



God's Word Is Truth

"Father, sanctify them in your truth, your word is truth" – John 17:16

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“What Is Truth?”

Jesus was crucified for his claim to speak the Truth which came from God. The Jewish authorities not only opposed Jesus and the words he spoke, they sought to eliminate him once and for all. But since they did not have the legal power to put him to death, they brought him to the Roman authorities to have him tried and executed. The charge they brought before Pilate, however, was political rather than religious.

Luke in his Gospel account tells us that three false accusations were leveled against Jesus (Luke 23:1-2): First, that Jesus agitated sedition. Second, they said that he encouraged people to not pay taxes to Caesar. And third, he assumed the title king. In so many words they falsely accused him of rebellion and insurrection. John goes further than the other Gospel writers to affirm Jesus' claim to divine kingship and the authority and power to rule over all of God's creation - both the heavens and the earth and all that is visible and invisible.

Bearing witness to the truth

Jesus explained to Pilate that he came to "bear witness to the truth" that his kingdom was from above - from heaven and not from earth.

"My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world." Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice." Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

- John 18:36-38

Jesus did not deny that he is King. He knew he would die precisely because he was God's anointed King and

Messiah. He explained to Pilate, however, that his kingship was "not of this world". He did not come to establish an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual one that would claim the submission of men's and women's hearts and minds to his word. This kind of kingdom made no sense to Pilate since he knew nothing of God and his ways. Pilate even questioned what was "truth". Jesus had promised his disciples that his word would open their minds to understand God's truth and set them free to live in the conviction and power of his love, justice, and goodness.

“If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:31,32).

The Lord Jesus died not only to bear witness to the truth - his victory on the cross won freedom for us from bondage to sin, Satan, fear and death. His rising from the dead on the third day demonstrates the invincible power of the truth that makes us free to live as sons and daughters of our Father in heaven.

Unmasking Satan's lies and deception

What can hold us back from hearing God's word and understanding his truth? Pride and indifference can block our ears from hearing God's word. But Satan also uses his powers of deception and empty promises to turn people away from truth to falsehood. Jesus explained to his disciples that he came to overthrow the "Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (John 12:31; Revelation 12:9-10; 1 John 5:19; Luke 10:18) in order to set us free from sin and falsehood.

This issue focuses on the truth which the Lord Jesus came to give us - the truth who is God himself - the author and creator of all that he has made. The battle which the followers of the Lord Jesus wage today is not political but spiritual. It is a battle for the truth and the freedom which God makes to all who believe in his only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The truth that makes us free

The kingdom which the Lord Jesus offers us is an everlasting *kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit* (Romans 14:17). His kingdom cannot fail or be destroyed - it will remain forever. May we his disciples take "the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17) and wield it to set captives free from the powers of sin, Satan, and deception so they may find true peace, joy, and the love of Christ that surpasses all else.

Sincerely in Christ,
Don Schwager
editor

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The Christian Mind in God's Perspective

How can we transform our mind from a secular stronghold
to a place inhabited by the Spirit of God?

by Bruce Yocum

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRISTIAN MIND

There is a significant difference between the Christian mind and the secular mind. The Christian mind approaches life from a different point than the secular mind and moves toward a different goal. This profoundly affects the way the Christian looks at life. I am indebted to Harry Blamire's book, *The Christian Mind*, for fresh insight into the characteristics of the Christian, as opposed to the secular, mind.

First, a Christian approaches and thinks about life from the perspective of eternity.

He affirms that there is life after death, that there is more to our existence than the life we experience in this world. He is convinced that there is a second death which is more conclusive and decisive than physical death.

Because a Christian is not fettered by a view of life bound to this world alone, his mind operates in a radically different sphere than the secular mind. A Christian hears Jesus ask, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?” and immediately responds, “Nothing, absolutely nothing.” He agrees with Paul that “if for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied” (1 Corinthians 15:19). Why? Because if there is no eternal life then this life on earth has been in vain, his hopes a mockery. But he knows that “in fact Christ has been raised from the dead,” and that from,” and that from him comes “the resurrection of his eternal perspective, the hope and the promise that shape all his thinking.

Second, the Christian views reality from a supernatural perspective.

He believes that God acts in the world in a way that goes beyond natural processes. It comes as no surprise to him that God heals, that he intervenes to alter the direction of events, that he reveals his mind to his people.

