Corinthians claimed they were not violating any written laws and were thus at liberty to do what they wanted, they refused to consider the basic law of Christ’s kingdom. The basic commandments to love God and your neighbor apply to every situation.

The actions and decisions of a Christian who refuses to consider the basic law of love become very self-centered. Without love as the determining factor, right or wrong degenerates into a matter of “how I feel about it” or “what I want.” Justification for worldly practices is often defended by a lack of specific commandments in Scripture. The refusal to obey the basic law to love God and love others is often the root of the problem. Without obedience to the basic commandment, Christianity is not only unattractive, it is detrimental to the cause of Christ. In those areas where we may lack specific commandments, we still have the opportunity to obey the Lord by keeping the basic commandment to love. Rather than trying to excuse ourselves in the name of Christian liberty, it may be best to deny ourselves in the name of Christian love. There are times when the only way to resolve a matter is to lay down the law of love. 

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

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One Sunday morning one of our greeters extended a hand and offered assistance to a visitor. To the greeter's surprise the visitor asked, "Is this a purpose-driven church?" Having an understanding of what was meant, the greeter responded, "Yes, we are driven to glorify God in all we do and say!"

While I do not espouse the "purpose-driven," pragmatic philosophy of church ministry, I am convinced that God's people must be reminded of the ultimate purpose for which they were created because life without purpose is meaningless. The purpose of this article is not to give a detailed exposition of the Scriptures' teaching on the glory of God. However, the Scripture clearly states that glorifying God is the purpose for which all things are created (Rom. 11:36), why any of us are saved (Eph. 2:7; Gal. 1:23, 24), and the primary objective of the church (Eph. 3:21). The Westminster Catechism's classic statement on the matter is "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." How many believing people have truly grasped the significance of this statement? In a culture steeped in narcissism the ultimate purpose is to glorify self. Throughout history godly men and women who have properly discerned their ultimate purpose in life discovered ultimate rest in glorifying God, even in the face of trying circumstances.

As a pastor it is my intent to keep God's glory fresh in the minds of God's people. I want to remind them that people are lost without purpose. Author Chuck Colson relates the following story from a Nazi prison camp in Hungary during World War II.

Each day the prisoners were marched to the compound's giant factory, where tons of human waste and garbage were distilled into alcohol to be used as fuel additive. Even worse than the nauseating odor of stewing sludge was the realization that they were fueling the Nazi war machine. Then one day Allied aircraft blasted the area and destroyed the hated factory. The next morning several hundred inmates were herded to one end of its charred remains. Expecting orders to begin rebuilding, they were startled when the Nazi officer commanded them to shovel sand into carts and drag it to the other end of the plant. The next day the process was repeated in reverse; they were ordered to move the huge pile of sand back to the other end of the compound. *A mistake has been made*, they thought. *Stupid swine*. Day after day they hauled the same pile of sand from one end of the camp to the other. And then Dostoyevsky's prediction came true. One old man began crying uncontrollably; the guards hauled him away. Another screamed until he was beaten into silence. Then a young man who had survived three years in the camp darted away from

the group. The guards shouted for him to stop as he ran toward the electric fence. The other prisoners cried out, but it was too late; there was a blinding flash and a terrible sizzling noise as smoke puffed from his smoldering flesh. In the days that followed, dozens of prisoners went mad and ran from their work, only to be shot by the guards or electrocuted by the fence. The commandant smugly remarked that there soon would be "no more need to use the crematoria." The gruesome lesson is plain: Men will cling to life with dogged resolve while working meaningfully, even if that work supports their hated captors. But purposeless labor soon snaps the mind. (*God & Government: An Insider's View on the Boundaries between Faith & Politics*, 76)

Indeed, life with all of its activity and business is meaningless without purpose. Daily activity apart from any apparent meaning proves to be maddening.

Life Void of Hope

A life lived apart from God and His glory is a life void of hope. In the fall of 1949 Walter Wyman of the Central Maine Power Company crafted a plan to harness the power of Maine's rivers to produce hydroelectric energy. His plan was to construct two dams along the Kennebec River and one along the Dead River near the town of Flagstaff, Maine. As a result of the Dead River dam the town of Flagstaff would be flooded. The people of Flagstaff eventually came to realize that the loss of their property was inevitable. In the months before it was to be flooded, the once quaint, rural Maine town became dilapidated and overgrown. What was the purpose of maintaining a property that would be covered with water in less than six months? Why repair anything when the whole village was to be wiped out? In the absence of purpose, maintenance was hopeless (www.windowsonmaine.org). People without God at the center of their lives face hopelessness and despair because they soon realize their endeavors are purposeless.

In spite of success in this world people are searching for purpose. The accumulation of material possessions or the acquisition of worldwide fame is no substitute for a life lived for the glory of God. In November 2005 New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady was interviewed on *60 Minutes* by Steve Kroft. The multimillionaire and three-time NFL champion quarterback's statements were quite

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

Charles Spurgeon

revealing. In spite of all of Brady's accomplishments, Kroft was surprised to hear Brady say, "Why do I have three Super Bowl rings and still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, 'Hey man, this is what is.' I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think, ' . . . It's got to be more than this.' I mean this isn't, this can't be what it's all cracked up to be." Kroft followed up by asking "What's the answer?" Brady's response: "I wish I knew. I wish I knew. . . . I love playing football and I love being quarterback for this team. But at the same time, I think there are a lot of other parts about me that I'm trying to find" (www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/11/03/60minutes).

A sad testimony of a soul that has lived for the glory of self. "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world" (C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity).

God's people must be people who live in accordance with God's intended purpose. The men and women of Hebrews 11 model what it means to live life with purpose. Their actions, decisions, and aspirations reflect a life lived to the glory of God. They are people living for a different purpose and a different place.

Most would assume that a man who has shattered every single season record there is for a quarterback in the NFL, who is the field general of what may go down as the greatest NFL team of all time, who already has three Super Bowl victories, dates whomever he wants, wears whatever he wants, and has a contract worth \$60 million would be completely satisfied that he has fulfilled his purpose. But he admits that sometimes he looks at his life and wonders, "Is this all there is?" It is apparent that he is someone who has everything he could ever want in life but is very empty. What is he missing? Even a highly successful life, by the world's standards, is meaningless apart from our Creator's intended purpose. All the fame and fortune in the world cannot fill the God-shaped void in every human heart. People are made to glorify God and serve Him.

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A Journey through Self

With the attempt to remove God from life people often look for purpose within themselves. Actress Shirley MacLaine has said,

The most pleasurable journey you take is through yourself . . . the only sustaining love involvement is with yourself. . . . When you look back on your life and try to figure out where you've been and where you're going, when you look at your work, your love affairs, your marriages, your children, your pain, your happiness—when you examine all that closely, what you really find out is that the only person you really go to bed with is yourself. . . . The only thing you have is working to the consummation of your own identity. And that's what I've been trying to do all my life (*Washington Post*, 1977).

A sad testimony of a soul that has lived for the glory of self. "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world" (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*).

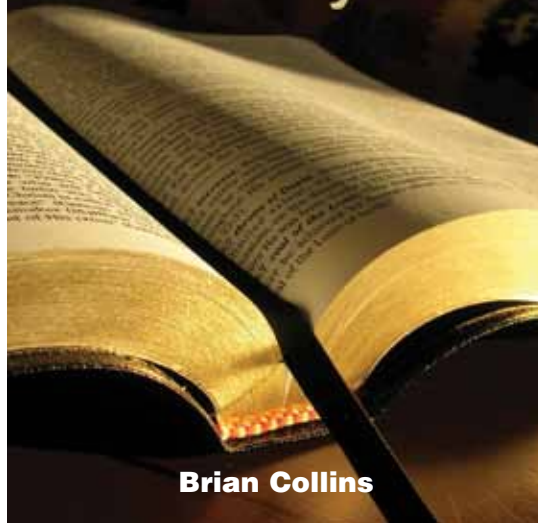
God's people must be people who live in accordance with God's intended purpose. The men and women of Hebrews 11 model what it means to live life with purpose. Their actions, decisions, and aspirations reflect a life lived to the glory of God. They are people living for a different purpose and a different place.

It was a mild October afternoon in 1982, and Badger Stadium in Madison, Wisconsin, was packed. Over 60,000 diehard University of Wisconsin fans were watching their beloved football team take a beating by Michigan State. What seemed odd was that as the score became more and more lopsided bursts of cheers and applause kept being heard in the stands. It was only natural that some people began to wonder who these strange people were who were cheering while their team was being pummeled. As it turns out seventy miles away from Badger stadium the Milwaukee Brewers were beating the St. Louis Cardinals in game three of the World Series. Many of the Badger fans in the stands were listening to portable radios and responding to something else besides what was happening right in front of their eyes.

