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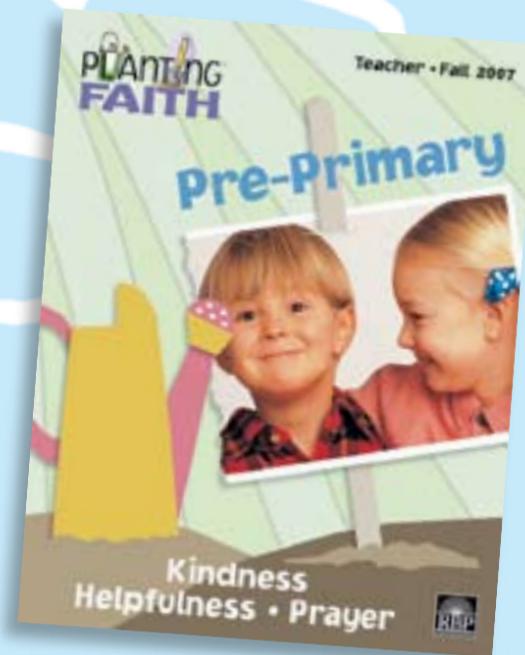
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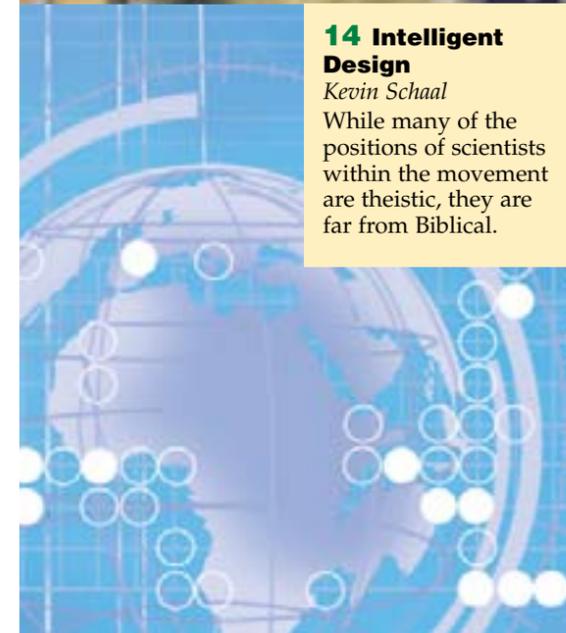
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You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.

The Lord recently convicted me about a comment that I made in the "Mail Bag" of the May 2002 issue of *FrontLine*. My comment was not made in love, and I would like to ask the readers to forgive me.

Steven G. Smallwood
Monroe, GA

I appreciated the mention of Jacob Johnson and Alan Ironside. They are wonderful servants of our Master. Jake has been a friend to pastors in his own unique way for many years. I count him a friend and respect all the efforts he has undertaken, especially in founding the great works in India and more recently in Pakistan.

Neil Sawatzky
Waterloo, Ontario

I just received the *FrontLine* magazine and have read it with delight. It was a tremendous blessing to read of the Chelli brothers leading the Berean College in Bangalore to continue its ministry in the same direction Jacob, their father, had led it for many years. All the other reports reminded me of my journey to India and associations with the Chellis and P. D. Cherian in South India. The memories are nostalgic.

We love the magazine, and it is a challenge and inspiration to us both. Thank you for the quality work that goes into producing such a publication rich in useful information and helps.

Also, your website is beautiful! Very nice! Thanks so much for your wonderful ministry.

Shelly Hopkins
Seaford, DE

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

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Igniting Ministry Passion

John C. Vaughn

The picture below was taken on March 27 at CENTCOM, MacDill AFB, Tampa, Florida. FBFI Chaplain Joe Willis was promoted to colonel in an impressive and Christ-honoring ceremony. The high-ranking officers who participated were unanimous in their appreciation for Chaplain Willis's personal character and spiritual ministry. They spoke of



his passion for what God has called him to do. That is the key, not only for military ministry but for all ministry.

We serve in hostile territory. Political correctness threatens from without, and personal compromise corrupts within. Ministry passion cools, and the fire of God's men dies down. A very effective WWII American general taught his officers, "Soldiers who dig in are more likely to die; marching fire is the best defense against the enemy." Fundamental Baptists often feel outnumbered, but we should follow the example of WWI Medal of Honor recipient Sergeant Alvin York. As a young corporal, when his platoon had suffered severe casualties, he assumed command of the seven survivors and led a charge against multiple machine gun emplacements manned by over 150 enemy soldiers.

After killing twenty-five, this passionate young soldier and his tiny band captured 128 men and four officers,

marching them back behind American lines. One version of the story reports that someone asked York where he had found all those Germans. The reply is said to have been, "The woods is full of 'em; go get you some." Regardless of the authenticity of this particular exchange, it captures the essence of the man. He knew how to shoot, and he knew where to aim. He was an honorable man and an honored soldier.

The "good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3, 4) has the passion to "endure hardness." He understands that "no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." Ministry passion keeps him on the front line for Christ. As Sergeant York might say, "He knows how to tangle without getting entangled." He endures in

the knowledge that there is an enemy to fight and a victory to win.

We urge every soldier of Christ to join us in Indianapolis on June 12-14, where all efforts are aimed at "Igniting Ministry Passion." You may feel that you don't need the encouragement of this Annual Fellowship. If so, let me appeal to you to come and encourage someone who does! Take a few minutes to visit www.fbfiannualfellowship.org and see what is in store. Burge Terrace Baptist Church and Dr. David Pennington have worked tirelessly to prepare. The speakers are known for their passion for their topics. This issue of *FrontLine* is sent out in hope of igniting concern for the subjects addressed.

In the July/August 2006 issue, we explained how FBFI resolutions would be prepared and presented in the future. This column explained that

Resolutions will continue to be passed by the Board of Directors prior to the

Annual Fellowship, and published in conjunction with it. Lord willing, the May/June issue of FrontLine will arrive very near the time of the Annual Fellowship in June. . . . Our aim is to strengthen Fundamental Baptists from the context of our Fellowship as we speak with resolution on matters of concern to our membership.

In Indianapolis, we look forward to passionate preaching on "Vision, Praying, Preaching, Teaching, Soulwinning, and Caring"; we will choose from timely and practical workshops and enjoy refreshing fellowship and discussion of whatever is on our hearts.

In reading over this issue's articles, you will find your mind engaged and your heart warmed. There are good answers here to questions we need to ask. Examples include: How can we fulfill our social responsibilities while remembering the error of the Social Gospel? What is the Great Commission response to immigrants who are not only illegal but unsaved? Does Theonomy matter to the FBFI (yes!), and why is it dangerous?

Secularists call Intelligent Design a deceptive way of teaching the religious view of creation; shouldn't we know how ID and Creationism are different? Are we so afraid of being dismissed as "hellfire and brimstone preachers" that we sit by while Evangelicals wonder whether there really is a literal Hell? Standing up for the truth in this arena can be daunting. That's why you should read Dr. Mark Minnick's article "A Good Soldier of Jesus Christ" right now. (I have read it twice already and plan to read it again.)

May God sustain every faithful Christian soldier and ignite ministry passion in every heart. Let's hold each other up in prayer as we press on until that Great Promotion Day to come.



Fundamentalists and Social Service Issues

Ever since Walter Rauschenbusch popularized the social gospel in America, Fundamentalists have been struggling with how Christians should relate to the multitude of social problems. Criticism has been leveled against Fundamentalists for dropping out of the social arena in the early part of the twentieth century. Some have called this the “Great Reversal.”¹ Perhaps “Great Takeover” would be a better title. Through the influence of evolution, socialism, and religious liberalism, governmental agencies began to take over social, psychological, and welfare programs² and to require certification in order to perform services, greatly limiting Christians’ ministering with a Biblical philosophy. Fundamentalists had to withdraw from such situations, and in reaction to the liberal social gospel they also withdrew from social activity that would require theological compromise.

The accusation that Fundamentalists in the early twentieth century deserted social service is often overstated. There is evidence that Fundamentalists were still involved socially.³ They were hindered, however, because they were busy rebuilding church congregations, buildings, and ministries after losing the battles over theological liberal-

ism in the major denominations. Carl Henry leveled this accusation in his book *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, published in 1947.⁴ Henry emphasized the absolute necessity of Biblical redemption as the keynote in all social service, but since he gave very little direction and safeguard, he left the door open for the development of social programs that easily developed into ministries that strayed from Biblical principles and were often without evangelism at all.

Social programs for both saints and sinners have never died in Fundamentalism. Fundamentalists have been involved in rescue missions, prison ministries, sports leagues, medical missions, addiction counseling, adoption ministries, disaster relief, and many others, some of which have been around for many years. Most Fundamentalists would agree on the following: in the course of preaching the whole counsel of God, pastors should preach on a wide range of social topics; individual Christians should use their positions, influence, and talents to Biblically and evangelistically confront social problems; and churches should compassionately meet the social needs of Christians.⁵

The main disagreement is over the legitimacy of a

church having social programs for the purpose of evangelism. Several writers have voiced their opinions.⁶ The FBFI has mentioned many social problems in its past resolutions and has recommended actions to be taken.⁷ Although emphasizing the role of the individual Christian, some of these resolutions imply that the local church should be involved.

The important question is, “What does the Bible have to say about churches being involved in social evangelistic programs?” The Book of Proverbs provides wisdom even for us today. Proverbs emphasizes the importance of helping the poor, and no distinction is made about who the poor are.

- “He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor” (14:31).
- “Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard” (21:13).
- “He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse” (28:27).
- “The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it” (29:7).
- “Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy” (31:9).

Is it possible for a church to use such verses to lead to a program to help the poor in order to reach them for Christ?

Jesus said,

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:13–16).

This can very easily be interpreted to mean that Christians, whether singly or corporately, can do good things before or for the unsaved world in order to bring them to a right relationship to the Father.

In Matthew 5:44–48, Jesus said,

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the chil-

dren of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Here is a command to do good, even to our enemies. Can exegesis limit this to individual Christians? It seems that it would not be wrong for a church to use this passage to lead into a ministry to social groups that hate Christians (radical Muslims, homosexuals). The same conclusion can be argued from the parable of the Samaritan recorded in Luke 10:30–37.

In Matthew 15:32, the Scripture records, “Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.” The primary purpose of Jesus’ miracles was to confirm that He was Messiah, but His compassion for people, both Jews and Gentiles, is specifically noted as another motive. (See also Matt. 14:14; 20:34; Mark 1:41; 5:19; 6:34.) Could it be that the demonstration of compassion could be used by Fundamental churches to lead people to the compassionate Savior?

Paul argues that the goodness of God leads to repentance (Rom. 2:4). Is it wrong for a church to demonstrate the goodness of God through social programs such as prison ministries, rescue missions, crisis counseling, and so on in order to bring the unsaved to repentance? Indeed Paul testifies that, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22). We could argue that this applies to individual Christians only, but it would be an argument from silence. Paul’s attitude was, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). It seems implausible that this should be interpreted to apply only to the individual Christian and not also to a planned action by a body of believers.

Finally, would we say that James was referring to Christians only when he wrote, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). Were local churches wrong for supporting the orphanages of George Mueller and Amy Carmichael, or for today sustaining the many orphanages operated and supported by Fundamental ministries in Eastern Europe, India, and so on? Just because there is no mandate, warrant, pattern, program, or agenda spelled out for the churches in the

**Social programs
for both saints
and sinners have
never died in
Fundamentalism.**

Scripture to be involved in evangelistic social programs does not mean that it is necessarily wrong to be involved in such programs, if the purpose is to win people to Christ and disciple them. We could just as well say that there is no mandate *against* such programs. When the Bible is silent, we should not be dogmatic.

Having said that, we must realize that there are dangers involved in such ministries: putting social needs before the gospel; becoming partakers of evil deeds (getting involved with Catholicism, the World Council of Churches, New Evangelicalism, etc.); creating “rice Christians”; and mismanagement of our limited ministry resources. We cannot afford to ignore the high percentage of good social programs that go wrong. Those who refuse to learn from history are doomed to make the same mistakes. The evangelistic and discipleship ministry must always be in the forefront, the *raison d'être*.

SomedisagreementwillcontinueamongFundamentalists on this issue, but we can hope that the Baptist doctrines of individual soul liberty and the autonomy of the local church will prevail and that good men will allow other good men some latitude.

Dr. John Mincy is an FBFI Board Member and pastors Heritage Baptist Church in Antioch, California.

¹ “Moberg contends, however, that ‘a great reversal’ took place between 1910 and the 1930’s in which the position of evangelicals on social action shifted” (quoted by James Singleton, “Fundamentalism: Past, Present, and Future Part VIII,” *Tri-City Builder*, February 1990).

² Rushdoony refers to a book written by Albert Jay Nock in 1935: “The state, as Albert Jay Nock saw, has become the new church of man.” R. J. Rushdoony, *The Death of Meaning* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2002), p. 155. Specific influences would include John Dewey, Sigmund Freud, the Scopes trial, and the creation of

social agencies (U.S. Children’s Bureau established by Congress in 1912, the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice founded in 1908, the Boston School for Social Work established in 1904, to name a few). “The meaning of the [Scopes] trial emerged through its interpretation of social and intellectual values” (<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/evolut.htm>, accessed 01/18/07). “[President Woodrow] Wilson [1913–21] argued that intellect—not Victorian traditions or religious precepts—should guide our social institutions” (<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/finalword.html>, accessed 01/18/07).

³ Rolland McCune, *Promise Unfulfilled* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador International, 2004), pp. 235–36.

⁴ Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003, 2nd ed.

⁵ McCune, p. 268; L. Duane Brown, *Confronting Today’s World: A Fundamentalist Looks at Social Issues* (Schaumburg: Regular Baptist Press, 1986), p. 70.

⁶ McCune (pp. 260–74) and Brown (pp. 63–71) strongly denounce local church social programs. At the end of his book, however, Brown says that social ministry is justified when it “gives opportunity for sharing the gospel. Some examples of this would be medical missions, city rescue missions, servicemen’s centers and possibly emergency funds for certain crises” (p. 170). David L. Burggraff gives a brief history of the issue and suggests that the future of Fundamentalism will probably involve more social programs, but stops short of condoning such (see <http://seminary.cbs.edu/content/events/nlc/2006/papers/WE5-DBurggraff.pdf>). James Singleton opts for recognition of both evangelism and social action without specifying what the social actions might look like (“Fundamentalism: Past, Present, Future, Part VIII,” *Tri-City Builder*, Feb. 1990. For the entire booklet see http://www.tricityministries.org/tcbc/resources/fundamentalism_booklet.pdf). For a recent blog discussion by Fundamentalists see <http://mytwocents.wordpress.com/2006/07/29/drying-out/> (accessed 9/15/2006).

⁷ All past resolutions are on the FBFI website. See <http://www.fbfi.org/resolutions.html>.

David Shumate

Ministering among Illegal Immigrants

Those with opportunities to minister to immigrant groups are often confronted with the question of illegal immigration. This social and political problem often complicates what would otherwise be a straightforward ministry response. Although the problem most often involves people from Latin America, it is an issue that applies to other groups as well. What should be the response of the Bible-believing congregation, the pastor, or the individual believer to this situation? A complete answer involves many different issues and goes beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, it is important that we establish a Biblical framework, one that begins

with our obligations under the Great Commission and then considers other salient Biblical principles. The result of this study is to reinforce our commitment to aggressively pursuing the Great Commission in a manner that gives due honor to the laws of our nation.

The Great Commission and Illegal Immigration

In this study of the Great Commission, we will follow the text of Matthew 28:18–20, bringing in other passages as necessary to augment the discussion.