Over the past century, efforts to “demythologize” Scripture have done considerable damage to this perspective. Often, demythologizing Scripture means stripping it of its supernatural elements and constructing a theory that explains those events in natural terms. According to this viewpoint, no one in Scripture is healed, no demons are cast out, and no miracles occur because such events are “myths” told in supernatural terms in order to make a certain point, or to convey a sense of God’s power, or for any number of reasons. Although there may have been some good insights derived from demythologizing Scripture, the overall effect has been to undermine the Bible and weaken the Christian’s supernatural perspective.

At its root, in fact, this kind of thinking is incompatible with faith in God because it contends that the Lord does not act in a miraculous way in the world. It limits God, deciding what he can and cannot do. Over against that, the Christian must constantly reaffirm that God is present in the world, continually acting to guide and heal his people.

Third, the Christian mind perceives truth as objective, knowable and universal.

Opposed to this is the current popular understanding of truth as subjective, unknowable, and relative to circumstances. The latter view is easy to characterize. Imagine that you’ve just told someone about the Lord and the changes he’s accomplished in your life. As you finish, your listener says, “That’s great! I’m glad you can get into that.” “Well, wait a minute,” you say. “I just told you about the Lord, the creator of the universe, and how he’s working in my life.” “I’m happy for you,” your listener responds. “I’m glad it does something for you. But me, I like to meditate. Reality is different for me, it doesn’t work the same way it does for you. You relate to your reality and I’ll relate to mine.”

What an enormous perversion of the truth! In essence, the listener is saying that whatever helps you become “a good person, ‘whatever makes you feel happy and “fulfilled,” is reality and truth for you. The secular mind of today does not admit the possibility of an ultimate truth and reality that applies to all men and women regardless of how it makes them feel. But the Christian asserts that there is objective, ultimate truth that everyone can know—in fact, that it is critical for everyone to know. Jesus didn’t come to the Pharisees and say, “Well, you’re not accepting me but that’s okay. I can see where you’re coming from and it’s evident that you’re not ready for this.” He came bringing the truth; if they rejected him, they rejected truth.

The Christian must resist the tendency of the secular mind to reduce the truth to likes and dislikes, to current ideas and popular trends. The Christian knows that ultimate truth is objective, firmly established, steady, and reliable. It is not conceived of one day and discarded the next.

Fourth, the Christian submits his mind to the authority of God and his word.

To an age in revolt against authority, this submission is astounding, distasteful. The secular mind insists that

it is its own authority, that as far as possible it is free from the restraints of an order imposed from above. The Christian mind, however, recognizes that the very nature of God himself calls forth complete obedience. Confronted with the awesome, all-powerful, eternal God, the Christian responds in utter submission. For him, there can be no shifting back and forth, no arbitrary recognition of God's authority in one situation and rejection of it in another.

Fifth, the Christian knows that the most important truths are revealed.

In other words, the truths that lie at the very heart of reality, the truths concerning who God is and who we are, have been revealed to us by God himself. We could never have learned of the Trinity or the love of God on our own. The secular mind, on the other hand, operates apart from revelation and, consequently, has cast off the most significant truths of life, asserting the primacy of revealed truth doesn't at all denigrate truths arrived at through science and other disciplines; it simply puts them in the proper perspective. No matter what technological advances we make, no matter what areas of study we pursue, if we're not laying hold of the truths that God has revealed our studies won't much avail.

FORMING THE CHRISTIAN MIND

Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind

- Romans 12:2

The Christian mind doesn't just happen to people. It doesn't arrive at baptism, and it doesn't come simply because we want it to. In fact, it won't develop without a great deal of effort on our part. Where do we begin? What can we do to transform our mind from a secular stronghold to a place inhabited by the Spirit of God?

Disciplined Servants

We can begin by resolving to view our mind as our servant rather than as our master. God gave us our mind so that we could think, reason, and know him. He intended that we use it to help establish order in our lives. But because our mind plays such an important role in helping us regulate our activities, and because the intellect is so exalted in our day, it's easy to assume that the mind is the master of life. We must dismiss that view and determine that our mind will serve rather than control us.

Discipline plays a key role in developing a truly Christian mind. In *The Wisdom of the Desert*, a collection of sayings from the hermits of the early church, a young hermit approaches an older one and asks for advice on how to handle the many distracting thoughts that fill his mind. The elder tells the younger to go outside, hold open the garments around his chest and catch the wind in them. When the younger says that this is impossible, the elder hermit tells him that, likewise, it is impossible to keep distracting thoughts from entering the mind. but, he adds, "Your job is to say no to them."