There is something to be said for being tuned in to another time and another place. This is what happened to the men and women of Hebrews 11. They were "tuned in" to another time and another place. Their purpose in life was distinct from those who surrounded them, and their actions at times appeared ludicrous. Their different lifestyles reflected a different purpose for living. When we are living for the glory of God and not the glory of self our lives will be distinct from the rest of the world around us.

When travelling to visit family we often cross the Hudson River in upstate New York. The massive waterway moves along at a steady pace carrying everything along in its current. All of history is like a steady current headed in one direction. The ultimate end of all things is the glory of God. As a human being all of your safety and security lie in going with the current. ☞

The Christian's Hope for Eternity



Brian Collins

A college friend and I once debated whether there would be soccer in Heaven. He steadfastly maintained we would all play, while I insisted that believers would surround the throne for eternity, praising God. No time for sports.

Freshman roommates rarely achieve advances in theology, and we were no exception. Our curiosity often gives rise to speculation: white-robed angels on clouds playing harps is an image deeply rooted in our culture's collective imagination, even if those of us who are determined to test all things by Scripture know this isn't an accurate picture.

What will eternity be like for the Christian? The apostle Peter says it clearly, even though most American Christians seem to have missed it.¹ We should be anticipating "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Pet. 3:13). Many Christians have read right over this passage without letting it register, and even some theologians dismiss the possibility that Peter really means "new earth." Donald Guthrie comments on Peter's statement: "This appears to be a material interpretation of the heavenly state, but it is probable that it was no more intended to be taken literally than Revelation 21:1."² Guthrie argues for "the absence of any materialistic conceptions of heaven."³

Part of Guthrie's problem is hermeneutical: he blithely dismisses the literal interpretation of end-time passages without sufficient warrant. He also assumes that Scripture equates eternal life with Heaven.⁴ For instance, he says that in Heaven humans will not be married,⁵ but Matthew 22:30 and Mark 12:25 simply say that in the resurrection humans, similar to the angels in Heaven, will not marry. The texts do not say that humans will be resurrected to Heaven.

Many Christians, however, make the same assumption. It is easy to see why. Colossians 1:5 says the Christian hope is "laid up . . . in heaven." First Peter 1:4 says the Christian inheritance is "in heaven" (cf. Luke 12:33). Hebrews 11:16 says Abraham and those like him seek a heavenly country. And in John 14:1–6 Jesus said that He was going away to His Father's house to prepare rooms for His disciples. It is clear that the Father is in Heaven (cf. Matt. 5:45). Jesus will come again and take His disciples to be with Him—presumably to Heaven.

Nonetheless, none of these texts actually say Heaven is the eternal destination of believers. The Christian hope and

inheritance are currently being prepared and preserved for us in Heaven, but that does not mean that they will stay there. John saw "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven" (Rev. 21:2). Likewise, the country Abraham sought is heavenly, but it is not necessarily in Heaven. Genesis 17:8 promised Abraham the land of his sojourning as an eternal possession, and we should expect Abraham to receive precisely what God promised: eternal possession of the land in which he sojourned.⁶ The country Abraham looked forward to was heavenly not because it was located in Heaven but because it would one day be characterized by Heaven.

The hope for an "earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13) finds its roots in the Old Testament expectation of a physical, earthly kingdom of the Messiah. Isaiah speaks of the Spirit-empowered Davidic Messiah righteously ruling over an earth in which both animal and human aggression are put to an end (Isa. 11–12). Amos ties the rule of the Davidic Messiah to the abundant fruitfulness of the earth (Amos 9:11–15). Joel also emphasizes the abundance of the earth, and he connects this to Yahweh's ruling from Zion (Joel 3:17, 18). The Psalms anticipate that Zion will be the location of future salvation (Psalms 2:6; 14:7; 53:6; 110:2). Isaiah envisions Zion as the location where Yahweh will rule the world in justice (Isa. 2:1–4; cf. Mic. 4:1–7; Jer. 31:1–12). He also connects a future Jerusalem with the new heavens and new earth (Isa. 65:17–19). Of this rule of the Messiah "there shall be no end" (Isa. 9:7; Luke 1:33).⁷

The New Testament presents the same hope found in the Old. The future hope of an earthly kingdom ruled by the Messiah remained the expectation of the disciples. Though Christ told them they could not know the *time* of the visible arrival of the kingdom, he did not deny their understanding of its *earthly nature* (Acts 1:6–8).

Revelation 21:1 and 2 Peter 3:13 provide the most explicit revelation of a new heavens and new earth.⁸ John says he "saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." Peter said that the new heaven and the new earth are the hope to which Christians are looking forward. And Romans 8:18–25 teaches that the creation is also awaiting redemption. When our bodies are redeemed, the creation will itself be set free from its corruption.

Less directly, we have the promise that the meek will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5), that Abraham will be heir of the world (Rom. 4:13), and that humans will enjoy food and drink in the eternal state (Luke 22:16, 30).

The emphasis on the bodily resurrection of the saints on the new earth is important because sin affected not only man's spirit but also his body. First Corinthians 15 discusses the role of the Second Adam in the context of the resurrection of the body. When Adam and Eve sinned, they died in their inner man. Eventually they would also die in their body. The reverse is true in salvation. Paul says that the Christian's inner man is being renewed day by day even as the outer man wastes away (2 Cor. 4:16). At the resurrection the outer man will be renewed also (2 Cor. 5:1-5). Paul calls this resurrection "the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). The Bible does not draw a line between the spiritual which is worthy of being saved and the physical which is unimportant. Paul says if Christians do not have the hope of the resurrected body they are of all men most miserable.

Romans 8 connects the resurrection of our bodies with the restoration of the world. The Fall affected every aspect of creation, and God intends for redemption to reverse the effects of the fall on every area that it affected. Eternity will surely be a place of tremendous worship and praise of God in speech and song. (Though it precedes eternity, Revelation 4 and 5 probably give some glimpse of eternal worship.) But Christians also have the hope of serving God forever in His marvelous unfallen new earth for all eternity in glorified bodies free from the effects of the fall (Rev. 22:3). And as we go about our service on the new earth, we will no doubt praise God for His marvelous re-creation. In the present fallen world, we revel in the beauty of clear mountain streams, we savor the taste of fresh fruit, and we marvel the complexity of ecosystems. How much more will we rejoice at the beauty of the river that flows from the throne of God and savor the twelve kinds of fruit that will grow each month on the tree of life and marvel at the wisdom of God in all His creation. In eternity the world will no longer groan with the burden of the Fall, and we will be glorified in body and spirit to see what God has done so that we rightly give Him glory for all that we see.

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¹ This is not to claim that the ideas presented here are novel. The basic concept can be found in the Reformers, Candlish, Bavinck, Pentecost, McClain, Hoekema, Blaising, and others.

² Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1981), 884-85; cf. 887.

³ *Ibid.*, 879.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 881.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 877.

⁶ How can Abraham receive the Promised Land if the earth is destroyed and re-created? Perhaps the best analogy is the resurrection body. Resurrection bodies are clearly different than the bodies Christians now have, and there is no indication that God is going to re-create these bodies using the same molecules. Nevertheless, there is a clear continuity between the dead person and the resurrected person. Likewise with the new earth: there will be enough continuity for God to fulfill the land promise to Abraham.

⁷ Old Testament passages that describe the future messianic kingdom are often seen as millennial. Some passages such as Zechariah 14 which speak of the Messiah ruling from Zion are clearly millennial since they include elements that cannot be the case in the eternal state. Isaiah 65-66, however, contains a mixture of elements, some of which only fit the eternal state and others which only fit the Millennium. Prophetic books mix time periods in this manner. Other prophetic passages that refer to future blessing on earth centered on the Davidic Messiah ruling from Zion could well refer to both the Millennium and the New Heavens and Earth.

⁸ The mention of "heavens" in "new heavens and earth" should be understood to refer to the created heavens. The point of comparison is Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven[s] and the earth."

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May Christians Drink in Moderation?

(continued from page 19)

... Therefore, Christians ought not to drink wine, beer, or other alcoholic beverages for they are actually strong drink forbidden in Scripture. Even ancient pagans did not drink what some Christians drink today."²⁶ John MacArthur concurs. He maintains that becoming intoxicated in ancient times "would have required consuming a large quantity" of wine that had been diluted with water. "The wine of Bible times was not the same as the unmixed wine of our own day. Even the more civilized pagans of Bible times would have considered the drinking of modern wines to be barbaric and irresponsible."²⁷

Specific Reasons a Christian Should Just Say "No"

Take the time to consider the following Biblical principles.

