

WHY ARE MOST FUNDAMENTALISTS DISPENSATIONALISTS? • SALVATION IN DISPENSATIONALISM

FrontLine

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Dispensationalism



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Contents

JULY/AUGUST 2010

FRONTLINE MAGAZINE

VOLUME 20 • NUMBER 4

5 Dispensationalism, Baptists, and Fundamentalism

Larry R. Oats

Dispensationalism is really more about hermeneutics than history.

6 The Old Testament Law and the New Testament Believer

Brian Trainer

Our commitment to *all* of God's Word is often accompanied by an internal preference for parts of God's Word in our daily spiritual diet and an avoidance of other sections.

13 Why Are Most Fundamentalists Dispensationalists?

David Saxon

Believers should invest in earthly cultures with the constant mindset that the return of Christ is imminent and that this earth will experience devastating judgments during the Tribulation period.

16 One Essential Feature of Dispensationalism

Bruce Meyer

The consistent use of a literal hermeneutic is the bedrock issue for dispensational interpretation.

10 Salvation in Dispensationalism

Larry R. Oats

Dispensationalism believes that each new dispensation represents a progression in revelation and a step forward in God's plan.

21 Neither Jew nor Greek?

Andrew Hudson

A clear distinction between national Israel and the Church characterizes any dispensational system.

Departments

4 Mail Bag

5 On the Front Line

Dispensationalism and Faithfulness

John C. Vaughn

20 On the Home Front

25 Cogitations

On Spirit Baptism

Warren Vanhetloo

26 Ladies' Circle

Too Much Screen Time

Brenda Needham

27 Wit & Wisdom

David Atkinson

28 Regional Reports

Doug Wright

29 The Evangelist's Corner

Faith That Honors the Lord

Jerry Sivnksty

30 At a Glance

The Epistle of Jude

Layton Talbert

33 Newsworthy

Robert Condict

35 Global Focus

The Student Volunteer

Movement's Detroit Roots, Part I

Pearson Johnson

37 Chaplain News

Bob Ellis

Special thanks to Mr. Brian Trainer for his help with this issue.

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You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.



In your most recent issue I read twice the article on the new Calvinism by Scott Aniol to be sure that I understood it correctly as I had come to the conclusion that the article was supportive of Calvinist doctrine. I understand that the primary issue of the article was separation, a major issue with Fundamentalists. But the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture is even more fundamental as inerrancy is the basis for understanding the Scriptural teaching of separation.

Calvinism is based on a totally unbiblical view of the sovereignty of God and of Grace. George Bryson, in his book entitled *The Dark Side of Calvinism*, did a superb job of demonstrating the errors of Calvinism and showing what the Bible clearly teaches based on his firm belief in the inerrancy of Scripture without any contradictions. Either the Bible is true without contradictions or it is not. If the Bible is true without contradictions, this belief is fundamental to everything else we believe. If Calvinism teaches Biblical error (which it does) and if, to be a Fundamentalist one must believe in the most fundamental

doctrine of Biblical inerrancy, how then can a Calvinist be a Fundamentalist? How then, with this article, does *FrontLine* fulfill its motto: "Bringing the Truth Home"? It seems to me that you have, in printing this article, done Fundamentalism a disservice.

*Kenneth G. Symes
Jewish Awareness
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Asheboro, NC*

FrontLine is the most clear publication on many issues we face here in the Northwest. I am working to get it into the hands of as many preachers as possible. However, in the recent article "A Separatist Evaluation of the New Calvinism," the soft touch as far as Driscoll was concerned was a problem. The statement regarding separatism was on target. Those of us in the area know that the carnage being brought to many of the churches is not due to the Doctrines of Grace, but to Driscoll's cynicism toward Fundamentalists and their positions. It is worse than most readers realize.

*Dr. Tom Nieman
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Dispensationalism and Faithfulness

John C. Vaughn

The Bible word “dispensation” means “economy, stewardship.” *FrontLine* magazine offers an opportunity to exercise faithful stewardship over Bible truth—in this issue, the truth of dispensationalism. As you begin to read this issue you will quickly notice that a lot of hard work and collaborative effort has been done by the Maranatha Baptist Bible College and Seminary faculty, who have done an outstanding job on this very important theme. Reading these articles has been like a breath of fresh air for those of us privileged to be involved in the publication of this magazine. Being reminded of these truths, we come away with the conviction that the view of Scripture on which we were nurtured will never be irrelevant. Studies such as these can be greatly encouraging for those who believe the Bible. Our recent Annual Fellowship is another example of why this is so.

Those of us who gathered at Tri-City Baptist Church in Westminster, Colorado, exulted in the glorious truth of our Blessed Hope, reviewing truths we hold dear and being reminded of their promises. We have that hope because our dispensational hermeneutic fully assures us that the imminent return of Christ is Biblical. Our fellowship was sweet because we focused on the truths we have in common—truths such as the ones you will review in this issue of *FrontLine*. When we declare what we believe as Fundamental Baptists or discuss our reasons for those beliefs, it is never our intention to belittle those who disagree. We are trying to be a blessing, and those of us who belong to the FBFI or subscribe to *FrontLine* are blessed by both. We also realize that not every criticism of FBFI or *FrontLine* is intended to belittle or harm, and we seek to learn from such criticisms.

One of the great lessons of dispen-

Continued on page 39

Dispensationalism, Baptists, and Fundamentalism

Larry R. Oats

While many think of dispensationalism as a way to divide history into seven (give or take one or two) eras, it is really more about hermeneutics than history. Its focus is on how to properly interpret the Bible, with an emphasis on interpreting Scripture in a straightforward, plain sense. If we study the Bible, understand its teachings, and live our lives in accord with it, we do well. God desires obedience on the part of the believer, but obedience comes with the proper comprehension of the Scriptures.

There are three basic approaches to the systematic study of Scripture. *Covenant theology* sees the revelation of God and the history of mankind under the umbrella of the covenant of grace, which came into effect because of the Fall and continues to the end of time. Although this system uses the Biblical word “covenant,” it uses it in a different way than the Old or New Testaments do. It also uses a hermeneutic that is nonliteral when it interprets certain prophecies, which results in the uniting of the Israel of the Old Testament and the Church of the New Testament into one common entity. In traditional covenant theology, there is no room for a future Israel.

Others take a position that creates a divide between *law* and *grace*. This viewpoint sees a distinction between the Mosaic Law and the grace of the New Testament, but it still views Israel and the Church as a common entity and interprets prophecy in such a way as to reject a future for Israel.

Dispensationalism is an approach to interpreting the Bible that is based on understanding the Bible literally. The dispensationalist and covenant theologian agree on the importance of the grace of God. The dispensationalist and those holding to grace as distinct from the law agree that the New Testament teaches such a distinction. Dispensationalism also argues that God’s primary purpose is to glorify Himself. In choosing to understand prophecies as they were written, dispensationalists make a clear distinction between Israel and the Church and understand that God has a plan for Israel that is still future.

The study of dispensationalism is not just an abstract hermeneutical exercise for the classroom. Any discipline that centers itself on the interpretation of the Bible has great implications. A dispensational hermeneutic affects every area of theology, but it especially affects two key doctrines that are intrinsically interwoven: eschatology (the study of prophecy and the end times) and ecclesiology (the study of the Church). It makes a difference if the Church is already in the Millennium, or if the Church’s task is to bring in the Kingdom by making the world and its governments Christian, or if the Church has the responsibility of evangelizing the lost with the understanding that the Church Age may come to a close at any moment.

The Maranatha Baptist Bible College and Seminary faculty are pleased to be able to address this significant topic in this issue of *FrontLine*. While it is impossible to cover the multitude of details and questions about dispensationalism in these short essays, we trust that these articles will encourage and instruct in the areas they address.

Dr. Larry R. Oats has been at Maranatha Baptist Bible College for forty-two years. Currently he serves as the dean of Maranatha Baptist Seminary. He and his wife, Colleen, have four children.

The Old Testament Law and the New Testament Believer

THE THIRD BOOK OF MOSES, CALLED LEVITICUS.

CHAPTER 1. 10 Flocks. 14 Flocks.

voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord. 4 And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. 5 And he shall kill the bullock before the Lord: and the priest shall take of the blood, and put it upon the horns of the altar: and he shall pour out the blood at the base of the altar. 6 And he shall larder the liver with fat, and the kidneys, and the larder thereof: and he shall burn it upon the altar. 7 And the lungs, and the spleen, and the kidneys, and the larder thereof: and he shall burn it upon the altar. 8 And the liver, and the kidneys, and the larder thereof: and he shall burn it upon the altar. 9 And the lungs, and the spleen, and the kidneys, and the larder thereof: and he shall burn it upon the altar. 10 And the liver, and the kidneys, and the larder thereof: and he shall burn it upon the altar.

CHAPTER 2. 1 The law of meat offerings.

1 AND when any will offer a meat offering unto the Lord, he shall bring fine flour, and oil, and frankincense: and he shall put it upon the bread, and he shall burn it upon the altar. 2 And he shall take of the flour, and of the oil, and of the frankincense, and shall put it upon the bread, and he shall burn it upon the altar. 3 And he shall take of the flour, and of the oil, and of the frankincense, and shall put it upon the bread, and he shall burn it upon the altar. 4 And he shall take of the flour, and of the oil, and of the frankincense, and shall put it upon the bread, and he shall burn it upon the altar. 5 And he shall take of the flour, and of the oil, and of the frankincense, and shall put it upon the bread, and he shall burn it upon the altar. 6 And he shall take of the flour, and of the oil, and of the frankincense, and shall put it upon the bread, and he shall burn it upon the altar. 7 And he shall take of the flour, and of the oil, and of the frankincense, and shall put it upon the bread, and he shall burn it upon the altar. 8 And he shall take of the flour, and of the oil, and of the frankincense, and shall put it upon the bread, and he shall burn it upon the altar. 9 And he shall take of the flour, and of the oil, and of the frankincense, and shall put it upon the bread, and he shall burn it upon the altar. 10 And he shall take of the flour, and of the oil, and of the frankincense, and shall put it upon the bread, and he shall burn it upon the altar.

All Fundamentalists are quick to embrace and endorse the significance of the inspiration of the Word of God. We note that the text of Timothy states that “all scripture is given by inspiration [breathed out] of God, and is profitable” (2 Tim. 3:16). We would readily defend each verse from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21. We speak of our commitment to God’s Word doctrinally and our love for God’s Word personally. This is right and appropriate. Yet this commitment to *all* of God’s Word is often accompanied by an internal preference for parts of God’s Word in our daily spiritual diet and an avoidance of other sections. This avoidance is not prompted by a lack of confidence in inspiration. In most cases it is generated by questions of personal profitability. We do not question that the text is from God, but we are just not sure what it has to do with us.

The Old Testament Law is one such section of the Scriptures. Each year in our Bible reading, with steely resolve we pledge to get through Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. At times with pure will power we manage our way through each verse, but internally we long to move on to Psalms, Proverbs, or some New Testament text that seems to speak more directly to our Christian walk. We acknowledge that David loved the Law of God, but surely that was because he had few other reading options. We understand the moral imperatives of the Ten Commandments, but the thirty verses of the “laws of discharge” do not strike the same chord with us. How are we to respond to this practical dichotomy within our belief system? We acknowledge that all of Scripture is profitable, but we only profit from or deem relevant some of Scripture.

The Profitability and Place of the Law

The question of the profitability and place of the Old Testament Law in the life of a New Testament believer is a vital one in distinguishing dispensationalism from other systems of Biblical interpretation. It is also a question that has engendered much debate. As the Reformed theologian Jonathan Edwards observed, “There is perhaps no part of divinity attended with so much intricacy and wherein orthodox divines do so much differ as stating the precise agreement and difference between the two dispensations of Moses and Christ.”¹ Views range from literally applying nearly all of the Law to the believer’s life, to selecting parts of the Law, to suggesting that the New Testament believer is completely free from all of the Mosaic Law. Our goal is not to answer all of the questions that arise from this discussion but to quickly survey the theological landscape and to practically seek principles that appropriately apply Old Testament Law passages to the believer’s life.

Two systems of interpretation view the Old Testament Law as directly binding or applying specifically to the New Testament believer today. The most extreme view is that of the Christian reconstructionists or theonomists. They desire to make both moral and civil elements of the Law binding on believers and unbelievers alike. This view holds that the Mosaic covenant is God’s divine mandate and ethic for all society. They see Old Testament Israel as a model citizenship to which all cultures should aspire. Though there are various implications of this view, the adherents would include Greg Bahnsen, Gary North, R. J. Rushdoony, and some members of the political Christian Right movement.

Covenant theologians also believe there is direct application of the Old Testament Law in the life of the believer. John Calvin wrote, “I understand by the word ‘law’ not only the Ten Commandments, which set forth a godly and righteous rule of living, but the form of religion handed down by God through Moses.”² Whereas dispensationalism distinguishes between the relationship that God had with ethnic Israel and the New Testament Church, covenant theology identifies the Church as a continuation of one people group through whom God is working. Covenant theologians identify the Church as “spiritual” Israel. As such, they identify more continuity between the laws and promises to Israel and the standards and future of the Church. For example, many covenant theologians delineate between what they define as three categories of law: civil, ceremonial, and moral. The civil and ceremonial they believe were uniquely time-limited to the children of Israel. The civil law was a means by which God regulated His theocracy, and the ceremonial pointed to the coming Messiah. Yet they deem all elements of the moral Law of Moses to be transcultural and timeless and thus binding on all believers today.

Dispensationalists, on the other hand, do not see the Old Testament Law as binding in the life of the New Testament believer. The primary reasons for this are three-fold. First, the Old Testament Law is viewed as a binding covenant between God and ethnic Israel. In Exodus 19:3ff God instructed Moses to speak the words of the covenant to the people of Israel. Throughout the narrative in Exodus, God highlights the unique relationship that the people of Israel would have to the Mosaic covenant. This is further highlighted at the second reiteration of the Law in Deuteronomy 5. As a covenant between God and Israel, and because ethnic Israel is distinct from the NT Church, dispensationalists do not see the Church as being under the obligations of the Law.

Second, a dispensationalist sees the Law as a unified whole. The covenant as given by God to Israel was a single covenant. Israel was to keep the Law in totality. There clearly are instructions which relate to human relations within the community, to priestly functions, and to moral imperatives. Yet there is no indication that these were to be viewed as distinct from one another. In both the Old and New Testaments the Law is always referred to as singular. To suggest that parts of it are functional today while other aspects are nonfunctional is to dissect a single entity and to arbitrarily create divisions which are not suggested in the Scriptural text. It is inappropriate and unthinkable from a first-century Jewish perspective to divide the Law. Paul argues in Galatians 5:3 for the unity of the Law, noting that the acceptance of one part of the Law (circumcision) makes one a debtor to the whole.

Third, a dispensationalist views the Law as being fulfilled via the life and death of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is presented in the Gospels as being the fulfillment of the Law

(Matt. 5:17) and in the Epistles as being “the end of the law” (Rom. 10:4). He was the perfect completion of the Law, thus freeing those in Him from the obligations of all aspects of the Law. Chafer wrote,

Only those portions of the Scriptures which are directly addressed to the children of God under grace are to be given a personal and primary application. . . . It does not follow that the Christian is appointed to conform to those governing principles which were the will of God for people of other dispensations.³

Throughout Paul’s life and epistles he stresses the believer’s freedom from the Law. As noted above, Romans 10:4 is the climax of his teaching as it relates to the role of the Law in the believer’s life. The concept of “end” or *telos* can indicate “end” or “abrogation” of the Law or also signify “goal” or “culmination”—that which the Law anticipated. Arguing for this dual sense of *telos*, Moo notes, “The analogy of a race course (which many scholars think *telos* is meant to convey) is helpful: the finish line is both the ‘termination’ of the race (the race is over when it is reached) and the ‘goal’ of the race (the race is run for the sake of reaching the finish line).”⁴

Ryrie notes that this does not free the believer to live without any moral boundaries, but that we are bound only to New Testament commands and those Old Testament directives that are restated in the New Testament as part of the law of Christ. The distinction between these two laws is important. He states, “As a part of the Mosaic law they are completely and forever done away. As a part of the law of Christ they are binding on believers today.”⁵ It should be noted that Paul refers to the “law of Christ” not in terms of a list of stipulations to be obeyed but primarily of it being fulfilled by the power of the Holy Spirit as believers love one another.

DISPENSATIONALISTS, ON THE OTHER HAND, DO NOT SEE THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW AS BINDING IN THE LIFE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVER.

The Benefits of the Law

This survey of the positions leads to the question of practicality. In what ways does dispensationalism view the Law of Moses as being beneficial in the life of a New Testament believer?

First, dispensationalists recognize that the Law cannot provide salvation for a man nor can it justify a man before God, but it is a “schoolmaster” which the Holy Spirit utilizes to convict men of sin. In Romans 7 Paul addresses the role of the Law within his own life as an Israelite who was under the Law. “Thou shalt not covet” was the commandment that convicted him of his sinful state and made him alive toward the realization of his spiritual death. The Old Testament Law, specifically the Ten Commandments,

served as written covenant for Israel of the moral law of God that is placed within each man's heart (Rom. 3:19).⁶ In like manner New Testament believers can utilize the Law as a tool in gospel proclamation. The Ten Commandments reflect the universal, timeless moral requirements that God places upon every man. A man's conscience in conjunction with the Law exposes his shortcomings and renders him dead before God. As the Holy Spirit utilizes the Law in that manner, Paul calls the Law "holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12).

Second, the reading of Old Testament Law is profitable in the life of a New Testament believer if the exegete asks the right questions of it. As noted above, the New Testament believer should not seek to place himself under the Law as if it were binding upon him. The goal is to recognize the timeless principle upon which the Law is based. For example, the following six questions may be helpful when reading the Law and then applying them to a specific text.

1. What did the text mean to the original readers?

The starting point for all Biblical interpretation is placing the text in its original context via the crossing of grammatical, cultural, geographical, and historical bridges. A clear understanding of the Law's intent to the original readers is vital.