Over the centuries the task has remained the same. Our job, too, is to learn to say no to distracting thoughts, and to discipline our mind by turning it to the subject at hand. If we're at a prayer meeting, it's time to direct our attention to the Lord. If we're talking with a friend, our thoughts belong with our friend in that conversation. In every situation, our mind should operate solely on the concerns that belong to it. If anxiety or fear arises, if wayward thoughts assail it, the mind should cast those cares upon the Lord in surrender to him.

Our minds should be like good soldiers, ready to obey our commands and, when necessary, ready to engage in battle to rout the enemy. Mental discipline isn't an arbitrary element of the Christian life, it's a strategic weapon in enabling us to free our minds for the Lord. Like any weapon, the more we use it the more skilled we'll become in handling it.

An Active, Open Mind

A common obstacle to forming a Christian mind is fear of using our mind, based on a conviction that the intellect hinders the spiritual life. Our mind, however, as a tool given us by God to be actively used in building his kingdom. An idle, empty mind is of little use to the owner or to God. Moreover, an empty mind, unoccupied by the things of God or other concerns proper to the task at hand, is likely to fall prey to distracting thoughts or thoughts planted by the evil one.

Not only should we actively use our minds, but we should enjoy using them. At the same time, we should discipline our minds to think within the limits set both by our mental ability and by God's call for our life. We shouldn't strain to think grander, more complicated thoughts than come naturally to us. On the other hand, we must resist the temptation to become discouraged or feel inferior if our mental faculties fall short of our intellectual ideal. It boils down to a question of stewardship. God has entrusted our minds to us and we should be using them with vigor and enthusiasm, knowing that if we are submitted to him, he will guide us in using them as he intended.

Further, it is imperative that we share our thoughts and concerns with the Christians around us. A reluctance to open our minds to others can leave us at the mercy of confusing, anxious, fearful thoughts that could be quickly dispelled by a word of truth from a brother or sister. If we're married, we should share our thoughts willingly and freely with our spouse. Our minds should be open to those who are in authority over us, and to mature Christian men and women in our prayer group or community. We can trust that they will be able to tell us when our thinking is out of line and help us to discipline our mind so that it is truly our servant.

A Mind Formed by God's Word

A mind filled with the word of God is a solid defense against the snares of the world, the flesh, and the evil one. "I have laid up your word in my heart," Scripture says, "that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11).

Formed by God's word and relying on his promises, the mind is quiet, receptive, and open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. It reaches out to God and welcomes his truth in Scripture, prophecy, and teaching. The mind that is immersed in Scripture will easily apprehend the mind of God and is well on its way to becoming a truly Christian mind.

Finally, we can train our minds for the Lord by limiting our exposure to worldly influences. Do we rigorously monitor the information that we allow to enter our minds and the minds of our children? What magazines and books do we read? Why do we read them? If they claim to be Christian publications, are we reading them critically, with an eye to whether or not they adhere to the truth? Do we exercise discernment when deciding what movie we'll see or what TV program we'll watch? How do we spend our free time? It is vital to our spiritual health that we honestly confront these and similar issues, seriously examine the role various influences play in our lives, and then take action against those influences that militate against the formation of a Christian mind.

THE MIND IN PERSPECTIVE

A discussion of the characteristics and formation of the Christian mind is sure to prompt some accusations of anti-intellectualism. People assume that when a person talks about disciplining the mind he is asking them to stop thinking. Not at all. The Lord gave us our minds and he expects us to use them. The intellect is a gift from God — a good, valuable part of his creation. But the Lord also expects us to view our minds in the

proper perspective and to accept the fact that above everything else, we must use them to cling to God. There's nothing anti-intellectual about that stance, it's simply a statement of the highest priority confronting the mind. When we have established that, then all the other things to which we should apply our minds assume their places.

“Be Transformed by the Renewal of Your Mind”

The mind can help us come either to eternal life or eternal death. Scripture tells us that “the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Scripture exhorts us, “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Romans 12:2). We are warned to “put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds” (Ephesians 4:22-23). The way we discipline and use our mind is a decisive factor in determining whether it is the territory of Satan or the stronghold of God. We can decide whether our mind will produce death or abundant life for ourselves and those around us.