1. Alcohol is very addictive. Studies continue to indicate that for every ten people who drink, one will become addicted.²⁸ One in ten! In 1 Corinthians 6:12 the New Testament believer is warned to avoid anything that may cause addiction: "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." Though some argue, "I'll not become addicted," the truth is they cannot be certain of the outcome of their first drink. For one in ten, one drink will lead to a lifetime of enslavement.
2. Alcohol harms the body, which, for the believer, is the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20). According to Dr. Haas, the former president of the American College of Sports Nutrition, "Beer, wine, and hard liquor form toxic substances called aldehydes that can destroy the liver, kidney, and brain cells."²⁹ The results of ongoing indulgence are predictable and pernicious. Binge drinking may be fatal.
3. The Bible specifically forbids the use of "strong drink" (Prov. 20:1; 23:29–31). All modern alcoholic drinks are forbidden by this prohibition! In Bible times taking strong drink (unmixed, highly alcohol-laden intoxicants) was reserved for those who were "ready to perish" (Prov. 31:6) as a deathbed pain reliever and sedative.
4. When surrounded by a corrupt culture, believers should choose abstinence as a testimony to their dedication to God. The Hebrew heroes of the Book of Daniel lived under the kosher dietary laws of the Old Testament and necessarily refused the "king's meat." Note, however, that Daniel and his compatriots in conviction also refused "the wine which he [the king of Babylon] drank" (Dan. 1:8). Though no dietary law in the Old Testament prohibited the appropriate use of wine, Daniel and his friends refused to drink the same wine that took the reasoning powers away from Babylon's King Belshazzar (Dan. 5). These Old Testament men of spiritual conviction living in corrupt cultures are models of abstinence for New Testament believers living in the corrupt culture of the last days (1 Thess. 5:1–8).
5. Believers are to guard their actions so that they do not cause others to stumble. "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak" (Rom. 14:21). "According to a survey . . . by the *Daily Journal* . . . October 26, 1988, one of the top five reasons teenagers drink is [that] their parents drink."³⁰ Church covenants and leadership policies have long recognized the responsibility believers have to one another in the battle against alcohol.
6. New Testament believers are "kings and priests" (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. Rev. 1:6; 5:10). Are you aware that the Bible says kings and priests are not to drink? Consider Proverbs 31:4, 5 and Leviticus 10:9. Because of the New Testament believer's wonderful position as a royal priest in Christ, abstinence is warranted.
7. The Bible consistently paints a very unflattering picture of the effects of drinking. Though the world speaks of gusto and good times brought about by alcohol, the Bible says that alcohol removes inhibitions, leading even the godliest of souls to debauchery, immorality, and shame. Noah, Lot, the drunkards of Ephraim, the inebriated earthlings who are unprepared for the Lord's coming—all the Biblical characters under the influence of alcohol were led to unrighteous acts (Eph. 5:18).
8. Alcohol is a sedative that dulls the mind (Isa. 28:7). As our Lord's appearing draws near we are

commanded to be especially attentive (Luke 21:34).

9. Ancient wines contained such a small amount of alcohol that when Peter and the Spirit-filled believers were accused of being drunk on the Day of Pentecost, he protested the impossibility of such a condition saying, "It is but the third hour" (Acts 2:15). Drunkenness by 9:00 AM in the first century was virtually impossible because becoming drunk would require premeditation, a large quantity of intoxicating beverage, and time.

Convicting Conclusions

It is unfortunate that many Biblically literate Christians are becoming vulnerable to the satanic dangers and deceptions of alcohol. The modern liberated believer says, "They drank in moderation during Bible times. Since they were moderate, why can't I be? We're talking about a little 'social drink!'" Be warned. The wine of the ancients typically did not contain as much alcohol as modern beer. The ancients could not imagine or even produce the alcoholic content of modern table wines. Though some Bible wine was not free from alcohol, that fact does not compel us to drink alcohol today. The Bible includes laws that address slaves and slave masters, but we do not argue for the enslavement of fellow citizens. The nation of Israel was instructed to aggressively occupy the homelands of the Canaanites, but we do not argue for aggression against our civil neighbors. Just because it was culturally and Biblically acceptable for the disciples to mix a moderate amount of wine into the water drawn from the family well or cistern, we cannot assume that God will look favorably on a New Testament king-priest who chooses to lift a glass of wine for an occasional toast. In fact, the believer is not to join the toast of the world. He is not to be "conformed" to the world (Rom. 12:1, 2). Alcohol is perhaps the most widely recognized symbol of worldly conformity known to modern men.

God will not look favorably upon

the believer who refuses to limit His liberties in order to expand His ministries. Modern believers think that they are giving up something by not drinking when in fact they are actually giving up more when they drink. Believers who imbibe must be warned that they are putting themselves, their testimony, and others at risk. May Christians drink—even in moderation? NO!

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Concerning Parentage

In a special newspaper spread just prior to Christmas five local pastors contributed devotionals on “ways to put Christ back into Christmas.” The first one at the top began, “Regardless of your view of the parentage of Jesus. . . .” What a strange way to begin, I thought. What would such various “views” have to do with the observance of Christmas? What different views might the writer have in mind?

I could come up with two views I have heard of in the past. One surmises that Joseph was the father and that the infant was conceived prior to his marriage to Mary. The other guesses that someone else may have impregnated Mary—perhaps even raping her. These views would be in keeping with the charge suggested by the Jews that Jesus was “born of fornication” (John 8:41). They went even further “and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?” (John 8:48). Before long, they “took . . . up stones to cast at him” (John 8:59).

Both of these views are clearly wrong according to information in the Scripture. There are recorded direct declarations from God that Mary was to give birth to a child conceived by the Holy Spirit. Joseph was divinely told of the origin of the child: “Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 1:20). In His public ministry Jesus repeatedly spoke of coming into this world, of God as His Father, of returning to that glory whence He had come. For a Christian there is but one explanation of the parentage of Jesus.

Who today might question the parentage of Jesus? Actually, many do. Many of them call themselves Christians. They sometimes call themselves liberals or modernists. The label is immaterial, although it is convenient. Because labels are at times misleading, we need to concentrate more on what they believe, preach, and teach than on seeking to classify them. Just one statement or remark may or may not be significant. (Muslims, of course, strongly deny the deity and virgin birth of the Son of God. That’s part of their entire system.)

Why would some want to be known as Christians if they doubt or deny two of the basic characteristics of Christianity? The answer may be social or economic reasons. The reason may be their persuasion of the finality of nature, the certainty of science, or the weight of personal experience. If they reject the testimony of the New Testament, are they not turning to another religion? Perhaps some hold to the historic teaching of Christianity, but they think it is insignificant that others might have slightly different views of a few things. In their mind the unique miracle of the virgin birth is not that important.

It has happened, though, that for over a century those presenting themselves as “liberal” Christians have reject-

ed the clear declarations of the Word and either denied or questioned the parentage of our Savior. That raises some important questions. If Jesus was, as they suggest, illegitimate and only His teaching and ideals were important, then there is no worship of Jesus, but only worship patterns and conduct consistent with His ideas. That would be nothing more than is presented by other religions of the world: ideas, dreams, fables, superstitions, etc. Some might consider His proposed way of life preferable but would not acknowledge it as divine.

So why should the Christmas season be of special importance to one who limits what he accepts of the Bible to that which is scientifically normal? Jesus is worthy of honor because He is God come in the flesh. His birth was as the fulfillment of numerous Old Testament prophecies of a coming Messiah, the Christ. Honoring a human named Jesus makes no more sense than honoring a human named Teddy Roosevelt. Presidents Day is not a day of worship. Christmas is more than a day for celebration and merrymaking.

Christmas and Easter stand tall as bookends of God’s special revelation in Christ Jesus. Many predictions prepared for His coming. That which has happened since has demonstrated a new life for believers, based on the renewal of physical life when He came forth from the grave. Neither Christmas nor Easter has any special meaning if the supernatural events which they honor did not actually occur historically. Consequently, the “meaning” of Christmas has changed from God’s greatest gift to all to a few special gifts to a few. The meaning of Easter now omits the physical resurrection of Jesus and His further forty days of walking among men. Instead, the world honors the birth of chicks or the return of spring.

What can we do? Stress the truth is one answer. Teach the details. Contrast the denials. Emphasize the significance. Live so that others see the new life we have received. Our supernaturalistic belief is radically different from other religious experiences throughout the world. We need to live the new life, stress its divine source, defend the revelation that God gave us to understand what He does in our lives. Two fundamental doctrines are involved: the deity of Jesus and the inspiration of the Bible. To question the parentage of Jesus is to doubt the accuracy and authority of the Holy Book. To think of the Savior as any less than God-come-in-the-flesh is also to call Him a liar. These are not insignificant “superstitions”; they are the truth that has changed the world.

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Modesty—A Lost Cause?

Kim Melton

"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (1 Tim. 2:9, 10).

We live in a society where it is perfectly acceptable for the human body to be displayed in clothing that would have caused our grandparents to blush in shame. It used to be that these displays were on the people "of the world," but in the past several years immodesty has begun to creep into the church. I have watched a married man avert his eyes when a young lady passed him in church in a dress that was provocatively cut. I overheard a Christian mother and her daughter discuss in a positive way how sexy the daughter looked. I have viewed pictures from weddings (a Fundamentalist pastor officiating) with dresses on brides and bridesmaids that several years ago were sold in stores as sleepwear.