2. What does the text teach us about ourselves (humanity)?

All good laws reveal the shortcomings of the citizens to whom it applies. For example, speed limits remind us that we are naturally selfish and focused upon our own agenda instead of the safety of others. God's laws do the same, but with clear perception and direct application.

3. What does the text teach us about God?

The Old Testament Law is a revelation of the holiness of God (Lev. 19:2). The foundation for ethical and moral actions prescribed in the Law is the character of God. He is the standard upon which all thoughts, words, and deeds are based.

4. What does the text teach us about our relationships with each other?

Much of the Old Testament Law relates to the affairs between fellow members of the people of Israel. Instruction is given on how people are to cooperate with their friends, neighbors, workers, and enemies.

5. What does the text teach us about justice?

One purpose of the Law is to establish justice in the land. It provides a framework for understanding ethical priorities and penalties.

6. How can the principles that are derived from these questions be applied in our contemporary context?

Direct application of specific Old Testament Law is not

valid for a New Testament believer. Yet the absolutes learned about God, humanity, relationships, and justice serve to equip the believer for good works (2 Tim. 3:17).

Utilizing these six questions when reading Deuteronomy 22:8 leads to simple applicable principles: "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence."

1. Original Readers: The original context instructed all Israelites to build a small wall as a barrier around the flat roof of their homes.

2. Human Nature: The command illustrates the natural selfishness and laziness of man. If no injunction were given, the natural proclivity of man would be to shortchange the building process for sake of his own ease.

3. God's Character: This command communicates that God's love for mankind extends to all people in the smallest of details. This instruction is for our personal protection and the protection of our integrity. It connotes God's concern for the sanctity of life.

4. Responsibility: Our care for neighbors and friends should extend to a watch-care over their safety and a willingness to exert extra effort on their behalf.

5. Justice: Slothfulness and lack of foresight in caring for others can lead to significant consequences. One must fulfill all personal responsibilities lest he be liable for the actions of others.

6. Application: Building a parapet around my roof is not the most likely application of this text in our historical setting. One of several applications may be utilizing my possessions in a manner that always looks out for the welfare of my family, friends, and neighbors.

DISPENSATIONALISTS RECOGNIZE THE LAW AS THE WORD OF GOD TO US MAKING IT PROFITABLE, BUT NOT AS THE WORD OF GOD FOR US AS BINDING.

Asking the right questions allows the Holy Spirit to reveal both the fullness of God's perfect character and the heinousness of man's depraved nature. We see ourselves as selfishly motivated in need of directives that teach us to love God and love others. The Law reveals who we are. It is a mirror that exposes our sin and declares us dead.

In like manner, it displays who God is. Indeed His separateness from all manner of sin is highlighted, but also His grace as He seeks the best for His people in all matters of life. His mercy is meted out, and His justice is perfectly

measured. It is no wonder that David said, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119:97). David learned who his God was by God's self-revelation in the Law of Moses.

The third way in which dispensationalists view the Law as being profitable to a New Testament believer is by celebrating this new era of grace. John notes that "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). The Law at its best exposed man's sin and God's holiness; by doing so it brought nothing but a curse to mankind. As we stand now in Christ "the righteousness of the law" is fulfilled (Rom. 8:4). We stand justified in Jesus. The ethical goals of the Law are fulfilled in the believer as he allows the Spirit of God to direct his life in a spirit of love (Gal. 5:13-15; Rom. 8:4; 13:8, 10). The Aaronic priesthood and sacrificial system have been replaced "by a new and living way" (Heb. 10:20). The Law has no more power over me. Dispensationalists recognize the Law as the Word of God to us making it profitable, but not as the Word of God for us as binding.

Old Testament Law is foundational for understanding the history of Israel, the love of the psalmists, the message of the prophets, the life of Christ, and the epistles to the early churches. Law is not always easy reading or preaching. It demands additional study and persevering meditation to unlock its riches. It is not the yoke in which we as

New Testament believers are bound, but it is a treasure trove of riches as we seek to know and love our God.

Brian Trainer is the chairman of the Bible and Missions Department of Maranatha Baptist Bible College. He was in pastoral ministry for ten years prior to transitioning to college education for the last ten years. In the summers Brian and his wife, Sherry, travel overseas to teach and lead student mission trips.

¹Jonathan Edwards, "Inquiry Concerning Qualifications for Communion," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. One* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1995), 465.

²John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II.7.1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1993), 300.

³L. S. Chafer, *Major Bible Themes* (Chicago: Moody Press 1994), 97.

⁴Al Hus, "The OT Law and Sanctification" in workshop notes from the Leadership Conference at Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary in Lansdale, PA, on 02/27/03. Hus quotes Doug Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1996), 641. Hus's workshop notes are a valuable summary of the Christian's relationship to the OT law.

⁵C. C. Ryrie, "The End of the Law," *BSac* 124 (1967), 246.

⁶The fourth commandment regarding the keeping of the Sabbath is the exception. See *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982).



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Salvation in Dispensationalism

Larry R. Oats



Dispensationalism inherently sees distinctions in many areas of theology and practice between the Old and New Testaments. We believe that the progress of revelation includes a progression of dispensational expectations and truth, some expanding upon information from former dispensations and some in contrast to former dispensations. Covenant theology, on the other hand, seeks to unify the testaments, using redemption and the all-encompassing umbrella of the covenant of grace to tie the entire Bible into one neat package. The covenant/dispensational differences are evident in the doctrine of salvation.

Charles Hodge demonstrates the unity of Old Testament and New Testament salvation: "The plan of salvation has been the same from the beginning. There is the same promise of deliverance from the evils of the apostasy, the same redeemer, the same condition required for participation in the blessings of redemption, and the same complete salvation for all who embrace the offers of divine mercy."¹ Many covenant theologians have been critical of dispensational soteriology, arguing that we teach multiple ways of salvation. Robert Reymond, after reviewing dispensational soteriology, concludes that dispensationalists believe "there are *at least two* different plans of salvation in Scripture" and then adds that dispensationalists have also argued for two ways of salvation in the Old Testament, one before the Law of Moses and a different way afterwards.² He then argues for the validity of covenant theology's singular soteriology.

The Accusations

Ryrie identifies (and responds to) several reasons for this accusation.³ One reason is a misunderstanding of the use of the term "dispensation of grace." This phraseology is taken to mean that there was no grace in other dispensations.

Another is a misunderstanding of the concept of a dispensation. Dispensationalists believe that revelation specific to a dispensation may include dispensationally specific requirements concerning how God approaches man and vice versa. This is assumed to mean that dispensationalists must argue for multiple ways of salvation.

A reason more important to dispensationalists, however, comes from statements made by early dispensationalists which indicate that salvation in the Old Testament was not by grace. The *Scofield Reference Bible* was the Bible of early Fundamentalism, and its editor, C. I. Scofield, was one of the leading popularizers of dispensational thought. Scofield made this unfortunate statement: "As a dispensation, grace begins with the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 3.24–26; 4.24, 25). The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Christ, with good works as a fruit of salvation (John 1.12, 13; 3.36; Mt. 21.37; 22.42; John 15.22; Heb. 1.2; 1 John 5.10–12)."⁴ This seems to indicate that in the New Testament salvation came by grace through the acceptance of Christ, while for those under the Mosaic Law salvation came by works through the maintenance of a system of works. Based on other comments by Scofield, this writer has concluded that this was an unfortunate phrasing by Scofield, but that is beside the point—the statement has been in print for over a century.

A related problem is that Lewis Sperry Chafer, a leading early dispensationalist, gives the impression that the

dispensation of Law was a forsaking of a previous plateau of grace, a reversal in the progress of the dispensations. "When the Law was proposed, the children of Israel deliberately forsook their position under the grace of God which had been their relationship to God until that day, and placed themselves under the law."⁵ The implication is that the Old Testament saint was under grace until Moses, under law until Christ, and the New Testament saint is now again under grace.

The Responses

The first two concerns may be addressed briefly. The term "dispensation of grace" is Biblical (Eph. 3:2). Grace is characteristic of this dispensation, but not exclusive to it. Grace and mercy flow from God's love and are, therefore, characteristic of His dealings with humanity since the Fall. God was gracious toward Noah (Gen. 6:8). Deuteronomy 7:7–9 indicates that one reason that God chose Israel was because of His grace, expressed in these verses as love and mercy.

The second concern is more significant and ongoing. Dispensationalism does not claim that each new dispensation contains new revelation concerning salvation. If a person accepts the traditional seven dispensations, then he must admit that the dispensation of Civil Government shed no new light regarding redemption. The more significant element of this problem, however, is that the hermeneutical debate between covenant theology and dispensationalism will not be resolved. Dispensationalists see a distinction between law and grace, based on Romans 6:14 and much of Galatians. Covenant theologians cannot accept this. While dispensationalists probably need to emphasize the role of grace in the Mosaic period more than they have traditionally done, we cannot dismiss the Biblical distinction between the two concepts and all the ramifications attendant to this distinction. Covenant theologians, however, have a problem on their side of this issue. Berkhof admits, "The Sinaitic covenant is an interlude, covering a period in which the real character of the covenant of grace, that is, its free and gracious character, is somewhat eclipsed by all kinds of external ceremonies and forms."⁶ Dispensationalism believes that each new dispensation represents a progression in revelation and a step forward in God's plan for the ages. Israel in Egypt had failed in their faithfulness to God; thus the giving of the Law was progress. It was obvious that Israel needed something better than it had in Egypt; therefore, God gave them a detailed code for living. Deuteronomy 8:18 declares that the Law was a gift from God. Romans 3:21 and Galatians 3:24 give one purpose of the Law as pointing to Christ, and it did so far more effectively than previous revelation. Hebrews demonstrates that no Old Testament sacrifice could actually take away sin, but that the sacrifices were only foreshadows of Christ's coming.

The third accusation needs to be addressed more completely. Scofield and Chafer (and they are not alone) left an impression that salvation comes in various ways. These

were unfortunate statements.⁷ It may be argued that they were said early in the debate and were not thought through well. It must also be admitted that the dispensationalism of today is not the same as the dispensationalism of Scofield, Chafer, Walvoord, and other early writers. There has been additional study and revision. Ryrie's position is usually called "revised dispensationalism." Some dispensationalists continue to revise and correct Ryrie to some extent. Still others have moved much further into progressive dispensationalism, but that discussion is for another day.

Dispensationalism agrees with covenant theology that the *basis* of salvation in every age is the death of Christ (Heb. 10:4ff). However, this does *not* mean that all believers in every age understood that it would be the death and resurrection of the God-man Jesus which would be the basis for granting salvation. While the proto-evangelium may now be seen to refer to Christ's death on the cross, it is unlikely that anyone in Adam's time fully comprehended this. "Bruising" someone's heel seems a far cry from crucifying him. Christ's death is the *basis* of salvation because from God's perspective the sacrifice of Christ was a finished transaction. The death of Christ was God's plan from eternity, and therefore God has always seen Christ's work as an accomplished fact.

The *requirement* of salvation in every age is faith. Paul, in his theological discussion of justification, used Abraham as an example of faith being the requirement for righteousness (Rom. 4:3, 4, 9, 16).

The *object* of faith in every age is God. Hebrews 11 demonstrates the role of faith in the Old Testament. The object of faith is preceded by the prepositions *eis* (John 2:11; Acts 10:43; 19:4; Gal. 2:16; etc.) and *epi* (Matt. 27:42; Acts 9:42; 11:17; Rom. 4:5; etc.). In John 1:12 faith was to be placed *in Jesus' name*, phraseology that "had significance to the Hebrews, who regarded one's name as virtually equivalent to the person."⁸

DISPENSATIONALISM BELIEVES THAT EACH NEW DISPENSATION REPRESENTS A PROGRESSION IN REVELATION AND A STEP FORWARD IN GOD'S PLAN FOR THE AGES.

It is the *content* of faith that changes in the dispensations. Covenant theologians and dispensationalists would typically agree on the *basis*, *requirement*, and *object* of faith. They do not agree on the reality of a change in the *content* of faith. Covenant theology "insists that Old Testament saints were saved through conscious faith in the future, anticipated sacrificial work of the promised Messiah in their behalf." Otherwise, salvation would be available for someone who did not know that without "the shedding of [Messiah's] blood there is no forgiveness."⁹ Adam had to be fully aware that the Messiah would be sacrificed for his sin and thus redeem him.

Dispensationalists agree that Biblical faith is not fideism, faith without an object. There must be something and someone genuinely true to believe on and believe in. Genuine faith believes that something is true (the *content* of faith) and believes (trusts) in a Person, the *object* of faith. The *content* of the faith is the mental assent to truth. When John the Baptist asked Jesus if He were the Messiah, Jesus directed him to His miracles (Luke 7:19–22). When Thomas doubted, Jesus offered him the opportunity to feel his wounds. These two cannot be divorced—faith in a Person without a content leads toward neo-orthodoxy and existentialism. Faith in content without trust in a Person leads to empty knowledge, a scholasticism of sorts. The question is, when the Old Testament saint “looked forward” to the final sacrifice for sin, did he see exactly what we see when we “look back” to the cross of Calvary? If not exactly, then how much did he see? And the question for the covenant theologian, then, is, how much must he have known of Jesus’ sacrifice and resurrection?

Dispensationalists argue for the progress of revelation, and we would include even redemptive revelation. The first revelation of the coming redemption was the declaration that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent’s head (Gen. 3:15). This glimmer grew brighter throughout the Old Testament until the prophets were speaking of the name, character, mission, and even birthplace of the Coming One (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Micah 5:2; etc.). It is extremely doubtful, however, if anyone clearly understood these matters; even His disciples did not fully understand until *after* His death and resurrection (John 2:22).

The *content* of the faith of the Old Testament saints was whatever portion of God’s redemptive revelation had been given to that point. It is important to remember that since in each economy the content is what God has revealed, belief in the content for that age is belief in the ultimate object of faith, God Himself, whether in the Person of the Father or the Son.

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¹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprint, 1970), 2:367.

² Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 509–11.

³ Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 106ff.

⁴ C. I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), 1115, footnote 1.

⁵ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947–48), 4:162.

⁶ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 296–97.

⁷ In fairness to both Scofield and Chafer, the reader is directed to Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 108, for a defense of their actual positions. Both of these men rejected multiple roads to God.

⁸ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 953.

⁹ Reymond, 509. The brackets are Reymond’s. Knowledge of the shedding of blood was insufficient; Reymond’s addition indicates that the believer had to recognize that the sacrifices pointed to Jesus the Messiah and that He would die as the future sacrifice or there was no faith.

“Grow in grace . . .
and in knowledge.” 2 Peter 3:18

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Why Are Most Fundamentalists Dispensationalists?

David Saxon

Although precise statistics are not available, it is undeniable and commonly recognized that the majority of American believers calling themselves “Fundamentalists” today are also dispensationalists. For instance, the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International, the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, the Baptist Bible Fellowship International, the World Baptist Fellowship International, the Sword of the Lord, Pensacola Christian College, Hyles-Anderson College, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary, Central Baptist Theological Seminary (MN), Central Baptist Theological Seminary (VA), Maranatha Baptist Seminary, and the state independent Baptist associations of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Illinois all explicitly affirm dispensational eschatology in their doctrinal statements (or in addenda to the same). This list could be extended considerably but already represents a large number of self-styled Fundamentalists who differ widely on a significant array of doctrinal and practical issues. Nevertheless, they are all dispensationalists.

Of course, no claim is being made here that all Fundamentalists are dispensationalists or that all dispensationalists regard themselves as Fundamentalists. Both statements are demonstrably false: one could compile lists of Fundamentalist organizations that do not explicitly affirm dispensationalism and dispensational organizations that are reluctant to be considered Fundamentalist. The observer must be careful, therefore, to avoid overgeneralization.

Historically, the proto-Fundamentalists¹ who gathered at the Niagara Bible Conference were deeply committed to premillennialism, but one cannot characterize them as predominantly dispensationalist. Similarly, the assortment of anti-Modernists who allied together between 1918 and 1930 reflected a variety of eschatological perspectives (reflecting a variety of hermeneutical approaches to Scripture). The “Fundamentalists” associated with Machen founded Westminster and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, both of which repudiated dispensationalism and, quite quickly, the Fundamentalist label (which Machen had never particularly valued). The National Association of Evangelicals, although including many Fundamentalist stalwarts at its founding in 1942, left the hermeneutical question open. Not surprisingly, perhaps, it was on the vanguard of Evangelicalism as the great rupture with Fundamentalists occurred in the 1950s and ’60s. In general, after 1930 many institutions and organizations left dispensationalism concurrently with leaving Fundamentalism or became non-Fundamentalists once alliance with dispensationalists was deemed no longer necessary.

These observations bring us back to the original issue: why does Fundamentalism find itself today largely dominated by dispensationalists?

Sea Cliff and Scofield

When the Niagara Bible Conference began to fragment in the late 1890s, the primary source of disagreement was the timing of the Rapture. Robert Cameron and Nathaniel West led the contingent that argued for a posttribulational Rapture. On the pretribulational side were C. I. Scofield, A. C. Gaebelein, and others. Dispensationalism drove the logic of the pretrib side. In the first decade of the twentieth century the dispensationalists launched the Sea Cliff Bible Conference, which considered itself the successor to Niagara, and Scofield began working on his great reference Bible. In short, the dispensationalists organized and perpetuated their beliefs in popular literature more effectively than did their “historic” premillennial brethren (the rather optimistic title assumed by many posttribulationists).

Oxford Press issued the *Scofield Reference Bible* (SRB) in 1909 (first edition) and 1917 (second edition) and discovered that it had a bestseller on its hands. Over the next half century the SRB became the principal Bible for Fundamentalists, and the SRB embodied the classic dispensationalism developed in systematic form by the Plymouth Brethren and popularized in the writings of Scofield and L. S. Chafer. Of course, this history suggests a “chicken-and-egg” problem: did Scofield’s Bible rise to popularity because of the dispensational hermeneutic already reigning within Fundamentalism, or did the SRB shape Fundamentalism in a dispensational direction? The increasingly homogenous dispensationalism of Fundamentalists as the twentieth century progressed suggests that to some extent the latter is the more significant factor: Fundamentalists imbibed and institutionalized the dispensationalism of their favorite study Bible.