Bruce Yocum is President of Christ the King Association and a member of the International Executive Council of [The Sword of the Spirit](#). This article was originally published in New Covenant Magazine, March 1977. Bruce states he would write this article somewhat differently today, but he is happy enough to let us reproduce it in its original form.

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Our Mind Matters

Doctrine has significance because Christianity is based on the truth

by Steve Clark

What is the role of our mind in the spiritual life?

Spiritual renewal movements sometimes have low interest in doctrine or even in the Christian use of the mind. They can seem only to be interested in producing emotional responses. They sometimes seem, in fact, to say that the mind is simply an obstacle in the spiritual life. As if God has to insult our intelligence to enter our hearts.

Doesn't the mind have any role in the spiritual life? To be sure, the mind can be a major obstacle to the grace of God. Paul reminds us that the message of the cross of Christ often seems like folly to the unconverted. God's truth is beyond what our minds can come up with. If we insist on having everything make sense on our terms, we will never get far in following God. Our minds need to confess that they cannot fully understand the things of God.

Yet we cannot be Christians without our minds, because Christianity is based on the truth. It is based on

teaching about God's word and his revelation. Eastern and modern spiritualities are often based on the ability to produce spiritual experiences or to enter spiritual states without believing truths about God and the human race. Christianity is different.

Even more, our minds can be spiritualized. In fact, if they are not, we will not enter the kingdom of God. We have to love God with our whole minds.

The conversion of our minds

To be spiritual, our minds need to be converted. They need to turn away from their old ways and turn to God's way. That comes most specially by faith or belief. "Faith" and "belief" are two different translations of the same Greek word. Faith involves trust, relying on God. But faith begins with believing the gospel. We cannot connect with Christ unless we believe.

When we believe in the gospel, we have to believe that what God said is true. When we believe in Christ, we cannot just believe that he will help us. We have to believe that he will help us, because we first believe he is who he said he is. "He who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God" (2 John 9). We abide in the doctrine of Christ when we "acknowledge the coming of Christ in the flesh" (2 John 7), that is, when we accept the doctrine of the Incarnation.

It is when we believe Christian teaching that the mind starts to become spiritual, because it has to replace its own understanding of the world with God's. That is part of being converted as a Christian. If we do not replace our understanding of reality with God's, we are not converted. The more we do so, the more converted we are, and the more spiritual our minds can be. Learning Christian truth, in other words, is one way to become more spiritual.

Repentance is also part of conversion, but we cannot truly repent if we do not learn Christian truths. Repentance is more than just regret or feeling bad about something that we did. When we repent, we have to change, reject sin and bad ways of approaching life, and take on good ways. We cannot repent, however, if we do not know what is bad and what is good, what is wrong and what is right. Repentance is more than thinking differently. It involves a personal change, and we certainly need God's help and healing to repent. But it does involve thinking differently, and we can only be converted if we accept God's views on how we should live and change our lives. Repentance begins by giving up our ideas on how to live, if they are not the same as God's ideas. Therefore, repentance involves learning about God's teaching on how to live.

Spiritual wisdom and understanding

The mind also plays an important role in exercising the charismatic gifts. The charismatic renewal has brought a renewed emphasis on spiritual gifts, especially tongues, healing, and prophecy. It has taught us to recognize and respond to God's willingness to work through us in spiritual gifts by sensing some movement inside or by having an impression we should respond to. All of this has been a great help.

At the same time, there are some very helpful gifts that are often neglected by the charismatic renewal. The Lord also inspires teaching and gives wisdom and understanding. These gifts cannot function unless the mind is able to understand truths and speak them. Moreover, God teaches us directly (see 1 Corinthians 2:9-13). He not only gives us senses about things, he also gives us light about truths. As our minds become spiritualized, they can be a vehicle for God's work. To receive the full blessing of God, we need to be renewed in our minds.

Using our minds and knowing Christian teaching not only allow us to grow spiritually and to receive spiritual

gifts well but also protect us against spiritual currents that are not so good or that bring problematic things as well as helpful things. Here the traditional wisdom of the church can be very helpful. One of the most important pieces of traditional wisdom is based on Paul's injunction not to quench the Spirit but to test everything, holding fast what is good (see 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21). That testing is more than checking out senses about a prophecy; it also involves testing the prophecy against Christian truths. We need to know Christian teaching well enough to know when preaching and teaching are not in accord with orthodox belief and so know when we have to discard some of what is preached to us.