There are many differing opinions among Christians about what is acceptable. Often you hear the term "Christian liberty" used when someone is defending what she is wearing. The purpose of this article is not to set a standard, but to make us stop and think about what kind of example we are setting.

I must confess that as a young woman I never gave the issue of modesty much thought. I had a mother who made sure I was modest. To my shame, I can remember times when I fought her about it, but she stood firm. Now I am grateful for the instruction she gave me in this area.

Even as a young married woman I didn't think much about what was modest because at that time it was easy to go shopping and find clothing that was acceptable. I remember a time shortly after my marriage when my husband asked me kindly not to wear a certain blouse any more. I remember inwardly wrestling with whether or not I would do what he asked. I realized there must be a reason he didn't want me to wear it, so I decided to listen to him. Now that I am older and hopefully a little wiser, I realize that a man knows how other men think, and I need to listen when my husband speaks about this important area.

There are many people (not just in our Fundamentalist camp) who are trying to fight this issue of immodesty. I watched a news clip recently on the local channel about a fashion group that was started by an *unsaved* mother who was concerned about the immodest apparel available for her teenage daughter to purchase. The fashion show demonstrated how to buy and layer fashionable clothing that covers appropriately. If this mother who doesn't know the Lord is concerned, how much more concerned should we be who represent the King of kings!

Over the years I have heard good teaching in this area and have read many books on the subject. Perhaps the thing that has helped me the most was teaching I received by the former assistant pastor of my home church, Gordon Dickson. He was teaching on the fear of the Lord, and he asked the question, "How can I dress today to show that I fear the Lord?" This simple question has stuck with me over the years, and it can be applied to any area of our life as we seek to show that we fear the Lord.

Sometimes I feel that modesty is a lost cause. It is becoming increasingly difficult to buy modest clothing. Everything is getting lower, tighter, shorter, and more provocative. What are we to do? Sewing is becoming a lost art, but for those who do sew, this is a great solution. You can hire a seamstress to sew for you or to alter existing clothing to make it modest. I did a Google search for modest clothing and came up with a number of sites offering fashionable clothing. God will lead you in this area if you allow Him to do so! "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

Ladies, please don't give up in this vital area. Set an example for others around you. Train your daughters. Let's adorn ourselves in modest apparel "which becometh women professing godliness"!

Kim Melton and her husband, Tim, serve as missionaries in Japan under Baptist World Mission and are members of Faith Baptist Church in Taylors, South Carolina. They have three children: Jonathan, Rachel, and Benjamin.

Nothing God has yet done for us can compare with all that is written in the sure word of prophecy. And nothing He has done or may yet do for us can compare with what He is and will be to us.
—A. W. Tozer

In our present delight in God we have the earnest of our endless joy in Him.
—C. H. Spurgeon

Friends, God hath provided an eternal heaven for us in His own Lamb. He is Heaven's heaven.—John Duncan

I do not know how I am going to stay up "in the air" with the Lord; but that is no business of mine.
—Oswald Chambers

We do not and cannot know when the world drama will end. The curtain may be rung down at any moment. . . . This seems to some people intolerably frustrating. . . . We do not know the play. . . . The Author knows.
—C. S. Lewis

Every unprejudiced reader of the New Testament cannot fail to perceive that the expectation of Christ's return filled the souls of the apostles.
—Johann W. Neander

The two Syriac words Maran – atha (the Lord is about to come) became the watchword of the Christians among themselves; the short, animated expression, which they passed from one to another to encourage themselves in their hoping.
—Joseph Renan

I give thee, O sovereign Lady, this crown to wear until He who reserves the right to wear it should return.
—Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, coronation of Queen Elizabeth, 1953

The Second Coming of Christ is "the one great Divine event toward which all creation moves."
—Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam*

The prophecies which represent the Messiah as a judge and in glory do not indicate the time.
—Blaise Pascal

When the Lord does come, it will be as natural as breathing. God never does anything hysterical, and He never produces hysterics.
—Oswald Chambers

Possibly nothing short of a world catastrophe that will destroy every false trust and turn our eyes once more upon the Man Christ Jesus will bring back the glorious hope to a generation that has lost it.
—A. W. Tozer

The most weighty proofs of Jesus are the prophecies. It is for them that God made most provision, for the event which fulfilled them is a miracle, continuing from the birth of the Church to the end.
—Blaise Pascal

Many Christians long for the Rapture, not because of their intense love for the Lord, but because it symbolizes an escape from the distress of our age.
—Erwin W. Lutzer

We must love someone very much to stay awake and long for his coming, and that may explain the absence of power in the advent hope even among those who still believe in it.
—A. W. Tozer

The early Christians were looking not for a cleft in the ground called a grave but for a cleavage in the sky called Glory.
—Alexander Maclaren

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

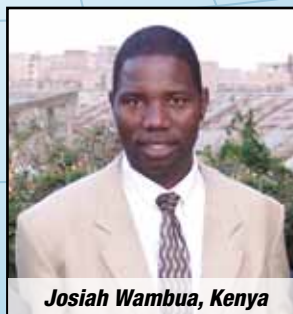
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First Chronicles 16:11 says, "Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually." The word "seek" has the meaning of "frequent." What we did not know at Scripture Baptist Church was this would mean frequent visits with the city planners because of road blocks that were constantly cropping up. For a period of about two years we would face obstacle after obstacle that slowed the issuing of a building permit. It is not that the Lord was not blessing during this time. He sent a man who made a very generous offer on the existing property, and then he allowed us to stay in the building for one year. When our year had expired, we were able to find another church that was willing to allow us to use their property for a minimum amount of money.

Through all of this time the Lord was preparing His people to take a step of faith that few today want to take. The new building would be built without borrowing any money. With the funds available and the generous giving of His people, the building would be built. But it could not be accomplished without a plan. First, plans had to be approved by the city. A local company was contracted, but they saw no urgency in getting the work finished. After many rejections from the city, it seemed that a set of plans would never materialize. Then, out of the blue, the city planners determined that the property was in a flood zone. With all of this it seemed as if the property that the Lord had given to us for a very good price could never be built upon.

It was determined that we needed to place all of these problems into the hands of a problem-solving God, for only He can move mountains. Prayer meetings began to be held in someone's home Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings. For over one year people met to pray for the Lord to remove the obstacles and allow the church to be built debt free. Finally, the builder, a local contractor, called and said that the city was going to issue the permit. Not only did he go to bat for us with the city, but he went back to all the subcontractors and had them rebid, saving us thousands of dollars. Even the contractor would see the Lord do the impossible. All the individuals involved could not believe what was being accomplished through the Lord. When the last check was written, there was still money in the building fund. God had accomplished what was humanly impossible for us to do. Seeking His face continually had moved the hearts of individuals that allowed for a place for His people to worship Him.

God's blessings have not ceased with the completion of the building. He has continued to send into the fellowship individuals who have been a blessing and asset to the fellowship of believers. People who watched the construction now attend regularly. The property that the Lord provided is located on I-25 that runs from Texas to

Colorado. Everyone in the area knows where Scripture Baptist Church is located.

If you were to ask the members of the church what made all this possible, their answer would be "the Lord!" Seeking His face and allowing Him to do the work necessary were the key. We acknowledge Him as the builder of His church, whether it be the spiritual church or the physical church. We could not do it in our own strength, but with the Lord in control, He accomplished what others deemed impossible. What others tried to block, God moved out of the way. Because we honored Him, He has honored us with a growing fellowship.

In the future there is enough property (approximately five acres) for further expansion. The property that the city deemed to be in a flood area, because of a housing development going in, is no longer considered to be in a flood area, opening the door to building without any restriction. God is even making plans for the future that as of yet we know nothing about. We, as believers, must continually seek His face, for we do not know when He will call upon us again to take a step of faith.

Richard Johnson is the pastor of Scripture Baptist Church in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Power in the Pulpit Conference

After four days of Christ-exalting preaching and practical workshops at the Power in the Pulpit Conference, I wrote the following summary in my journal: "As we look unto Jesus, we have sufficient grace to passionately shepherd God's flock as He changes us and our congregation into the likeness of Christ." The fellowship among the diversity of men was truly "iron sharpening iron." The meeting ended on a glorious note as Dr. Jim Schettler reminded us that our prize in ministry is not property or people but a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. *Submitted by Dale Cunningham.*

2010 FBFI South Regional Fellowship

The 2010 FBFI South Regional Fellowship was canceled due to close scheduling of conferences at the Wilds and Temple Baptist Church, in Powell, Tennessee. Controversy over Dr. Vaughn's participation at the Independent Baptist Friends International Conference at Temple Baptist raised many questions. He is responding to individual inquiries as time allows. Several FBFI men attended and were greatly encouraged by the outstanding music, exemplary hospitality, and the refreshingly sweet spirit of fellowship. Those who identify themselves as independent, Fundamental, Bible-believing separated Baptists came together for a week of fellowship.