BJU and DTS

The rise of key institutions also contributed to the triumph of dispensationalism in Fundamentalism. While enforcing a standard fundamental creed and having at times a mix of dispensational and covenant professors, Bob Jones University (founded as Bob Jones College in 1927) has consistently maintained allegiance to a premillennial, pretribulational eschatology that makes the most sense in a dispensational context. Quantifying the influence of such an institution is difficult, but the sheer number of graduates it has sent into Fundamentalist churches worldwide suggests that this influence has been substantial.

While less visibly associated with the Fundamentalist

movement, Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) has been committed to dispensationalism since its founding by leading dispensationalists Chafer and W. H. Griffith-Thomas in 1924. During the presidencies of Chafer (1924–52) and John Walvoord (1952–86) Dallas exerted enormous influence on both the Fundamentalist and broader Evangelical communities through its graduates and publications, especially *Bibliotheca Sacra*, which it took over in 1934. Prominent among the Dallas graduates who contributed to the dispensational direction of Fundamentalism was Charles Ryrie. DTS influenced Moody Bible Institute (MBI) to move decisively in a dispensational direction in the 1930s and '40s, and MBI has been a leader in dispensational training and publishing since that time. DTS and MBI have belonged to a broader religious spectrum than Fundamentalism throughout their histories, but their influence on Fundamentalism has been undeniable.

Fundamentalists in the twentieth century established a number of Bible colleges and seminaries in addition to BJU, and the great majority of these schools have espoused dispensationalism (several of these institutions are mentioned in the first paragraph above). As Fundamentalists drew away from denominational and Evangelical schools, they received dispensational teaching in the Fundamentalist schools. Thus, the dominance of dispensationalism in the movement was perpetuated and reinforced.

Also contributing to the sway of dispensationalism is the fact that Reformed Christians, many of whom were willing to ally with dispensational Fundamentalists in the culture wars of the 1920s, saw no further value in working with dispensationalists after 1930. Their commitment to Reformed orthodoxy and the Westminster standards was far more important to most of them than the separation issues that came to define the Fundamentalist movement. When the great Fundamentalist/New Evangelical divide occurred in the 1950s, most Reformed Christians were simply spectators. While many were skeptical of the Arminianism implicit in ecumenical evangelism, they did not have a separatist tradition that would cause them to draw ecclesiastical lines such as were drawn by leading Fundamentalists. Hence, Fundamentalists viewed most Reformed Christians as simply part of broader Evangelicalism. Reformed elements have never disappeared from Fundamentalism—one thinks of the Faith Free Presbyterian churches, for instance—but Fundamentalist separatism has never been a hallmark of the Reformed tradition.

A Deeper Reason?

All of the reasons just given, however, seem to cry out for some deeper reason. Why did the heirs of the Niagara Bible Conference turn primarily to dispensationalism in the

early twentieth century at a time when they were combating liberalism in the denominations and American culture? Why did the Scofield Reference Bible become so popular among these Fundamentalists? Why do dispensationalists find Fundamentalist separatism more appealing than do Reformed Christians, by-and-large?

As a Fundamentalist and a dispensationalist, answering this question is tricky for me because my commitment to each has contributed to my adherence to the other. It would be easy for me to overstate their congruence. Clearly, there is nothing in either label that *necessitates* that one adopt the other label, as previously noted. Nevertheless, it may be that central tendencies in both make their convergence reasonable and not unexpected.

Dispensationalism has often been accused of having a basic pessimism about contemporary culture. Premillennialism, in general, and dispensationalism, in particular, argue that Christ's reign will be realized on this earth only during a future ideal kingdom. Believers should invest in earthly cultures with the constant mindset that the return of Christ is imminent and that this earth will experience devastating judgments during the Tribulation period. Such a perspective does not necessitate total disengagement; indeed, most dispensationalists believe they can impact their culture in various ways to the glory of God. Nevertheless, they stand in marked contrast to most Reformed Christians, Lutherans, and Catholics in their attitudes regarding cultural involvement.

When Modernism/theological liberalism began to sweep through the American denominations in the late nineteenth century, the Modernists believed they were advancing modernity. That is, they sought to wed their

FUNDAMENTALISTS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY ESTABLISHED A NUMBER OF BIBLE COLLEGES AND SEMINARIES ... AND THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THESE SCHOOLS HAVE ESPOUSED DISPENSATIONALISM.

theological thinking with the reigning paradigms of modern culture. When Matthews, Fosdick, and other liberals slandered the conservatives, their favorite charge was that the old orthodoxy was out of touch with the times, backward-looking, and irrelevant.² In rejecting naturalistic evolution, materialism, pragmatism, and other philosophies that appeared to be gaining the ascendancy in the West in the early twentieth century, Fundamentalists appeared to secular and liberal observers to be opponents of modernity. Indeed, many Fundamentalists perceived themselves to be the guardians of earlier, simpler times, as is evidenced by their strong preaching against various social sins. This opposition of Fundamentalists to the perils of modernity correlated quite well with a dispensational eschatology that held little hope for the rescue of modern culture.

What is, perhaps, most surprising is that dispensational Fundamentalists joined hands for a while with nondispensational Fundamentalists in the 1920s to fight a great culture war against evolution and theological Modernism. Historian George Marsden highlights in *Fundamentalism and American Culture* the basic incongruity of the kind of cultural engagement carried on by the World's Christian Fundamentals Association, for instance, and the dispensationalism of most of the leaders of the WCFA.³ Once these battles were lost, the Reformed and other nondispensational combatants went their own way, and the dispensationalists were left to ponder a more effective way of reflecting their theological commitments. Fundamentalist separatism and focus on evangelism and local church ministry thrived thereafter in a dispensational context.

Graham, FTS, NEA, and New Evangelicalism

When the New Evangelicalism emerged in the 1950s under the leadership of Billy Graham, Fuller Theological Seminary, and the National Association of Evangelicals, parallel trends began to become apparent. The New Evangelicals desired more tolerance and openness to varying eschatological positions and were embarrassed by what they deemed extreme dispensationalism. Second, they desired more cultural and academic impact; they eschewed the isolationism of their Fundamentalist brethren. Carl Henry's *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947) explicitly linked premillennarian "despair over the present world order" with Fundamentalist loss of "social passion."⁴ In other words, he feared that Fundamentalists were retreating into an exclusively evangelistic mindset because of their eschatological commitments and abandoning their prophetic voice relative to the great social issues of the day. Hence he offered his famous advice:

Contemporary evangelicalism needs (1) to reawaken to the relevance of its redemptive message to the global predicament; (2) to stress the great evangelical agreements in a common world front; (3) to discard elements of its message which cut the nerve of world compassion as contradictory to the inherent genius of Christianity; (4) to restudy eschatological convictions for a proper perspective which will not unnecessarily dissipate evangelical strength in controversy over secondary positions, in a day when the significance of the primary insistences is international.⁵

This quote foreshadows the gradual trek of large segments of the Evangelical world away from dispensationalism that has occurred over the intervening sixty years. During this time, Fundamentalists have been ever more marginalized in a culture sinking into secularism. Not surprisingly, then, Fundamentalists have retained or embraced the dispensationalism many Evangelicals have been jettisoning.

Speaking quite broadly, Eevangelicalism has sought to transform or, at least, to infiltrate culture, an effort far more conducive to less dispensational theologies. Social consciousness flourishes when the kingdom is viewed as having primary reference to the present.⁶ Fundamentalism

has been far more discriminating in its critique of culture, separating from any aspect of modernity (such as evolution or feminism) that appears to stand in opposition to the authority of God's Word. Such separatism flourishes when the kingdom is viewed as primarily future. Fundamentalists are not trying to build a kingdom now; hence, they need not blur lines of distinction either ethically or ecclesiastically. Again, dispensationalism is a hermeneutic that serves the Fundamentalist community admirably.

Perhaps such reasoning at least partly explains why the majority of Fundamentalists today are also dispensationalists. It also may help explain another modern trend. When young Fundamentalists follow after progressive dispensationalism, new covenant theology, or traditional Reformed theology because of the social implications of these theologies, they usually abandon Fundamentalism in the process.

It is this author's hope that Fundamentalists will strive to explore the proper balance between cultural engagement and the specific task of world evangelism while maintaining a strong allegiance to the blessed hope of Christ's imminent return and to the normal interpretation of Biblical prophecy while remaining committed dispensationalists.

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¹ "Proto-Fundamentalist" refers to late-nineteenth-century conservatives who opposed Modernism and generally espoused premillennialism. They laid a foundation in American Christianity upon which the self-styled Fundamentalists built in the years immediately after World War I. The title "Fundamentalist" first appeared in 1920 among Northern Baptists.

² For instance, Fosdick's predecessor Cornelius Woelfkin scornfully wrote, "The whole world-view has changed since the Bible was written, and we cannot make the modern and the ancient world-views correspond. . . . Our conservatism threatens to become the winding sheet of death. . . . If men prefer to become octogenarian before their time and sink into religious lotus eaters and dream dreams of the past, let them at least grant to youth their heritage and permit them to see visions, new visions, and follow the Lord who goes before them" (*Religion: Thirteen Sermons* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1928], 42, 50, 51).

³ George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 128.

⁴ Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), 29.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁶ See, for instance, Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004), who argues for a progressive dispensational view of the kingdom and then affirms that "the church cannot address only personal 'spiritual' matters, but instead witnesses to the whole counsel of God and to the justice of the Kingdom, through the internal discipline of the Body and through the external witness to the state and the societal structures" (167).

One Essential Feature of Dispensationalism: A Consistently Literal Hermeneutic

Bruce Meyer



No doubt every one of us has encountered the following objection when arguing theology: “That’s just your interpretation.” The statement, although often a convenient escape, does highlight the importance of a hermeneutic that is centered in objective principles of interpretation, especially in a postmodern world. Among Fundamentalists, dispensationalism provides a popular yet consistently literal approach to the text. Dispensationalism is, however, often wrongly associated with a variety of nonessentials such as elaborate eschatological charts and timelines, sensational identifications of Antichrist, and even tenuous predictions concerning the timing of the Rapture. I have even encountered those who mistakenly thought that anyone who holds to premillennialism is a dispensationalist. What, then, are the essential characteristics that distinguish dispensationalism from covenantalism? Dispensationalism is a hermeneutical approach to the Scriptures that is distinct in three essential features: a consistently literal interpretation, a distinction between Israel and the Church,¹ and a doxological purpose in history.² Dispensationalists refer to these features as the *sine qua non* of dispensationalism. This article, however, will focus strictly upon the first distinction.

The first essential of dispensationalism, the consistent use of a literal hermeneutic, is the bedrock issue for dispensational interpretation. The reader should be advised, however, that covenantalists do in many texts employ a literal hermeneutic; *amillennial covenantalists*, however, will not interpret literally when dealing with prophecy.

Covenantalists have often been critical of dispensationalists for either failing to recognize or undervaluing metaphorical language, a practice they claim reads the text too “flatly.” But is the criticism accurate? This author maintains that a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, consistently applied, correctly acknowledges both metaphorical language and a literal fulfillment of that same language.

Literal Interpretation and Metaphor

Ryrie stated in 1965 in his groundbreaking book, “Consistently literal or plain interpretation is indicative of a dispensational approach to the interpretation of the Scriptures.”³ Bernard Ramm describes a literal interpretation at length:

We use the word “literal” in its dictionary sense: “. . . the natural or usual construction and implication of a writing or expression; following the ordinary and apparent sense of words; not allegorical or metaphorical” (*Webster’s New International Dictionary*). We also use it in its historical sense, specifically, the priority that Luther and Calvin gave to literal, grammatical, or philological exegesis of Scripture in contrast to the Four Fold Theory of the Roman Catholic scholars (historical meaning, moral meaning, allegorical meaning, eschatological meaning) developed during the Middle Ages and historically derived from Augustine’s Three Fold Theory. It was particularly the allegorical use of the Old Testament that the Reformers objected to,

and the manner in which Roman Catholic dogma was re-enforced by allegorical interpretation. Hence the “literal” directly opposes the “allegorical.”⁴

It is quite significant that the Reformers were quick to identify the error of allegorical interpretation in the Roman system, but retained the practice in their own hermeneutic for prophetic genres.

With regard to symbols and figurative language, Ramm writes,

*All secondary meanings of documents depend upon the literal stratum of language. Parables, types, allegories, symbols, figures of speech, myths and fables presume that there is a level of meaning in language prior to the kind of language this kind of literature is. The parable of the sower is understood only within the context of literal “farm” language.*⁵

Therefore, a literal interpretation allows for figures of speech and metaphors, but insists upon contextual markers that would indicate the use of metaphorical language.⁶ Daniel, for example, describes the fourth beast as having ten horns (Dan. 7:7, 20). The *text explains* that the ten horns are ten kings (v. 24) and that the beast is the fourth kingdom on the earth (v. 23). God uses symbols, but He identifies those symbols for readers through textual indicators. Ryrie clarifies the issue in writing:

Symbols, figures of speech, and types are all interpreted plainly in this method, and they are in no way contrary to literal interpretation. After all, the very existence of any meaning for a figure of speech depends on the reality of the literal meaning of the terms involved.⁷

Furthermore, he adds that “to be sure, apocalyptic literature does employ symbols in prophecy, but they stand for something *actual*.”⁸

The covenantal view that one symbolic *word* can represent an unrelated symbolic *concept* leads to a more subjective interpretation that lacks contextual justification. Ramm cautions, “To rest one’s theology on the secondary strata of meanings is to invite *interpretation by imagination*.”⁹

It is this author’s belief that the amillennial position is one remaining “carryover” from the Catholic Church that the Protestant Reformation has yet to jettison, although covenantalists have made modifications that would distinguish their system from Catholicism. Therefore, although dispensationalists acknowledge the use of metaphorical language, they insist that the metaphor speaks of a literal fulfillment.

Metaphorical Language versus Literal Fulfillment

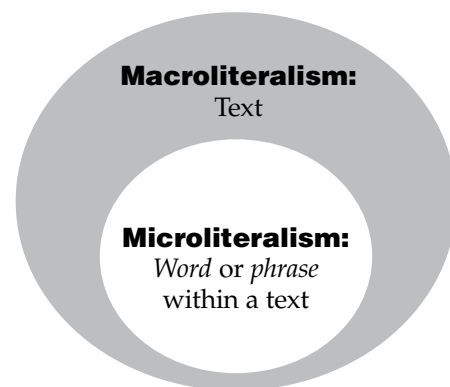
Ice clarifies the difference between a literal interpretation and the interpretation of metaphorical language when he explains,

The church will not be substituted for Israel if the grammatical-historical system of interpretation is consistently used because there are no indicators in the text that such is the case. Therefore, one must bring an idea from outside the text by saying that the passage really means something that it does not actually say. This

kind of replacement approach is a mild form of spiritualized, or allegorical, interpretation. So when speaking of those who do replace *Israel* with the Church as not taking the Bible literally and spiritualizing the text, it is true, since such a belief is contrary to a macroliteral [textual] interpretation.¹⁰

Ice is highlighting the two senses in which dispensationalists use the word “literal.” The first use of the word literal is what Ice calls “microliteralism.”¹¹ This use of the word focuses upon whether one understands a *word* or *phrase* to be literal as opposed to a figure of speech. This would be the sense one would apply to the expression “I’m so hungry I could eat a horse.” Common usage, or “historical interpretation,” demands that the reader understand that expression as a figure of speech (unless there is an actual gluttonous person especially partial to equine delicacies). The *literal meaning* to the saying is that one is extremely hungry (a macroliteral interpretation) rather than some other spiritual meaning foreign to the expression. An allegorical interpretation, however, might look something like this: the word “hungry” speaks not of a physical hunger, but a spiritual hunger as evident in David’s hunger for God. Horses in Scripture are metaphorical for that which is unclean, since Israel often purchased horses from Egypt (a picture of the world).¹² Therefore, the expression indicates that a person possesses a spiritual hunger for that which is worldly and unclean. The blatant misuse of metaphor in this example is obvious, since people use the expression in everyday usage to communicate extreme physical hunger. The context argues against a spiritualized *meaning*.

Ice’s macroliteralism refers to the “system that views the *text* as providing the basis of the true interpretation” of a *text*.¹³ One can diagram these distinctions as follows:



Therefore, a text always has a literal meaning, but the text may use figures of speech or symbols to communicate that meaning. Even when Paul uses symbolism (or allegory) in Galatians 4:21–31, he provides textual indicators that explain his intended meaning: law = slavery to the flesh (bondwoman, flesh, Mount Sinai, Hagar [Ishmael], Jerusalem [vv. 22–25]) and Spirit=freedom from sin (freewoman, promise, Jerusalem above, Isaac [Sarah] [vv. 26–30]). These symbols have a literal *meaning* that Paul explains throughout his text. Feinberg rightly identifies the fallacy within the covenantal system in noting that the

system's "objection fails to recognize the difference between *kinds* of language (figures of speech, plain language, e.g.) and *methods* of interpreting language."¹⁴ Dispensationalists, therefore, are arguing that the method of interpreting language, even figures of speech, must be a literal interpretation; otherwise, the interpreter is assigning a symbolic meaning to symbolic words that the author never intended, a practice that leads to a high degree of subjectivity and conflicting interpretations.

Examples of Literal Interpretation of Symbols

When God promises "land" to Israel throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, the Jews correctly understood God to mean land as "physical property" or "territory" rather than "spiritual blessings" because of God's promises beginning in Genesis 12. For the covenantalist to insist that the term "land" in the NT is now metaphorical for "blessings" to all believers, he must have some contextual basis for making that claim. In other words, God must have imbedded a marker in the text, a clue that He is now speaking metaphorically, since He had previously used "land" for centuries to mean literal territory or property. The burden of proof falls on the covenantalist to demonstrate the annulment of the promises rather than the dispensationalist to show they have not been annulled.