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The Universality of the Great Commission

The Great Commission given in Matthew is an appropriate place to begin this study because of its comprehensiveness. First, it is based on Christ's universal, supreme authority ("All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth"). Because the Commission comes from the King of kings, it applies regardless of human difficulties, legal or otherwise.¹ Second, Christ's words are binding on all believers throughout the Church age ("Go ye therefore, . . . Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"). Finally, we are confronted with an obligation to reach all people everywhere, regardless of their ethnicity, culture, or language.² It is a temptation for churches and individuals to reach those we like (or those we think will like us!). As social hostility toward certain groups increases, this in no way excuses withholding the gospel. In fact it opens even greater opportunities and responsibilities to love and reach those who are hated and rejected by others.

The Framework of the Great Commission

Applying the Great Commission to the situation we face helps us understand our plain duty. This duty includes reaching everyone we can; baptizing those whom we reach; and instructing them to know, accept, and obey all of Christ's commands.

Christ commanded us to disciple all nations. Neither the preaching of the gospel nor the call to repentance and faith is conditioned upon the hearer's moral or legal status. If anything, it seems that those regarded as the worst sinners were often the most responsive to the message (Matt. 21:31, 32).³ Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Matt. 9:10–13). Therefore our proclamation of salvation in Christ to a person should not depend upon whether or not he has a Green Card.

Christ also ordered us to baptize those whom we reach. Although churches follow different procedures with regard to conditions placed on baptism, the order of the text strongly implies that baptism does not depend upon any mandatory level of Christian growth but rather upon a credible testimony of faith in Christ.⁴ There is a good argument, therefore, that determining a person's legal status should not be a condition for baptism.

We are obliged to instruct all those saved and baptized. This is an ongoing process that brings them into transforming contact with the Word of God and leads to their obey-

ing its commands and living by its principles. Included in these commands is the responsibility to honor and obey civil authorities. Therefore, churches are duty bound to help those who come to Christ to understand, accept, and comply with their legal responsibilities. How quickly and forcefully a spiritual leader deals with believers about this is a matter of Spirit-directed wisdom.⁵ It should be noted here that a necessary component of the discipleship process is the requirement that believers congregate for mutual ministry and edification (Acts 2:42–47; Heb. 10:24, 25). Throughout church history believers have been willing to suffer persecution at the hands of governmental authorities for obeying this command. Therefore, regardless of the

legal climate, churches may not exclude anyone from Christian fellowship because of their legal status (except of course as a result of exercising legitimate church discipline).

Other Biblical Principles and Illegal Immigration

Although the Great Commission provides the basic framework, we must still consider other Biblical principles in order to respond properly to certain questions.

Obedience to Civil Authority

The Scripture makes it plain that believers must obey the government (Rom. 13:1–5; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13, 14). The only exceptions are where compliance with a dictate of the government would require the believer to disobey a clear Scriptural duty (Dan. 3:18; Acts 4:19, 20; 5:29). Even in these cases the Christian has an obligation to diligently seek a way to fulfill his obligations both to God and to government, to make a wise appeal, and to maintain a respectful spirit toward God-ordained authority throughout.

We have asserted that believers have a direct, undeniable, Scriptural obligation to make disciples of Jesus Christ regardless of the legal status of the recipients. To the fullest extent possible, however, the manner in which we fulfill these responsibilities must be in accord with the law.

The main federal statute in question is 8 U.S.C. §1324, which prohibits acts of importing, harboring, transporting, or hiring illegal aliens. Federal law also requires that employers obtain certain documents from every person hired, proving the right to work in the country.⁶ In addition to federal law some states and localities are considering prohibiting other activities, such as renting to illegal immigrants. Certainly churches should not be in the business of bringing illegal aliens into the country or trying to help

them evade authorities. Moreover, neither churches nor individual Christians should knowingly hire illegal aliens.⁷ The laws in question are complex, are subject to interpretation, and may change. Therefore churches that are involved in ministering to this group should seek guidance from immigration officials and local law enforcement agencies, and they should develop contact with competent legal counsel. The principle should be to comply with all laws as far as possible without violating a clear Christian duty. One thing we must not do is allow the legal difficulties to deter us from our Great Commission responsibility.⁸

Leadership

First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 both require that a pastor be "blameless." The term in Timothy comes from a word picture that means "without handles," that is, that there is nothing someone can grasp as a reason to challenge the pastor's leadership. The term in Titus is different, meaning not liable to being called into account. In both passages, however, the idea is one of maintaining a public testimony that does not hinder the ministry. An illegal immigrant who is a pastor would have a serious problem with his testimony and would be hindered from preaching obedience to governmental authority. The same restriction would apply to the position of deacon, since deacons must also be blameless.

Church Membership

One question often asked is the proper policy regarding church membership. Should a person be asked if he or she is legally in the country before being received into membership? Should the church adopt the policy of not asking any questions and dealing with the issue only if it arises? The answer to these questions is not as clear as to those above. Although the Bible provides a principled basis for the practice of local church membership, the author is not aware of any specific stipulations regarding the reception of members. Some churches view membership as essentially commensurate with baptism, taking the position that baptism makes a believer a member of the local church in which he is baptized. Others require an extended period of instruction and even evidence of Christian growth. In this regard, the matter should be one of conviction for each local church. Of course, a church should act consistently in the matter, not treating the legal status of an alien differently from other issues of equivalent moral and spiritual import in the lives of candidates for membership.

Conclusion

This article has not addressed the question of what should be government policy toward immigration in general nor the proper response to the current immigration crisis. No doubt Scriptural principles apply to these concerns as well. Churches should first deal with their own response to the situation in which they find themselves, often surrounded by spiritually hungry people who may or may not have a legal right to be here. The Scripture plainly teaches that we have a Great Commission responsibility with reference to these souls for whom Christ died. We also have to teach and practice a right response to civil author-

ity—honor at all times and obedience whenever possible without disobeying Christ. Although ethical dilemmas will undoubtedly arise, we must face them squarely if we wish truly to render what is due unto both God and Caesar.

Dr. David Shumate is the Executive Director of Mission Gospel Ministries International in Phoenix, Arizona.

¹ The Apostles' response to the Sanhedrin that we must obey God rather than men came specifically in the context of their preaching Christ, at His command, and contrary to the express dictate of human authorities (Acts 5:28, 29).

² The universality of the gospel proclamation is expressed or implied throughout the New Testament (e.g., Mark 16:15; Luke 3:5, 6; John 3:15, 16; 11:26; 12:46, 47; Acts 8:4, 5; 10:35; 13:38, 39; 17:30; Rom. 1:16; 10:4, 9–15; 2 Cor. 4:1, 2; Col. 1:23, 28; 4:6; 1 Thess. 1:8; 1 John 5:1; Rev. 5:9).

³ At this point one might raise the issue of the nature of repentance as part of conversion. Without entering this debate, it is sufficient here to state that no orthodox person holds that a person will stop all sinning upon receiving Christ. Repentance is a lifetime process for the Christian. It may well be the case that someone in the country illegally who trusts Christ might come under the immediate conviction that he needs to return to his country and respond in obedience. However, this cannot be expected universally.

⁴ This will certainly involve making sure that a person truly understands the gospel. In some societies it may also require making sure that a person must forsake his idols, former religion, and anything else he is trusting in for salvation. However, this condition is materially different than expecting a new convert to correct all sinful behavior before permitting him to be baptized.

⁵ First Thessalonians 5:14 teaches that the response of the spiritual leader depends in large measure on the attitude of the follower. This passage as well as 2 Timothy 2:24, 25 enjoin patience on the minister as he seeks to bring people along to Christlikeness. In this regard, one must understand (although not excuse) the mindset that some immigrants may have toward governmental authority. In many countries in the world the real law is not what is written but what the governmental official decides it is. Because of American governmental and social ambivalence toward illegal immigration over the past decades, many immigrants have the idea that lack of legal status is not morally culpable. Therefore, dealing with such individuals (whether or not they are in the country by permission) is a matter of transforming their attitudes by Biblical principles and not merely a matter of insisting on external obedience. Just as in many other areas the patient teaching of Biblical principles is usually required in order to bring about the necessary transformation.

⁶ The brief discussion here is not offered as legal advice but to orient the reader to some of the issues involved.

⁷ Ethical difficulties could potentially arise when the church or individual Christians want to provide practical help such as giving a family a place to stay or taking a child to the doctor. If these actions were taken with knowledge that the person helped was illegally in the country, would they be deemed "transporting" or "harboring"? Such questions turn on the interpretation given to the statutes. Even if such activities were deemed contrary to the law, would believers nevertheless have a duty to help their fellow man and especially their Christian brothers in some of these ways? These are issues that must be faced squarely.

⁸ Every pastor knows that the legal complexity of the ministry continues to increase. The ministry today is affected by tax law, tort liability law, insurance law, and family law, just to name a few. Nevertheless, the Lord expects us to continue to occupy until He comes.

It is a temptation for churches and individuals to reach those we like (or those we think will like us!). As social hostility toward certain groups increases, this in no way excuses withholding the gospel. In fact it opens even greater opportunities and responsibilities to love and reach those who are hated and rejected by others.

THEONOMY

Rolland McCune

Theonomy (“God’s Law”) is a title given to a movement that teaches the earthwide rule of God through the reinstatement of the Law of Moses for every nation. It is also called “Christian Reconstruction” because it wants the church to dismantle the present world culture and reconstruct it as a Mosaic society; “Dominion Theology” because it sees the church of God as having eventual dominion over the world; and “Kingdom Now” theology because it holds that Christ set up His Messianic reign in the first century, which will eventually Christianize the whole earth, after which He will return and consummate all things in resurrection and judgment.

The movement had its beginning in the 1960s through the efforts of Rousas J. Rushdoony, who founded the Chalcedon Foundation to promote the ideas above. Other names associated with the movement are Greg Bahnsen, Gary North, David Chilton, and Gary DeMar. Theonomy had its heyday in the 1970s and ‘80s, but some of its ideas still appeal to those who envision and politically work toward a “Christian America.” Such would include Jerry Falwell (Moral Majority), Jay Grimstead (Coalition for Revival), D. James Kennedy, the late Francis Schaeffer, Franky Schaeffer, Pat Robertson (along with Joseph Kikasola and Herb Titus of CBN University), Josh McDowell, as well as remnants of the old “health and wealth gospel/positive confession” notions of Kenneth Hagin, Robert Tilton, Kenneth Copeland, and Oral Roberts. Some of Theonomy’s proposals are also appreciated by many conservative people who are rightfully alarmed at the rapid secularization, degeneration, and deepening licentiousness of our Western, allegedly Judeo-Christian, culture. It can also be argued that Islam’s general hatred of the USA is fed more by our worsening moral depravity than simply a jealousy over our political freedoms.

Major Principles of Theonomy

The Immutability of God and His Laws and Commands

Theonomists rightfully hold to the changelessness of

God in His attributes and character (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17). From this it is inferred that *all* His laws and commands are also immutable, absolute, and perpetually binding on everyone. This gives continuing validity to the OT Mosaic system in its minute details, except where the NT indicates fulfillment in Jesus Christ and the New Covenant.

There are several problems here. One, it ignores the plain fact that the Law was given only to Israel. Gentiles, including the Church of Jesus Christ, were never given the Law (Rom. 2:14; Deut. 4:8; Ps. 147:19, 20). Two, the whole Law was an indivisible unity with its inseparable penalties; one cannot choose which parts to keep and which to disregard. To keep one part makes one liable for the whole code (James 2:10; Gal. 3:10; 5:3). Three, when the righteousness of the Law was totally fulfilled by Christ, giving believers eternal liberation (Rom. 8:1–4), the Law was nailed to the cross, abolished, and taken out of the way (Rom. 10:4; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:13–15; 2 Cor. 3:3, 11, 13). As a law system it is not, and will never be, operative for any nation. Four, the patent truth of the NT is that the believer is not under the Law for any purpose—salvation, justification, sanctification, or a rule of life (Rom. 3:20; 6:14; Col. 2:14). Five, God’s immutability does not mean immobility. In His immutable sovereignty God can change His requirements and dealings with His universe without any change in Himself. For example, the minute OT laws and commands pertaining to food, farming, clothing, holy days, and the form of Israel’s government have been rescinded (Col. 2:16; Mark 7:19; Heb. 9:10) and a whole new standard pertains (1 Cor. 10:31–33; Col. 2:20–23). The platform of Christ’s kingdom demonstrates this point (Matt. 5:21–28—“it has been said . . . but I say to you”). As well, God’s whole dispensational program is based on epochs of new revelation of Himself and His will that result in new stewardships with new requirements and responsibilities that displace previous commands and laws.

Sixth, the Law of Moses was designed specifically to serve a temporary purpose. It served as a “schoolmas-

ter”—a tutorial custodian of Israel—until Christ came “in the fulness of time” (Gal. 3:22–4:7). Since then, the code of Moses will not serve as a tutor for anyone, individual or nation (Gal. 3:19, 25).*

The Continuity of Israel and the Church

Theonomists hold that the nation Israel was “the church in the OT” and the church is “the new Israel” in the NT. However, the Bible is quite clear that there is a fundamental distinction between Israel and the church in origin, purpose, and destiny. Israel originated in the fifteenth century BC as a political organization at Sinai with an ethnic favoritism (the Hebrews) and a fundamentally earthly agenda governed by its constitution and legal instrument, the Law of Moses (Exod. 19–23). This institution lasted for about 1500 years until dissolved by the Roman legions in the first century AD. There is no nation of Israel in the Biblical sense. The church was born on the Day of Pentecost in the first century AD as an essentially spiritual organism with no ethnic or social favoritism (Gal. 3:26–28) and with no political or social agenda. Its mandate is a heavenly commission to evangelize the lost, baptize the believers, and mature them in the Christian experience within the context of a local New Testament church (Matt. 28:18–20; 1 Tim. 3:15).

A Postmillennial Second Coming of Christ

Theonomy has an optimism for this present age in that given enough time (some say 40,000 years and more), the church will incrementally Christianize or “millennialize” the world’s social order so that Christ will return to His righteous world and consummate all things.

The Scriptures teach, to the contrary, that this age will deteriorate and apostatize (2 Thess. 3:1–3a; 1 Tim. 4:1–3; 2 Tim. 3:13), culminating in the departure of those “in Christ” to Heaven (1 Thess. 4:13–17), followed by the universal acceptance of the Man of Sin (2 Thess. 2:3b–10). This person, with his followers, will be destroyed by the Lord Jesus Christ when He returns in cataclysmic glory and power to suddenly, not incrementally, set up His Messianic Kingdom for a universal reign of peace and prosperity (Dan. 2:34, 35; 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:11–21). Christ’s coming is not after (post) the “millennium” of undetermined length, but before (pre) the millennium of one thousand years (Rev. 19:4–6).

A Fundamental Baptist Response to Theonomy

First, it must be remembered that the Church of Jesus Christ is not mandated to Christianize the existing world order along political and social lines. Aside from assisting its own needy people (Rom. 12:13; James 2:15, 16; 1 John 3:17), the institutional church has no sociopolitical agenda for the world community at large, either as fulfilling the Great Commission or as a means of opportunity to fulfill it. Further, since the Messianic Reign with its political,

economic, social, and physical dimension is still future, there can be no such “kingdom now” proposals for the church to fulfill. Second, the church’s mission is evangelistic/local church planting (Matt. 28:18–20) and has gospel proclamation, not social work, as its motif (1 Cor. 2:1–5). Third, the vision of Theonomy for a religious state or government in this present age violates the Biblical and historic Baptist principle of the separation of church and state—a free church in a free state (Matt. 22:21). Fourth, an individual Christian as a member of the civil state is not disenfranchised but may participate fully in the political and social process as personal resources, interest, abilities, and the will of God permit. But this is a wisdom issue (Eph. 5:10—“what is acceptable [pleasing] unto the Lord”) and not necessarily based on a specific Biblical command or warrant. Fifth, individual Christians and the institutional

church on earth should manifest a non-antagonistic and non-belligerent attitude toward the civil powers for the Lord’s sake (Rom. 13:11–7; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13, 14), except when the state attempts to force one to sin (Dan. 3:18; Acts 4:19).