Asking Specifically of the Lord

The Lord desires to meet the needs of His people, no matter how large or small they may be. Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." When the desires of our hearts are right and our motives are Biblically sound, then the treasures of Heaven are at our disposal.

In the Old Testament, Abraham desired for his son Isaac to have a wife. His desire was pure and right. He didn't want his son to have a wife from the Canaanites. Abraham said to his servant in Genesis 24:3, 4, "And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." So the servant took his journey to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor." He arrived there in the evening and stopped by a well. Then this servant prayed a specific prayer to find the right wife for Isaac in Genesis 24:12-14:

And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.

When this servant had barely finished praying, a beautiful young lady named Rebekah appeared. The servant of Abraham said to her in Genesis 24:17, "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher." Then we have the amazing response from Rebekah in verses 18-20:

And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels.

The servant of Abraham rejoiced in seeing the Lord answer such a specific request in verse 27: "Blessed be

the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren." This ought to be an encouragement to many of the Lord's people who truly desire to see the Lord meet their needs. Perhaps someone reading this article is praying for the Lord to send the right person into his life. Maybe a college student is seeking the Lord's will for a husband or wife so they can labor together in the Lord's work.

Recently I held meetings with a pastor in Lebanon, Pennsylvania; his name is George Mackey, and his wife's name is Carol. When she was a student at Bob Jones University, she desired to marry a man who was going into the ministry. She wanted to spend her life with someone who was called to preach. She related how she dated several men. She would always find out in conversation what their majors were. When she discovered that they had no desire for the ministry, she would stop dating them and tell them why. Well, George took an interest in Carol and began to invite her to events on campus. Carol really liked him, but when she found out that his major was in music, she was disappointed. She decided after one morning chapel service to tell George that she would have to stop seeing him and explain the reason. They met after chapel, and she said, "George, I have something to tell you." But George interrupted and said, "I know that usually it's polite for ladies to go first, but there's something I must tell you first. This morning when Dr. Bob Jr. brought the message, I surrendered my life to preach!" Well, the rest is history. They married and have been serving the Lord together for many years. Carol prayed specifically, and the Lord gave her the desire of her heart.

When the Lord called me to be an evangelist, I prayed specifically that the Lord would give me a wife who could sing and play the piano. I wanted a wife who would have part in my ministry so we could be a team for the glory of God. My wife, Sharon, was a music education major at BJU and plays the piano! First John 5:14 says, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." Pray specifically, and watch how God will answer!

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Written and Compiled by Dr. Layton Talbert

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN:

This column concludes a miniseries on the epistles of John the Apostle. A brief overview will help map out the intersections and overpasses between these three unique letters.

John's first epistle lays down the basics of authentic apostolic orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Orthodoxy (right doctrine) is identified by what one says (or doesn't say); but, of course, anyone can *say* the right things (1:6, 8, 10). Orthopraxy (right living) is identified by how one lives (or doesn't live) and functions as a practical test of what one truly believes (1:7, 9). Major ingredients of authentic apostolic orthodoxy include the full removal of our sin (with its guilt and penalty) through faith in the substitutionary death of Jesus whose self-sacrifice is propitious and efficacious precisely because He is God come in flesh—full deity and full humanity. The central features of authentic apostolic orthopraxy outlined by John include a habitual walk in fellowship with God that leads one out of darkness and into light, apart from sin and into obedience to His commands, away from love of the world and toward greater love of the brethren. Orthodoxy and orthopraxy are the two sides of authentic apostolic Christianity; either without the other signals misunderstanding, disobedience, hypocrisy, or a counterfeit. One must take care: a failure in orthodoxy may be the result of ignorance rather than malice, and a failure in the area of orthopraxy may signal sinful self-deception rather than forgery. But if ignorance or immaturity is not a factor, orthodoxy without orthopraxy makes one a liar (1:6) and orthopraxy without orthodoxy qualifies one as an antichrist (4:3). These are the apostolic tests for assessing one's own spiritual authenticity. But they are also specifically intended for assessing others who profess to be in the church but say or exhibit something other than authentic apostolic Christian faith and experience.

Both 2 and 3 John are miniature case studies of 1 John—specific, personalized applications of principles that John enunciates in his first epistle. Both address and apply these principles in the context of *hospitality*. Second John—a qualification of hospitality—reiterates the warning of 1 John regarding the important issue of orthodoxy (especially those who deny the incarnation of God in the person of Christ) and the call to orthopraxy (both loving the brethren and walking in truth). The warning is as timeless as it was necessary because a "love of novelty combined with admiration for piety breeds an irresponsible tolerance for theological rubbish" (D. A. Carson, "Epistles of John," *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*). Third John reiterates the principles of orthopraxy (both loving the brethren and walking in truth) but within quite a different set of circumstances—Gaius's model hospitality in stark contrast to Diotrophes' lack of it.

3 John

Background

The recipient is identified as Gaius, the Greek equivalent of the Latin name *Caius*—a name so common, notes F. W. Farrar, that it functioned as the ancient equivalent of the generic John Doe. We know nothing of this individual apart from what we can glean from this epistle about his excellent testimony and selfless service to the saints. In fact, the importance of one's *testimony* (5x, noun and verb) in the church is a focal point of this epistle.

John had sent out messengers of the gospel to the surrounding territory and had commended them to the churches for hospitality and support. When they arrived at the church where Gaius lived, Diotrophes, an influential member if not the leader of the church, refused to receive them, spoke against the apostle himself, and opposed those who followed John's request. Gaius actively befriended these missionaries; upon their return to the church where John resided, they reported their experiences before the church. In response, John wrote to Gaius, expressing his warm appreciation for his friendly reception of the missionaries and announcing his intention of a personal visit to deal with the trouble (Hiebert, *Epistles of John*).

Third John is particularly intriguing for the window it provides into concrete personalities and issues in the earliest era of the Christian church. Diotrophes' disturbing behavior is treated calmly by John, not as insubordination or a threat to his personal apostolic authority but rather as an attack against the brethren (v. 10) that is self-evidently evil and an example that is to be avoided at all costs (v. 11). John immediately contrasts Diotrophes with the example of Demetrius (v. 12), whose testimony would instantly commend itself to the consciences of the believers as a counterexample worthy of following instead of someone such as Diotrophes. What "this last glimpse of Christian life in the apostolic age" displays, among other things, is a remarkable testimony to the independence of local churches at this early stage: "The state of things which is disclosed does not come near an ideal, but it witnesses to the freedom and vigor of a growing faith" (Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John*).

Key Terms

John's third epistle revolves around the concepts of *truth* (7x in vv. 1, 3, 4, 8, 12) and *testimony* (5x in vv. 3, 6, 12). As we have already seen, however, both these

3 John—Truth and Testimony

concepts are two-sided. Truth and testimony must be not merely spoken but lived. The convergence of these ideas is most concisely expressed in verses 3 and 4 where John employs the metaphor of *walking*—“For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”

Issues

How did Diotrophes manage such high-handedness? Why did anyone listen to him? Why does anyone listen to Diotrophes today? Was it a failure to apply Biblical standards for Christian faith and practice (ignorance)? Or was it an unwillingness to do so, out of a blind or idolatrous loyalty to a personality? Or perhaps he was skillful at creating in others a sense of indebtedness to him. Men who “love to have preeminence” are always forceful, persuasive (or intimidating), and manipulative personalities. Perhaps he possessed the only suitable home in the community for hosting the local church. Perhaps he had secured the loyalty of a core of believers by past faithful service, so that their confidence was gained and later abuses of his authority were rationalized. Of the causes we can only speculate, but the character issues are clear and timeless. Such scenarios continue to play themselves out in churches today. The Church is never short on its supply of such people, and many still listen to these modern Diotrophes rather than the voice of the apostles in the New Testament.

Unlike the first two Johannine epistles, 3 John makes no specific mention of heretical beliefs or practice. [Heretical in what sense of the word?] The elder assumes that Diotrophes ought to receive his messengers, but that he does not do so because he “loves to be first” (v. 9, NIV) and has engaged in a power play that has manipulated his local church into a stance that excludes the elder and his emissaries (Carson).

As 3 John verifies, it didn’t take long for arrogant, narrow, self-seeking leadership to rise to the surface in the early church. It is important to note that John never attacks Diotrophes as one of the false teachers he warns against. John gives no indication that the problem with Diotrophes is an issue of faith or doctrine. Diotrophes’ problem is not in the area of orthodoxy but orthopraxy. Nevertheless, to his censure of Diotrophes John immediately appends an exhortation and an ominous hint (v. 11). The exhortation: *Beloved, don’t be like that*—“Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good.” The ominous implication: *Your behavior displays your condition*—“He that doeth good

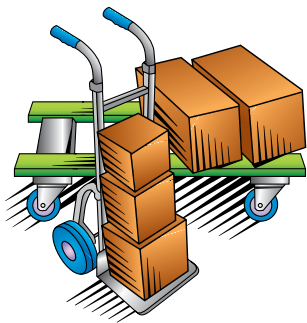
is of God; but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.” The contextual insinuation is clear: someone unrepentantly guilty of habitual Diotrophesian behavior “hath not seen God,” regardless of his doctrine or position in the church.