One of my most helpful lessons along these lines came from hearing an account of William Branham by a man who worked with him. Branham was one of the most powerful Pentecostal evangelists in the US in the years after World War II. He exercised striking revelational gifts; impressive healings occurred at his rallies. Yet he gradually became more and more unorthodox, and ended up teaching against the Incarnation. He even said that Trinitarianism was of the devil. Though he preached heresy, his miracles did not cease.

The man who told me about Branham was one of Branham's coworkers. As Branham became less orthodox, this man was in turmoil, because he could see both power and unorthodoxy in the same man. He finally had to decide that he could not accept much of what Branham said because it was not true, even though Branham could still do miraculous things. This coworker had to test what Branham said by holding fast to Christian teaching. Orthodox Christians who knew about Branham had a variety of views as to why his revelational and healing power did not cease as he became unorthodox, but he is, at least, a clear example of the need to test everything against orthodox Christian teaching.

We need evangelists. We need powerful preaching. The more the action of God becomes visible through healing and revelation, the better. But our preaching and renewal also need to be based on sound teaching so we can know God's will and distinguish what is Christian from what is not Christian. When God's truth abides in us, then we bear fruit that is truly pleasing to him. [This article was first published in *New Covenant Magazine*, June 1991, copyright © Stephen B. Clark]

Steve Clark is past president of the [Sword of the Spirit](#) and founder of [The Servants of the Word](#).

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publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom
email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com



The World and Its Myths

by Carlos Mantica

Growing up in a Christian environment, my family learned that there are three enemies of the soul: the *world*, the flesh, and the devil. We understood well that when we speak of the *world* as an enemy we are not referring to “the whole world,” meaning all people or the human race as a whole. Instead, we know that “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son...” (John 3:16).

We also understood that it does not refer to the cosmos, that is, creation, the universe that came forth from the hands of God, for “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).

The *world* which the Scripture refers to as the enemy of the soul is that society or culture which is separated from God and is organized in opposition to the Kingdom of God. This *world* is made up of ideas, values, attitudes, patterns of relating, and systems that oppose God’s plan and that destroys humankind.

A definition of the *world* in this sense can be described as follows: The *world* is the set of ideas, values, attitudes, circumstances, structures and systems that oppose God’s plan, and which to a greater or lesser degree determine people’s thinking and behavior.

In the area of ideas, it is made up of philosophical theories, political ideologies, trends in modern psychology, etc. In the area of values, the world manifests itself in a materialism that exalts money and the pursuit of wealth as the key to happiness. It is present in hedonism which exalts pleasure as the supreme value.

The world's values have traditionally been four: knowledge, riches, power, and pleasure. In the area of attitudes we find mistrust, jealousy, revenge, resentment, just to name a few. These are not merely seen as something we may have - but as something we are entitled to pursue and must absolutely possess in order to survive in an increasingly cruel and dehumanizing world.

These attitudes gradually become relationship patterns with a high potential for destruction. One of these patterns is ruthless competition, where you seek to be competent in order to compete, and you seek to compete in order to crush your neighbor, even if you have to walk over his dead body. Other patterns are manipulation, emotional blackmail geared to make you do what I want, oppression, extortion, rebellion and the desire to dominate. Showing a facade, guarding appearances, bargaining, hiding, disguising. The list has no end.

Socioeconomic systems agree with these relationship patterns. Hardcore capitalism protects indiscriminate struggles against each other, so that the strongest can win. Marxism centralizes all property and power, and manages to have no one earn anything. In summary, the world and its structures are shaped according to what is inside the hearts of men and women.

Our purpose here is not to explain what the world is, but to show you what part or aspect of the world may be destroying ones life. We need to gradually bring Egypt [Biblical metaphor for the world] out of our hearts. That is why we need to seek out the discernment and counsel of other wise and mature Christians who can help us see how the world may be adversely affecting us or even destroying us - that is why repentance and a willingness to change is necessary. As described above, the *world* is the devil's gospel, the devil's church. It is the system that the devil once set up so that the cosmos, and the whole world, would be destroyed by themselves without him having to destroy them.

Myths

Something entirely new for me was to discover, from experience, that our emotions are so closely linked to our patterns of thinking, to the ideas we hold, and that many of the emotional problems psychiatrists have to deal with have their origin in the ideas the patient carries inside his little head. (Spiritual warfare takes place mainly in our minds too, and the devil cannot control our emotions unless he first controls our minds.)