Sixth, in matters of Biblical interpretation, Bible-believing Baptists should practice the literal method, understanding the words of Scripture in their normal sense—i.e., the meaning the Biblical authors intended in their original context. Theonomists want to interpret the Law of Moses quite literally for today but, inconsistently, they do not do so with the prophetic lit-

erature of the Bible with its distinction between the church and Israel and its testimony to the coming Kingdom of God, where Christ will literally reign over the earth from David’s throne (Luke 1:32, 33). In the same vein, theonomists adopt a method of prophetic interpretation (preterism) that says that the majority of Bible prophecy has been fulfilled already in the first century, especially with the destruction of Jerusalem and the dissolution of Israel as a Jewish state in AD 70. This widely discredited method, among other things, destroys the unconditional promises of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 13:14–17; 15:12–21; 17:7, 8; Micah 7:18–20) and Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:8–16; 23:1–5; 2 Chron. 13:5; Ps. 89:20–37), which guarantee a distinct place of favor nationally for restored Israel in the future Kingdom of the Messiah.

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* This is not to say that the OT Law and its commandments are not relevant today, with dispensational changes considered, of course, since we are “not under the law but under grace.” According Colossians 2 the Law has been abolished. As given in the OT and for purposes that related to Israel, it is no longer in force; it has been nailed to the cross. Galatians 3, in my view, does not teach nor warrant using the Law of Moses evangelistically today except as it depicts/demonstrates/illustrates that “all have sinned.”

*The Scriptures
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apostatize . . .*

With the increasing popularity of Darwinism during the early part of the twentieth century, the concept of a created universe was increasingly relegated by those who held to some form of theological understanding of origins, usually based upon the Bible. Even many who claimed religion, even Biblical allegiance, discounted a Biblical concept of origins.

Champions of the Biblical concept of origins did exist: Whitcomb and Morris as well as Ken Ham and others continued to teach and preach a concept of origins as presented in Scripture and the scientific ramifications of the Biblical claims.

But in the early 1990s a new movement began to take full form. Its proponents call it the "Intelligent Design" (ID) movement. In his book *Cosmic Pursuit* William Dembski describes the origins and basic approach of ID.

The Intelligent Design movement begins with the work of Charles Thaxton, Walter Bradley, Michael Denton, Dean Kenyon, and Phillip Johnson. Without employing the Bible as a scientific text, these scholars critiqued Darwinism on scientific and philosophical grounds. On scientific grounds they found Darwinism an inadequate framework for biology. On philosophical grounds they found Darwinism hopelessly entangled with naturalism, the view that nature is self-sufficient and thus without need of God or any guiding intelligence. More recently, scholars like Michael Behe, Stephen Meyer, Paul Nelson, Jonathan Wells, and myself have taken the next step, proposing a positive research program wherein intelligent causes become the key for understanding the diversity and complexity of life.¹

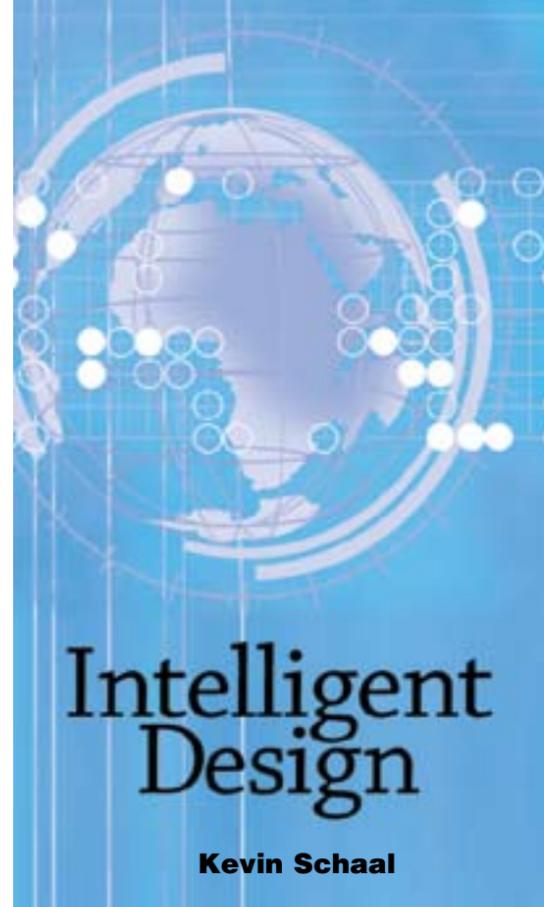
The scientific arguments of those within the group are compelling, their presentations masterful, and their printed and electronic materials are honest, beautiful, and persuasive.²

A New Approach to Origins

The ID movement has a new approach to identifying the origins of the universe. For the purpose of argument, the ID argument usually begins with the presumption of Darwinism, or at least an explanation of the popular views concerning the origins of the universe. In a sense, it begins with the presumption "There is no God."

But the approach quickly identifies insufficiencies within the Darwinian concept of origins to explain the universe as we know it. ID proponents come to the conclusion that the "there is no God" presumption does not work scientifically.

So they ask the question, "Is there a God?" and look for scientific indication of a Designer in the universe. The



conclusion of the ID movement is that the scientific evidence clearly points to an intelligent architect of the universe—a Designer. In the end, they claim that the ID concept is as legitimate a scientific concept as Darwinism and should at least be taught as an alternate view to Darwinian evolution.

There are key differences in the approach of the ID movement to origins from the standard approach taken by Bible teachers and theologians throughout the centuries—and especially in the 150 years since the advent of Darwinian evolution.

The ID movement starts with scientific theory and uses scientific methodology and philosophical reasoning as its evidentiary body. The movement refuses to use the Bible, Biblical statements, or even Biblical accounts as evidence or clarification of the scientific data. While we assume that some within the movement would suggest that their scientific data leads us to the Bible eventually, the sense is that

science is the true messenger of truth, and the Bible is subject to its verifications.

ID is characteristically nontheological in approach. While ID focuses upon the existence of a Designer, its materials rarely draw conclusions about the Designer beyond intelligence. His moral qualities, attributes, goodness, and so on are matters that are completely ignored. The nature of mankind and his relationship with the Designer are also, to a large part, ignored.³ ID scientists do often acknowledge the metaphysical consequences of their discoveries—usually because such consequences are the arguments Darwinists use against their findings—but they rarely explore the theological consequences of their findings.

Because of the movement's appeal to science as its authority, ID does not use Scripture to set any boundaries for those who identify with it. Many within the movement hold to varying degrees of Designer-based evolutionary concepts. Many hold to a "Big Bang" origin of the universe, but within a Designer motif. Certainly the six-day Biblical account of creation is not a priority or a standard within ID circles.

A Fundamentalist Response

So how should a Fundamentalist approach the claims of the ID movement, and how should he use ID books and materials?

There are some wonderful positive aspects to the movement. It is consistent with Biblical passages concerning general revelation and its significance. Believers should not be surprised that open-minded scientists find evidence of an all-wise Creator in the natural world. Psalm 19 and Romans

1 indicate clearly that the testimony of God to Himself in creation spans the boundaries of geography and language and teaches us of a glorious, wise, and powerful God.

ID attacks the closed-mindedness of Darwinism. While we understand that true Biblicists accept the Bible account of creation by faith and that we interpret all we see in creation through that lens, we also criticize proponents of naturalism for similar presuppositions. We presuppose that there is a God. They presuppose there is no God. We accept our presupposition by faith, yet we also see that understanding demonstrated in the natural world. Naturalism uses similar presuppositions but fails to acknowledge the "faith" aspect of their own philosophical view or how it skews their scientific understanding of the universe. The ID movement masterfully attacks this phenomenon.

The ID movement can give believers and students who are involved in science a greater appreciation of creation and the revelation of God in creation. The beautiful material produced by the Design Institute and Illustra Media can be a great encouragement to believers as they view the wonders of God's creation. There is a truly devotional experience for a believer in seeing how a bacterial flagellum works, how DNA information is stored and used, or how our planet is clearly situated by God to be a window to the universe.

ID is especially useful in introducing apologetic theories and approaches and is helpful for second-generation believers struggling with doubt. Young people growing up in Christianity and already familiar with Scripture can gain confidence that they do not have to take a back seat as they pursue scientific interests in the world today. Some of the greatest scientists in the world also see the scientific indications of a Creator in the world around them.

ID's Insufficiencies

But the ID movement also has some glaring insufficiencies. It is insufficient, on its own, as an evangelistic tool. It is insufficient because the blindness of the depraved mind refuses to consider the existence of God and its ramifications. The Bible is clear that man is blind to his own spiritual condition because of his own depravity, and he blinds himself to what he can see of God in nature by his own choice. No amount of science or scientific explanation in the world can quicken a mind dead in trespasses and sins. Salvation is a supernatural event, not one that springs naturally from human argumentation. No matter how logical an argument is, the unsaved will not see the truth unless he is enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

ID is completely insufficient as an evangelistic tool because it does not communicate man's sinfulness, human need, the work of Christ on the cross, or redemption. No evangelistic tool can be effective without the truth of the gospel. The ID movement of itself can produce generic

Deists of sorts, but even Satan and the demons believe in Intelligent Design (although Darwinism has been used as a Satanic lie to divert many). Romans is clear that the supernatural life-changing nature of the Bible is essential for the conversion of the human soul. The ID movement, while scientific, is devoid of the true authority of the Word of God, and therefore bereft of its power.

There are also dangers inherent in the movement, such as the danger of establishing false foundations of faith. ID's claims are primarily scientific. Historically, many scientific claims have been proven wrong. If some of the claims of the ID movement are eventually proven wrong (which is always possible in the world of science), holding such claims as some sort of false foundation of faith could be disastrous.

The greatest danger in the ID movement is the appeal to science rather than Scripture as the ultimate authority. The result is that, while many of the positions of scientists within the movement are theistic, they are far from Biblical—willing to accept the Big Bang, varying forms of theistic evolution, and other concepts clearly contrary to Scripture.

It is not our intent to criticize sincere people in the scientific world who are willing to acknowledge the evidence that God has placed in His universe concerning Himself. In fact, we commend them for their efforts. But we do want to honestly evaluate that approach in the light of the Fundamentalist's acknowledged authority—the Bible. We would conclude that while much of what the ID movement has to say is worthy of consideration and may be of help to a Biblical Fundamentalist—

even useful as teaching aids in school in scientific study and to be considered when considering various approaches to apologetics—we must always carefully maintain, clarify, proclaim, and defend our dependence upon the Bible as our authority for all things.

Dr. Kevin Schaal, FBFI Research Secretary, pastors Northwest Valley Baptist Church in Glendale, Arizona.

The greatest danger in the ID movement is the appeal to science rather than Scripture as the ultimate authority.

¹ http://www.arn.org/docs/dembski/wd_idmovement.htm.

² Illustra Media's four masterful productions *Case for a Creator*, *The Privileged Planet*, *Unlocking the Mystery of Life*, and *Where Does the Evidence Lead* are so well produced and illustrated that they will be distributed widely among Evangelicals of all sorts. Every Fundamentalist pastor, Christian School administrator, and science teacher ought to understand the approach that the ID movement takes as they use videos in churches or in classrooms. In our opinion, they should not be used without carefully communicating the insufficiencies of the ID approach to origins in a thorough introduction to and discussion of the materials.

³ In their book *Privileged Planet* Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards conclude that the unique conditions of the earth indicate not only a Designer but also the intention of the Designer for human beings to observe and understand the universe.

The Fire of God's Wrath

Warren Vanhetloo

Your assignment is to explain clearly the heat and the force of the atom bomb over Hiroshima to a sixth grade class. You will be allowed to use a few visual clips and charts. You soon realize you face two difficulties: Are there words and pictures sufficient to impress on them the magnitude of the heat and power involved? Are sixth graders capable of comprehending the concepts you intend to present?

Those are the very problems God had to deal with to inform humans of the suffering of Hell: inadequate verbal terms and immature mental comprehension. His solutions are interesting to consider. His primary speaker in making known that part of reality was the active agent of creation, His only begotten Son—One much better qualified for that task than any of us are to tell of the force of an atomic or hydrogen bomb. God did not withhold information from mankind until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, however, but gave some prior indications.

Though much of what God revealed in early centuries is not recorded, two possible indications need to be considered. When first instructing Adam, warning him not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God gave a forceful warning: “for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (in the Hebrew, literally, “dying thou shalt die”; Gen. 2:17).

Translations are correct; it is an expression of certainty: “thou shalt surely die.” Later revelation supports the

possibility of a deeper warning: at physical death, which is certain to come, you will face a more severe death, a total, eternal separation from your Creator, as a result of your sin. That is, physical dying is followed by a greater separation.

Anthropological surveys of religious rituals around the world point to a common practice of shedding blood as a means of purging the guilt of sin, practices which may have been handed down generation after generation since the confusion of tongues, pointing to a common practice prior to that time.

Concepts of a fiery place of intense suffering also are noted in various parts of the world, similarly pointing to a belief already held by humans prior to worldwide dispersion. Though there is no indication of such in Scripture, there is really but one likely source for such universal beliefs, that is, initial information from God Himself.

What may be the earliest direct reference to Hell in Scripture is in Psalm 9:17: “The wicked shall be turned into hell [sheol], and all the nations that forget God.” This is not set forth as something new that God has just revealed through David; he employs a common term that at times refers to physical death but is used also to refer to a place of just retribution, as in the context of this psalm (cf., “the poor shall not perish for ever,” v. 18).

References in Isaiah are more clear: “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall

dwell with everlasting burnings?” (33:14); and, “They shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh” (66:24). It is left to Daniel, who portrays detail of the future, to speak of Hell most clearly: “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (12:2).

An obvious lesson for us, based on God’s pattern: Do not preach hellfire and brimstone to men without making even more emphatic the love and sacrifice involved in providing man an escape from damnation. General knowledge and occasional reference are enough for the Holy Spirit to convict of sin and coming judgment. It is the gospel that is appointed to be the power of God unto salvation, not the blare about extreme suffering under the wrath of God.

The Gospels use the word “Hades” where Jesus in speaking may have used “sheol”, having the same meaning, the place of the dead (Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:13). More than mere use of a familiar term, however, He gave specific content: “more tolerable in the day of judgment”; “the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments . . . send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. . . .

thou are tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. . . . lest they also come into this place of torment” (Luke 16:19–31).

Jesus more often used the word “Gehenna” in speaking of Hell. Gehenna, just outside Jerusalem, was a foul-smelling, constantly burning dump, a fitting picture of the place He revealed (Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45–48; Luke 12:5). When He used this word, His descriptions were clear: “fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28); “how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matt. 23:33); “to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched” (Mark 9:43; cf. vv. 45, 48).

Jesus taught of the final judgment, “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41); “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matt. 25:46). The length of suffering in Hell is as long as the time of our unending life with God. Jesus proclaimed that those who reject Him will not go where He goes: “I go my way, and ye . . . shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come” (John 8:21; cf. vv. 23, 24). Just as Heaven is a place, so Hell is a place. Jesus returned to Heaven; those who are His will join Him

there. Others go to a different place following physical death—a place just as real as Heaven.

When Jesus spoke of Hell, He was not using information received from prior written revelation; rather, guided by the Holy Spirit, He spoke of that which He had known prior to His incarnation. To doubt what He said about Hell, then, is to question His deity and to deny His veracity. The witness of no human being—other than that of the rich man of Luke 16—is of any consequence in weighing the questions of whether there is a Hell or not, whether it involves eternal suffering, or whether it is consistent with the love of God. The supreme Authority spoke clearly.

Paul wrote of that time when they “that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: . . . shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess. 1:6–10). Jesus identified Himself to John as having “the keys of hell and of death” (Rev. 1:18). Predicting a time of future judgment, John wrote: “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Rev. 19:20). “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are,

To doubt what He said about Hell, then, is to question His deity and to deny His veracity.

and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev. 20:10).