Whether the Diotrophes debacle was a Korah-like snub against apostolic authority or the fallout from a misguided hyperseparatism we’ll never know this side of Patmos. The modern church has its share of both—those who devalue apostolic standards and those who define the line of separation so narrowly around their own views that they would exclude the apostles themselves from their fellowship. John promised to expose and rebuke such abuses when he came, and so should we.

Interestingly, 2 John and 3 John counterweight each other at key points. Whereas 2 John 10 warns not to welcome false teachers, 3 John 10 rebukes the failure to welcome true teachers. In 2 John 11, greeting an “antichrist” makes one a participant in his evil work; in 3 John 8, supporting (via hospitality) a Christian makes one a fellow worker for the truth.

Purpose

This epistle “commends Christian hospitality to missionary brethren as the inviolable duty of individuals and of the church. It is distinctly the epistle of missionary obligation” (Hiebert). But it accomplishes this emphasis through both positive and negative emphases. John furnishes an effective contrast by sandwiching the negative behavior of Diotrophes (vv. 9, 10) between the two positive examples of Gaius (vv. 1–6) and Demetrius (v. 12). One can imagine how much twisted pleasure a Diotrophes would derive from being the dominant emphasis in an apostolic epistle; preeminence-loving people typically enjoy notoriety among their adversaries as much as they enjoy fame among their followers, as long as they are the focal point of extended discussion. John denies him this pleasure by giving the vast majority of space and attention to Gaius (as well as the faithful missionaries in vv. 7, 8) and to Demetrius; John buries the unchristian behavior of Diotrophes beneath the dominant attention given to the noble examples of authentic Christian behavior. The function of 3 John is to encourage believers to be “fellow-helpers to the truth” by commending positive examples of selfless hospitality and condemning self-exaltation, autonomous insubordination to apostolic standards for association and behavior, and personal ambition. The path we follow is a commentary on our spiritual condition (v. 11). According to John, orthopraxy and orthodoxy go hand in hand.



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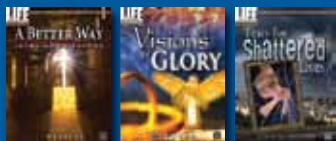
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Another Glimpse into the Unchurched

The Barna Study Group conducted a study of unchurched Americans from August of 2009 until February of 2010. The definition for “unchurched” in this study covers people who have not attended church or any related church activity for the past six months. This study concluded that 28% of adult Americans are unchurched. This translates into more than 65 million adults!

Of that group 61% identified themselves as “Christian.” Even more interesting is the 20% who claimed to be “born again.” The respondents were not asked to identify themselves as “born again.” But the number was realized by those “who said they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their lives today who also indicated that they believe they will go to Heaven when they die because they had confessed their sins and had accepted Jesus Christ as their savior.”

Of all non-church-goers who were surveyed, 37% indicated they did not go to church because of negative past experiences with churches or church people.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/362-millions-of-unchurched-adults-are-christians-hurt-by-churches-but-can-be-healed-of-the-pain>.

Mississippi and Personhood

The Mississippi secretary of state has declared that the signature drive that was required in order to get a motion placed on the November 2011 ballot exceeded its needed signatures by more than 40,000.

The motion was described as a one-sentence definition of personhood that states that “‘person’ or ‘persons’ shall include every human being from the moment of fertilization, cloning, or the functional equivalent thereof.” While this will undoubtedly be contested on all sides, for now a clear prebirth definition is being presented to uphold the sanctity of all human life.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Politics/Default.aspx?id=966682>.

Music and Its Messenger

In 1999 Jennifer Knapp was winner of the Dove Awards “New Artist of the Year.” She produced four different albums of the “Christian rock” genre, receiving a Grammy nomination for her 2001 album “Lay It Down.” After her successes, she moved to Australia to recover “from exhaustion.” Now, seven years later, she has emerged to announce a new album—and a new lifestyle. She now openly acknowledges her homosexual relationship of the past eight years—as “just the way she is.” Her new album is not bearing a “Christian label.”

Knapp now joins Ray Boltz and Tonex in openly acknowledging and justifying their depravity.

This article can be referenced at http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/music/2010/04/19/2010-04-19-jennifer_knapp_christian_music_singer_announces_she_is_gay_on_eve_of_letting_go_.html.

Homosexual Marriages Not a Fundamental Right

Pennsylvania still defines marriage as “between one man and one woman.” Efforts to make this a constitutional amendment have failed one three separate occasions. Yet Biblical marriage proponents have some reasons to rejoice in the Keystone State.

Carole Kern and Robin Taney were “married” in Massachusetts in June of last year. However, Massachusetts subsequently declined to grant them a divorce because the couple did not meet their residency requirement (they had the right to marry, but not divorce). So Kern and Taney sought dissolution in their own state of residency. Since according to Pennsylvania law the couple was not married, it could not grant them a divorce.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Legal/Default.aspx?id=953092>.

Waltke and Theistic Evolution

Renowned Old Testament scholar Dr. Bruce Waltke made his resignation from Reformed Theological

Seminary public on April 6 of this year. Tensions were rising between Waltke and Reformed over his public support for theistic evolution. In a videotaped March 24 interview Waltke stated; “If the data is overwhelmingly in favor of evolution, to deny that reality will make us a cult . . . some odd group that is not really interacting with the world. And rightly so, because we are not using our gifts and trusting God’s Providence that brought us to this point of our awareness.”

This incident parallels the parting of ways between RTS and Tremper Longman III over his discounting the historicity of Adam in September last year.

This article can be referenced at http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctliveblog/archives/2010/04/ot_scholar_bruc.html.

A White House Seder

US–Israeli relations are greatly diminished under the present administration and policies. While there have been many social gaffes committed, the most insulting issue has come with the declaration that a Jewish presence in East Jerusalem (even where it has existed for some time) is illegal and “an affront to American interest.”

Ironically, President Obama has hosted a Seder dinner in the Old Family Dining Room of the White House. The Seder ended with the traditional words, “Next year in Jerusalem!” In spite of all of this, the Jewish community hopes

that America will get it right on the issue of Iran.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.jewishworldreview.com/0310/tobin032910.php3>.

A Study of Charismatics and Pentecostals

The Barna Group released a study on Charismatics and Pentecostals in the United States as March closed out this year. Such a study is helpful for Fundamental Baptists as they seek to converse on doctrinal issues. Today's growing number of noncessionists is blending the distinctions between Charismatics and non-Charismatics.

In Barna's survey 21% of all Americans determined they belonged in the Pentecostal/Charismatic category. That number equals 25% of all people who claim to be Christians. To belong to this category people would acknowledge that "they believe that they 'have been filled with the Holy Spirit,' and that God has given them at least one of the charismatic gifts, such as tongues, prophecy, or healing."

The generation that introduced the Pentecostal movement (ages 45–63) was least likely to identify themselves as "Charismatic." Baby Busters (ages 26–44) were most likely to take on that identification. Under 10% of all Charismatic respondents claim to have ever spoken in tongues. Most of those surveyed did not believe the Holy Spirit to be a being, but rather a symbol of God's presence and power.

The article carries many more stats of interest. But of more significance are some of the observations made based on the data collected. One conclusion is that "generational changes and the diffusion of Pentecostalism across many denominations have made its beliefs, behaviors and identities much less focused. For millions of the young-

NOTABLE QUOTES

If a preacher were to arise of the power of Demosthenes, he would, and must, carry that power into the pulpit and ought to do so. But on the other hand, an elaboration that is betrayed in every part of the discourse, and which makes it but too evident to every serious or observant mind that it was the preacher's aim not to convert souls, but to catch applause; which in the view of the fashionable, the giddy, and the frivolous, entitles the sermonizer to the highest rank among pulpit orators; which fills the discourse with flowery diction and gaudy metaphors, with elegant declamation, and fanciful descriptions, with tasteful addresses, and beautiful pictures; which, though it takes the cross for its subject, almost instantly leaves it, and runs out into the fields of poesy, or the labyrinths of metaphysics, for its subtle arguments, or its sparkling splendid illustrations; which to sum up all, engages the judgment or amuses the imagination, but never moves the heart, nor calls the conscience to discharge its severe and awful functions—such preaching may render a preacher popular, secure him large congregations, and procure for him the plaudits of the multitude; but where are the sinners converted from the error of their way, and the souls saved from death?— John Angell James

From the goods which they distributed to others and so placed in greater safety, they derived more happiness than they incurred from the goods which they so anxiously hoarded and so lost more easily. Nothing could be really lost on earth saved what one would be ashamed to take to Heaven.— Augustine

God can achieve His purpose either through the absence of human power and resources, or the abandonment of reliance upon them. All through history God has chosen and used nobodies, because their unusual dependence on Him made possible the unique display of His power and grace. He chose and used somebodies only when they renounced dependence on their natural abilities and resources.—Oswald Chambers

Since most of us would rather be admired for what we do, rather than for what we are, we are normally willing to sacrifice character for conduct, and integrity for achievement.—Sidney J. Harris

est Christians, the charismatic, Pentecostal and Spirit-filled labels are not as divisive as they were to their parents' generation. The Mosaic generation [those born between 1984 and 2002] in particular is removed from many of the long-standing debates about the validity of spiritual gifts, the role of expressive forms of worship, and about the need for receiving personal direction from the Holy Spirit. As a consequence, the next generation of charismatic and Pentecostal Christians spends less time defending their views to others, but also seems much less certain what they believe or how to put their faith into action."