Covenantalists, however, employ a literal approach selectively, resorting to an allegorical interpretation in prophecy ("land" = "blessing" or "Christ's throne" = "the believer's heart").¹⁵ Ramm states that allegorical interpretation is "the interpretation of a document whereby something *foreign, peculiar, or hidden* is introduced into the meaning of the text giving it a proposed deeper or real meaning."¹⁶ Covenantalists, however, argue that their hermeneutic views such statements as metaphors. Allis remarks,

What may be called the popular and naïve idea of a millennium is derived largely from such a passage as [Isaiah 11]. It is to be a golden age, when the "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb," when none shall "hurt or destroy," when the earth shall be "full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."¹⁷

Such a picture of an ideal age raises only one serious difficulty. It is whether the Bible and especially the New Testament predicts or allows for such a period of blessedness before the eternal state is ushered in, or *whether the picture given to us by Isaiah is a description of that eternal state itself under earthly forms and images*.¹⁸

The covenantal explanations of key millennial passages are not without problems. Isaiah 65:17–25, for example, contains images that neither fit the Church Age nor the eternal state, both of which are common covenantal explanations of the text. Isaiah describes a scenario in which death is rare (v. 20), a description that rules out the possibility that this passage describes the Church Age. The second half of the

verse, however, is especially problematic for the amillennial position. Here, Isaiah states that a person who dies at age one hundred is viewed as a youth and the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. This statement eliminates the eternal state as the interpretation, since there will not be any death then. God is saying more than "there is no death then." He is allowing for the possibility of death to occur, but also indicating that death, especially at an early age of one hundred, will be exceptional. This

... INTERPRETERS MUST EMPLOY A HERMENEUTIC THAT ALLOWS THE TEXT TO SPEAK FREELY WITHOUT INCREASED DISTORTION FROM PERSONAL OR THEOLOGICAL BIAS.

statement certainly cannot refer to the Church Age, since living to one hundred is not the norm now either.

Even clearer than the former passage, Zechariah 14 contains elements that cannot refer to the eternal state without spiritualizing the language. In verses 16–19, God warns that those who would choose not to participate in the Feast of Tabernacles would experience drought and plagues. The amillennial interpretation argues that this reference teaches no such rebellion will exist in the eternal state.¹⁹ This interpretation overlooks the level of specificity with which God warns the potential rebels. Zechariah records three verses of explanation detailing the punishment for those who fail to participate. There is more included in this text than merely a metaphorical description of the absence of rebellion. These features, therefore, can neither apply to the eternal state nor to the Church Age.

In an effort to explain the features of Revelation from an amillennial position, Hoekema provides a good example of a "metaphorical" *interpretation* with reference to the millennium:

Obviously the number "thousand" which is used here must not be interpreted in a literal sense. Since the number ten signifies completeness, and since a thousand is ten to the third power, we may think of the expression "a thousand years" as standing for a complete period, a very long period of indeterminate length. . . . We may conclude that this thousand-year period extends from Christ's first coming to just before his Second Coming.²⁰

One will observe the distinct absence of any textual markers pointing the interpreter to the fanciful explanation Hoekema proposes. Additionally, in explaining the binding of Satan in the abyss during this period, Hoekema explains,

The word *Abyss* should rather be thought of as a figurative description of the way in which Satan's activities will be curbed during the thousand-year period. . . . During the gospel era which has now been ushered in, Satan will not be able to continue deceiving the nations

the way he did in the past, for he has been bound. . . . We conclude, then, that the binding of Satan during the gospel age means that, first, he cannot prevent the spread of the gospel, and second, he cannot gather all the enemies of Christ together to attack the church.²¹

If it is true that Satan is bound at this very moment and, as Hoekema claims, that he is no longer able to gather all the enemies of Christ together, then for what purpose does God loose Satan at the end of this amillennial Church Age? Amillennial covenantalists stumble over the loosening of Satan, but fail to provide a good answer for why God would loose him at the end of their “Church Age.” The “metaphorical” or allegorical interpretation of the nondispensationalist fails to answer the specifics of many passages. A literal interpretation allows the text to speak in a normal way without creating the dilemmas of the amillennial position.

It certainly is true that one’s philosophy of interpretation affects the outcome of an interpretation. Since interpretation is so important to an accurate understanding of the authorial intent of the text, interpreters must employ a hermeneutic that allows the text to speak freely without increased distortion from personal or theological bias. Dispensationalists believe their hermeneutic is the most accurate, since a consistently literal approach to the Scriptures correctly acknowledges both metaphorical language and a literal fulfillment of that same language. A literal interpretation does allow for the use of metaphorical language, but it also recognizes the difference between metaphorical language and literal fulfillment of that language. When one applies this approach to difficult prophetic passages, the hermeneutic demonstrates its own validity through the objective way in which it unlocks the meaning of the text.

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¹ Such a distinction actually emerges from a consistently literal hermeneutic.

² The author is aware that covenantalists do focus upon God’s glory in practice. The difference here, however, is a hermeneutical issue. Dispensationalists interpret through the lens of God’s glory whereas covenantalists interpret through the lens of salvation, i.e., the covenant of grace. Dispensationalists see a broader purpose of God in history than salvation alone.

³ Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 46.

⁴ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 119.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁶ Elliott Johnson, *Expository Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 194–5, lists several contextual clues: explicit contextual statements, conflicting imagery, and juxtaposition of images.

⁷ Ryrie, 80–81.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 87 [emphasis added].

⁹ Ramm, 125 [emphasis added].

¹⁰ Thomas Ice, “Dispensational Hermeneutics,” *Issues in Dispensationalism*, Wesley Willis and John Master, eds. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 32. Ice borrows these concepts from S. Lewis Johnson.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹² That Egypt is always a picture of the world is also a dubious assumption.

¹³ Ice, 32 [emphasis added]. Ice uses definitions provided by Elliott Johnson, 9.

¹⁴ John Feinberg, “Systems of Discontinuity,” *Continuity and Discontinuity*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 74.

¹⁵ This approach assigns a “spiritual meaning” to words where no symbolic markers exist.

¹⁶ Ramm, 223.

¹⁷ Allis, 236.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 237 [emphasis added].

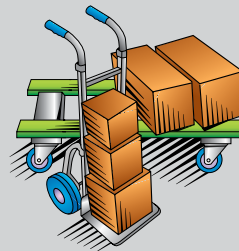
¹⁹ Thomas McComiskey, “Zechariah,” in *An Exegetical & Expository Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, ed. Thomas McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 3:1242.

²⁰ Anthony Hoekema, “Amillennialism,” *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 161. One should wonder in what way this is obvious (is this really what John or his readers would have thought?). Furthermore, this author believes that if the Church is currently in the Millennium, as the amillennialists believe, then the Church has great cause for disappointment. Only if one interprets the lion and lamb imagery to be, say, Lutherans and Presbyterians living in unity, can an individual say these conditions are currently present.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 161–62.

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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

Dark Days

During the last half-century tens of millions of Americans have testified to being Bible-believing Evangelicals. But the actual, effectual influence of Scripture upon their lives is less and less apparent.

The late Evangelical Philadelphia pastor James Montgomery Boice lamented, *Our worship is irreverent, and our lives are immoral. Even the evangelical church has succumbed to the spirit of this age. . . . Perhaps the simplest way to say this is that evangelicalism has become worldly* (*The Doctrines of Grace*, 20).

Similarly, R. Kent Hughes, recently retired pastor of College Church in Wheaton, Illinois, confesses, *Among evangelicals, there is a great disconnect between (on the one hand) what Christians believe and assimilate from sermons and Christian sources and how (on the other hand) they actually live. . . . The Christian church is not lacking for moral and spiritual education. It is lacking in its ability to remain uncontaminated by the unchristian thinking and morality of contemporary culture* (*Set Apart: Calling a Worldly Church to a Godly Life*, 10).

Recently Sovereign Grace Ministries founder C. J. Mahaney observed, *First John 2:15 isn't a verse we tend to underline when we come across it in our daily Bible reading. . . . We don't hear many sermons on this verse and its prohibition of the sin of worldliness. We read, we live, as if it doesn't belong in our Bible* (*Worldliness*, 16).

Sadly, this same disturbing condition seems to be increasingly characteristic of Fundamentalism as well. It would be difficult to find many within our ranks who would attempt to make the case that the movement as a whole is less worldly than it was two decades or even ten years ago. Or that it is more effective evangelistically. Or even healthier theologically. If the text and translation

debate among Fundamentalists has done nothing else, it has exposed alarmingly that even within Fundamentalism there can be heated disagreements on issues as foundational to orthodoxy as bibliology.

Who would dispute that what the Church needs again, at this point in its long history, is a sweeping, purging, thoroughly heart-changing revival?

Revival is a gracious, renewing activity of our sovereign God. Concerning its being God's choice, Paul writes, *If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth* (2 Tim. 2:25).

God must give repentance. Human beings cannot produce it in other human beings. Andrew Bonar, saintly Scottish pastor, recorded in his diary in February of 1839 the agonized disappointment of many pastors after having labored with all their might to do spiritual good: *Grieved at the thought that I do not see any real spiritual movement among any of my people! "Lord, how long!"* But two days later Bonar felt that he had found at least a partial explanation while reading Jonathan Edwards.

I met in the evening this remark in [Jonathan] Edwards: "It is God's way to let ministers try all their strength first, and then He Himself comes and subdues the hearts they cannot." Perhaps God is trying me thus. I am using all means, and all my power, and it avails nothing.

Frustration and discouragement are God's tools to turn us from self-dependence to His omnipotence. God is able. *Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear* (Isa. 59:1). God is willing. *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven* (2 Chron. 7:14). But even the most earnest ministers need constant renewing of their faith that God is both able and willing to work in their day, no matter how dark.

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

Inside

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

A Beginning

Sometimes the Lord begins to fuel faith by bringing His past acts to our attention in a presently encouraging way. Psalm 106 is an example. The psalmist reviews centuries of God's past deliverances of His disobedient people, and it heartens him to pray that God would repeat those mercies in his own day. *Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.*

Similarly, the Levitical leaders under Ezra rehearsed the sins of their nation throughout its history in order that they might remind the Lord that He had nevertheless repeatedly saved them and to plead that He would yet again forgive and restore (Neh. 9).

- *But thou art a God ready to pardon (17).*
- *Thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not (19).*
- *Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them (20).*
- *In the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven (27).*
- *When they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies (28).*
- *For thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them (31).*
- *Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us (32).*

Church history is replete with similar examples. The remembrance of God's mighty acts through the Reformers emboldened their spiritual descendants, the Puritans. In turn, what He did for the Puritans encouraged those who followed, men such as Jonathan Edwards and Samuel Davies here in America, and others in Britain such as Isaac Watts and George Whitefield.

A century later, just a decade previous to the 1857–59 revival that swept the British Isles and the United States, men were again taking heart from what God had done in the past. For instance, in 1840 a significant preaching conference on the need for revival among Scottish churches was convened in Glasgow. Those sermons were subsequently printed. In the book's preface the editor urged his readers to give attention to Jonathan Edwards' writings on revival a hundred years earlier. *At a time like the present, when the attention of the public is strongly directed to the subject of revivals of religion, it is of unspeakable importance to be able to refer to the writings of such a man as Edwards (The Revival of Religion, xviii).*

Five years later (1845) Horatius Bonar reissued John Gillies' 1754 *Historical Collections Relating to Remarkable Periods of the Success of the Gospel*. In commending the volume, Bonar wrote, *To see how God has been working, and to mark the means and instruments by which he has carried on his work, cannot fail to be profitable and quickening. It makes us sensible of our own shortcomings, and it points*

out the way by which the blessing may be secured.

The point here, briefly argued, is that a review of God's mighty acts in the past is an inspiring and faith-quickenning place to begin in a dark day.

Eighteenth-Century Fuel for Faith

The eighteenth century was one of the most Divinely favored periods in all of Church history. Powerful spiritual upheavals, happily called "awakenings," convulsed three areas of the globe in particular: Germany, the British Isles, and the American Colonies.

But speaking of events as "awakenings" implies that the previous state of things had been languid, if not comatose. In this case, it would be difficult to exaggerate the deadness of church life in the British Isles and the American colonies following the Puritan era, or the frigid languor of most of the Protestant church on the European continent during that same period of time.

Are conditions in our day bad? They were worse then. Is there cause for despair now? There was much more just previous to the First Great Awakening. Church historians call the era preceding it "the dark age of Protestantism." *Our light looks like the evening of the world*, lamented the authors of a *Proposal for a National Reformation of Manners* just before the turn of the century (1694).

Night Falls

Ironically, "the dark age" was largely the tragic consequence of the free thinking era in human history called the Enlightenment. In a nutshell, the Enlightenment was simply what Immanuel Kant described as *mankind's exit from its self-incurred immaturity*. That immaturity, Kant explained, *is the inability to make use of one's own understanding without the guidance of another*.¹

This eighteenth-century intellectual emancipation was coveted by kings, nobles, politicians, educators, and even clergy. It was championed by an endless stream of witty essays and affordable pamphlets from the pens of respected philosophers. It eventuated in the jettisoning of Europe's every traditional authority, including the Scripture, for the sake of unrestricted mental and moral experimentation. The brilliant, widely read, and apparently irrefutable advocates of free inquiry exuded supreme confidence in the power of human reason once it was liberated from the stunting presuppositions of a supposedly Divine revelation. *Common sense is the best distributed commodity in the world*, Descartes had offered.² John Locke, the quintessential liberal, agreed. *Don't follow authorities unquestioningly, whether they're intellectual, political or even religious*, he advised his disciples, *think for yourselves*.³

Thinking for oneself had led Thomas Hobbes, "the first modern materialist," to conclude that the universe is all that exists. Likewise, intellectual liberty betrayed David Hume, who became one of the most influential figures in the entire history of philosophy, into asserting that only what is provable mathematically or experientially is certain. *And there is no serious observable evidence for the existence of God*, he argued.⁴

This doesn't mean, of course, that He doesn't exist. It only means that He isn't provable. Or as Kant argued, *anything* may exist, but apart from scientific proof of its existence, we have no way of knowing.

The societal consequences of the Enlightenment are now a matter of notorious historical record. For France, the conclusions of free thinking proved to be the intellectual tributaries swelling the bloody floodtide of its fearful Revolution. In Germany, they laid the foundations for that nation's crass nineteenth-century skepticism, which together with its brazen higher criticism of Scripture, paved the way for Hitler's horrific Nazi nightmare barely fifty years later. In the universities of the British Isles, exaltation of human reason spawned teeming theological liberalism in the pulpits and rank immorality not only in the streets but throughout every stratum of society. The American colonies drifted toward Deism. Their morals deteriorated. Samuel Stoddard, Jonathan Edwards' maternal grandfather, preached to the legislators of Massachusetts in 1703, *God has had a great controversy with the country for many years. . . . We live in a corrupt age, and multitudes of men take a licentious liberty, in their drinking and apparel, and company, and recreations, and unsavory discourses . . . and ministers living in an infectious air, are in danger to be infected also.*⁵

English Society in Particular

Eighteenth-century England was extraordinarily coarse. Many of its citizens loved brutal amusements: bull baiting, cock fighting, and other diabolical schemes for amusing the public by torturing animals, including setting them on fire. Public hangings for offenses as small as picking a pocket or shaving a coin were so popular that fashionable people paid for grandstand seats, while *thousands who could not afford seats sucked oranges round the gallows, watching the contortions of poor wretches as they slowly choked to death, for no drop was allowed, and it took a man a good half-hour to die.*⁶ (No wonder that these same Englishmen were capable of calloused cruelty to the early Methodist preachers.)

Drunkenness was a nearly national pastime. Taverns advertised that for a penny you were guaranteed enough gin to get drunk, for two pennies, "dead drunk." Henry Fielding, best remembered for *Tom Thumb*, observed that *if drinking this poison be continued in its present Height during the next twenty years, there will, by that Time, be very few of the common People left to drink it.*⁷

Circulating libraries offered the public easy access to obscene, contaminating fiction. In *Citizen of the World* (1762) Oliver Goldsmith argued that most of the fictional romances of his day were *no better than instruments of debauchery.*⁸ Theaters shamelessly exhibited every form of noxious vice. A French visitor to London, M. Grosley, wrote to his readers, *At the representations of Macbeth, Richard III, King Lear and other pieces of Shakespeare which I happened to be a spectator of, whatever the most barbarous cruelty and the most refined wickedness can possibly conceive is presented to view.*⁹ Because of this, reputable women sometimes wore masks to the theater,

lest their reputations be tarnished for even attending.

In the opening chapter of his *Christian Leaders of the 18th Century*, J. C. Ryle summarized the appalling condition of his nation at this time.

*From the year 1700 till about the era of the French Revolution, England seemed barren of all that is really good. How such a state of things can have arisen in a land of free Bibles and professing Protestantism is almost past comprehension. Christianity seemed to lie as one dead, insomuch that you might have said, "she is dead." Morality, however much exalted in the pulpits, was thoroughly trampled under foot in the streets. There was darkness in high places, and darkness in low places—darkness in the court, the camp, the Parliament, and the bar—darkness in country, and darkness in town—darkness among rich and darkness among poor—a gross, thick, religious and moral darkness—a darkness that might be felt.*¹⁰

The English Pulpit

In the late eighteenth century Kant would argue that when a clergyman was out of the pulpit and writing for the general public, he enjoyed *unlimited freedom to use his own reason and to speak in his own person.*¹¹ But long before Kant, liberated rationalism had already permeated not merely the writings but even the preaching of the Church of England.

A fair measure of blame must be attached to John Tillotson. As a popular preacher at Lincoln's Inn in London, and then later after ascending to Archbishop of the Church of England, Tillotson deliberately crafted his sermons into literary essays that appealed logically to man's reason. He attempted to win England's common people for Christ by arguing that *Christianity requires only such duties of us as are suitable to the light of nature and do approve themselves to the best reason of mankind.*¹² Accordingly, he offered his listeners and readers sermon themes on such intellectually satisfying subjects as "The Reasonableness of the Resurrection," "The Advantage of Religion to Society," and "The Rewards of Religion." In the sixty years after his death in 1694, three different editions of Tillotson's collected works were published. Scores, if not hundreds, of English clergy admired and attempted to imitate his smooth, rational style.