In his vision of the future, John also saw “the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:12–15).

Various descriptions characterize Hell: the place prepared for the Devil and his angels, the blackness of darkness, torment in fire and brimstone, unquenchable fire, the smoke of torment, a lake that burns with fire and brimstone, death, the second death, and so on. The reality of the endless suffering portrayed is surely infinitely greater than these vivid expressions. Every Bible reference points to the reality of such a place. God and men warn against going to such a place. Jesus died that men might spend eternity with Him rather than suffer in such a place. Surely no wise man will neglect to take these warnings seriously!

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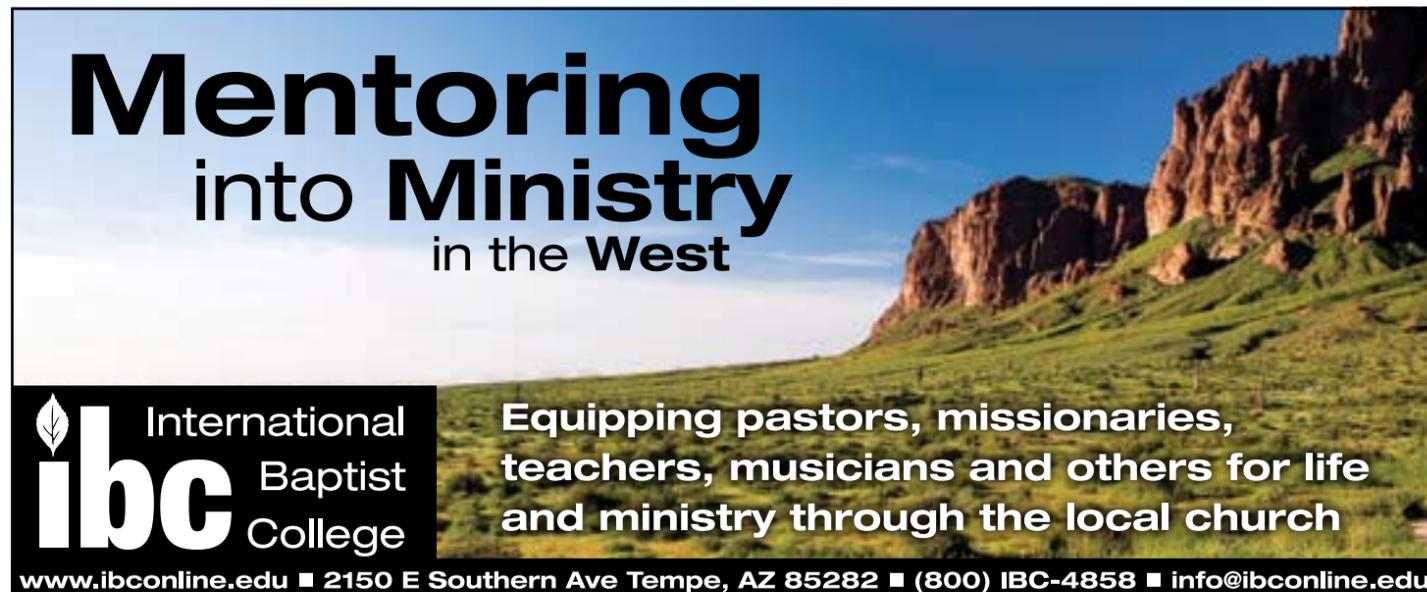
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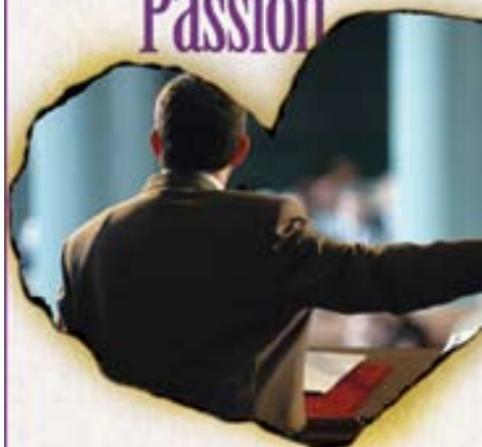
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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

A Good Soldier of Jesus Christ

We have a full thirty of them in our church's hymn-book: songs by Charles Wesley. But it would take nearly eight hymnbooks of equal size to hold all the church songs Charles wrote. They amount to over six thousand, ten times those of Isaac Watts.

So it's understandable that we might envision that this saint lived a contemplative, idyllic existence, surrounded by the silence poets love. Oh, we could think to ourselves, *what I wouldn't give for one-tenth of his solitude.*

It's amazing how far from the truth our uninformed perceptions can be. Take Wesley's case. There are few of his hymns that express both his philosophy and his excruciating experience of the Christian life any more truly than the one that begins, *Soldiers of Christ arise, and put your armor on,* and continues, *Take to arm you for the fight. . . . From strength to strength go on, wrestle and fight and pray.*

It would be hard to find any preachers of the last two centuries any more acquainted with outright warfare for Christ than Charles and his brother John. Their earliest journals are not only almost monotonously replete with references to it, but often the entries nearly spurt blood. Here are samples from Charles's journal for just one week in 1743.

A stream of ruffians was suffered to bear me from the steps. I rose, and, having given the blessing was beaten down again (May 21).

The stones flew thick, hitting the desk and the people.

. . . The stones often struck me in the face (May 25).

They pressed hard to break open the door. They laboured all night . . . and by morning had pulled down one end of the house (May 25)

We passed by the spot where the house stood. They had not left one stone upon another (May 26).

The mob attended me to my lodgings [a different house later that same day]. . . . The windows were smashed in an instant. The ambush rose, and assaulted us with stones, eggs, and dirt. . . . David Taylor they wounded in his forehead, which bled much. . . .

My arm pained me a little by a blow I received (May 27).

Do you ever wonder how you'd perform under fire? Occasionally after some minor discouragement that my brooding flesh has worried into a major internal crisis, I find the Lord's challenge to Jeremiah chiding my conscience: *If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?*

One surefire way to combat these kinds of fears is to take seriously an admonition written to suffering first-century Jewish Christians (Heb. 13:7). It concerns the example of those who have gone before us. Follow their faith, the writer urges, *considering the end of their conversation* (the consequence or result of the way in which they lived).

So we'll let Charles Wesley himself tell us what the consequences were of their suffering hardship like good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Here are five instances for our meditation and encouragement.

"I Think He Is a Man of God"

Wednesbury (October, 1743): My brother came, delivered out of the mouth of the lions! He looked like a soldier of Christ. His clothes were torn to tatters. The mob of Wednesbury, Darlaston, and Walsal, were permitted to take him by night out of the society

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

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house, and carry him about several hours, with the full purpose of murdering him.

My brother had been dragged about for three hours by the mob of three towns. Three of the brethren and one young woman kept near him all the time, striving to intercept the blows. Some cried, "Drown him! Throw him into a pit!" some, "Hang him up upon the next tree!" others, "Away with him! Away with him!" and some did him the infinite honour to cry, in express terms, "Crucify him!" One and all said, "Kill him!" but they were not agreed what death to put him to. In Walsal several said, "Carry him out of the town. Don't kill him here! Don't bring his blood upon us!"

He did not wonder (as he himself told me) that the martyrs should feel no pain in the flames; for none of their blows hurt him, although one was so violent as to make his nose and mouth gush out with blood.

At the first justice's, whither they carried him, one of his poor accusers mentioned the only crime alleged against him, "Sir, it is a downright shame. He makes people rise at five in the morning to sing psalms." Another said, "To be plain, sir, I must speak the truth. All the fault I find with him is, that he preaches better than our parsons."

We gave ourselves to prayer, believing the Lord would deliver us; how or when we saw not, nor any possible way of escaping. Therefore we stood still to see the salvation of the Lord. As soon as the mob had emptied the engine, they ran to fill it again, keeping strict watch on all sides lest we should escape.

Mr. Justice did not care to meddle with him, or with those who were murdering an innocent man at his worship's door. A second justice, in like manner, remanded him to the mob. The mayor of Walsal refused him protection, when entering his house, for fear the mob should pull it down. Just as he was within another door, one fastened his hand in his hair, and drew him backward, almost to the ground. A brother, at the peril of his life, fell on the man's hand, and bit it, which forced him to loose his hold.

The instrument of his deliverance, at last, was the ringleader of the mob, the greatest profligate in the country. He carried him through the river on his shoulders. A sister they threw into it. Another's arm they broke.

I took several new members into the society, and among them the young man whose arm was broken; and (upon trial) Munchin, the late captain of the mob. He has been constantly under the Word since he res-

cued my brother. I asked him what he thought of him. "Think of him!" said he: "that he is a man of God; and God was on his side, when so many of us could not kill one man."

Our Bitterest Enemies Were Brought Over

St. Ives (July 22, 1743): I had just named my text, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God," when an army of rebels broke in upon us. They began in a most outrageous manner, threatening to murder the people if they did not go out that moment. They broke the sconces, dashed the windows in pieces, bore away the shutters, benches, poor-box, and all but the stone walls. They swore bitterly I should not preach there again; which I immediately disproved by telling them Christ died for them all. Several times they lifted up their hands and clubs to strike me; but a stronger arm restrained them.

They beat and dragged the women about, particularly one of great age, and trampled on them without mercy. The longer they stayed, and the more they raged, the more power I found from above. I bade the people stand still, and see the salvation of God, resolving to continue with them, and see the end. In about an hour the word came, "Hitherto shalt thou come; and no farther."

The ruffians fell to quarreling among themselves, broke the town-clerk's (their captain's) head, and drove one another out of the room. Having kept the field, we gave thanks for the victory; and in prayer the Spirit of glory rested upon us.

[The next morning]: It was next to a miracle that no more mischief was done last night. The gentlemen had resolved to destroy all within doors. They came upon us like roaring lions, headed by the mayor's son. He struck out the candles with his cane, and began courageously beating the women. I laid my hand upon him, and said, "Sir, you appear like a gentleman. I desire you would show it by restraining these of the baser sort. Let them strike the men, or me, if they please; but not hurt poor helpless women and children."

He was turned into a friend immediately, and laboured the whole time to quiet his associates. Some, not of the society, were likewise provoked to stand up for us, and put themselves between. Others held the ruffians, and made use of an arm of flesh. Some of our bitterest enemies were brought over by the meekness of the sufferers, and malice of the persecutors.

Our Adversaries' Hearts Were Turned

Bristol (February 25th, 1747): A day never to be forgotten! At seven I walked quietly to Mrs. Philips's; began preaching a little before the time appointed; and for three quarters of an hour invited a few listening sinners to Christ. Then the boys, with their bells, like the devil's infantry began; and soon after his whole army assaulted the house, to bring us forth. We sat in a little ground-room, and ordered all the doors to be thrown open. They brought a hand engine [for

pumping water], and began to play into the house. Just then, Mr. Borough, the constable, came, seized upon the spout of the engine, and carried it off in spite of them all . . . but they hurried out to fetch the larger engine.

They now began playing the larger engine, which broke the windows, flooded the rooms, and spoiled the goods. We were withdrawn to a small upper room, in the back part of the house, seeing no way to escape their violence. . . . Our brother who keeps the society they laid hold on first; dragged him away, and threw him into the horse pond; and broke his back.

We gave ourselves to prayer, believing the Lord would deliver us; how or when we saw not, nor any possible way of escaping. Therefore we stood still to see the salvation of the Lord. As soon as the mob had emptied the engine, they ran to fill it again, keeping strict watch on all sides lest we should escape.

The rioters without continued playing their engine, which diverted them for some time; but their number and fierceness still increased; and the gentlemen plied them with pitchers of ale, as much as they would drink. . . . We had now stood siege for about three hours; and none but the Invisible Hand could have kept them one moment from tearing us in pieces. Our constable had applied to Mr. Street, the only justice in town, who would not act. We found there was no help in man, which drove us closer to the Lord.

We prayed and conversed as freely as if we had been in the midst of our brethren; and had great confidence that the Lord would either deliver us from the danger, or in it. . . . They were now close to us, on every side, and over our heads, untiling the roof. I was diverted by a little girl, who called to me through the door, "Mr. Wesley! Mr. Wesley! creep under the bed! They will kill you. They are pulling down the house."

At this time we fully expected their appearance and retired to the furthest corner of the room; and I said, "This is the crisis." In that moment Jesus rebuked the winds and seas, and there was a great calm. We heard not a breath without, and wondered what was come to them. The silence lasted for three quarters of an hour before anyone came near us; and we continued in mutual exhortation and prayer, looking for deliverance. If ever we felt faith, it was now. Our souls hung upon that arm which divided the sea.

In about an hour after the last general assault, the answer of faith came, and God made bare his arm. Soon after three Mr. Clarke knocked at the door, and brought with him the persecuting constable. He said, "Sir, if you will promise never to preach here again, the gentlemen and I will engage to bring you safe out of town." My answer was, "I shall promise no such thing." "But you will not tell me, you have no intention of returning hither?" "Not till you are better disposed to receive me; for, in obedience to my Master, if you persecute me in one city, I will flee to another. But, setting aside my office, I will not give up my birthright, as an Englishman, of visiting what part I please of his

majesty's dominions." "Sir, we expect no such promise, that you will never come here again: only tell me that it is not your present intention; that I may tell the gentlemen, who will then secure your quiet departure." I answered, "I cannot come now, because I must return to London a week hence; but OBSERVE, I make no promise of not preaching here when the door is opened; and don't you say that I do."

He went away with this answer, and we betook ourselves again to prayer and thanksgiving. We perceived it was the Lord's doing, and it was marvelous in our eyes. Our adversaries' hearts were turned. Whether pity for us, or fear for themselves, wrought strongest, God knoweth. Probably the latter; for the mob were wrought up to such a pitch of fury, that their masters dreaded the consequence, and therefore went about appeasing the multitude, and charging them not to touch us in our departure. I knew full well, it was not in their power to lay the devil they had raised, and none but the Almighty could engage for our security.

In about an hour after the last general assault, the answer of faith came, and God made bare his arm. Soon after three Mr. Clarke knocked at the door, and brought with him the persecuting constable. He said, "Sir, if you will promise never to preach here again, the gentlemen and I will engage to bring you safe out of town." My answer was, "I shall promise no such thing." "But you will not tell me, you have no intention of returning hither?" "Not till you are better disposed to receive me; for, in obedience to my Master, if you persecute me in one city, I will flee to another. But, setting aside my office, I will not give up my birthright, as an Englishman, of visiting what part I please of his dominions."

None Were Suffered to Hurt Me

Dublin, Ireland (September, 1747): Here the first news we heard was, that the little flock stands fast in the storm of persecution. . . . The Popish mob has broken open their room, and destroyed all before them.

(September 9) I walked at five in the evening to the shattered room in Marlborough-street, where a few people were met, who did not fear what men or devils could do unto them. God has called me to suffer affliction with his people. The Popish mob, encouraged and assisted by the Protestant, are so insolent and outrageous, that whatever street we pass through, it is up in arms. The mayor would assist us, but cannot. The grand jury have had the plainest evidence of the riot laid before them; that mixed rabble of Papists and Protestants broke open our room, and four locks, and a warehouse, stealing and destroying the goods to a considerable value; beat and wounded several with clubs, &c.; and burned them openly before the gate, swearing they would murder us all: yet it is much doubted whether the grand jury will find the bill!

I met the society and the Lord knit our hearts together in love stronger than death. We both wept and rejoiced for the consolation.

(September 13) In the strength of the Lord I went forth. . . . I stood under the wall of the barracks and preached Christ crucified. . . . Thousands were now assembled to hear the word, and many to hinder them. . . . In vain did the poor blind Papists rage, and shout, and cast stones. None were suffered to hurt me, or any of the hearers.