This article can be referenced at <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/360-how-different-generations-view-and-engage-with-charismatic-and-pentecostal-christianity>.

CH (LT) Robert Johnson's Testimony

A Wilmington news organization featured a story about the capturing of Marjah, a former Taliban stronghold in Afghanistan. In featuring the victory, the news also highlighted the deaths of twelve soldiers from Camp Lejeune. These soldiers died bravely in the midst of the struggle. CH (LT) Robert Johnson, one of our own endorsed Chaplains, was interviewed for the news segment.

The story features what the Chaplain faces as well as the ministry he provides on the field. We praise God for the faithful work of our Chaplains.

This article can be referenced and the video feed viewed at http://news14.com/coastal-news-110-content/top_stories/622553/chaplains-help-marines-cope-with-offensive-in-afghanistan.

Compiled by Robert Conduct, FBFI Advisory Board member and pastor of Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church, Baldwin, Maryland.

Newsworthy is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the FBFI.

What to Do While We Wait?

The **Blessed Hope**, the theme of this month's *FrontLine* magazine, is a wonderful doctrine to contemplate. We all long for the day when Christ will rapture His Church and save us from this sin-cursed world. The question in this month's *Global Focus* is "What should we be doing while we wait for His coming?"

In the context of discussing the end times, Peter writes in 2 Peter 3:15, "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation." Peter exhorts the believers that, while they wait for the day of the Lord, which will come "as a thief in the night," they should be focused on living holy and blameless lives (v. 14). They should be prepared to meet the Lord. However, Jesus' delayed coming should also remind them of others who are not ready to meet the Lord. In each moment the Lord does not return, Peter reminds us God is exercising His longsuffering. While all unbelievers deserve God's immediate judgment, God patiently grants more time for many to come to salvation. There will come a day, an hour, a moment when He will justly call the world to account. Until then, there remains the opportunity for anyone living within the sound of the gospel to repent of sin and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. To many, the longsuffering of the Lord will give them opportunities for salvation.

Too often, we believers watch and wait, while we should be working and witnessing *while we wait*. Consider the responsibility. According to the US Census Bureau's population clock¹ one person is passing into eternity every twelve seconds. Five people die every minute. Three hundred people every hour, 7200 every day, 216,000 every month. This means that every year in the United States alone, 2,628,000 people pass into eternity. Certainly, for thousands of these people, "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." We rejoice with these. We wait to see them again someday.

However, the Gallup organization recently estimated that only a little over one in five people, or twenty-two percent of Americans, are "Evangelical" in faith.² This means they have had a conversion experience, they

believe that the Scripture is God's Word, and they are responsible to share their faith with others. While the percentage of Evangelicals is greater among the older generation, we still are sobered by the statistics. It is probable that well over two million people from our country passed into a Christless eternity in 2009, given a generous outlook on the statistics.

We should also consider the opportunity. From a more positive perspective, God continues to give us more people to reach with the gospel in the United States while He delays His coming. The US gains one person by birth every eight seconds. We gain one international migrant (that we know about) every thirty-six seconds. Factor in the deaths, and we have a *net gain* of one person in the US every thirteen seconds! While the Lord delays His coming, our mission field here in the US continues to expand by more than 2.4 million each year.

So, if you are wondering what to do while you wait for "the blessed hope," get out in your neighborhood and tell others about Christ. Organize a church plant from your church that will reach a new group of people. If we plant five churches per state next year, certainly an attainable goal for Fundamental Baptist churches, we can have a new church for every 10,000 new residents of the US! Distribute gospel literature to new immigrants. Reach out to the children in your community. Whatever you do, don't sit on a mountain or in your fellowship hall just watching and waiting for Jesus to come back. Be working and witnessing. The longsuffering of God may be salvation to someone right around the corner!

¹ <http://www.census.gov/population/www/popclockus.html>

² <http://www.gallup.com/poll/16519/US-Evangelicals-How-Many-Walk-Walk.aspx>

Pearson Johnson is the pastor of Missions and Evangelism at Intercity Baptist Church. You can e-mail him with questions or comments at pjohnson@intercity.org.

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An Interview with Chaplain Rob Johnson

As this issue of *FrontLine* goes to press, four FBFI-endorsed Chaplains have been deployed. Army CH (MAJ) Gary Fisher, CH (CPT) Bret Perkuchin, and CH (CPT) Michael Barnette are in Iraq. Navy CH (LT) Rob Johnson recently returned from Afghanistan.

In February of this year *News 14 Carolina* reporter Andrea Pacetti interviewed CH (LT) Johnson by telephone and subsequently wrote the article below.

Chaplains Help Marines Cope with Offensive in Afghanistan

WILMINGTON—Chaplains deployed to Afghanistan have provided support for Marines dealing with the loss of their own in recent battles.

After two weeks of intense fighting in Afghanistan, an Afghan flag now flies over Marjah, a former Taliban stronghold.

"They are optimistic and hopeful about a new beginning, and we've got a lot of work to do to make that happen," Brigadier Gen. Larry Nicholson said.

The cost of securing Marjah has already been high. About a dozen

Camp Lejeune Marines died in the offensive.

In times of tragedy, chaplains like Navy Lt. Robert Johnson step in.

"Chaplains walk around [and] talk to the different Marines about the pressures and the struggles of losing a brother or sister that they really loved," Johnson said. He says Marines tend to worry more about their comrades than themselves.

He remembers being in the hospital when a Marine who lost both legs regained consciousness.

"This Marine looked me in the eye and said, 'Chaplain, how are my Marines doing?' and that is the mentality that is the focus of all these Marines out there," Johnson said.

That loyalty makes it especially difficult when Marines lose one of their own. Chaplains stay with a unit before, during, and after a deployment and provide spiritual and emotional support. They also look for signs a Marine should be referred to military psychologists.

"Chaplains typically spend enough time with their Marines to know how their Marines act on a daily basis, and if

they're a little bit more angry or impatient or a little bit more quiet and reserved, those are indicators that that Marine might be struggling," Johnson said.

He says there are many other support systems for Marines once they return from Afghanistan. There are also programs through the Marine Corps and Marine Corps Community Services designed to help the families of fallen Marines.

Johnson says when a Marine or sailor dies, the unit conducts a memorial service in the field. It's recorded and sent to loved ones back home.

"It is also designed for the unit to provide some closure for them, and it's a way to show honor for their sacrifice," he said.

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Editor's Note: You may also access a video clip of this interview by going to http://news14.com/coastal-news-110-content/top_stories/622553/chaplains-help-marines-cope-with-offensive-in-afghanistan.

Stealth Jihad Continued from page 5

Since 9/11, many Americans have become unhappily acquainted with the terrifying, violent strain of jihad. Under Shariah, violence—often described by non-Muslims as "terrorism"—is the preferred means of securing the spread and dominion of Islam, as it is the most efficient.

While Shariah deems jihad to be the personal obligation of every faithful Muslim capable of performing it—man or woman, young or old—they can forgo the violent form when it is deemed impracticable. In such circumstances, the struggle can be pursued through means that are, at least temporarily, nonviolent. Taken together, the latter constitute what renowned author and expert Robert Spencer calls "stealth jihad." Adherents to Shariah call it "dawah".

Examples of stealth jihadism abound in Western societies, notably Europe and increasingly in the United States. They

include the demand for symbolic and substantive accommodations in political, economic, and legal areas (for example, special treatment or rights for Muslims in the workplace, in public spaces, and by government); the opportunity to penetrate and influence operations against government at every level; and the insinuation of the Trojan horse of "Shariah-compliant finance" into the West's capital markets.

If stealth jihad seems less threatening than terrorism, the objective is exactly the same as that of violent jihad: the subjugation to the Dar al-Islam (House of Islam) of all non-Islamic states that, like the United States, make up the Dar al-harb (House of War). It follows that those who seek ostensibly to impose Shariah through nonviolent techniques—notably in the West, the organization known as the Muslim Brotherhood—are our enemies every bit as

much as those who overtly strive to defeat us by murderous terrorism.