These destructive ideas that are able to cause serious emotional and spiritual problems are what we call myths.

Definition: *A myth is a falsehood, generally accepted as truth, which determines our acts or attitudes, and that will almost always have negative consequences.* Another definition, which can be easier for you to remember, is this: *A myth is a piece of the world that got stuck in my brain.*

I'm going to give a few examples, so you can better understand what a myth is like, pay more attention to what you carry around in your own head, and hopefully detect and discard them before they ruin your own life.

A Few Myths

The following are falsehoods, accepted as truths by many, many people who are paying the consequences of carrying them around in their heads.

1. My past determines what I now am and do, in an inexorable way.
(This is the story told by all married couples that have had problems in the past, as a way to justify their present condition and to preclude every future responsibility. They are supported by modern pseudo-psychiatry.)
2. Unhappiness is caused by things that take place outside of myself, so I won't be able to attain happiness unless the circumstances change.
Corollary 1: I am at the mercy of circumstances.
Corollary 2: Changing things will change everything (i.e. getting a new wife, a new job, a new government, etc.).
3. I am entitled to happiness. (Says who?!)
Corollary 1: My wife (my husband) is in the obligation to make me happy.
Corollary 2: I am being deprived of a right of mine, and an injustice is being done unto me.
Corollary 3: I would be happy if it were not for you.
Corollary 4: I have a right to change the wife I have for the woman that would make me happy.
4. Romance in marriage is the measure of true love.
Corollary 1: Love without romance is not true love.
Corollary 2: Since I am so romantic, I have a right to true love.
Corollary 3: You don't love me anymore.
5. If God were good and loved me, these things would not happen to me.
Corollary 1: God is responsible for everything that happens in the world!
Corollary 2: God is my good-luck charm.
6. If you offer God a portion of your life, he takes the whole of it. You can't trust God. (This myth was invented in Paradise and did away with it.)
7. It is God's obligation to listen to me and to grant me whatever I ask.
8. I have a right to be trusted.
9. I'm always right, and I have the right and the obligation to demonstrate so.
Corollary 1: An injustice is done when someone does not accept that I am right.
Corollary 2: I would be doing injustice if I deprived others of the truth, of which I am the sole possessor.
Corollary 3: Being right entitles me to act as I will.
10. Having good looks, great charm, a lot of money and a lot of cleverness is all that counts.
11. It is my right to have a lot of money.
Corollary 1: No one has a right to have money unless I have it too.
Corollary 2: It is my duty to make a lot of money.
Corollary 3: For me to be poor would be a crime. For others to be too rich would be a crime.
12. It is dangerous to love much, so it's better not to love at all.
Corollary 1: Do not express your feelings.
Corollary 2: It is better to have a life without love than to suffer the loss of your loved one. (All our

loved ones will depart one way or another.)

13. Every woman is my rival, unless the opposite is demonstrated.
14. Every problem has a solution, and it is terrible not to find it.
Corollary 1: It is not possible to live with a problem.
Corollary 2: You cannot be happy unless things come out the way you want.
Corollary 3: Everything ought to come out the way I want, and if it doesn't, then I am entitled to complain to someone.
15. People have a right to be informed about everything. Me too.
Corollary 1: If someone hides something, he must have done something wrong.
Corollary 2: I have a right to snoop around.
16. Every form of aggressiveness must be uprooted from a Christian's heart.
17. Being loved and accepted by everybody is absolutely necessary.
Corollary 1: I am willing to pay any price in exchange for love and acceptance.
Corollary 2: I would never do anything that might hurt you.
18. Death is the worst tragedy that can happen to you.
19. Nothing is wrong if nobody learns about it.
Corollary 1: Do it, for no one will hear about it.
Corollary 2: If you do it just once, nothing will happen to you.
20. Having had and losing is worse than not having at all.
Corollary 1: You cannot enjoy something that you could lose.
21. Guilt is subjective.
Corollary 1: If I don't feel guilty, I'm not guilty.
Corollary 2: The solution to guilt is ignoring or denying guilt.
22. Children and drunkards always tell the truth. *Corollary:* Anything my husband says when he's drunk is what he actually thinks about me.
23. How can I forgive him—don't you see he has offended me? (If he did not offend you, what would you forgive?)
Corollary 1: Forgiving is a favor I do to God. *Corollary 2:* Forgiving is a favor I do to you.
Corollary 3: Forgiving makes me virtuous (for it makes you happy).
24. Sincerity in believing makes your belief true.
Corollary 1: It makes no difference if you're wrong, as long as you firmly believe in your error.
Corollary 2: The important thing is to believe, no matter what you believe.
Corollary 3: You can't be sincerely wrong.
25. Sincerity absolves everything.
Corollary 1: If I'm sincere and I don't hide my sin, I'm absolved even if I don't repent of my sins.
Corollary 2: I'm not just absolved, but you are now indebted to me.
26. Intention is what matters.