We Sung a Song of Triumph

Athlone, Ireland (February 11, 1748): At eight I took horse for Athlone. We were seven in company, and rode mostly abreast. Some overtook us, running in great haste; and one horseman, riding full speed. We suspected nothing, and rode on, singing, till within half a mile of the town. Mr. Samuel Handy and John Healey happened to be foremost, three or four yards out of the line, though I had led the company till then. We were mounting a little hill, when three or four men appeared at the top, and bade us go back. We thought them in jest, till the stones flew. John Healey was knocked off his horse with a stone fell backward, and lay without sense or motion. Mr. Handy, setting spurs to his horse, charged through the enemy, and immediately turned upon them again. There were only five or six ruffians on the spot; but we saw many gathering to us from all sides.

I observed the man who knocked down John Healey, striking him on the face with his club, and cried to him to stop; which drew him upon me, and probably saved

our brother's life, whom another blow might have dispatched. They had gathered against our coming great heaps of stones, one of which was sufficient to beat out our brains. How we escaped them, God only knows, and our guardian angels. I had no apprehensions of their hurting me, even when one struck me on the back with a large stone, which took away my breath. One struck Mr. Force on the head; at whom Mr. Handy made a full flow. He turned, and escaped past; yet it knocked him down, and for the present disabled him. As often as we returned, we were driven off by showers of stones. Some were for returning home, but I asked if we should leave our brother in the hands of his murderers.

We rode back to the field of battle, which our enemies had quitted, the Protestants beginning to rise upon them. It seems the Papists had laid their scheme for murdering us, at the instigation of their priest, father Ferril, who had sounded an alarm last Sunday, and raised a crusade against us. The man who wounded John Healey was the priest's servant, and rode his master's horse. He was just going to finish the work with his knife, swearing desperately that he would cut him up, when a poor woman from her hut came to his assistance, and swore as stoutly that he should not cut him up. The man half killed her with a blow from John Healey's whip; yet she hindered him till more help came.

We found John Healey, in his blood, at the hut, wither the woman and her husband had carried him. He recovered his senses at hearing my voice. We got him to Athlone; had him blooded; and his wounds dressed. The surgeon would take nothing for his pains.

The people of the town expressed great indignation at our treatment. The soldiers flocked about us. They had been ordered by their officers to meet and guard us into the town.

We marched very slowly for the sake of our patient, till we came to the field of battle. It was stained with blood abundantly. We halted, and sung a song of triumph, and praise to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Here we sent back our guard and went on our way rejoicing to the Moat. I proclaimed in the street the faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. A few stones were cast, and a drum beat, to entertain the ladies. In spite of the genteel devil, some impression was made on the vulgar, as their tears testified. We rode through the noisy ones to Mr. Handy's. The voice of joy and thanksgiving was heard in his dwelling; and we magnified the God by whom we escape death.

Christ Wins

Charles Wesley's "Soldiers of Christ, Arise" doesn't leave the end in doubt. *Tread all the powers of darkness down, and win the well-fought day*, it triumphantly concludes. We ought therefore, brothers, to urge one another *To stand . . . to withstand . . . having done all, to stand. . . stand therefore . . . stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.* ☞

Bring . . . the Books

The year 1813 saw a battle of monumental proportions won for the gospel. That battle was not fought among the uncivilized heathen but in the halls of the British Parliament, not by a clergyman but by a common-looking, slightly disfigured gentleman named Wilberforce—a Christian first and a politician second. The cause he championed had to do with resolving a predicament that was keeping a young missionary to India from effectively propagating the gospel. Wilberforce's stirring speech to Parliament resulted in the lifting of a prohibition placed on Christian missionaries living in British colonies in India. One of Wilberforce's biographers observed, "Parliament had opened a fast-locked door and it was Wilberforce who had turned the key, in a speech which Lord Erskine said 'deserves a place in the library of every man of letters, even if he were an atheist.'" This was not the only locked door that Wilberforce opened by sheer tenacity coupled with Christian virtue.

William Wilberforce was born to affluent parents in Hull, England, in August 1759. His father died when William was only nine, and for a time he was sent to live with relatives who introduced him to the evangelical influence of men like George Whitefield, John Wesley, and John Newton. However, years passed before he came to Christ while serving as a member of the British Parliament. At the age of twenty-one he was elected to Parliament to represent the district in which he had been born. His political career spanned forty-five years of uninterrupted political service. He married at the age of thirty-seven and had six children with his wife, Barbara.

William was twenty-five when he came to Christ through the influence of a friend and mentor, Isaac Milner. His conversion radically changed his own life and that of his nation. A man of significant wealth, Wilberforce devoted his money and his energy to two great causes: the abolition of slavery in Britain and the formation of Christian morals in England. A journal entry for October 28, 1787, reads, "God Almighty has placed before me two great Objects, the Suppression of the Slave Trade and the Reformation of Manners." He went on to engage in a forty-five year battle in Parliament to see the achievement of the first cause; his life and testimony played a key role in accomplishing the latter.

Of the available biographies of Wilberforce's life, one of the best is a short work (seventy-six pages) written by John Piper entitled *Amazing Grace in the Life of William Wilberforce* (Crossway, 2006). The work gets behind Wilberforce's legendary achievement to see what drove him. Piper's answer (and I think he is right) is that Wilberforce was driven by "a profound biblical allegiance to what he called the 'peculiar doctrines' [car-

A Well-Fought Fight, a Well-Run Race: The Life of William Wilberforce

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

dinal truths] of Christianity." Wilberforce believed if a man truly embraced the key doctrines of Biblical Christianity, these doctrines will give him an internal desire for spiritual things. Those spiritual affections lead then to a genuine inner change that manifests itself externally in radically changed morals which, in turn, eventually lead to the welfare of the nation.

He was convinced that the majority of Britons who claimed to be Christians during his day were at best nominal Christians more interested in the external ethic and morality associated with Christianity in civilized lands than the doctrines that comprised Christianity and from which genuine moral and ethical behavior sprang. "The fatal habit of considering Christian morals as distinct from Christian doctrines insensibly gained strength," he argued. "Thus the peculiar doctrines of Christianity went more and more out of sight, and as might naturally have been expected, the moral system itself also began to wither and decay, being robbed of that which should have supplied it with life and nutrient."

In our day many believers and Christian leaders have manifested an interest in achieving in American politics the kind of influence and stature that Wilberforce achieved in his day. They should consider the observation made by a former member of the British House of Commons, Jonathan Aitken: "The primary driving force behind Wilberforce's legislative perseverance was not, like most politicians before and since, to pass laws that would bring benefits to society; it was to pass laws to eradicate the activities of society that were offensive to God." For Wilberforce, this was a lifelong warfare. Finally, on July 26, 1833, slavery was outlawed in the British colonies—three days before Wilberforce's death.

The world needs more William Wilberforces—men who are so radically transformed by the doctrines of Christianity that they are set on fire for God and burn in front of the world with such force and tenacity that the worldliness around them can't survive in their presence. More importantly, such men are needed to confront the worldliness and nominal Christianity of many who are in the Church. By living as he did, Wilberforce affected Parliament and influenced a nation flung around the world. Perhaps by living as he lived, we can affect our churches and influence Christianity around the world. May God grant us grace and strength to make a confident attempt. ☞

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The contemporary church is fraught with many problems related to Christian leadership. Three are at the forefront: leaders who demand absolute authority over their followers; leaders whose sins are so blatant that they have forfeited the privilege of leadership; and Christians who believe that they may function autonomously. These two verses set forth God's requirements for both leaders and followers.

Context

The developing theme of Hebrews, the superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ, gives motivation for the Christian life. Old Testament heroes of faith in chapter 11 are martyred examples. Jesus is the supreme example in chapter 12. Chapter 13 adds earthly examples that should be followed because of the outcome. Paul instructed, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Properly applied, this portion of Hebrews presents a dual responsibility to prevent and correct problems that attract much public attention today.

Terminology

Bible believers often overlook important teaching because they depend on modern uses of words or informal meanings rather than investigating the Biblical terms or comparing Scripture with Scripture. Consider some important wording in the seventh and seventeenth verses of Hebrews 13.

Remember (mnemoneuete) is more than a call for casual recollection. It is an imperative requiring action. Even indicative uses expect a resultant action. Hebrews 11:22 reminds us that Joseph "made mention" (*emnoneusen*) and then gave a commandment. An application is expected in the call of Peter (2 Peter 3:2) to "be mindful" (*mnesthenai*) of the teachings of the apostles and commandments of the Lord.

Them which have the rule over you translates one word (*hegoumenon*), literally *the [ones] leading*. The 1611 AV includes the marginal reading "are the guides." Joseph, called a governor in Acts 7:10, is literally a leader. His leadership authority was derived from a greater authority and his concern for the welfare of those over whom he had been appointed.

Follow (mimeisthe), the source of the English word "mimic," leaves no question about the degree to which we are to follow. *Considering (anatheorountes)* is literally to look again, to look attentively with the sense of examining critically. The word occurs in Acts 17:23, where Paul inspected, considered, contemplated the Athenian idols, and reached a conclusion. *End (ekbasin)*, literally "to go out," implies here the outcome or result. *Conversation* is

an obsolete English usage. The former meaning was "conduct," corresponding to the Greek *anastrophes* with the figurative meaning of behavior or lifestyle.

Obey (peithesthe) in this use has the sense of obedience produced by being convinced or believing. *Submit (hupeikete)* is simply to yield. *Watch (agrupnousin)* is to be sleepless, to stay awake, hence to be alert. *Give (apodosontes)* means to render, in the sense of accounting for behavior (Matt. 12:36) or to deliver the produce of a vineyard to the owner (Matt. 21:41). *Grief (stenazontes)*, literally "groaning," is the expression of discontent or displeasure.

Interpretation

The command "Remember" calls attention to examples. Remember the Old Testament examples of faith. Remember the faithfulness of Christ. Likewise remember the example of those who brought you the Word of God. Their faith, philosophy of life, and pattern of conduct produce beneficial results for them and those who follow.

There is something about human nature, especially in our present age, that rebels against the concept of someone "ruling over" us. Counseling is a popular topic and activity today. Yet both secular and Christian guidance is often rejected or ignored. Those seeking counseling often ignore the guide that God has given. It is important that we understand the term used here—"leading" or "guiding." No better guidance is available than that which comes from God because it is based on His authority and has our welfare as its goal.

Both "obey" and "submit" evoke innate resistance to instruction. This obedience is not the result of sovereign imposition but of being convinced and believing. It is not difficult to follow that which one believes. There comes a point at which one who is convinced "yields." Leaders, therefore, have the responsibility to convince and lead to belief instead of demanding.

Application

Believers have the duty to follow those who bring them the Word of God because the result is of great benefit. Failure to do so is unprofitable, even hurtful. An equally solemn responsibility is placed upon pastors and teachers. They must give account to God for the results produced in the lives of followers as a steward must account for the produce of a vineyard. That accounting can bring joy or grief. The pastor/teacher groans when his sheep go astray. The grief is even greater when he fails to heed a further admonition in 1 Timothy 4:16. Worthy leaders produce worthy followers. ☞

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

What Do You Say in Your Heart?

Let's take a stroll down a hallway of the heart in the museum of mankind. Here the Lord has skillfully arranged amazing portrayals of the motives of men. In each exhibit we find marvelous mirrors that allow us to observe the heart motives of the sinners and saints found in Scripture. This, then, is a hall of horror and humility, brought to life in convincing fashion. Such displays are skillfully designed to deliver us from self-deception. They force us to look within ourselves to discover whether these horrible or humble motives are our own. Each new exhibit compels us to ask, "What did he say in his heart?" and "What am I saying in mine?" The purpose of this column is to help you illustrate your sermons with these statements heard within the heart.

The Hall of Horrors

Psalms for Self-Deceivers

There are those who enter this great hallway of the heart as unbelievers. They believe that they can read the Book but not that the Book reads them. For such, the Psalm 10 exhibit is instructive: "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. *He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity*" (vv. 4-6).

In his *Treasury of David*, Spurgeon said of verse 6, "The present witness has been prying into the secret chambers of the heart, and has come to tell us what he has heard." The self-deceiver described in Psalm 10 denies God and God's judgments, and he insists upon his own permanence and freedom.

Verse 11 records more of his self-deception: "*He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it.*" In the message of this mirror, we find the self-deceiving hope of the sinful heart. He fervently hopes that God may never see him and has forgotten him. Like a toddler playing peek-a-boo, the sinner believes that "out of sight is out of mind."

Like facing mirrors on opposite walls, the Scriptures contain many "reflected reflections" of the sentiments found in Psalm 10.

"*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abom-*

inable works, there is none that doeth good" (Ps. 14:1; cf. 53:1). The problem is that the way you say things is the way you see things. True to form, these wrong assumptions lead to wicked abominations.

Premeditated Murder

"And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and *Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob*" (Gen. 27:41). Esau chose to nurture hatred and envy to monstrous, murderous proportions by what he said in his heart.

Two Awful Lies

Is it merely young people who say the wrong things in their hearts? The Lord told Ezekiel the answer: "Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? *for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth*" (Ezek. 8:12). This remarkable exhibit in the hallway of the human heart is especially instructive. In order to make dark lords out of their lusts, these people had to utter two awful lies in their own hearts: (1) The Lord doesn't see me, and (2) the Lord doesn't care. But the Lord does see, and the Lord does care. Don't utter these lies in your own heart.

Reasoning Behind False Religion

The Lord gave Jeroboam a wonderful, conditional promise of security in 1 Kings 11:37, 38. The Lord initiated this promise in 1 Kings 12. But Jeroboam turned to his own strategy. Why would anyone make such a ridiculous move? The answer can be found in the message of the Mirror of Jeroboam's heart: "And *Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David*" (1 Kings 12:26). In Jeroboam's thinking, God simply wasn't big enough and needed a helping hand. But Jeroboam's control led to Jeroboam's corruption. The product of this poisonous pondering was idolatry that plagued many generations. Where did all this start? It started with what the king said in his heart. What are you saying in your heart?

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

Charles Spurgeon

National Arrogance

Obadiah gives another example for the hall of horrors. He portrays the pride of the Edomites. "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; *that saith in his heart*, Who shall bring me down to the ground?" (Obad. 3). The Holy One will not bypass such a haughty national heart.

What Do You Say To Your Soul?

Another notable exhibit is the heart of the wealthy man mirrored in Luke 12:19-21: "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." In this case, the rich man's prosperity had become his idolatry. He worshipped and served the creature comforts more than the Creator of the comforts. Don't plant these lies in the soil of your soul.

The Hall of the Half-Hearted

There is hope for the half-hearted in this hallway of the heart. Things that are said in the heart do not always depict a lifelong pattern. For instance, consider Abraham and David.

Is God Big Enough?

What Abraham said in his heart reflected his lack of faith in God's ability. But notice the substitute plan that Abraham proposed in the next verse! "Then Abraham fell upon his face, and *laughed, and said in his heart*, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee" (Gen. 17:17, 18).

If the Lord could use Abraham, He can also turn other faithless people into faithful leaders. He sometimes does so in painful, embarrassing ways. Consider another episode from the life of Abraham in Genesis 20. There, Abraham thought that he could concoct a lie that would deliver his own life. When the king, who feared the Lord, confronted Abraham about this lie, Abraham responded, "Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake" (Gen. 20:11). Isn't the heart deceptive? Abraham, who would have said that he feared the Lord, chose to lie because he didn't think others feared the Lord. For those who claim

to fear the Lord, it's important to reflect on these reflections of Abraham's heart.

In 1 Samuel 21:12, 13, David changed his behavior because of what he "said in his heart": "And David laid up these words *in his heart*, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath. And he changed his behavior before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard." How much of your irrational behavior has been fueled by the fears you've expressed in your own heart?

The Heart of the Humble

What can we say to our hearts that will turn us away from these problems? The next exhibits give us hope.