The English Baptist Robert Hall Jr. (1764–1831), wrote of the pulpit in those days:

There arose also, at that time, a set of divines who, partly in compliance with the popular humour, partly to keep at a distance from the puritans, and partly to gain the infidels, who then began to make their appearance, introduced a new sort of preaching. . . . From that time, the idea commonly entertained in England of a perfect sermon, was that of a discourse upon some moral topic, clear, correct, and argumentative, in the delivery of which the preacher must be free from all suspicion of being moved himself, or of intending to produce emotion in his hearers; or, in a word, as remote as possible from

such a mode of reasoning on righteousness, temperance, and judgment, as should make a Felix tremble.¹³

By the first half of the eighteenth century a menagerie of skewed spiritual positions characterized English theology and preaching. Many embraced what came to be called *Latitudinarianism*—the view that since human reason is the ultimate litmus test of theology, doctrines which cannot be verified by reason are of relatively minor importance. Deism was not a formal movement but a growing trend. Arianism crept in, surprisingly even among the Nonconformist bodies. In February of 1719 over one hundred ministers from three of the dissenting denominations (Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Baptist) met in London to consider the issue of whether they ought to require that their clergy subscribe to traditional Trinitarian confessions. They voted 57 to 53 against the proposal.

Moderatism conquered the English pulpit. Hughes Oliphant Old analyzes Moderatism as *the response of the more perceptive young Protestant preachers to an older generation of Protestantism which had lost its freshness and become stale*.¹⁴ Olds includes among its definable characteristics *a growing acceptance of the diversity of Christianity, and with it a growth of tolerance and the concern . . . to develop a well-ordered life*.¹⁵

But what the new moderates defined to be a *well-ordered life* was a Christian existence that wasn't as otherworldly as their forbears, the sixteenth-century Reformers and the seventeenth-century Puritans, had insisted upon. John Bunyan had portrayed the world as Vanity Fair. The Puritans in general saw *the life of the spirit as pilgrimage and battle*. . . . Few [Puritan] sermons lacked and many abounded in such allusions to spiritual wayfaring and warfaring. . . . The number of extant sermons and of individual authors dealing with the theme is indeed so great that to discuss severally any considerable number would entail much repetition of details, significant chiefly in the mass.¹⁶

Moderatism, on the other hand, promoted a respectable worldliness. It advocated a more thoughtful use of life's lawful pleasures and a more respectful cultivation of its finer features than the Puritans had advised. The influences of Moderatism upon the life of the clergy were disastrous. Although the atmosphere at the two university centers, Oxford and Cambridge, had seldom been conducive to godliness, it was truly toxic at this time.

George Whitefield, who matriculated at Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1732, found it to be a place of great temptation. *I was quickly solicited to join in the excess of riot*, he recorded in his journal. Once, in order to avoid his tempters, he was compelled to spend an entire sleepless night in the cold.

Samuel Walker (1714–61), who graduated from Oxford and was ordained in 1737, later recalled with great regret, *The week before my ordination, I spent with the other candidates, as dissolute I fear as myself, in a very light, indecent manner; dining, supping, drinking and laughing together, when God knows we should have been all on*

our knees, and warning each other to fear for our souls in the views of what we were about to put our hands to.¹⁷

Though Cambridge had once been the nursery of Puritan preachers, things were little better there. William Grimshaw, who began his studies at Christ's Church, Cambridge, in 1726, soon learned *to drink and swear*. He became *as vile as the worst*, was ordained in an unregenerate state in 1732, and quickly became a hunting, fishing, card-playing minister.¹⁸ John Berridge, who would later be a tower of strength to Rowland Hill while the latter was suffering for Christ at Cambridge, entered Clare Halle himself in 1734. He was soon seduced away from the serious approach to study and religion with which he'd come. The consequence was that he forsook private prayer for ten years.¹⁹

Once graduated and ordained, young ministers lethargically performed the expected rounds of clerical duties. It was a respectable way to make a living. But their lives were their own, and they indulged them freely.

After visiting England, a young German minister, Charles Moritz, recorded his impression: *The English clergy (and I fear those still more particularly who live in London), are noticeable, and lamentably conspicuous, by a very free, secular and irregular way of life*.²⁰ Ryle wrote of the English ministers, *The vast majority of them were sunk in worldliness*.²¹ *An almost pagan darkness in the concerns of salvation prevailed*, wrote Robert Hall Jr., *and the English became the most irreligious people on the earth*.²² (To be continued.)

¹ Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment? (1784).

² Quoted by Bryan Magee in *The Story of Philosophy*, 88.

³ *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689).

⁴ *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779).

⁵ Quoted by George Marsden in *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 13.

⁶ G. R. Balleine, *A History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England*, 15.

⁷ *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers, Etc.* (1751), 34.

⁸ Letter LXXXIII.

⁹ Quoted by Rosamond Bayne-Powell in *Travellers in Eighteenth-Century England*, n.p.

¹⁰ 13–14.

¹¹ Translated by James Schmidt in *What Is Enlightenment: Eighteenth Century Answers and Twentieth Century Questions*, ed. James Schmidt, 61.

¹² Quoted by Balleine, 16.

¹³ *The Miscellaneous Works and Remains of the Rev. Robert Hall* (1853), 478.

¹⁴ *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, vol. 5, p. 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3, 4.

¹⁶ William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism*, 142–43.

¹⁷ Edwin Sidney, *The Life and Ministry of the Rev. Samuel Walker*, B. A., 4.

¹⁸ See Faith Cook's *William Grimshaw of Haworth*, 9–17.

¹⁹ *The Works of the Rev. John Berridge*, A.M., 5.

²⁰ *Travels, Chiefly on Foot, through Several Parts of England, in 1782*, 71–72.

²¹ *Christian Leaders of the 18th Century*, 17.

²² *Miscellaneous Works*, 478. 

Bring . . . the Books

*Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy—
The Life and Testimony of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

As Adolf Hitler and the Nazis seduced a nation, bullied a continent, and attempted to exterminate the Jews of Europe, a small number of dissidents and saboteurs worked to dismantle the Third Reich from the inside. One of these was Dietrich Bonhoeffer—a pastor and author, known as much for such spiritual classics as *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together*, as for his 1945 execution in a concentration camp for his part in the plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler.

With these words Eric Metaxas introduces *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy—A Righteous Gentile vs. the Third Reich* (Thomas Nelson, 2010), the first major biography on Bonhoeffer in almost half a century. From the author of *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*, this new biography of Bonhoeffer has to be one of the best books I have read this year.

Using resources only recently made available, Metaxas presents a riveting, informative, and even inspiring picture of the life of this complex man. Though well known in broader Evangelicalism, Bonhoeffer's life and contribution have been largely unknown in more conservative circles. So it was with great interest that I opened this new biography and was so captured by the story that I stayed up an entire night reading the book! I literally could not put it down.

Metaxas' compelling writing style draws the reader into a world where theology, suffering, and the politics of a global war were woven inextricably into the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The author places the reader on the front lines of the struggle that Christian pastors and leaders faced on both sides of the conflict as Hitler seized power and systematically commandeered and dismantled the German church founded by Luther centuries earlier. These events transpired in a complicated social and political context that is little known or appreciated by most modern conservative believers. Most of us know Bonhoeffer primarily as Barth's protégé and as a political activist whose martyrdom for a good cause does not remove the stain of his neo-orthodox theology. While we are rightfully suspicious of aspects of his theology, I suspect that greater familiarity with his experiences and their larger context might give us greater appreciation for his life.

He was trained by leading liberal theologians of the day, including Adolf von Harnack. So it is especially significant that Bonhoeffer, despite this liberal indoctrination, held to the primary doctrinal truths central to the person and work of Christ. The surprising thing about Bonhoeffer is not so much his neo-orthodoxy (which was actually a reaction against liberalism), but rather his staunch commitment to orthodoxy when it came to the gospel, to Christ, and in certain regards, to the Church.


Almost from the start, Bonhoeffer perceived the danger Hitler posed to the existence of Christianity

in Germany and was stunned when many of his professors and peers supported Hitler. By contrast, Bonhoeffer spoke repeatedly and loudly on both sides of the ocean, warning the Church to stand against Hitler's demands and deception and decrying Nazi posturing in the early years while Hitler was still attempting to appease German church leaders. Bonhoeffer was convinced that the church's capitulations would lead to her eventual evisceration. His concerns were largely ignored. However, he found an ally in another older theologian, Karl Barth, who was convinced that the liberal theology being taught in German seminaries had brought German Christianity to its knees long before Hitler appeared on the scene.

As persecution of the Church increased in Germany, so did Bonhoeffer's conviction that something radical must be done to stop it at the highest levels. Here is how he expressed it.

If we want to be Christians, we must have some share in Christ's large-heartedness by acting with responsibility and in freedom when the hour of danger comes. . . . Mere waiting and looking on is not Christian behavior. The Christian is called to sympathy and action, not in the first place by his own sufferings, but by the sufferings of his brethren, for whose sake Christ suffered.

It was this conviction that eventually led Bonhoeffer to consent to use his family connections to aid and advance a failed plot against Hitler's life. Whatever one thinks of Bonhoeffer's participation in the assassination plot, and however distant we remain from his neo-orthodoxy, there can be no doubt that he lived and died for convictions that many conservative Evangelical leaders claim but without his fervency or will to suffer for those beliefs.

I found myself unusually captivated by his life, his struggle to warn his Christian brothers of the danger he saw, the complicated context of his difficult decisions and questionable actions, and his execution with its ongoing impact. One wonders what Bonhoeffer might have been had he been trained by and embraced conservative Christianity instead of liberalism and neo-orthodoxy. One also wonders what we, who claim and embrace true Biblical orthodoxy, would have done had we been in his shoes. In any case, it is a life well worth pondering and a book well worth reading. 

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

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Straight Cuts

The Prodigal Son: God's Unfinished Story

Have you ever wondered why the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) ends as it does? Perhaps you've simply accepted it as satisfying: the celebration goes on, and the elder brother's objection has been refuted. What more can there be? Perhaps our failure to see that the story is, in fact, glaringly unfinished begins with our missing the insolence of the elder son's tirade. "Look! All these years I've been slaving for you, and I never disobeyed your commands. And yet you never gave me so much as a small kid to have a party with my friends. But when this son of yours who has wasted your money with prostitutes comes home, you kill for him the fattened calf!"

How does the sensitive reader react to this outburst? For one thing, he wonders how the father will respond. That young man deserves to taste some of his own blood. Will the father manifest the reader's outrage?

We also likely miss how perfectly the father answers the details of the son's complaint (vv. 31, 32). First, the son said he had been slaving for his father; the father restates the fact from a better perspective: "All this time you have been with me." While the prodigal strayed, the elder son had enjoyed the privileges of the father's presence. Second, to the son's complaint that the father had never given him the smallest animal for a party, the father replies that he shares in the whole estate. The prodigal may be welcomed home, but he has no more inheritance! Third, how it must have hurt the father to hear the utter lack of brotherly love evident in those hissing words, "This son of yours." Perhaps the father got a little more aggressive when he said, "This *brother* of yours was dead and is alive again!" But probably we betray our carnality again, and the intensity of those words more likely reflected the father's demeanor toward him from the first: pleading with him (v. 28) to manifest a repentance of his own.

Here Jesus ends the story. Are you satisfied? How can you be satisfied? If we have read the story well, we simply *must* know how the elder son responds. Why doesn't Jesus tell us? Great question!

The answer lies in the situation the story addresses. Verses 1 and 2 set the scene: sinners come to Jesus, and the Pharisees and scribes resent His receiving them. So He tells them one parable (v. 3) in three episodes. In each episode someone loses something, recovers it, then celebrates with friends. The point is to vindicate Jesus' celebrating with the sinners who come to Him.


The third episode, though, moves beyond the celebration. Up through verse 24 Jesus has included in the parable only characters representing Himself, the people He is recovering, and those who join the celebration. The objecting Pharisees do not appear until verse 25 in the character of the elder brother. In this light, why Jesus ends the story as He does becomes apparent. Just as the father corrected the elder son, Jesus has now corrected those who object to His celebrating. Until the Pharisees respond, there is no more story to tell.

Of course, we now know their response. Soon they crucified Him, and the right continuation of the story would be for the elder brother to sulk off, seethe in his resentment, and eventually murder his father.

But this is still no satisfying ending. The father represents Deity. Deity cannot be left dead, and we know that not long after the cross comes the empty tomb.

If we really know the nature of our Father, though, we remain unsatisfied still. The story begins, "A certain man had two sons" (v. 11). Can we be content with God's loss of one of His sons? Perhaps so; people are of two types: sinners who come to repentance and sinners who do not. The unrepentant suffer eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord (2 Thess. 1:9). The elder brother, though, seems especially to represent self-righteous national Israel. We know that God is not yet finished with Israel and that He will eventually win Israel back to Himself.

How much better, then, to see in this story just the first part of the story of all God's saving work. Among God's true children are those who overtly rebel and eventually come to their senses and return. But also among His true children are those who nourish a self-righteousness that demeans repentant sinners and stumbles over their conversion. Yet God will eventually bring them to repentance too. Most of God's Gentile children fit better into the first category, and most of His Jewish children fit better into the second. But where do the lost fit? The best answer seems to be that Jesus simply was not talking about them. This is a story about a man and his two sons. To the lost, Jesus says, "I never knew you" (Matt. 7:23).

What a story! Not yet finished, but what a day it will be when God finally has the hearts of all of His sons. 

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

Windows

Modern Applications of Idolatrous Associations

In 1 Corinthians 10:14 the apostle Paul instructs the Corinthian believers to run like a fugitive from idolatry. The specific form of idolatry under discussion as noted in 8:10 was participation in feasts at the pagan temple. Gordon Fee suggests and provides support for the assertion that these feasts in the temple precincts were like the country club, banquet hall, or restaurant of our day where nearly every kind of occasion both religious and social was celebrated. “The gods were thought to be present since the meals were held in their honor and sacrifices were made; nonetheless, they were also intensely social occasions for the participants” (Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 361).

This is why in the paragraph subsequent to the admonition to flee, the legs of Paul’s reasoning all have to do with religious feasts. In verses 16, 17 he cites the Christian feast of the Lord’s Supper, in which believers partake of elements that are tokens of the Lord’s broken body and shed blood, and by doing so testify of their fellowship with other believers to the benefits of the atonement. In verse 18 he makes reference to the various holy feasts of Israel of old that bound the congregation together in the common worship of Jehovah. And then in verses 19, 20 he returns to the matter of cultic feasts in the pagan temple that were in the honor of idols. The idol in verse 19 may be just a stick or stone, but in verse 20 there is a real demonic presence behind those idols. With the entire flow of the rationale in view, the issue in verses 21, 22 is one of fundamental allegiance. A believer in Christ cannot participate in the Lord’s Table and then sit down at a feast in the honor of pagan deities in the idol temple. You will provoke God to jealousy, and, if unrepentant, you will bring on yourself His judgment. That was the message to the Corinthians in this context, and it remains a challenge to us today about our fundamental allegiance.

In addition to this primary thrust of the passage, there are some secondary lessons suggested from the forbiddance of idol feasts. Let me state and attempt to illustrate three of these lessons.

First, some places on the earth are so marked by anti-God dynamics that frequenting the establishment raises questions about ultimate allegiance.

Visit the website of a local theater. Here is ours: cinemasofwhitewater.com. I can’t even print the title of one of the current movies without being inappropriate and can’t remember the last time I took notice of the sign announcing current movies without finding at least one title offensive. Once you discover what is showing, look online for a family friendly movie review site and read the reviews of multiple movies. Again, the mere printing of the reviews for the first two PG movies showing locally would be defiling, and the content would run

into explicit black and white condemnation from several Scriptural texts. Spending less than thirty minutes in an exercise like this for nearly any theater in the country would yield similar results. When an establishment advertises itself as a source of entertainment content condemned by the Scripture, how could frequenting the establishment not raise questions of allegiance? What should believers

think about staying at casinos not for the gambling and all that goes with it but for the cheap hotel rooms? Or what should believers think about frequenting bars because of the great food and the availability of sporting events on big screens? Are casinos and bars primarily known for cheap hotel rooms and great food, or are they known for some of the greatest displays of the lust of the flesh to be observed anywhere on the earth? Paul’s argument throughout chapters 8–10 has been that frequenting the temple even in the name of the temple feasts has the potential of damaging other Christians (8:9), hindering the gospel (8:9), of having a more negative effect on the individual himself than what he may realize (10:1–13), and bringing into question the church member’s ultimate allegiance (10:14–22).

Second, do not be dismissive of the reality of the demonic.

The worship of idols, Paul declared, does involve demonic activity. American pastors might be more aware of this reality if we lived and ministered in another culture. James Fraser, missionary to China from 1908 to 1938, ministered primarily to a people known as the Lisu who lived in the mountains and had been steeped in demon worship for centuries. One of the first families to profess faith in Christ in the mountains reported to Mr. Fraser, “It has been fine since we became Christians! The evil spirits don’t get after us now like they used to. People say that most of the Lisu up at the Valley of Ease are waiting to see if anything happens to our Tsai family; if not many of them want to be Christians too.” His biographer wrote, “Persuasion to pay half-hearted lipservice to God for a while would be a relatively harmless exercise; it could co-exist with a demon shelf anyway. But if the Spirit of the Living God were to regenerate the hearts of these people and set up His Kingdom there, it would be another matter; it would demonstrate the victory won at the Cross. The enemy would make an onslaught against any such possibility.”

Subsequent events in the Tsai family well illustrate the commentary of Fraser’s biographer. This family of professing believers had been singing their hymns one evening when the father brought up

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

Charles Spurgeon

the question of the demon-shelf. His family at once decided that it was time to burn it and they immediately did. That night, the old man was seized with a back pain which soon spread to the whole body. His agony was so intense that the entire family was up trying to relieve his pain. Eventually they decided to ask God about it, and after prayer the pain eased and then gradually went away. There was a time when Fraser feared most of this family would be turned back to their old superstitions before nearly all eventually displayed their establishment in the faith.