Corollary 1: Intention justifies action.

Corollary 2: The end justifies the means.

(This is the basis for legitimizing terrorism and almost every revolution.)

27. How can God forgive me, after all the things I've done?

Corollary 1: My faults are greater than God's mercy and love.

Corollary 2: Christ's blood, passion and death are not enough to blot out my sins.

28. I'm a child of God, but God must be ashamed of having a child like me.

(Numbers 27 and 28 nullify the two greatest truths of our faith, while at the same time we allow ourselves to continue calling ourselves Christians.)

29. Being a man is not enough—you've got to show it.

30. You can serve God wherever you want.

31. God is not in charge of the world, and if he is, he's doing a very bad job.

32. The family must be managed as a true democracy.

33. When I marry him (her), I'm going to make him (her) change.

34. Resignation is the only possible course of action in face of something inevitable or impossible.

(Resignation here means refraining from fight. And something impossible is something that is merely difficult.)

No wonder so many people go through life full of anguish!

> [See other Living Bulwark articles](#) by [Carlos Mantica](#)

This article is adapted from the book, *From Egghead to Birdhood (hatch or rot as a Christian)*, (c) copyright 2001 Carlos Mantica.

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publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom

email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com



The Myth of Tolerance

by Carlos Mantica

When UNESCO declared 1995 as the “Year Against Intolerance”, the Nicaraguan Institute for Culture and the Cultural Association “New Acropolis” planned to publish a cultural supplement under the title Towards Concord Through Tolerance, whose objective was “to foster this feeling that seems to be almost extinct in our peoples.”

My pride was shaken when I found my name next to the names of thirty-three of the most outstanding personalities in the nation, who had been invited to participate in this project. But, once the temptation was overcome, I consider myself to be inhibited (or at least embarrassed) from the possibility to participate in such a lofty initiative. In fact, even though I share the ideal of concord, I have justifiable reasons to doubt that tolerance (or the things that often come across us under its disguise) is the most effective way to reach this unity of hearts we aspire to. In addition, I believe that tolerance, far from being an almost extinct feeling among our people, has grown among us to such an extent that it is almost impossible to distinguish it from overindulgence.

In order to understand each other better, let us begin by clarifying concepts. Let us remember that manipulating words has always been the most effective tool to corrupt the truth.

The Dictionary of the Spanish Language published by the Royal Spanish Academy offers us the following definitions:

Tolerate: 1. To suffer, to bear patiently. 2. To allow something that is not held as legitimate, without explicitly approving of it.

Tolerance: Respect and consideration for the opinions or practices of others, even if they are disgusting to us.

The quickest reading of these definitions immediately shows that, in the name of tolerance, many things are demanded today that go beyond the scope of the notion of tolerance. When we read, for example, the manifestos and literature of the Gay Movement or of certain (lesbian) trends in the Feminist Movement, we realize that neither of them simply intends to be tolerated, that is, to be withstood patiently without approval, but precisely the opposite. They intend, and have managed to achieve, to have their sexual preferences be approved and placed at a level of social equality with the heterosexual relationship that makes the perpetuation of the human race possible. They require that the remaining 98% of us be the ones to change, not only in attitude, leaving behind extreme positions that would make them victims of mockery and contempt, but to change our minds and even our morality, and to raise their particularity to the level of an inalienable right. None of this demands tolerance.

It all began with a sexual revolution that emptied sexual relationship from every sense of responsibility and separated it from procreation, encouraging the use of contraceptives, up to the point of limiting it to the mere sphere of pleasure (which is also claimed as a right). Now it has come to the point of claiming the right of homosexuals and lesbians to marry and to adopt children that will grow up in their image and likeness. The request for understanding and respect (tolerance) has now become a demand for equality of job opportunities. Now this is claimed as a right, and companies, schools, or the army, are required to hire or recruit members of those groups in specified proportions.