Peter

When Peter's problems of the heart "came home to roost," he made the right choice regarding what to say to his heart: "And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. *And when he thought thereon*, he wept" (Mark 14:72). Carefully remembering God's words can awaken us from the sleep of self-deception.

David

"And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant *found in his heart to pray this prayer* unto thee" (2 Sam. 7:26, 27). David's meditation in Scripture produced fruitful prayer.

Hidden in Your Hearts

Your Treasured Thoughts

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:11).

With these illustrations, we have learned much about what is hidden in the heart. Now it is time to hide God's Word in the heart. In so doing, your heart can become a hall of great heritage—the heritage of the humble.

The Lord Jesus went straight to the heart of the matter with these words found in Matthew 12:34, 35: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." It's time to carefully consider what you say in your heart. ☞

Gordon Dickson is the Treasurer of the FBFI and pastors Calvary Baptist Church in Findlay, Ohio.

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Resolutions

Resolution 07-01: Concerning Fundamentalism and “Social” Ministries

The FBFI warns its members that history teaches us that many social programs have led to theological compromise or have ended up as all social and no gospel. The singular purpose of the church is to glorify God through worldwide evangelism and discipleship, and there is no social mandate for the organized church parallel to the gospel. Realizing that there is disagreement over the propriety of churches involving themselves in evangelistic outreach through social programs, and realizing that many Fundamentalist churches are reaching people for Christ through such programs, the FBFI encourages Christians and local churches to practice individual soul liberty and refrain from condemning each other unnecessarily over the application of these principles. We express our full confidence in the power of the gospel to transform individual lives and society as a result.

Resolution 07-02: Concerning Ministry to Illegal Immigrants

Recognizing the New Testament church’s obligation to win and disciple the world, the FBFI acknowledges the responsibility of Fundamental Baptist churches to reach the growing number of immigrants in our communities regardless of their legal status. We urge churches to avoid making legal status, in any way, a condition of evangelism. But we also urge churches to practice and teach submission to human governmental authority as an essential aspect of Christian growth. Churches should act consistently in the matter, not treating the legal status of an immigrant differently from other issues of equivalent moral and spiritual import in the lives of church members. We recognize the autonomy of each local church to implement these principles in harmony with its own understanding and application of church polity.

Resolution 07-03: Concerning the Intelligent Design Movement

While commending sincere men of science for recognizing the beautiful, intelligent, and clear evidence of our Creator in nature, the FBFI reiterates our commitment to the Bible as our ultimate authority in all matters—including creation and the origin of the universe. We readily acknowledge our commitment to evaluate matters of science through the lens of the Word of God. We also see the approach of the ID

movement as, at best, an insufficient tool for evangelism because of its appeal to science and human intellect apart from Scripture. The salvation of a soul is a supernatural event that cannot occur apart from the truth of the Word of God and the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit. The Intelligent Design movement acknowledges general revelation, but is not necessarily Christian.

Resolution 07-04: Concerning the Doctrine of a Literal Hell

The FBFI declares without apology its commitment to the Biblical, historical, and orthodox doctrine of a literal Hell. Many who claim the name Evangelical today deny the existence of a literal Hell, and others who believe it are ignoring it in Bible preaching and teaching. We urge everyone who claims to be a Bible believer to continue to preach and teach this important doctrine so central to the teachings of Jesus Christ Himself. Let us boldly urge the lost to avoid the fires of Hell through personal faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Resolution 07-05: Concerning Theonomy

The FBFI expresses its rejection of the doctrine called “Theonomy” for the following reasons: It fails to see the clear Biblical distinction between the Church and Israel. It is the outgrowth of a postmillennial view of the return of Christ, which we reject. It sees the role of the Church as significantly social, expanding the scope of the Great Commission far beyond its Biblical evangelistic and church-planting focus. It violates the historic Baptist distinctive of separation of State from Church. In its quest for a religious state, it has the potential of pitting believers against human governments that Romans 13 clearly indicates they must obey. Its view of the Old Testament Law fails to recognize the New Testament treatment of the Law as being not a means of grace or government but a standard of measure intended to demonstrate to man his own sinfulness and the insufficiency of his own righteousness.

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The best medicine for present sufferings is a regular performance of present duty. —Susannah Wesley

Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire. —William Butler Yeats

Dedication is often marked not by great stimulation or great emotion but by great weariness. —Bob Jones Jr.

John Fletcher is a seraph who burns with the ardor of divine love. Spurning the fetters of mortality, he almost habitually seems to have anticipated the rapture of the beatific vision. —Robert Hall

Should love of souls e'er be wanting here, then sit in me for I am Whitefield's chair. —Inscription on George Whitefield's chair

Brethren, the crying sin of the Church is her laziness after God! —Samuel Chadwick

I preached as never sure to preach again and as a dying man to dying men. —Richard Baxter

I love those that thunder out the Word. The Christian world is in a dead sleep. Nothing but a loud voice can awaken them out of it. —George Whitefield

Put your elbows on the pulpit. . . . Put your face in your hands. . . . Now let the tears flow. That is what Mr. McCheyne used to do! —The sexton, St. Peter's Church, Dundee, Scotland

Find preachers of David Brainerd's spirit, and nothing can stand before them. —John Wesley

There is passion in the praying that prevails. . . . God loves a man aflame. The lukewarm He cannot abide. He never keeps hot hearts waiting. —Samuel Chadwick

Yet with all his wit did he never in the pulpit stoop to court a grin when he should save a soul. —W. Withrow on Francis Asbury

Contemporary preachers gaze back fondly at the days of the great revival movements. We make the study

of methods used in bygone days become a science. However, methods imitated without price paid produce a hollow, mechanical, superficial echo. —Les Olilla

Oh, how gloriously a man speaks when his lips are blistered with the live coal from the altar.—Charles H. Spurgeon

Spurious, false, humanistic excitement will result in burn-out and burn over. —Whitney R. Cross

Piety is not natural to a people, and so they do not hold it long. —Solomon Stoddard

Would ministers preach for eternity, they would act the part of true Christian orators, for then they would endeavor to move the affections and warm the heart, and not constrain their hearers to suspect that they dealt in the false commerce of unfelt truth. —George Whitefield

The gospel of a broken heart demands the ministry of bleeding hearts. . . . As soon as we cease to bleed, we cease to bless. . . . Tearless hearts can never be the heralds of His passion. —John Henry Jowett



"SORRY, ... BEFORE I HANDED OVER THAT ENDOWMENT CHECK I SHOULD HAVE ASKED IF YOU WERE ON MEDICATION..."

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

Those Who Serve behind the Scenes Are Seen by God

Debbie Hibbard

And he [Jesus] saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. (Luke 21:2)

Earlier that day with a willing heart, that widow made a decision to take her last two mites, go to the temple, and give all that she had. The sense of this account in Luke and also in Mark 12 is that she did it without display, as quietly and as discreetly as possible, seeking to be unnoticed.

Then the One who makes any sacrifice worth it all gives to us a glimpse of what He sees all the time—a quiet lady giving all that she had and continuing on. Throughout each day many godly ladies give of themselves and are observed only by the God who sees and takes note. Many jobs are accomplished in homes, churches, and other ministries that do not escape the attention of God's perfect Servant.

Even before any outward evidence can be noticed by others, our Lord sees the heart. God saw and knew the heart of Mary, the mother of Jesus, long before the angel came. God knew that in her heart she would be willing to obey immediately. She was ready to give, even of her reputation, and trust her Savior implicitly.

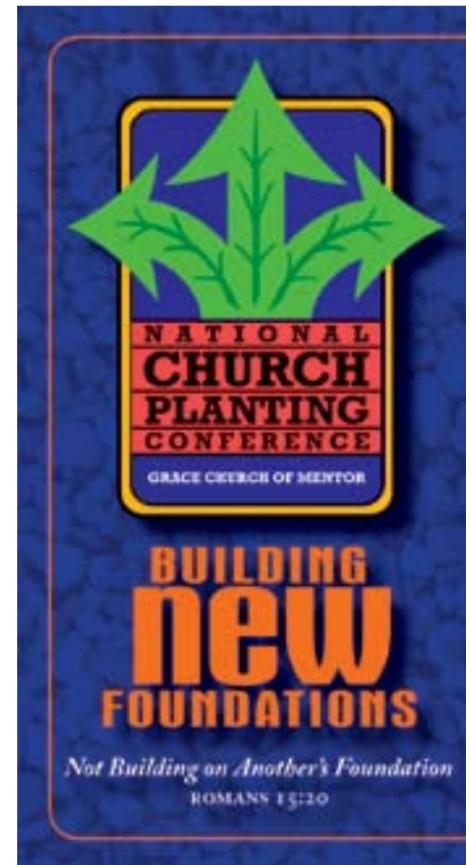
Many ladies do the same today. They give of their strength, their finances, their time, and their emotions to willingly obey and serve the Lord because of their devotion to Him. Some serve in their homes through the day and into the night doing the repetitive tasks of

meeting the needs of their family. It could be demands of infants and toddlers or the challenge of the care of a loved one with failing health. God sees the long hours of loving sacrifice and gives strength for the weary.

Only God knows the words of encouragement and acts of kindness that are shared daily with people in need. Behind the scenes meals are prepared, phone calls are made, transportation, shopping, cleaning, and child care for others are provided, and many letters and e-mails are written. Also the sweet fragrance of prayer rises to our God from the hearts of ladies twenty-four hours a day. Those very private conversations between a loving Heavenly Father and His child are pleasing to Him as a broken, caring heart pours out a burden to the One who understands and who listens and who satisfies.

Thousands of physical and emotional needs are met by our God through the willingness of heart and the efforts made by godly ladies in our churches and around the world. So ladies who faithfully labor, be encouraged, because the God of Heaven still sees both your heart and your giving. He still takes note. "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40). It is to His praise that we thank God for His servants and for the continued privilege of serving our Savior.

Debbie Hibbard is a Christian school teacher. She and her husband live in Glassboro, New Jersey.



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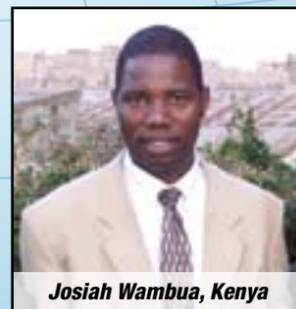
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Old Age

Old age enables us to spend long days alone with the person we've been shaping all our lives. That one who walked and talked with God throughout a busy day finds that he now has long periods of uninterrupted fellowship, joys of various sorts in contemplations of past, present, and future. His inner voice does not crack as he sings the old hymns of the faith. He can send up a prayer at any time for any sort of request. His life is full and blessed. Yes, his life is excellent.

One who griped and complained through the years will find much more to complain about in the declining years of body and mind. More things other people do now cause greater reaction than through previous years. Irritating sounds become even more irritating. Nothing becomes less irritating; more things cause irritation. Life becomes increasingly more difficult to endure to the end.

The declining years are not always all we had expected. One who loves to travel and looks forward to visiting several places after retirement finds instead that the body is not up to the rigors. Travel is more pain than pleasure. One who looked forward to spending hour after hour reading unexpectedly finds that his eyes no longer can stand steady reading for more than an hour or two. For many, old age is living in a different type of world.

The aging process affects everyone differently. There is a marked difference in the way people who are devoted to God enter old age. They get sweeter. Any church is greatly blessed to have senior saints who are fully devoted to God in their old age. Others can see the glory of God in their kindness and patience and humility. Will you be devoted in your old age? It doesn't happen automatically. You don't turn 65 and retire and become devoted to God. As we age, we just become more of who we already are. If you are not devoted now, you won't be devoted later. If you want to finish your life devoted to God, live a faithful devoted life now. Be committed to prayer and God's Word and serving in Christ's church.

When we have the strength and stamina, we can take care of things ourselves. But there may come a time when we can't do what we used to do; when we can't drive our car anymore; when we can't keep up the home we are living in. What do you do then? Well, if you have been depending on God each day, that's what you continue doing. God is no different; He just has different lessons.

Those who are older, because of their closeness to eternity, have a clearer vision of true values. Simeon

had been told that he would not die before seeing the Lord's Christ (Messiah), and so he waited, and looked for and expected the arrival of the Messiah (Luke 2:26). Picture him, visiting the temple wondering, "Is this the day? I'm getting old, Lord. My joints are hurting; I get tired so easily. It's not so easy climbing these steps to the temple." Younger folks walk past him quickly. He seems to be in the way of people who have somewhere to go. He sits down in the midst of many people in the temple, but his thoughts aren't there. He's seen much of life. He has seen fads come and go. He's been to many weddings. He's been to many funerals. Many of his contemporaries are dead. He knows he is on the threshold of eternity. So he is looking beyond this world. His values are different. He knows there are things more important than money and possessions, than clothes and beauty, than popularity and good times.

Many churches have been blessed with numerous senior saints devoted to God in their old age. They stand on the threshold of eternity, living with a daily dependence on God, thereby testifying to the truth of His Son. Such senior saints who are devoted to God in their old age are not prejudiced. They have seen that people are people no matter their background, and that God loves all. Jesus came to be the Savior of all men.

We are blessed to have such seniors in our midst. We are honored by their presence. We don't always recognize the treasure God has placed with us. We would be wise to get to know better these senior saints who are devoted to God in their old age. You will surely be blessed to invite them to your home or to visit them.

God has a place of service for everyone who is devoted to Him, no matter your age. But this is especially true for senior saints. God has a place of service for each senior saint. Even by the way they live their life they are testifying to truth. God has placed in our midst some senior saints, fully devoted to God in their old age, who have a clear vision of values because of their closeness to eternity and who are living daily with a dependence on God. Our senior saints who have been walking with Jesus in this life have grown accustomed to His presence. They know that only by knowing Jesus Christ can a person have peace concerning death and eternity.

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Fighting a Good Fight

Jerry Sivnksty

On November 17, 1987, my father, Mike Sivnksty, was rushed by helicopter from Fairmont, West Virginia, to a hospital in Morgantown. Dad had suffered a burst aneurysm in his stomach. Before he was taken into surgery the doctor told him, "Mike, you may not come out of this operating room alive." My father said, "That's okay, Doctor. I'm ready to meet the Lord." He passed away that evening. The last words my father uttered are very dear to me because he was a saved man.

In the New Testament we find a man of God who was ready to leave this earth. Some of the last words Paul said are found in 2 Timothy 4:7: "I have fought a good fight." The key to fighting a good fight for the Lord is dedication.

I enjoy playing and watching sports and have always been intrigued by boxing; very few people understand the dedication required in this sport. Several years ago Chris Byrd, a heavyweight boxer, came every night to my meetings in Flushing, Michigan. To prepare for a fight Chris runs many miles, jumps rope, and performs many other rigorous exercises so that when he steps into the ring he is in top physical condition. The same principle is true in the spiritual realm; fighting a good fight for the Lord involves spiritual dedication, and there are no shortcuts. Many people who step into the spiritual boxing ring are "knocked out" in the first few seconds of the fight because they lacked dedication in preparing for it.

One of the aspects of dedication is repetition, going over and over something until it becomes a part of you. When I was in junior high, my older brother and I would wrestle and box—it was a constant, almost daily activity for us. One day in school the class bully picked on me. This boy was mean and feared by everyone, but he crossed the line with me, and I told him I was going to fight him after school. (Of course, I wasn't saved at the time.) The news spread throughout the entire school; even the townspeople heard about it, and many of the coal miners came out to see the fight! I was the last one to arrive because I was scared of this boy like everyone else.

When I walked inside the huge circle of onlookers, the bully said, "So you want to fight me, huh?"

I said, "Yeah!" By the way, my dad was a bouncer in a beer joint and always told me, "Don't you ever start a fight, Jerry; but if you have to fight, you must get in the first punch—that's a must!"