There were others who turned back more decisively. One family named the Kohs originally professed faith in Jesus. At the time there were four sons living at home. Not long after James left, the youngest son became very sick. In accordance with Biblical teaching some at least went through some motions of praying for a recovery. As the sickness grew worse, they turned in desperation to a “diviner,” who told them that the sickness was caused by a “spirit seizure.” He told them what to offer: a pig or fowl or something of the sort—James later couldn’t recall what exactly he had heard—and from the time they offered it the boy began to recover. There was calm for a while, and then one night the boy and his next older brother went mad. The brother picked up a winnowing basket and beat it as if it were a gong, raving all the time and scaring everyone. Then the two climbed up onto a “table of honor” underneath the ancestral tablets, and the older boy shouted to his father, “Come over here and worship me or I am going to die.” The younger brother began to stuff his mouth with rice, which was only done to people ready to die to give them something to eat in the next life. The father, scared out of his mind, went and bowed down humbly before his sons. The older brother picked up a bowl of pottery and shouted, “I will show you earth people whether I have power or not,” and flung the bowl to the ground while all watched it fail to break in pieces as would be expected. The chaos eventually stopped, but in a short time the younger brother died. Not long after another brother scolded his wife in anger, to which she responded by taking opium and committing suicide. That brother ran away and was not heard of, for some time at least, and others believed it all happened because they forsook the worship of the spirits and turned to Jesus. These disappointments impressed on the mind of James Fraser that the battle for men’s souls must be won in prayer because there was a real and active and even violent enemy (Eileen Fraser Crossman, *Mountain Rain* [Wheaton: Harold Shaw 1994]; for the accounts of the Tsai and Koh families, see pp. 45–55; for special emphasis on prayer, see pp. 64–97).

Such dynamics exist not only in primitive cultures but in highly developed cultures as well. When the Lord used the ministry of Martyn Lloyd-Jones to be

instrumental for an awakening in Wales, a woman well known in the community for making her livelihood as a spirit-medium was sick and was unable to go out to lead a spiritist meeting she typically led on Sunday evenings. She lived not far from the church, and, while sitting at home, she saw numerous believers walking to church with evident anticipation of the blessing they would receive. It awakened a desire in her to attend a service herself, and when she did she was wonderfully converted to Christ and had a consistent testimony until her death. When she shared her testimony with the one who led her to the Savior she said, “The moment I entered your chapel and sat down on a seat amongst the people, I was conscious of a supernatural power. I was conscious of the same sort of supernatural power as I was accustomed to in our spirits meetings, but there was one big difference; I had a feeling that the power in your chapel was a clean power” (Iain Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth 1983], 221).

Third, be wary of an emphasis on things “spiritual” that are not Scriptural.

On March 14, 2009, the Grand Rapids Michigan Press ran an article titled “Rock ‘n’ Roll Can Soothe the Soul for Modern Christians.” The author, Charles Honey, cited a survey that points to the fact that a growing number of nondenominational Christians are packing out churches that are praising God with rock-style music and informal worship. He went on to add, “More people are seeking the spiritual wherever they can find it—crashing cymbals included.” The last section of the article suggests that if you want to find a noninstitutional faith surging through our culture, the Irish rock band U2, which has increasingly used some Biblical lyrics, is a great place to start. Honey notes that Andy Whitman, a music critic for *Christianity Today*, praised U2 for their “great spiritual and human songs” sung by Bono, an “aging, iconic rock star in love with Jesus and himself in equal measure.”

Honey’s reference to the American Religious Identification Survey put me on the path of stumbling over more indications of spurious spirituality. The latest results (published March 9, 2009) indicate that in the State of Wisconsin those claiming to have no religion increased from 6% to 15% over the course of a decade. One of the trends several recent reports and commentaries have highlighted is the growing numbers who claim to be spiritual but will make no claim to any church affiliation. An Eau Claire woman, for instance, was quoted as saying, “I have my own spirituality that I practice, and I don’t need to be in a group in order to fulfill my spiritual needs” (“Survey Shows Wisconsin Becoming Less Christian,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 10, 2009).

A “spiritual” aura and feelings of “spirituality” can be stimulated by any one of a number of sources, and when not anchored fast in the study of the Scripture—and with its truths renewing the mind and transforming the life—those dynamics can be very dangerous. ☞

Neither Jew nor Greek?

What relationship exists between national Israel and the Church after the cross of Christ? The answer to this question distinguishes dispensationalism from other systems of interpretation. A clear distinction between national Israel and the Church characterizes any dispensational system. There may be subtle differences regarding the relationship between Israel and the Church, but the Church is not Israel nor does the Church become Israel. Further, dispensationalists affirm that there is a real, earthly future for national Israel in fulfillment of promises made to her in the Old Testament.

In contrast, many mainstream Evangelicals blur this distinction. For example, commenting on Ephesians 2:11–22 John Piper concludes, “The picture here is that the true Israel becomes the church of Christ and the church of Christ emerges as the true Israel. And what unites this new people is Jesus. They are the people of Jesus. Not Jew and Greek, not slave and free, not male and female, not barbarian, Scythian, free, but Christ is all and in all (cf. Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11).”¹ Piper also says, “Our hearts’ desire and prayer to God is that Israel be saved (Romans 10:1)—that Israel according to the flesh become with us the true Israel, the body of Christ.”²

In a recent exchange this dispensational distinctive was called into question by a young believer. His claims included the following: that this distinctive insults the work of Christ; that this would “undo” what Christ accomplished in bringing Jew and Gentile together into one body, the Church; and that since Christ’s work on the cross destroyed the Jew/Gentile distinction in the Church, it is a tragic step backward to propose a renewed distinction in the future. Further, he stated that those who propose a renewed distinction between Jew and Gentile in the future evidence a Pharisaical carnal mind.

While there is much that needs to be addressed in this believer’s view, I will focus only on the notion that Christ destroyed the Jew/Gentile distinction in the Church. Several passages of Scripture address this distinction (Rom. 10:12; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:11–22; Gal. 3:28; and Col. 3:11). My goal in this article is simply to show that these verses do not teach a complete obliteration of the Jew/Gentile distinction in the Church.³ The Church is a multiethnic body, not a nonethnic body.



Andrew Hudson

Distinctions That Remain

Galatians 3:28 mentions three groups of people who have been equalized by the ministry of Christ: Jew/Greek, bond/free, and male/female. Paul mentions similar groups in Colossians 3:11. He focuses on Jews and Gentiles being reconciled into one new body in Ephesians 2:11–22. Romans 10:12 states that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. A closer examination of Scripture reveals that the reconciliation spoken of in these passages is not complete. Some of the distinctions between these groups remain even after salvation in Christ.

Male/Female: It is hardly necessary to argue that the physical distinctions between male and

female remain in the Church. In speaking of persecuting the Church, Paul says that he “persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women” (Acts 22:4; cf. 1 Cor. 7:2, 13; 1 Tim. 5:16; 1 Pet. 3:7). Paul’s distinction between “men and women” would make no sense had the physical difference between them disappeared in Christ.

In addition to the physical distinction that remained, ethical obligations demonstrate a continuing distinction between men and women in the Church. Women are instructed to avoid praying with an uncovered head (1 Cor. 11:5); to “keep silence in the church” (1 Cor. 14:34); to “learn in silence” (1 Tim. 2:11); not to teach and not “to usurp authority over the man” (1 Tim. 2:12). Older women are to teach the younger women (Titus 2:3, 4). The “aged men” are to be “sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience” (Titus 2:2). The “young men” are to be “[exhorted] to be sober minded” (Titus 2:6). Whatever the exact meaning of these passages, there is no doubt that the ethical instructions are gender specific. The roles of husband and wife are also gender specific (Eph. 5:22–33).

Clearly, male/female distinction remains in the Church. The physical and ethical teaching above would be senseless without this distinction.

Slave/Free: The slave/free status is not removed in the body of Christ. Paul instructs the Corinthians to remain slaves or free if they were saved in that status (1 Cor. 7:21–24). A believer who was a slave when he was saved is still a slave afterward.⁴ Paul sends Onesimus back to Philemon because he was a slave and, yet, now also a brother (Philem. 16). Paul also gives ethical obligations to both slaves and

masters (Eph. 6:5; 1 Tim. 6:1, 2; Titus 2:9, 10). These ethical duties would be senseless if a slave ceased to be a slave and a master ceased to be a master in the Church. These social distinctions remain in the body of Christ.

Jew/Gentile: Scripture teaches a continued distinction between Jew and Gentile in the Church. Saucy concludes, “After the beginning of the church, Israel is still addressed as a physical entity.”⁵ The Church never adopts the title Israel.⁶ The early church decided that its Gentile members need not keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved (Acts 15:1–29). Paul claimed to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; Eph. 3:1) even though he maintained his Jewish ethnicity (Acts 21:39; Gal. 2:14, 15). He claimed that the present time continues “until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom. 11:25). In the Church there is a remnant of Jews (Rom. 11:4, 5). Paul spoke of a time of restoration for Jews (Rom. 11:1, 2, 12, 26). The blessing of God on Gentiles in the Church is designed to make national Israel jealous, leading to national repentance (Rom. 11:11, 14). In the future kingdom, the twelve apostles will rule over the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28). To suggest that all ethnic distinction vanishes in the Church contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture.

Distinctions That Are Refuted

If Paul was not arguing for a complete removal of distinction what, then, is his point in these passages? First, Paul teaches that all are saved the same way. This refutes the Pharisaical notion of favor with God because of human works or status. Bruce suggests, “In Gal. 3:28 the choice of antitheses is apparently made with a view to overthrowing the threefold privilege which a pious Jew recalls morning by morning when he thanks God that He did not make him a Gentile, a slave or a woman.”⁷ In other words, supposed advantage with God because of gender, social status, or ethnicity simply is not true. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26; also Rom. 10:12, 13, “for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”).

IF PAUL WAS NOT ARGUING FOR A COMPLETE REMOVAL OF DISTINCTION WHAT, THEN, IS HIS POINT?

Second, Paul teaches that all believers share equally the benefits of salvation. This refutes the divisive claim that some have more spiritual clout with God than others. All have been baptized into Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27). All are one in Christ and are “heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). All are reconciled to God (Eph. 2:16). All have put off the old man and put on the new man, making transformation into the image of Christ possible (Col. 3:9–11). All are equipped by the Spirit for service in the Church (1 Cor. 12:12ff). All have equal access to God the Father via prayer (Eph. 2:18). “Paul simply has in

mind that all believers, no matter what their racial, social, or gender status, share the same spiritual status in their union with Christ.”⁸

Third, Paul teaches that all believers are equal members of the same body. This refutes the false notion of Jewish superiority in the Church. Ephesians 2:11–22 argues that the hostility (2:15) between Jew and Gentile under the Law has been erased by the blood of Christ (2:13). Hoehner describes this hostility: “Paul shows that the Jews considered the Gentiles uncircumcised, indicating that they had no favor with God because they lacked the covenant seal. Furthermore, not only were they not circumcised but they had none of the privileges that God graciously gave to the Jews.”⁹ The refutation of this false notion was accomplished by removal of the Law of Moses and the creation of one new body—the Church (2:15). The Church did not join Israel or become Israel. Paul confirms that God created one “new man” or “body” (Church) by means of the cross that consisted of both Jew and Gentile at peace with God and with each other (2:15, 16).

Conclusion

There are two aspects to those passages that equalize Jew/Gentile, male/female, and slave/free. With respect to spiritual status and benefit, God treats every person the same. With regard to function, God still maintains clear distinctions between ethnic, social, and gender groups. This functional distinction was never removed at the cross. Passages that equalize status in no way eliminate distinction in function. Quite the contrary, the New Testament affirms the multiethnic makeup of the Church.

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¹ John Piper, “Israel and Us Reconciled in One Body,” sermon, September 27, 1992, http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByDate/1992/810_Israel_and_Us_Reconciled_in_One_Body/. Accessed March 20, 2010.

² Ibid.

³ The prophesied distinction between Jew and Gentile in the future is not a “tragic step backward” from what Christ accomplished on the cross through His blood (see Isa. 14:1, 2; 49:22, 23; Zech. 8:22, 23). One cannot logically “step back” from a change that never occurred.

⁴ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 320.

⁵ Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 70.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ F. F. Bruce and E. K. Simpson, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 275.

⁸ Peter R. Shemm Jr., “Galatians 3:28—Proof-text or Context?” *Journal of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8 (Spring, 2003), 23.

⁹ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 352.

A photograph of two men in a river. The man on the left, wearing a white shirt and dark pants, is holding the other man's shoulders and has his right hand raised. The man on the right, also in a white shirt and dark pants, is standing waist-deep in the water, facing away from the camera. The background is a blurred green landscape.

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On Spirit Baptism

Three new entities were introduced at Pentecost: the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Spirit baptism, and local churches. These three characterize the present age as distinct from OT periods or others after the Rapture. Jesus predicted to His disciples that whereas the Holy Spirit had been with (accompanied, departed from) certain individuals, soon they would experience a new relationship, the indwelling of the Spirit. Just one passage informs us of this important change (John 14:16, 17). There are but few recorded predictions from Him of a new alignment of His followers in local churches (Matt 16:18; 18:15–18). Following the Gospels, this aspect is extensively developed.

In some respects, the third of these newly introduced alignments is the most important—that commonly called Spirit baptism (which I will customarily label immersion to avoid confusion with other practices which are mistakenly called baptism). Although perhaps the most important, it is surely the most neglected, overlooked, or misrepresented of the three.

We can easily comprehend indwelling and distinguish it from the filling of the Spirit. The nature and activities of churches are evident in Acts and the Epistles. We cannot “see” the indwelling; we can “see” local churches. The human mind has difficulty for some reason being able to comprehend NT references to immersion by the Spirit.

John the Immerser was the first to announce Spirit immersion, declaring it to be like but greater than his water immersion. “I indeed [immerse] you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall [immerse] you with the Holy Ghost” (Matt 3:11; cf. Mark 1:7, 8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). John’s immersion in water was a teaching activity pointing to a great reality soon to follow. His immersion was not a liturgical procedure. It was never a part of Temple ritual or practiced in Judaism. As a divinely appointed didactic action, likenesses of water immersion were to prepare followers to comprehend the greater Spirit immersion about to begin as commanded by this now-revealed Messiah.

John’s water immersion can be broken down into individual aspects: (1) an immerser, (2) an element into which one would be immersed, (3) a candidate desiring to be immersed and showing himself qualified to be immersed, (4) the lowering of the entire body into water, and (5) the raising of the body from the water. That meant John or one of his disciples as the immerser, water deep enough, one repentant, and the action of lowering and raising, probably with proclamation of the importance and significance of the action.

John taught that to escape the wrath to come individuals should repent. He boldly proclaimed God’s provision for that deliverance: “Behold the Lamb of God, which

taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29; cf. 1:36). Thus, before Jesus began His public ministry, two of the greatest events of world history were predicted concerning Him: His death as the perfect Lamb of God for the sins of all mankind and His immersion of believers by the Spirit.

The likeness of immersion is used in four ways in Scripture: of the death of Jesus and His resurrection, of our death to sin and enlivenment unto a redeemed life, of the physical death of a believer and his future bodily resurrection, and of this immersion by the Holy Spirit. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3, 4). “Buried with him in [immersion], wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:12). “For by one Spirit are we all [immersed] into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13).

All believers are declared now to be one in Jesus (cf. Rom. 6:4). We are immersed into Jesus—by whom or what? Not by some human agent. Such divine activity can be by no other than the Holy Spirit. The change from spiritually dead to spiritually alive took place at our conversion, a work of the Holy Spirit, just as it had taken place in the lives of all who truly trusted God through the former ages. What was different following Pentecost? There is now a special divine placement into Christ, a union in His death and a resurrection power enabling us to live as honors Him, the promised immersion by the Spirit.

Jesus as well as John the Baptist promised the immersion by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is not the immerser. It is the Spirit who immerses us, that is, unites us in the death of the Messiah and simultaneously unites us in a new spiritual oneness with the Messiah. Note that this “body” of which believers are now a part is not eternal Deity (Jesus eternally was God) nor is this in any fashion a part of His human body (now resurrected and in Heaven). This is a new alignment in which the redeemed have a glorious oneness in Christ and spiritual interrelationships with fellow believers. Christ is the Head of this body, but its parts function in various ways. There is no hint of any gathering together of this spiritual body prior to the Rapture. Jesus also instituted local spiritual bodies, congregations of which He is the Head.

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Too Much Screen Time?

Brenda Needham

The American Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the average American child spends twenty-one hours weekly watching television. Added to this are fourteen hours of screen time on computers, cell phones, and video games. Thus in a week the average young person spends thirty-five hours looking at some sort of screen. This is almost equivalent to a full-time adult work week. The cumulative effect of this much screen time on a child's development is significant.

About thirty years ago secular author Marie Winn released an insightful book entitled *The Plug-In Drug*, dealing with the effects of television on the minds and behaviors of children. In a more recent edition, the author added computers, video games, and other forms of screen time to her study. Winn's book is unusual in that she doesn't concern herself with the *content* of screen time, but with the actual medium itself.

The author asks several compelling questions of parents who let their children spend too much time in front of a screen. One significant question is, "What would your kids be doing if they weren't looking at a screen?" She follows up with the question, "Would your kids be better off doing something else?" Historically when kids had free time they participated in some physical activity. Or they had a hobby, played games with their siblings, did chores, practiced an instrument, or read a book. If young people exchanged a majority of their thirty-five hours of weekly screen time for any of these more worthwhile activities, would they not be better off?

A second question asked by the author is, "When screen time fills our children's days, what are we avoiding?" She discovered that parents often used television to avoid conflict. The TV was turned on when children were annoying each other or getting on their parents' nerves. But if screen time is used to keep kids from being annoying, when will parents take the time to teach the family how to get along with each other?

The TV was also turned on when children claimed they were bored and had "nothing to do." If every time kids are bored, they are allowed to passively look at a screen, why should they ever make the effort to do something more worthwhile? Filling our time with media is often a sign of laziness—it's just easier to turn

on a screen than it is to "do something."