The Seduction of the West

Many Western elites, including the Obama administration, have been seduced by the seemingly benign quality of the Muslim Brotherhood. In fact, we know from the 2008 prosecution of the Holy Land Foundation—the largest terrorism-financing trial in US history—that the Muslim Brothers' mission in the United States is “a kind of grand jihad to destroy Western civilization from within . . . by their own miserable hands.”

Another Brotherhood document, titled “The Rulers,” was seized in a 2004 raid and describes how the organization will try to overthrow the US Constitution in five phases:

Phase I: Discreet and secret establishment of elite leadership

Phase II: Gradual appearance on the public scene, and exercising and utilizing various public activities

Phase III: Escalation, prior to conflict and confrontation with the rulers, through the mass media

Phase IV: Open public confrontation with the government through the exercise of political pressure

Phase V: Seizing power to establish an Islamic nation, under which all parties and Islamic groups will become united

“The Rulers” makes plain that all the above-mentioned phases are preliminary steps to reach the fifth phase.

The Muslim Brothers know that by masking their ideological agenda as a religious program, they can use Western civil liberties and tolerance as weapons in their stealthy jihad. For this strategy to succeed, however, they must suppress any discussion or understanding of the true nature of Shariah.

Adherents to Shariah insist that their law prohibits any slander against Islam or Muhammad. Under such a catch-all restriction, virtually any kind of conversation about—or *critique of*—Islam can be considered impermissible if Muslims find it offensive. Particularly in Europe, the ever-present prospect of violence, like that which followed the September 2005 publication of Danish cartoons poking fun at Muhammad, is generally sufficient to induce self-censorship.

In this country, the application of such prohibitions seems unthinkable, given the guarantees of free speech enshrined in the Constitution's First Amendment. Unfortunately, the Obama administration last year cosponsored with Egypt a relevant and deeply problematic resolution in the UN Human Rights Council, promoted for years by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), a group of fifty-seven Muslim-majority nations that stridently embraces Shariah and seeks to legitimate and promote its advance around the world.

The resolution calls on members of the United Nations to prohibit statements that offend Islam. It also calls for criminal penalties to be applied to those who make such statements.

The US implementation of such a resolution would

obviously be a matter not just for the executive branch, which supported it, but for Congress and the judiciary as well. It is a safe bet that any formal effort to supplant the First Amendment in this way would meet with great resistance.

A “Religion of Peace”?

To a stunning degree, US leaders have been effectively conforming to Shariah slander laws for some time now. For instance, presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama have both repeatedly described Islam as “religion of peace,” without acknowledging the requirement for jihad its authorities demand, pursuant to Shariah.

At the Muslim Brotherhood's insistence, the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department have barred the use of perfectly accurate terms such as “Islamic terrorism.” The US government has also embraced the Muslim Brothers' disinformation by translating *jihad* as nothing more than “striving in the path of God.”

Under the Bush and Obama administrations, the favored name for the enemy has been “violent extremism”—a formulation that neither offers clarity about the true nature of our foe nor lends itself to a prescription for a successful countervailing strategy. Even when al-Qaeda is identified as the enemy, it is almost always accompanied by an assurance that its operatives and allies have “corrupted” Islam. Ignored, or at least earnestly obscured, are two unhappy realities: such enemies are implementing Shariah's dictates to the letter of the law, and they have millions of fellow adherents around the world who view Islam's requirements the same way.

One of the most egregious examples of this practice of unilateral disarmament in the battle of ideas is the January report of the independent review of the Fort Hood massacre, cochaired by former Army Secretary Togo West and former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Vernon Clark. Their eighty-six-page unclassified analysis purported to dissect an event allegedly perpetrated by Major Nidal Malik Hasan—a medical officer whose business card described him as “Soldier of Allah,” whose briefings justified murder of his comrades in the name of jihad, and who shouted the Islamic martyr's cry “Allahu Akbar!” (“God is great!”) as he opened fire, killing thirteen. Incredibly, the words “Islam,” “Islamic terror,” “Shariah,” “jihad,” and “Muslim Brotherhood” were not used even once in the West-Clark report.

Such political correctness, or willful blindness up the chain of command, doubtless caused Hasan's colleagues to keep silent about his alarming beliefs, lest they be punished for expressing concerns about them. Now, reportedly, six of them have been designated as the scapegoats for what is manifestly an institutional failure.

The painful truth is that however we rationalize this sort of behavior, our Shariah-adherent enemies correctly perceive it as evidence of submission, which is the literal meaning of the word “Islam,” and what Shariah demands of everyone, Muslim and non-Muslim alike.

Three Choices

Indeed, Shariah offers nonbelievers only three choices:

conversion to Islam, submission (known as *dhimmitude*), or death. Historically, *dhimmitude* was imposed through successful Muslim conquests. In more recent years tolerant Western nations have increasingly succumbed to stealthy jihadism, backed by more or less direct threats of violence.

That trend, worrying as it is, may be giving way in this country to a new campaign: jihad of the sword. The past year saw a fourfold increase in the number of actual or attempted terrorist attacks in the United States. Sadly, that statistic will likely be surpassed in the year ahead. Four of the nation's top intelligence officials have testified before Congress that it is certain new acts of violence will be undertaken in the next three to six months. Worse yet, a blue-ribbon commission has calculated that the probability of the use of weapons of mass destruction somewhere in the world by 2013 is now over fifty percent.

Is this dramatic upsurge in violent jihad directed at the United States unrelated to our behavior? Or does it reflect a growing calculation on the part of our Shariah-adherent enemies that violence against the United States is now, once again, practicable?

Either way, the time has clearly come to make a far more serious effort to defeat both the violent and stealthy forms of jihad being waged against this country. If we are to do so, however, we have to start by telling the truth.

Our enemy is not "violent extremism" or even al-Qaeda alone. Rather, it is the millions of Muslims who—like the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaeda, and their allies—adhere to Shariah and who, therefore, believe they must impose it on the rest of us.

We are at war with such individuals and organizations. Not because we want to be. Not because of policies toward Israel or the Middle East or anything else we have pursued in recent years. Rather, we are at war with them because they must wage jihad against us, pursuant to the dictates of Shariah, the same law that has guided many in Islam for some twelve hundred years.

What is at stake in this war? Look no further than the American Legion's Americanism Manual, which defines Americanism as "love of America; loyalty to her institutions as the best yet devised by man to secure life, liberty, individual dignity and happiness; and the willingness to defend our country and Flag against all enemies, foreign and domestic."

Such values cannot coexist with Shariah, which demands the destruction of democratic nations such as the United States, its governing institutions and liberties. Shariah would supplant them with a repressive, transnational, theocratic government abroad and at home.

The extraordinary reality is that none of this—the authoritative and malevolent nature of Shariah, its utter incompatibility with our civilization, and its adherents' determination to force us to convert, submit, or die—is concealed from those willing to learn the truth. To the contrary, the facts are widely avail-

able via books, the Internet, DVDs, and mosques, both here and overseas. Interestingly, on December 1, 2005, Gen. Peter Pace, then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called on his troops to expose themselves to precisely this sort of information: "I say you need to get out and read what our enemies have said. Remember Hitler. Remember he wrote 'Mein Kampf.' He said in writing exactly what his plan was, and we collectively ignored that to our great detriment. Now, our enemies have said publicly on film, on the Internet, their goal is to destroy our way of life. No equivocation on their part."

As it happens, Major Stephen Coughlin, a lawyer and Army Reserves intelligence specialist recruited by the Joint Chiefs to be their expert on the doctrine and jurisprudence of jihad, took Pace's admonition to heart. He wrote a master's thesis inspired by the chairman's quote, titled "To Our Great Detriment: Ignoring What Extremists Say about Jihad."

Coughlin's briefings explicitly and repeatedly warned military leaders of the enemy's "threat doctrine"—drawing from, among Islamic texts, passages the Fort Hood suspect used to justify his massacre. Unfortunately, engaging in such analysis, let alone acting on it, was

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powerfully discouraged in January 2008 when Coughlin was dismissed from the Joint Staff after he ran afoul of a Muslim Brother then working for Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England.

In short, we are today confronted by the cumulative effect of a sustained and collective dereliction of duty, one that is putting our country in extreme peril. Our armed forces—like their counterparts in the intelligence community, Department of Homeland Security, and law enforcement—have a professional duty to know the enemy and develop appropriate responses to the threat doctrine. If this dereliction is allowed to persist, it is predictable that more Americans will die, both on foreign battlefields and at home.

The American people also need to become knowledgeable about the threat of Shariah and insist that action be taken at federal, state, and local levels to keep our country Shariah-free. This toxic ideology, if left unchecked, can destroy country and institutions that are, indeed, "the best yet devised by man to secure life, liberty, individual dignity and happiness."

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