So when this boy said those words to me, I hit him as hard as I could in the mouth. Then I jumped on him, bit, scratched, and did everything I could think of. However, he got me pinned on the ground and was sitting on my chest with his knees across my arms. Then he got a nasty grin on his face, spit on his knuckles and reared back to ram his fist down my throat. But he didn't have my feet pinned. Since my brother and I wrestled so much, it was a natural instinct for me to wrap my legs around his neck and bend his neck back almost onto his ankles. Then I proceeded to beat him up—I beat up the class bully! The things I did in that fight were done by instinct because I had worked on those techniques constantly with my brother, and that repetition brought success.

The same thing will be true in the spiritual battle we are involved in. We must realize that repetition is necessary in our lives. We must be memorizing the Word of God, meditating, studying, and pondering on it daily. The same applies to prayer; we must be praying daily, earnestly, interceding for others—the unsaved, those in the ministry, our nation, and the Jews.

For those of us who are in full-time ministry as well as those who serve as laymen, we must constantly be aware that we will be tempted to take the easy way out. Perhaps we'll be tempted to ease up in our separation or violate a Biblical principle or make a decision based on the fear of man. But dedication doesn't take the road of least resistance! Dedication says, "I will not succumb to laziness! I am preparing for my Master's work, and I will take the most difficult challenge so the Lord can use me for His glory." This matter of dedication brings a lot of pain, discomfort, and exhaustion; but it also brings unspeakable joy, and it is well worth the spiritual pain and hardship.

The apostle Paul sums up the joy he was soon to experience in 2 Timothy 4:8: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

In the next article we will examine the second aspect of what Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7.

Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at P.O. Box 141, Starr, SC 29684 or via e-mail at evangjivn@aol.com.

NEHEMIAH, PART 1:

This column recently explored the historical and theological significance of the book of Ezra. Ezra's contemporary and political counterpart was Nehemiah. Persia's King Artaxerxes commissioned both of these men to return to Jerusalem within a few years of each other. Nehemiah continues the story of restoration begun in Ezra. (The Jewish canon combines the two books into one.)

The Book of Nehemiah divides into two main sections: (1) the physical restoration of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1–7), followed by (2) the spiritual reformation of God's people (Nehemiah 8–13). This column explores the first division of Nehemiah.

Historical Backdrop

The previous column mentioned Megabyzus, the Persian governor of Syria and Artaxerxes' general, who brought Egypt back into submission to the Persian Empire by 456 BC. Megabyzus brought the Greek and Egyptian commanders back to Susa, Persia's capital, under promise of immunity. Amestris, the widow of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes), demanded their execution. Infuriated, Megabyzus returned to Syria and declared independence from Persia. Having repelled two Persian campaigns against him, Megabyzus returned two years later to redeclare his loyalty to the Persian crown (ca. 447–446 BC). But Syria's taste of independence and the tenuousness of the Syrian satrapy made it politically expedient for Artaxerxes to appoint Nehemiah as governor of Judah in 445 to insure a stable and loyal neighbor near Syria. Why was Nehemiah so trusted? He was the royal cupbearer, the king's personal butler. If there was anyone you'd better know and trust, it was the one who could slip something into your goblet or be bribed to do so. In later Persian times, the cupbearer wielded more influence with the king than the military commanders.

Nehemiah's Return (1–2)

Reports reached Nehemiah back in Babylon that things were not going well in Jerusalem. The city walls were breached, its gates burned, its defenses in disarray, leaving her vulnerable to her enemies. Nehemiah's instinctive response was to pray (1:1–11). Unable to conceal his concern, Nehemiah unfolded his burden to his master the king. Artaxerxes responded by granting Nehemiah gubernatorial authority and commissioning him to go to Jerusalem specifically to rebuild the city, gates, and walls (2:1–10). Nehemiah, then, was neither priest nor prophet, but primarily a politician, a spiritually minded statesman

(as oxymoronic as that may sound), a godly governor, strategically placed (first in Susa, then in Jerusalem) by the appointment of man in the providence of God.

After arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah immediately surveyed the condition of the city and laid out a strategy for completing the walls as expeditiously as possible (2:11–18). Predictably, as it is whenever God's people undertake any important work, antagonists soon surfaced. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem instigated a campaign of demoralization via mockery (2:19, 20).

Sanballat was, or was to become, governor of Samaria (to Judah's north). Tobiah was governor of Ammon (to Judah's east). Geshem the Arab is also mentioned outside the Bible. Why did they resent and resist the rebuilding of Jerusalem? They may have sided with Megabyzus in his earlier rebellion against Persia and viewed Nehemiah as a strong pro-Persian. They didn't want competition from an upstart province. They knew Jewish history; any reestablishment of the Jewish capital was an ominous sign of Jewish independence and potential Jewish domination of the region. But anyone who reads his Bible believingly understands that these three antagonists were the tools of a larger, more far-sighted adversary who understood the messianic potential attached to a viable Jerusalem community.

Secular Work Is Sacred (3)

Chapter 3 looks to the modern reader like one of those necessary but uninteresting lists—a record of those who built the walls and gates of Jerusalem. This seems odd when compared with Ezra's record of the rebuilding of the temple. Why did Ezra include no record of who rebuilt the temple? Wasn't that the more "spiritual" and important work? Yet Nehemiah includes a meticulously detailed account of who did what in this seemingly "secular" work of rebuilding the city's defenses. With a good map of ancient Jerusalem you can trace the chapter's progression counter-clockwise around the city, gate by gate.

Notice the details of who did what. These were not all skilled masons but people of God willing to do manual labor outside their areas of expertise. It was a community effort for the most part. Some thought themselves too good or too important to lend a hand to "the work of their Lord" (3:5). Then there were others—goldsmiths, perfumers, and merchants (3:8, 31, 32), priests (3:22), and local leaders (3:9, 15, 17, 18). Some got their daughters involved in the labor (3:12) and their young sons as well (3:30). The exception-

RESTORING MESSIAH'S CITY

ally industrious receive special notice (3:20). A few who finished their assigned task early went in search of more work (3:27).

Secular callings are sacred opportunities. God noted this secular work with such precision—who does what (or does not) and how—and memorialized these labors in His Word. Do not think He takes no note of what we do and how we do it, even in seemingly secular affairs. Nehemiah 3 confirms that God is attentive to how we give ourselves to our God-given callings and opportunities. Any secular duty or calling becomes a sacred act to be performed as to the Lord (Col. 3:23, 24). He notes whether we are like the nobles who do not help in the work or like the Tekoites who do double work, whether we work willingly outside the area of our strength like the perfumers or Shallum's daughters or Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph. He notices when we work earnestly and diligently like Baruch. And He remembers.

Balancing Offense and Defense (4)

Ezra introduced us to a variety of opposition strategies employed by the enemies of God's people. Here another one surfaces: demoralization by mockery (4:1–3). When that does not work (4:4–6), the enemies of God's people resort to a more serious opposition strategy: terrorism and threat of violence (4:7–9). Refusing to buckle to intimidation but unwilling to take unnecessary risks, Nehemiah divides the labor between working and guarding (4:10–23), combining diligence and vigilance with a firm reliance on God Himself (4:14, 20).

Leading by Personal Example (5)

How much simpler Christian life and warfare would be if our enemies were only external. Like the Church, Judah had internal conflict to deal with as well. The siege-like conditions during the rebuilding made things difficult. Food was scarce. Some had to mortgage their property to buy food or pay Persian taxes. Unable to repay their debts, some had even been forced to indenture their children as servants. Those profiting off these difficulties were not Judah's Gentile neighbors but their wealthy Jewish brethren! Nehemiah addresses this injustice and corrects these in-house abuses (5:1–13). But the effective leader who wins the heart of his followers goes beyond public legislation to personal leadership. Nehemiah sets a positive personal example by adopting a simple lifestyle, forgoing the provisions prescribed for him as governor that he had every right to expect (5:14–19). Paul

not only preaches but embodies the same principle in 1 Corinthians 9.

More Opposition Strategies (6–7)

Their previous stratagems foiled, Judah's enemies opt for a subtler strategy: *dialogue* (6:1–4). But the invitation to dialogue merely cloaked the daggers of treachery. Nehemiah smelled an ulterior motive (6:2). Probably they meant to assassinate him. Their appeals were suspiciously persistent—four attempts to lure him away from his work. The fifth time the mask begins to slip. They play the libel card in the form of an open letter, which they threaten to send to Artaxerxes, accusing Nehemiah of monarchical ambitions in violation of his commitment to the king (6:5–9). That the charges are false and groundless makes no difference to them. The whole purpose is to force Nehemiah to come to the table, where they can do him in. Nehemiah calls their bluff, but they are not out of tricks yet.

Another opposition strategy takes shape. Judah's enemies employ a Jew named Shemaiah as a fifth columnist who infiltrates Judah's ranks in hopes of undermining Nehemiah's leadership credibility (6:10–14). The intrigue of the story is fascinating. Shemaiah agrees to be a double agent for Sanballat, Geshem, and Tobiah. Pretending to prophesy a warning from the Lord, he attempts to persuade Nehemiah that a gang of thugs is coming for him and that he must hurry and take sanctuary in the temple. Nehemiah spurns the idea and subsequently discovers that it was a plot to create panic, undermine his authority, and demoralize the people.

In the face of all this opposition and even treachery, the wall is finished at last—much to the chagrin of their enemies (6:15, 16). But the fight is not over yet (6:17–19). When Nehemiah gives his brother, Hanani, and Hananiah charge over the city proper (7:1–3), a new problem surfaces (7:4–73). Jerusalem had been virtually abandoned because of the lingering Babylonian devastation. Most had apparently established homesteads on the outskirts of the city. The city and the walls are rebuilt, but walls cannot save a city without inhabitants to defend them. Men are a city's best defense. Nehemiah uses genealogical records to determine Jerusalemite descent in order to relocate an adequate population within the city.

Messianic Importance of Jerusalem

Why was the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem so important—not only to the Jews, but to God? "The key

Continued on next page

At a Glance Continued

that unlocks the book for us theologically is the doctrine of Christ. . . . As we carefully examine the life of Christ, it becomes very evident that certain Jewish institutions must be in place for His work to be accomplished and for prophecy to be fulfilled" (Robert Bell; all quotations in this section taken from "The Theology of Nehemiah," *Biblical Viewpoint* [Nov 1986], 56-57). Bell lists several factors:

1. "It was necessary for Messiah to be born into a Jewish community that adhered to a strict practice of the Law. If this did not happen, then even as a child He could not have fulfilled the Abrahamic and Mosaic requirements (Lk. 2:21-22, 27)."

2. "The Messiah's life must also be intimately connected to the system of temple worship. A community that knew nothing about God's system of sacrifice could not understand the Messiah's death on the Passover. Furthermore, without the temple, the full practice of the Law of Moses was not possible."

3. "For the faithful practice of the Law and the worship of the Temple, a strict separation from the gentiles is necessary in the Jewish community. The whole history of Israel is a testimony to the negative side of this fact."

4. "For this separation to exist, there is a *physical* necessity: a strong Jewish capital with an ability to exclude gentile influence in religion and morals."

5. "Such a city would not be possible without the willingness [and security] of a large Jewish population to dwell there."

All of this is wrapped up in the work of rebuilding the walls. God was restoring Jerusalem, securing its perpetuity, and recovering its institutions not merely for the Jews' sake; He was orchestrating the circumstances and environment necessary for the sending of His Messiah into the world in "the fulness of . . . time" (Gal. 4:4).

Rebuilding the city was the first (and easier) step. The next need was to rebuild the people. That's the focus of Nehemiah 8-13 and the next *At a Glance* column.

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Israel Facing More Geopolitical Pressure

Israel is facing political pressures on all sides once again. From within, the Olmert government is facing increasing disapproval ratings from the Israeli people, and pundits are expecting new elections by the end of this year. Which direction things will go is uncertain.

Pressures are mounting from without as well. The Israeli government has put out travel warnings for every one of their citizens to leave every Muslim country in the world. They are even encouraged to leave countries where Muslims are found in a small minority, such as Thailand. (http://www.onenewsnoe.com/2007/03/israeli_elections-could_be_cal.php, accessed 3/20/07)

Persecution Growing for Refugees

A little over 2000 Iraqi Christians fled their country during the last five years to what they thought would be a place of safety, but now in Jordan many of these Christians are facing growing persecution. Some have already been beaten, and fears mount. One Christian refugee was beheaded by militiamen while his sisters received verbal and physical threats. With persecution on the rise, their reason for leaving Iraq becomes moot. (<http://www.christianpost.com/>

[article/20070315/26346_In_Jordan_Christians_from_Iraq_Harassed.htm](http://www.christianpost.com/article/20070315/26346_In_Jordan_Christians_from_Iraq_Harassed.htm), accessed 3/20/07)

Worship: Surprising, Challenging, and Fun

The Church of England's Holy Communion service will be using songs and lyrics from the popular rock band U2, entitling the service the "U2-charist." Initially, recorded music will be played. An event is planned in May where a live band will play some of U2's music, such as "Mysterious Ways" and "Beautiful Days." The intent is to be able to raise awareness for the church's millennium development goals, the purpose of which is to alleviate world poverty. Interestingly, though, the idea was gleaned by watching worship here in the US. The Bishop of Grantham, Timothy Ellis, stated he wanted his services "totally inclusive," adding, "Rock music can be a vehicle of immense spirituality. . . . It is important that we try and find ways of worshiping that are surprising, challenging, and fun." (http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=paBonoMon12U2_hymnsud&show_article=1, accessed 1/31/07)

New Way to "Do Church"

The United Methodist Church has launched a new website, www.umc.org, for the sake of its congregants. This will allow the congregation to "do church" in

the way that best fits their lifestyle.

"The web site is not based upon what administrators of the church believe people need to know about us as an institution so much as it is built upon the requests of people who use the site, telling what they want to know." They hope to launch a youth site by June of this year. Although the UMC states that the online church is not "the church" but rather a "doorway to the church," it is clear that the traditional approach is passing away. (<http://www.christianpost.com/article/20070130/25492.htm>, accessed 1/30/07)

Catholic Church Loses Ground in the UK

Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that discrimination against homosexual partners will not be allowed even by faith-based groups. Catholic adoption agencies in the UK sought exemption based on the tenets of their faith. Initially the church took a strong stand saying no compromise would be met, but in recent comments issued by Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, conciliatory gestures appear in the works. Whether the agencies will close as initially proposed or not is yet to be determined. (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/01/30/ngay30.xml>, accessed 1/30/07)

The Gay Gene Firestorm

Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, found himself in the midst of a firestorm based on comments quoted in a *Time/CNN* article by Michael Lindenberger, posted Friday, March 16, 2007. According to the article, Mohler's position was, "We sin against homosexuals by insisting that sexual temptation and attraction are predominantly chosen." What is significant about this particular debate is that it was viewed by liberals and non-Christians as a chink in the armor of the "fundamentalist leader." Political philosopher Charles Teller said Mohler's comments were "refreshing. Both science and religion can be much perverted by ideological beliefs. Both need to be purified."

In the firestorm that followed, Mohler issued a lengthy statement regarding the article insisting that he was misrepresented in his beliefs and misunderstood by gay activists and Bible-believing Christians alike. His comments and his position can be noted at www.albertmohler.com/blog/read.thp?id=901.

Electronic Comfort

AP reporter Lisa Leff reported on a nonprofit group, Exhale, and the unveiling of a new line of post-abortion greeting e-cards. An examination of their website

Reaching the Pearls of the Pacific for Christ

David Utter

Travel posters and calendars mesmerize us with beautiful scenes from tropical islands scattered across the Pacific. Decades ago, Robert Louis Stevenson gave the designation “Pearls of the Pacific” to the Marshall Islands. God has truly displayed His capacity for lovely creation in many of these remote places. Yet that beauty is often marred by the sinful lives of those who are unsaved. The needs are great and the challenges numerous, but many islands of the Pacific are in great need of those who will bring the liberating truth of the gospel.