Technology is everywhere. I don't have to teach my children to behave at the doctor's office because they can just stare at a DVD. My children don't have to be patient in the grocery store because I can rent a shopping cart that plays videos. No one has to socialize in the car—we can all plug in to our own medium of choice. We can eat out without talking to each other because the television in the restaurant is distracting us. Young people can sit side-by-side, staring at their cell phones instead of talking to each other. Because screens are on at every turn, everyone is looking and no one is talking.

Children aren't learning how to socialize, solve interpersonal problems, or relate to each other because they aren't interacting with other people. The author even surmises that the escalation of violence among children is not really related to watching violent *content* on television. Instead, she contends that children's violence stems from undeveloped social skills, since they spend their time watching a screen instead of interacting with people.

How should Christians relate to media? While it is true that most forms of technology are (apart from sinful content) morally neutral, it is helpful to keep in mind the original purpose of each.

Television was developed as a source of entertainment, so its wisest use comes in watching an occasional movie or DVD when amusement (enjoyment without thinking) is in order. Video games are at best a diversion from more useful pursuits and should be only a temporary respite from more profitable activity. A cell phone is designed to pass on information quickly, not maintain a constant running dialogue. A computer is a machine that can aid us in our work.

Technologies were designed to be tools, either to help us in the tasks of real life or to give us an occasional break from daily responsibility. But now in our society technology has become a lifestyle. Schedules are ordered around *TV Guide* listings. Kids hurry home from school to play video games. Teenagers stay up late updating Facebook accounts and checking on all their friends. Kids are pressured to see the latest movie or

Continued on page 32

Among the ancients, they immersed the whole body in water. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church.
—John Calvin

Whatever the dispensational interpreter may do to the Sermon on the Mount, it might not be as bad as the nondispensationalist's adjusting and spiritualizing.
—Charles C. Ryrie

God's plan for history is to reveal His glory, and He does this not only by saving men but by fulfilling His purpose through His dealings with Israel, with the Church, and with the nations.
—Lewis Sperry Chafer

I and others who are rightminded Christians on all points are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead and a thousand years at Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged as the prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah, and others declare.
—Justin Martyr in dialogue with Trypho, a Jew

It is admitted on all sides that the premillennial coming of Christ and His reign with His saints on earth for a thousand years was the faith of the early church.
—W. E. Blackstone

The most striking point in the eschatology of the Ante-Nicene Age is the prominent chiliasm or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years before the general resurrection and judgment.
—Philip Schaff

Covenant Theology insists that there is no essential distinction between the Mosaic Covenant (the Law) and the New Covenant.
—Renald E. Showers

Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialist pictures.
—F. E. Hamilton

Interpretation is one; application is manifold.
—Franz Delitzsch

The church age is not one in which the good finally triumphs over the evil and all along the way things get better and better in the world.
—Charles L. Feinberg

Baptism is a Greek word, and may be translated immersion. . . . I would have those who would be baptized to be altogether dipped into the water.
—Martin Luther

If the many prophecies relating to the millennial kingdom are taken in the natural sense, they describe a dispensation that is different from that of the Law and also from the present age of grace.
—John F. Walvoord

Recognizing dispensations does not automatically make a man a dispensationalist.
—Charles C. Ryrie

Covenant theology denies the distinction between the nation of Israel and the Church.—Renald E. Showers

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

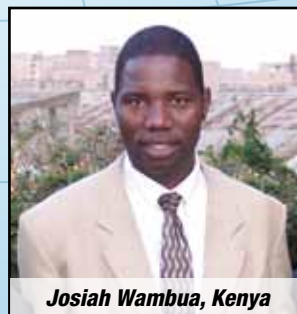
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Regional Reports

Doug Wright

Pacific Rim Meeting, Cebu, Philippines (June 2009)

EDITOR'S NOTE: We often hear questions about the "international" ministry of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship **International**. The Lord has allowed us to work with groups of pastors in South America—Brazil, Argentina, and Bolivia. Annual meetings are held in Romania. Frequent other meetings are coming together in Africa—Ghana and Zimbabwe. We are working through national leaders and missionaries in other countries. One of the best organized international fellowships is in the Pacific Rim. Beginning in 2004, well-planned and well-attended meetings have been held in Tokyo, Cebu (Philippines), and Singapore. The next meeting is scheduled for Harvest Baptist Church in Barrigada, Guam, June 21–23, 2011. Here is a recent report from the last meeting.

Two to three hundred people were able to come together for the evening services at the June 2009 regional fellowship. The Pacific Rim meeting was held at the DepED-ECOTECH Center in Cebu City. Dr. Peter Maruyama, Dr. David Innes, Dr. Ron White, Dr. and Mrs. Bob Jones III, and Mr. and Mrs. Ed Rea rallied around Psalm 96:1, "O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth." This meeting drew pastors from such places as Thailand, Viet Nam, Cambodia, and several other countries. Pastor F. G. Homsher from Harvest Baptist in Guam said he was personally blessed by Dr. Innes's message on Fundamentalism. He also commented on how needed and valuable the Reas' music seminar was. Many of these men are in closed countries and have limited information on some very sensitive subjects. In spite of these limitations, God is doing great things in the midst of persecution.

Arizona Regional Fellowship (March 1–2, 2010)

Pastor Mike Sproul and Tri-City Baptist Church in Chandler, Arizona, hosted a two-day meeting for thirty-seven pastors including several pastors new to the regional meeting. This region has had monthly prayer and fellowship times that have been a great encouragement to the brethren. This prayer time was included as a part of the regional fellowship. An hour and a half of prayer formed the foundation of Tuesday's preaching and workshops. Dr. Kevin Schaal (Glendale), Pastor Dan Budgick (Tucson), Pastor Dick Mercado (Litchfield Park), and Dr. David

Stertzbach (Tucson) were the speakers. The theme of the conference was "Biblical Truth."

Northwest Regional Fellowship (March 15–17, 2010)

Pastor Rick Coursen and the people of First Baptist Church in Sedro Woolley, Washington, had over thirty pastors join them for their fellowship. Evangelist Jeremy Frazor and his team were holding meetings at several churches in the area. This afforded the fellowship the privilege of having Brother Frazor as well as Pastor Jeff Musgrave



preach on the theme "Discipleship and Evangelism." Steve Pabody, assistant pastor at First Baptist, noted that the Frazors' team added significantly to the meeting by providing music as well as meetings for the teens and children. In the evening services the area churches attended, bringing the attendance to around one hundred and fifty.

Three Rivers Regional Fellowship (April 19–20, 2010)

"Preaching to the Heart" was the theme for Dr. John Vaughn and Pastors Tim Jordan, Daryl Jeffers, Charles Maddaus, and Don Harward. Evangelist Mike Shrock's songleading has added enthusiasm to many of the FBFI meetings, and the Three Rivers Fellowship (Morgantown, West Virginia) was no exception. The host pastor, Bennie Moran, noted that this was among the best regional meetings he has ever attended. Approximately twenty-five pastors joined him for the preaching, fellowship over lunch at Faith Baptist, and an excursion to Coopers Rock.

New England Regional Fellowship (Rescheduled)

The New England Regional Meeting has been postponed. Cornerstone Baptist in Scarborough, Maine, will host the meeting on October 25–26, 2010. Pastor Mark Minnick will present several messages dealing with recent trends in "worship."

Faith That Honors the Lord

We are living in a time when fear governs the lives of millions. However, for the truly born-again believer, faith is what should govern our lives. In Mark 11:22 we read, "And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God." In this verse, the Lord Jesus declared that faith has a focus, and that focus is God. The Scriptures also tell us that the key to overcoming the world is faith. First John 5:4 says, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Fear will overwhelm and lead to defeat; but faith will overcome and lead to victory.

The child of God is walking through a world where he must shield himself from its ungodly attacks. The Scriptures declare how this can be done. Ephesians 6:16 says, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." As we examine in God's Word the lives of men whom He used, we find that their lives were governed by faith. The Bible speaks of Abraham in Romans 4:20, 21: "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." We read of Moses in Hebrews 11:24, 25: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." The Scriptures say of Noah in Hebrews 11:7, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Then the writer of the book of Hebrews climaxes this marvelous chapter by saying in verses 32-34, "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

Here we see that these men of God lived their lives by faith—and this is exactly how God wants us to live today. Romans 14:23 says, "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin." And Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him."

When my wife and I stepped out in evangelism, we told the Lord that we would give our first love offering entirely back to Him as an expression of our gratitude of His calling us into evangelism. By the way, we had only six meetings when we started. In our first meeting, we had two bankers saved. We got the biggest love offering of our entire first year; I believe the Lord was testing the sincerity of our hearts. We gave it all back to Him, and He began to flood us with meetings. We were booked so heavily that I preached for sixteen weeks in a row, and my wife sang every night of those meetings. Ironically, we both had a dream the same night. I dreamt that I was so exhausted from preaching that I collapsed in the pulpit. Sharon dreamed that she went up on the platform to sing wearing a housecoat and one shoe!

God will always honor us when we realize the truth of Hebrews 10:38: "Now the just shall live by faith." Second Corinthians 5:7 says, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." We will never see the Lord's power in our lives if we do not live by faith. In the Old Testament, God told Joshua to go and defeat the city of Jericho. His war plan was astounding. He told Joshua to have the children of Israel march around Jericho once every day for six days. Then on the seventh day, they were to march around seven times and then give a great shout, and the walls of Jericho would fall down. They did exactly as the Lord instructed, and Hebrews 10:38 says, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

Someone has said, "Faith honors God, and God will always honor faith." What "walls" do you want to see fall down in your life? What do you want to see God accomplish in your life? Whatever it is, it cannot be done without faith. Our prayer should be that of Luke 17:5: "And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith."

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THE EPISTLE

Orthodoxy and orthopraxy go hand in hand. This column has recently explored John's exposition of that truth in his epistles. Jude, like most of the other General Epistles, enunciates this same spiritual law even more forcefully. It is a principle the contemporary church desperately needs to recover. "In perhaps no area of Western Christendom is the failure to take account of itself more apparent than in the area of self-discipline and moral formation," observes J. Daryl Charles ("Interpreting the General Epistles," in *Interpreting the New Testament*, ed. by Black and Dockery). "Miming common culture, the [modern] church would rather make people feel good about themselves than have them conform to ethical and communal norms. . . . It is a scandal when the Christian community divorces morality from the message of divine grace." Charles continues, "The General Epistles very much counter this tendency. . . . Surely it is no exaggeration to suggest that there have been periods during the church's history when these writings were the most relevant books in all the NT." We may be in just such a period now.

Introduction to Jude

The author, "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James," has traditionally been held to be the brother of the leader of the church in Jerusalem and, hence, also the Lord's half-brother. No other "James" was eminent enough to be referred to without further qualification. It is impossible to date Jude with certainty; nothing in the epistle itself connects it to any particular event. Nevertheless, the content does require a date late enough for false teaching (its central subject) to have arisen, and early enough for the recipients to have heard the apostles themselves (Jude 17, 18).

Thematic links between Jude and Peter's epistles, especially 2 Peter, are numerous.

Jude	2 Peter
4	2:1-3
5a	1:12
6	2:4
7	2:6
8	2:10
9	2:11
10	2:12

Jude	2 Peter
12a	2:13b
12b	2:17a
13	2:17b
16b	2:18
16b	2:3
17, 18	3:2, 3
24	1:10, 11

The similarities suggest that one is echoing the other's warning but with some modifications for his own audi-

ence; the wording, even where similar, is almost never identical.

But important elements distinguish Peter and Jude. Second Peter is broader in scope, challenging the readers to pursue the only antidote to the dangers posed by false teachers and false teaching—stability in their faith through Word-centered growth in their knowledge of Christ. In other words, Peter emphasizes the proper defensive posture against false teaching, coupled with a personally proactive strategy—"Beware lest ye . . . fall. . . . **But grow in grace**" (2 Pet. 3:17, 18). Jude devotes his epistle almost entirely to describing the nature and destiny of false teachers and their teaching. In other words, Jude emphasizes the proper proactive posture against false teaching, without neglecting the necessary personally defensive strategy—"Earnestly contend for the faith . . . building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 3b, 20, 21).

The messages of Peter and Jude complement one another. The presence of two epistles of such similar content and focus near the end of the apostolic era underscores the pervasive reality of the danger of which Paul had warned years earlier (Acts 20:29, 30; 1 Tim. 4:1, 2; 2 Tim. 3:1-8, 13; 4:3, 4; Titus 1:10, 11, 16). Both Peter and Jude remind their readers of just such warnings (2 Pet. 3:2, 15, 16; Jude 17, 18).

Key Themes

Jude contrasts believers, addressed as *beloved* (3, 17, 20) with the *ungodly* (5x in 4, 15). Jude focuses on *certain men* (4) within the church (12) whose lives and/or doctrine contradicts the truth of the gospel. Rather than labeling them, Jude employs about thirty descriptive phrases and metaphors to expose their character and behavior (see vv. 4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19). Their judgment is described graphically and with certainty (4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 15).

Content Overview

1-2: Opening

3: Our posture toward the faith—*contend, fight, strive, agonize for it.*

Jude spells out one of the clearest indications of Spirit-guidance in writing this letter. A free translation gives familiar words fresh force:

Beloved, making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I received a compulsion to write to you, urging you to contend earnestly for the once-entrusted-to-the-saints faith.

OF JUDE

The logic of the grammar suggests that, while Jude intended to write about their common salvation, he was constrained to write instead about the imminent dangers to the Christian community (Schreiner, et al.). The repetition of the verb “write” supports an apparent change of intent and content. Apparently, Jude originally wanted to lay out for his audience an encouraging exposition of the salvation believers held in common, but the Holy Spirit redirected his thinking and drew his attention to a different priority, an urgent “necessity.” The infinitive *to contend earnestly* is an intensive form of the verb from which we derive our word *agonize*. It is the same term Paul uses (twice) in 1 Timothy 6:12 (“Fight the good fight of faith”). This is a passionate, forceful, striving, struggling, sweaty word of exertion.

4–19: Our posture toward those who attack, undermine, or pervert (in doctrine or practice) the faith that has been entrusted to us by God—identify them.

This is not to say that “contending earnestly” means name-calling or defamation. Jude’s point is not to furnish a Biblical vocabulary of verbal abuse but to unveil the true character and motives, strategies and influence, danger and destiny of such persons. Strong language can be delivered with a proper spirit without personalized “railing accusations” but with an express reliance on the Lord (9), out of loyalty to Him and to His truth. Such language as Jude employs is to be reserved for the outright enemies of the faith—not those of the household with whom we disagree (even rightly or on issues of significance).

20, 21: Our posture toward ourselves—Guard yourselves (by building, praying, looking).

Our security lies not in our militancy or bravado but in a humble reliance on the love of God, by constantly *building* ourselves up in our faith (cf. 2 Peter’s emphasis on personal spiritual stability through the Word), *praying* in the Holy Spirit, and *looking* for the mercy of Christ that is our only hope of eternal life.

22, 23: Our posture to those in danger of succumbing to false teaching—mercy and urgency.

Jude balances our posture against the influence of false teaching between two essential attitudes and activities: *contending* for the faith (3) and *compassion* for the deceived (22).

Message

Jude “is calling his readers to consider what follows when people who profess to be followers of Christ deny the faith in teaching and in life. . . . This letter is a strong challenge to its readers to oppose resolutely all teachings

and habits of life that profess to be Christian but deny the essence of the faith. . . . In our century it is the fashion to be tolerant of anything that calls itself Christian, no matter how wide of the gospel it may be. Clearly tolerance is important. . . . But Jude reminds us that there are limits. . . . It is possible to reinterpret the Christian life so that it ceases to be too demanding and degenerates into a way of living indistinguishable from that of the world” (Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction to the NT*, 463).

In his hymn “O Word of God Incarnate,” William How (1823–97) voices the historic ambition of the Church—to be “a lamp of purest gold”—wedding *doctrinal light* with *purity of life*.

O make Thy church, dear Savior,
A lamp of purest gold,
To bear before the nations
Thy true light as of old.

There is much less sympathy, or even understanding, of that complementarity in modern, grace-abusing Christianity. “Contending earnestly for the once-entrusted-to-the-saints faith” is a call to a militant defense of the purity of the Christian faith—both in its doctrine and in a lifestyle that is consistent with that doctrine. “Militant” does not mean belligerent, mean-spirited, pugnacious, or arrogant—these are all manifestations of spiritual immaturity and/or personal insecurity. We do not operate from a position of weakness or vulnerability or insecurity or fearfulness. Mark Sidwell aptly condenses the Biblical posture and practice of separation that is the necessary consequence of earnestly contending for the faith.

True biblical separation is manifested in love: a love for God that rejects the world system, a love for the church that will not tolerate false teachers who desire to lead the sheep astray and to devour them, and a love for the Christian brother that is willing to endure even a break in fellowship in order to provoke him to do right. In the practice of separation, Christians should not become frustrated or vindictive. They should not be hasty to condemn others on the basis of unproven rumors. Instead they should demonstrate a godly patience because they know that God will eventually judge all ungodliness (Jude 14–15), whether it be the ungodliness of the world, of the false teacher, or of a disobedient brother (*The Dividing Line*, 67–68).

In this fight for the faith, our motivation is the fear of God (not man), loyalty to His truth (not to self), and love for His church (not for the fight).

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Ladies' Circle Continued from page 26

purchase the newest game package. Instead of relating to people, America now spends its time interacting with a screen.

Hopefully Christian young people are well below the thirty-five-hour weekly average for screen time. But to be lower than the national average should not be nearly enough to satisfy Christian parents. We are called to stand apart from our society, and simply falling below the national norms cannot qualify as a uniquely Christian lifestyle.

Turning on a screen may be easy, but it is often not the best choice for our family. The author of *The Plug-In Drug* concludes by saying, "It's time to stop watching and start living." As Christians we have the greatest cause to live for, and our lives are brief. Let's fill our lives with useful endeavors and teach our children to redeem their time as well.

Brenda Needham and her husband, Phil, are members of First Baptist Church in Troy, Michigan. They have four children, and Brenda conducts the string orchestras at Bethany Christian School and teaches private music lessons.

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Swiss Suicide Laws Revisited

Swiss police recently recovered over three hundred urns containing the ashes of patients of a local assisted suicide clinic from the bottom of Lake Zurich. The nation's lawmakers are bringing this issue back to the table. Many recognize the reputation that Switzerland has earned and understand that, believe it or not, suicide has become a tourism issue. Some Swiss hope to impose a large fee on those who come to Switzerland for help with assisted suicide as a potential disincentive. This article can be referenced at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Culture/Default.aspx?id=1002126>.

Hastings Law School Prevails

The Supreme Court ruled on Monday, June 28, that Hastings Law School can "legally deny recognition to a Christian group that won't let gays join." But the issue is not about recognition. The school may now banish from its facilities any group that does not follow the school's antidiscrimination guidelines.

The Christian Legal Society required its members (not attendees—everyone was welcome to attend their meetings) to sign a statement of faith. Part of that statement affirms that "unrepentant participation in or advocacy of a sexually immoral lifestyle" is not consistent with the Christian faith.

The 5-4 decision

effectively brought to an end what Justice Kennedy called "loyalty oaths." While Biblical and moral values were clearly being attacked in this decision, the logical result of such a decision is that no group can maintain any distinctiveness. It is now compelled to offer membership to people who are ideologically opposed to its founding charter. A society designed to promote animal rights must logically be allowed to admit hunters to their membership. Such logic is preposterous. This article can be referenced at http://www.mercurynews.com/breaking-news/ci_15393551?source=rss.

Evangelicals and Alcohol

A study was conducted by the National Association of Evangelicals regarding Christian leaders and alcohol consumption. Those polled were denominational leaders who associate with the NAE as well as CEOs of similarly minded Evangelical organizations. Two out of every five—or forty percent—of Evangelical leaders consume alcohol.

A recent Lifeway poll indicated that 29 percent of Christians polled believe that Christians should never drink. Only 24 percent of their pastors agreed. Sixty-eight percent of pastors claimed that "reasonable" consumption of alcohol is a "biblical liberty." Fifty-four percent of their congregants agreed. Yet ninety percent of those

same Christians believed that drinking alcohol could cause other believers to stumble or be confused. This article can be referenced at <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20100625/poll-2-in-5-evangelical-leaders-drink-alcohol/index.html>.

The Flotilla and Ezekiel 38

According to a June 3 *Arutz 7* article, a collective group of notable Jewish rabbis has stated that the Gaza flotilla incident may likely be the beginning of the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38. While Bible believers do not build their theology upon the speculations of other faiths, it is notable that even secular Jewish eyes can see the significance of the days in which we live.

The council, formed by Rabbi Zalman Melamed, was made up of notable rabbis from Judea and Samaria.

The article reports, "'Gog and Magog' is a reference to chapters 38 and 39 in the book of Ezekiel, a part of which is read on the intermediate Sabbath of Sukkot (Tabernacles). These chapters describe a vision of a war where the world is united against Israel that will precede the final redemption of Israel and the world. The prophecy's symbolism involves a prince called Gog of Magog, leader of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, who leads a coalition that includes Persia (Iran), Cush, Phut, Gomer, and Beit Togarmah against Israel."

This article can be referenced at <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/137869>.

Insights on the Professing Teenager

George Barna pollsters have just released the results of a December 2009 poll on the inner working of the American professing teenager. The focus of the poll was to accurately identify the motivating values of our youth.

His results revealed that college and career was the most important aspect of these teenagers' lives. A relationship with God made the second level of importance. Thirty-nine percent of youth definitely believed that they would have a close personal relationship with God by age twenty-five. Twenty-nine percent believed they would be actively involved and integrated into a local church. Only twelve percent believed they would be married by age twenty-five. Seven percent believed they would already have children.

Evangelicals, more than mainliners, were more likely to want an active relationship with God, active service through a local church, and service to the poor. They were also more interested in becoming famous than were their mainline denomination counterparts.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/13-culture/366-teenagers-want-successful-careers-and-global-travel-expect-to-delay-marriage-a-parenting->

Divestment

A study was conducted in 2008 by the United Methodist Church regarding Israeli and Palestinian issues as they relate to the denomination's investments. Their concern with Israel was likened to their concern with gambling, pornography, and alcohol: while they attempted to appear to have a balanced concern for people on both sides of the issue, their disdain and sanctions were directed only toward the nation of Israel.

Their rationale is disclosed on their website. One may download a PDF file entitled *Mission Study Update: Israel-Palestine* at <http://new.gbgbm-umc.org/missionstudies/israelpalestine/>. In the end, the Methodists believe Israelis to be occupiers. They desire to remove financial investment of \$141 million from companies that in their opinion aid the "occupation."

The report has been openly criticized by the Jewish community as "inflammatory, inaccurate, and polemical."

Israel has also received statements of censure from the Presbyterian USA denomination.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.forward.com/articles/12587/>.

PayPal and Islam

Robert Spencer and Pamela Geller both sponsor websites that speak boldly about Islam. They also both used PayPal to secure donations for their websites. Geller reasoned publically that PayPal was refusing to process their donations because of ideological differences. He subsequently cancelled his account.

Geller's blogging on the issue incensed her readers. They began a writing campaign while cancel-

NOTABLE QUOTES

They are unwittingly being "conformed to this world" by embracing its ideals and answering its appeals. The world is offering them a smorgasbord of ways to feel *alive and real and fulfilled*—all without God, which is the essence of worldliness.—Jim Berg

How unreasonable is the security of the multitudes of men. . . . They seem to live easily and undisturbed. Yea, and many of those who have been well instructed in this doctrine of the necessity of being born again . . . they don't trouble themselves about it. They have something else to mind: they mind the world, and are concerned to increase their estates, or mind their pleasures and their company, and let this matter of being born again be as it will.—Jonathan Edwards

Jesus Christ in his providence has placed me among you, this if I only pass you on the streets, you may have proof before your eyes of his gracious declaration, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men for the Son of Man's sake."—John Newton

There will be no significant maturing in the Christian experience until a believer comes to the realization that because of Christ's work on the cross on his behalf, he belongs *entirely* to God to be used *entirely* for God's purposes.—Jim Berg

I defy you to read the life of any saint that has ever adorned the life of the Church without seeing at once the greatest characteristic in the life of that saint was discipline and order. Invariably it is the universal characteristic of all outstanding men and women of God. Read about Henry Martyn, David Brainerd, Jonathan Edwards, the brothers Wesley, and Whitefield—read their journals. It does not matter what branch of the Church they belonged to, they have all disciplined their lives and have insisted upon the need for this; and obviously it is something that is thoroughly scriptural and absolutely essential.—D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

ling their personal accounts. PayPal offered to reinstate the accounts, but Spencer has refused. He writes, "I'm not interested in that. I think that we don't need to go hat in hand to people who are going to be buying into the leftist and Islamic supremacist lines that there's something wrong with what we're doing or that it's racist or bigoted or all that nonsense."

This article can be referenced at <http://www.onenewsnw.com/Culture/Default.aspx?id=1069032>.

The Bigotry of Higher Education

Julea Ward enrolled in Eastern Michigan University's graduate program in January of 2009. During a counseling practicum course, she was assigned a client who was seeking counsel regarding his homosexual relationship. Julea knew that her faith and convictions would not allow her to give the expected counsel. She spoke immediately to school officials about the situation.

She has reported their response as, "We don't care, we're going to kick you out anyways. We have no interest in accommodating your religious beliefs. You just need to believe like we do or we're going to kick you out of the program."

Arguments for her case are being heard. A ruling is expected in a couple of months.

This article can be referenced and the video feed viewed at <http://www.onenewsnw.com/Legal/Default.aspx?id=1069536>.

Compiled by Robert Conduct, FBFI Executive 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.

The Student Volunteer Movement's Detroit Roots, Part I

D. L. Moody is well known as one of the men instrumental in fostering the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM). Lesser known today, but just as involved then, was Arthur Tappan (A. T.) Pierson. His phrase “the evangelization of the world in this generation” became the rallying cry for John R. Mott and the Student Volunteer Movement. Before Pierson became a leader in world missions, it was necessary for God to first break his heart for the lost in the community he was a part of: Detroit.

Pierson arrived in Detroit, Michigan, in 1869 to a pastor's office in the tower room of the steeple of the Fort Street Presbyterian Church. One historian at FSPC quotes Pierson as saying,

In January (1876) I found myself pastor of a large, wealthy church, with one of the finest and most elegant church buildings in the whole land; with everything to gratify a carnal ambition, and lust of human applause. I had been led by a most singular searching of heart to see that I had been making an idol of literary culture and worldly position; and a few months before, I had solemnly renounced all these things that I might be a holier and more useful man.*

Pierson's heart became particularly moved with compassion toward the numerous people socially excluded from his wealthy Fort Street congregation. On Friday, March 24, 1876, Pierson met with a group of church members at an evening prayer meeting. He recounts,

I frankly opened my heart to my beloved people. I spoke to them as to the obvious lack of power in the church to reach these neglectors of worship, and I said that our elegant church edifice perhaps tended to repel the poor. . . . I knelt among them and we earnestly besought God to remove even a mountain obstacle that might hinder us as a church from effectually reaching the unsaved.

The Lord very clearly answered their prayers, but in an unexpected way.

The next morning, at 15 minutes before 6 a.m., two alarms of fire were rung, almost simultaneously. [One neighbor] noticed the bright light in the windows of

the church across the street, and saw the smoke pouring out in great volumes from all possible points. At five minutes before six the roof fell in and sank down to the bottom of the basement. When the roof gave way, the tall spire settled visibly; and then, just at the stroke of six, plunged downwards with a terrific crash, falling diagonally across Fort Street. At half past six the fire was extinguished.

That evening, Pierson was quoted as saying, “I felt this was God's way of opening a door great and effectual to the neglected masses about us, and I was at peace.”

That same day the trustees secured the rental of Whitney's newly completed opera house for Sunday services. For sixteen months, as the church building was rebuilt, Pierson preached to standing-room-only crowds, seeing more people converted in that time than in his entire ministry up until that point. He opined,

The extemporaneous preaching of a simple and free gospel for sixteen months in a place of popular amusement somehow drew us to these neglected masses, and drew them to us, and the effect has been to change the relations of that church to the whole community and greatly increase its power for good.

Pierson concluded, “From the day of that fire, Fort Street was largely attended by a class of people whom we had found it so difficult to reach before.” God moved in the heart and circumstances of A. T. Pierson for the evangelization of the unreached in his community before He gave him opportunities to lead in world missions. In the next issue, we will see how God continued to move in Pierson's ministry to influence the evangelization of the world in the beginning of the Student Volunteer Movement.

Pearson Johnson is the pastor of missions and evangelism at Inter-City Baptist Church. You can e-mail him with questions or comments at pjohnson@intercity.org.

*The quotes and historical information from this article are taken from a series of lectures by Tim Moran on Fort Street Presbyterian's role in Detroit for Detroit's 300th anniversary: <http://www.fort-street.org/Facility/History/ithappenedhere.html>.

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Chaplain News

Bob Ellis

Young men who are going into the military chaplaincy ministry can, while in seminary, enlist in the Chaplaincy Candidate Program. Several of the Chaplains endorsed by the FBFI have been in this program. All have received practical training and have had a variety of ministry experiences while in the candidate program. Most have been at the top of their class and have received outstanding recommendations from senior Chaplains and other officers.

Alan Findley, who pastors an inner-city church in Greenville, South Carolina, completed the Air Force Chaplain Candidate School in April. He writes,

The Lord has allowed me to complete two thirty-five-day Chaplain Candidate tours. During the first tour in the summer of 2009 we traveled to seven military bases in thirty-five days. The thirty chaplain candidates were divided into three flights, each with a chaplain mentor and a chaplain assistant mentor. Each flight also had a flight leader selected by senior leadership based on a number of variables: date commissioned, ministry leadership experiences, etc. I had the privilege of being the flight leader for our flight. We had a great flight, and it was a joy to lead them. It was very busy, and we had the opportunity to conduct worship services, visit airmen, and work with active duty chaplains.

On our second day, I volunteered (no one else wanted to do it) to preach a POW/MIA memorial service. (No one had died; we just had to conduct a service as a flight.) Our flight did an excellent job, and the message went over very well. We were given many opportunities to experience chaplaincy in the Air Force. We were given freedom to visit with a wide variety of airmen in various career fields.

In February–April 2010 I performed my final thirty-five-day tour at Shaw AFB, SC. The Lord again gave me an outstanding tour. Little did I know that this base has a high “operation tempo” for chaplains. On my first day, I met the Wing Chaplain (0-6) Catholic priest. He inquired about my faith background, endorsing agency, etc. He asked very specific questions in a nonthreatening way. I told my wife, “This is going to be a long tour.” Praise the Lord, I was wrong. The tour was great.

When I arrived, the chapel staff was preparing for the National Prayer Breakfast (NPB). I was given several projects to complete for the NPB. There were many long days in preparation. The Command Chaplain for the Air Combat Command was the speaker, so I received a prompt education about protocol for a distinguished visitor! The NPB went really well, as did the visit from

the ACC chaplain.

The Lord gave me numerous opportunities to minister, including going with two other chaplains to talk to commanders after the death of someone in their units. It was great to minister to these line officers in an area where they really needed help. It was also great to help set up and work the memorial service.

There were many highlights from the tour, but being with and ministering to the troops was the biggest blessing. By the way, the Wing Chaplain was a great chaplain. He was very concerned about seeing that I received an excellent training experience. He really cared for the entire chapel staff. At the end of my tour, the senior Protestant chaplain (0-4) said he and the Wing Chaplain agreed that I was “the best chaplain candidate” they’ve come across in their entire military career. Praise the Lord!



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sationalism is that we have a specific task for this specific time. That time is limited, and we will never regret using it as wisely as we can. If you will invest the time to read this issue of *FrontLine*, you will understand why the mission of FBFI is “to provide a rallying point for Fundamental Baptists seeking personal revival and the opportunity to work with committed Bible-believers in glorifying God through the uncompromising fulfillment of the Great Commission.” Our meeting in Colorado was a time of personal revival. We pray that this issue of *FrontLine* will encourage every reader to seek God’s glory through more timely and diligent obedience to our Commission.

Obedience is essential to every act of stewardship. Consider this truth in 1 John 5:3: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” Our obedience is the reasonable response to the love of God, but our selfishness is a terrible hindrance to loving obedience. In recent years, immediate electronic communications have brought our selfishness into public view as never before. A simple preacher once said, “The Bible is not hard to understand; the Bible is hard to obey.” Consider the simple command in 1 Corinthians 10:24 that provides the key to human relationships—wisdom that is always needed: “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth.” Narrow the focus and quibble on the context all you will, but that verse applies to all of life. Pilgrim preacher Robert Cushman took it for his text in 1621 in the first recorded sermon preached in America.* He titled his sermon “The Sin and Danger of Self Love.” His point was that the tendency of fallen man to “seek his own” instead of “another’s wealth” was the most destructive force in every relationship—home, church, culture, and government. When we participate in discussions of Bible truth, we must seek to edify rather than to display our own brilliance.

There is much talk today about the failures of the “leaders of Fundamentalism.” True leaders are servants. They seek opportunities to serve, not to be honored. Every leader should examine his servanthood and remember that as a steward he is required to be faithful. These are perilous times, but the greatest threat to Fundamentalism is not from without, but from within—the sin and danger of self love. May I offer a few words of admonition to all of us who call ourselves Fundamental Baptists? “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth.” Weekly, even daily at times, I am contacted by someone who needs encouragement to maintain patient persistence for Christ in the face of intense criticism or adversity. Trouble can draw us closer to the Lord but can also harden our hearts against Him. Bitter sarcasm that wounds the spirit and discourages the servants of God is deadly. A consistent appeal within the FBFI has been, for quite some time now, to speak the truth **in love**. I believe that appeal has been heard. The

tired claims of systemic hatefulness and abuse in what is portrayed as an irrelevant remnant of a Fundamentalism that has outlived its usefulness are themselves becoming irrelevant. Hatefulness about hatefulness is hatefulness nonetheless. If we allow ourselves to erect a new and more enlightened Fundamentalism on unnecessary criticism of the old, what will we have learned in the process?

I have talked with men who are almost afraid to discuss a topic such as dispensationalism for fear that they will be cut down to size by their intellectual superiors. That “fear of man” reveals a proud heart in both those who are afraid of giants and those who present themselves as giants. Any casual observer can see that disrespect is respected and clever arrogance is admired on the Internet. We need no long list of examples to know that many hurtful things are said there by Christians violating the command, “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s. . . .” In perilous times we need to remember Proverbs 10:19: “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.” If we believe a brother is overtaken in a fault, shouldn’t we seek to restore him rather than ridicule him? One of the main reasons the FBFI chooses to publish a magazine rather than manage a website for immediate discussion is that this format allows more time for delibera-

**THERE IS MUCH TALK TODAY ABOUT THE FAILURES
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tion and measured speech. Print media is not perfect, and it obviously lacks the many benefits of electronic communication, but it has certainly kept us from saying many things we would have regretted later.

Just a few days ago I was involved in a conversation with a friend that led me to ask, “Have you read the last two issues of *FrontLine*?” He had not, and I was delighted to be able to put them in his hands. I knew that the very questions he was asking were answered in those issues of *FrontLine*. As he saw the value of the information provided, he said, “I need to get this magazine.” I heartily agreed. And I hope that will be your response when you finish reading this issue! We pray it will be a blessing to you as it certainly has been to us. It may be that there is some theme that the Lord has laid on your heart that our subscribers would benefit from reading. Let us know. Perhaps that theme is a “dispensation of the gospel” committed to you for publication. If so, you have a stewardship of that message. *FrontLine* might be just the place to share it with others.

* Editor Don Jasmin has published this sermon through Fundamental Baptist Ministries, PO Box 489, West Branch, Michigan.

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