One challenge in reaching these areas is logistics. The Marshall Islands are spread out over a 700,000-square-mile area in the middle of the Pacific about halfway between Hawaii and Guam. Yet the total land mass is barely 70 square miles. Small islands with relatively small populations are far apart, and the transportation to most is not entirely reliable or predictable. As a result of their remoteness, many islands have rather “primitive” lifestyles on them.

Another factor confronting the potential evangelist is that of the languages. The language of all the Marshalls is Marshallese. This contrasts to some of the other island groups in Micronesia where there are multiple (but related) languages in the same group. While the languages of Micronesia may not be difficult grammatically, the problem is the acquisition of these languages. For the most part, there are no language schools and few books from which to learn, so the missionary must do it on his own. Because the use of English varies, it is necessary to learn the local language.

Perhaps the biggest challenge in reaching these islands for Christ is the syncretism which has taken place over many decades. Missionaries first came to the Marshalls in the mid 1800s. Today, the nation considers itself Christian and even has a nation holiday called Gospel Day to celebrate the coming of the first missionaries. Nearly every speech at political and education events begins by thanking God. It is common to hear people speak of the light which has come to the Marshalls.

However, the same people who express thankfulness for what they term “the gospel” also go to diviners when

they are sick to see who cast a spell on them. Some preachers go to local medicine practitioners for treatments to make them more popular among the people. Bible pages are wadded up and pinned to infants’ clothing to keep away evil spirits, and Bible pages are inserted in empty bottles hung from trees for the same purposes. The animism that controlled the lives of the people decades ago is still very much alive.

Immorality is rampant. Many believe that it is better to live in fornication than to marry and risk the possibility of divorce. This contrasts with the outward mere conformity to religion as evidenced by the general modesty in dress and the taboos regarding public displays of affection even by those who are married.

In dealing with people here, we often come up against three challenges. First, there is a tendency for the people to say yes and give the answer that they believe the speaker desires. This may stem from a desire to be kind, but it can be misleading to the evangelist. Second, there is a confusion of terms. “Repentance” and “belief” are well known to the nationals but have become imbued with different meanings from those of Scripture. Third, there is a tendency for the people to join a cause for perceived benefits even when those benefits may be considered minor by American standards.

Given this situation, this is a place where missionaries are needed who will commit to learning the language, living among the people, and communicating the gospel clearly, cogently, and compassionately. Quick trips and evangelistic rallies are probably not the best means for reaching these people, who have such wrong beliefs ingrained in their thinking. However, God desires and is able to reach those in small remote groups as well as those in large urban areas. Only two of the inhabited thirty Marshall Islands have gospel-preaching works, and much of the rest of the Pacific is in similar need with scattered islands needing those who will commit their lives to making disciples of Christ in remote places.

David Utter is a missionary from Hampton Park Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina to the Marshall Islands. For questions or comments, email him at dutter@gfmissions.org

NOTABLE QUOTES

The modern scientist has lost God amid the wonders of this world; we Christians are in real danger of losing God amid the wonders of His Word. We have almost forgotten that God is a person and, as such, can be cultivated as any person can. In is inherent in personality to be able to know other personalities, but full knowledge of one personality by another cannot be achieved in one encounter. It is only after long and loving mental intercourse that the full possibilities of both can be explored.—A. W. Tozer

New Testament Christianity zealously seeks the salvation of lost people. This zealous commitment to evangelism also characterizes Fundamentalism. Evangelistic fervor is a logical part of biblical Christianity. Fundamentalists accept the Bible as God’s revelation. Thus they accept all that the Bible teaches, including what it teaches about man’s sinfulness, his need of a Savior, God’s grace revealed in Christ, and man’s eternal doom without Christ. These truths send Fundamentalists to lost people the world over with the gospel of Jesus Christ.—Dr. Fred Moritz

There is no book so intelligible as the book of God; no book that so clearly reveals man to himself; or that has such inexpressible power over the heart; or that connects itself so naturally with his popular feelings and interests. The savour of Divine truth is sensibly diminished, by passing under the conceptions and expressions of men.—Charles Bridges

What the Scripture indisputably says about these [Heaven and Hell] must be an article in any completely orthodox statement of “the faith”. And the thesis of this message is that “*Hell is an ultimate destiny where men and women experience eternal, conscious torment in fire that is nothing less than literal.*” Notice the words “eternal,” “conscious,” “torment,” “fire,” and “literal.” Each of these is the indisputable conclusion reached by precise handling of the Bible’s revelation about Hell. So, in light of the current evangelical rethinking of this doctrine of destinies, I want to restate and contend for the orthodox position that “going to Hell” will be the inexpressible personal catastrophe of experiencing eternal, conscious torment in fire that is nothing less than literal. This is a sobering severity, repugnant and utterly unacceptable to the natural mind. It is, nevertheless, what the Bible teaches and therefore what every Christian must bear as the burden of his Scripturally informed conscience whenever he has an opportunity to evangelize the lost.—Dr. Mark Minnick

proved to the skeptical visionary that this would work was the fact that the eight of the nine campuses grew. The only one that did not was the one where the pastor was physically doing the ministry.

(http://www.christianpost.com/article/20070118/25244_LifeChurch.tv_Named_Most_Innovative_Church.htm, accessed 01/18/07)

Evangelism Contest

Donald Mitchell, a strategy consultant, received a “new commission” from the Lord. “[God] told me to launch a contest to find better ways to save more souls through Jesus by using the 2,000 percent solution process and then to publicize what is learned as widely as possible.” He adds, “I’m very humbled that God wants me to take on this task.”

Mr. Mitchell, who “attends” two different “Internet churches” (Calvary Chapel of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and Lakewood Church of Houston, Texas), plans to author two books after collecting the entries. The first is to be a part of his own “2,000 percent solution” strategy series and will be titled *The 2,000 Percent Solution for Saving Souls*; Mitchell will co-author it with the contest winner. That book is to be followed by the 101 best entries for a work to be titled *The 101 Great Solutions for Saving More Souls*. He hopes both will be available by Christmas 2007. (http://www.christianpost.com/article/20070122/25264_New_Contest_in_Search_of_Best_Soul-Winning_Method.htm, accessed 02/02/07)

Compiled by Robert Condict, Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International Advisory Board member and pastor of Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church, Baldwin, Maryland.

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

(www.4exhale.org) revealed the group’s purpose and range of available e-cards. The groups was organized because “they wanted to participate in creating a service that could meet women’s after-abortion needs, provide an alternative to politically motivated counseling agencies and create awareness that abortion, and having feelings afterward, is normal in the reproductive lives of women and girls.” The cards range from simple encouragement to spiritual and religious overtones such as “God will never leave you” and “You are in my prayers.” (http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D8NRL580&show_article=1, accessed 3/14/2007)

Christian Pastor Sentenced

Pastor Dmitry Shestakov has been sentenced to four years of exile for pastoring an “officially-recognized religious organization.” His documentation verifying the validity of his ministry was ignored. His crimes include not being registered and leading church services. (http://www.one-newsnow.com/2007/03/christian_pastor_sentenced_to.php, accessed 3/20/07)

Innovative Churches

“Without apology, I will do whatever it takes to grab people’s attention,” states founding LifeChurch.tv pastor Craig Groeschel. LifeChurch.tv has topped the chart of *Outreach* magazine’s most innovated churches. Groeschel’s “church without walls” concept, which was born in a two-car garage with forty attendees, has now grown to 18,000 weekly attendees at nine locations. Using the Internet, eight satellite locations of LifeChurch have been set up to reach people beyond geographical limitations. What

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Chaplain News

I'd Be Delighted!

Seth Hamilton



My story begins before I can remember. My parents tell me that my fascination with all things military must have begun sometime between conception and birth. While my five siblings were happily doing what kids do (playing dodgeball, riding bikes), I was voraciously consuming the biographies of Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant, Alexander the Great, and George Patton. Two framed pictures sat on my desk: Dwight Eisenhower and the greatest of them all, Douglas MacArthur. My spare time was spent busily building up an impressive arsenal of homemade artillery. Every discarded piece of plumbing or leftover lumber I could scavenge from Dad's garage found itself transformed into some semblance of military hardware. By the time I was ten, I had appointed myself general (if not commander-in-chief) of the Cedar Rapids Irregulars and had conscripted the entire neighborhood into my army. Despite our sometimes all-too-realistic skirmishes (strategized by yours truly), we somehow survived childhood and entered adolescence with only two trips to the emergency room and minimal psychological trauma.

During my freshman year of high school I approached my parents about pursuing admission to West Point. My goal: to become the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff! Much to my surprise, my mother and father seemed completely open to the idea. I appreciate my father's wisdom. Although I am sure he would have loved to see all of his four sons follow in his steps and pursue the ministry, I don't believe any of us ever felt pressured to do so. Along with my parents, I began to pray for the Lord to make His path clear. He did. He wanted me in the ministry. I wanted to serve in the military more than I wanted to breathe, but I feared God enough to realize that a battlefield is a stupid place for a man to be if he is there out of God's will. Like Jonah, he not only puts himself but everyone around him in jeopardy. I believe it was primarily because of the prayers of my parents that I was finally able to put to death what had been an idol of my heart: not only was West Point out of the question, but as far as I was concerned a career in the military was no longer a consideration.

Two years later I surrendered to missions. I did not know whether I was called, but I told the Lord that if He wanted me to go, I would. My search for the Lord's will continued through high school. I ran track, worked construction, and was active in our youth group. I enjoyed working with my hands and considered a mission helps ministry. However, every missionary agency I spoke with said the need was missionaries. Still unsure of what the Lord wanted me to do, I enrolled in Baptist College of Ministry in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, and declared Bible as my major. As a freshman, I took Greek and found out something I had suspected for some time: I did not have an affinity for foreign languages. One of the young ladies in our class regularly got 100% on quizzes and tests. She

and I defined the grading curve. How was I ever going to be a missionary if I couldn't learn a foreign language? By this time, I was convinced the Lord wanted me in some form of missions, but the question of how I would communicate with the nationals caused me to question my ability to serve in that capacity. After several months of wrestling with the Lord, I again surrendered my will to His. He assured me that if it were necessary to learn a language to accomplish His purpose, He would

enable me to do so. Toward the middle of my freshman year, Bob Ellis, the FBFI Chaplain Endorsement Agency representative, spoke in chapel. I was captivated. It had never occurred to me that I could be in the ministry and the military simultaneously. While I listened, a verse I had memorized as a child came to my mind—Psalm 37:4, "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

I must sincerely apologize to any unwitting students who may have found themselves unfortunately positioned that morning between my 6'5", 220-lb. frame and the BCM chapel platform. I'm not sure the final "Amen" was out of Brother Ellis's mouth before I was at his side. An hour and a half later, I still had a myriad of questions for which I wanted answers. When I inquired as to where I could meet some of the FBFI chaplains, Mr. Ellis told me that several would be at the FBF Annual Fellowship in June. I knew my father had some connection with FBFI, but I was too busy to talk with him that night. Imagine my surprise when next morning I received an e-mail from him asking me if I would like to go to the Annual Fellowship with him in June! Later, when I talked to my parents about what I had heard, my mother said, "Seth, a verse comes to mind: Psalm 37:4!"

Because of my previous inordinate desire to go into the military, I was hesitant to believe that the Lord was directing me into the chaplaincy. However, I began to pray and ask the Lord to make things perfectly clear. At the Fellowship that summer, I spoke with several chaplains about the opportunities. Over the next two years, the Lord brought me in contact with three chaplains who were able to give me different perspectives on their ministry. One of them had gone through the Chaplaincy Candidate program and was able to direct me in how to pursue it during seminary.

It was during the second semester of my junior year that the Lord gave me the assurance that I was called to be a US Army Chaplain. I was accepted by FBF in the summer of 2005 and commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant on April 2, 2006. If it is the Lord's will, I will be assigned to active duty in 2010.

Seth Hamilton is currently pursuing a Master of Divinity degree at Bob Jones University. He is also engaged to be married to Jill Steiger on May 26, 2007. He completed airborne school in 2006 and will be attending Air Assault school this summer.

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Behind the Lines

Sacrifice

Philip S. Hunt

He who chooses a difficult road must be ready to bear the consequences." Umm Nidal

Have you heard of Umm Nidal?

Umm Nidal, the woman known as "Mother of Martyrs," made headlines for a day around the world in January 2006 when the major news outlets picked up on an interview she gave. Umm Nidal is a Palestinian mother who was a parliamentary candidate for Hamas in the Palestinian Legislative Elections.

Umm Nidal is the mother of ten sons. She has voluntarily sacrificed three of her sons for the sake of resisting the occupiers—Israel. Her son Muhammed was the most recent to give his life for the cause. In Nidal's own words, "Muhammad carried out his operation at a military academy. They were all soldiers.

... This was not a bombing operation. He carried a regular weapon—a Kalashnikov—and hand grenades. He went in. There were several rooms. He went from room to room and shot them. He continued for twenty-two minutes, during which he was in total control—until he ran out of ammunition. ... Martyrdom was inevitable in this operation."

Interviewer: "Did you cry?"

Nidal: "At first I did not cry. I said 'Allah Akbar' and bowed in gratitude. The truth is I was ashamed to say: 'Allah, help me in my tragedy,' because I consider this a blessing, not a tragedy. ... As a human being I feel these emotions very deeply. Believe me, when it comes to my sons, I am one of the most compassionate mothers. But this is a sacred duty, which no emotion can supersede."

Now listen closely to what Umm

Nidal said next: "We cannot stop sacrificing just because we feel pain. What is the meaning of sacrifice? One sacrifices what is precious, not what is of little value. My children are the most precious thing in my life. That is why I sacrificed them for a greater cause—for Allah, who is more precious than them. My son is not more precious than his God."

As I view missions from my field in Africa, I am deeply concerned as I look to the future of foreign missions in our movement. We are working to reach those who are often far more committed to their false religion than those who claim our own.

We are called as soldiers of the cross of Jesus Christ to trust in our Sovereign God and not only to be willing but actually to lay down our lives for His sake. We are called to be shepherds, not hirelings. The shepherd stays with the sheep, loves the sheep, feeds the sheep, protects the sheep, guides the sheep ... and gives his life for the sheep. A hireling flees when the wolf comes; he flees when no man pursues.

Have we not been called upon like the great prophets of old to "bear the reproach" with our people? Should we expect that our lot in life should be of different standard than the dear people God has given us to lead and to disciple? Should I take options of escape because of my comparative affluence, options not available to my people?

Our supreme example in missions is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He came into the world ultimately to be despised and rejected by man. To be beaten and killed by the very people He came to love and save. Should we expect better treatment than our Master?

Did Paul retreat? His missionary career was not exactly a life of ease. He faced opposition at every turn, threats, physical violence, arrest, imprisonment, and ultimately execution. Could it be that the missionary force of the 21st century is seeing fewer results than Paul because we are not willing at all costs to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"?

Where is our resolve to God's will, our passion for God's glory, our obedience at all costs? Where are the Christian mothers with the resolve of an Umm Nidal? Listen to her once again: "We cannot stop sacrificing just because we feel pain. What is the meaning of sacrifice? One sacrifices what is precious, not what is of little value. My children are the most precious thing in my life. That is why I sacrificed them for a greater cause—for Allah, who is more precious than them. My son is not more precious than his God."

Should one who serves a god who is not God have a better theological perspective on sacrifice than we who know Him personally—we who have had His love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit?

Interviewer: "You have ten sons. If another is killed ... will your heart be filled with unbearable sorrow?"

Nidal: "No, no. Allah be praised. I am preparing myself. I will sacrifice them all. If my duty requires me to sacrifice them all, I will not refuse—even if it costs me a hundred sons."

May God strengthen our hand to stay the course, to fight the fight, to be faithful to the end that we may stand before Him unashamed. May there be nothing in our lives more precious than God!

Philip S. Hunt serves at Central Africa Baptist College in Kitwe, Zambia.

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