All of these achievements have already obtained in the United States and in other countries, and they might have an explanation under a different name or pretext (perhaps as an effective tool for birth control), but certainly not as an expression of tolerance, unless the definition of tolerance is twisted and inflated.

The same can be said of abortion, which went from being tolerated by the state to being demanded as a right, so that contributors are currently required to finance with their taxes, in state clinics, the free enactment of a form of murder they cannot agree with.

These three things—homosexuality, lesbianism and abortion—plus so many others that are added day by day, have as their common argument the notion that we are the owners of our own bodies.

As C. S. Lewis wrote in *The Screwtape Letters*:

The humans are always putting up claims to ownership which sound equally funny in Heaven and in Hell, and we must keep them doing so. Much of the modern resistance to chastity comes from men's belief that they "own" their bodies—those vast and perilous estates, pulsating with the energy that made the worlds, in which they find themselves without their consent and from which they are ejected at the pleasure of Another!

The examples above do not exhaust the long list of things that are required today in the name of tolerance. In the past few weeks we witnessed the great mess that emerged concerning the accumulation of garbage in our

sidewalks. Nobody thinks about claiming for tolerance or come out in defense of filth or pollution. But it is precisely tolerance that is claimed as a right (the right to freedom of expression) by those who set out to fill with garbage and filth, not our streets, but our homes, and the minds of our children, through the propagation of violence, pornography and stupidity in the mass media.

This reminds me of the words of Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn in his address at Harvard University in 1978:

Western society today has revealed the inequality between freedom for good and freedom for evil... The defense of the rights of the individual has come to such an extreme, that it leaves society in a state of defenselessness against certain individuals. It is the task of the West to advocate, not so much human rights, but human duties.

I honestly wonder whether tolerance thus understood can really be a way to concord, or whether it has actually been and will continue to be a cause for discord. I wonder whether the current Nicaraguan crisis, our greatest stumbling block that can lead us once more into chaos, is not precisely the tolerance that has been shown towards the intolerable.

Tolerance has a limit, which is the one set by law. You cannot expect concord from tolerance to governmental corruption which is punished by law, or to the arbitrary usurpation of private or state property, or to the destruction or damage to the properties of the people, or to closing streets and highways, or to the takeover of public buildings, or to environmental pollution disguised as a right to strike.

The reason why I believe that such a tolerance cannot be a way to concord is very serious. The concord of peoples and the peaceful common life of citizens is based on the respect for the rights of others. In Benito Juárez's words, "Respect for the rights of others is peace."

But, which is even more serious, human concord and common life are based on what sociologists have called the social contract. This social contract inescapably requires an agreement concerning the things that can be permitted and the things that cannot. It assumes a set of ideas, values and patterns of behavior we all agree to and to which we all agree to submit ourselves. Historically, what our nations took as the basis for this social contract is Judeo-Christian law and tradition, which they cast in innumerable ways into their constitutions and laws.

At all times there were people who broke these laws, but their behavior did not invalidate the acceptance of the fact that their act was not permissible, and that those who acted against those values incurred the punishment and the weight of the law.

Democratic nations decided that it would be the people themselves who would set the laws, through representatives elected by the people. And these representatives, in turn, would legislate in support of the ideas, values and patterns of behavior of the majority they were representing and who had elected them. There existed, then, a social contract that minorities were supposed to respect.

Over the last few decades, two phenomena have come up that presage a very dark future for mankind as a whole. The first is a result of relativism, of subjectivism and of atheistic secular humanism. What these three trends ultimately say is that every man is his own master and can govern himself by his own conscience, and nobody can impose on him a set of laws or values from without, in the name of an authority or of a higher being that does not exist.

We cannot attain a social contract if the dominant idea is that every individual is his own master, and that he has his own good reasons and therefore the right to be and to act as he wills. Perhaps for the first time in

history we are facing the impossibility of drafting a social contract that can safeguard common life.

The second phenomenon is that of those democracies which, in their concern to safeguard the rights of minorities, have to such extent broken the rights of majorities that, what once was the government of the people, by the people and for the people has now become the government of organized minorities, with the tolerance and complicity of so-called silent majorities.

The tolerance of disrespect for the desires and concerns of majorities to benefit the interests or whims of minorities is not the best way towards concord. Minorities have their rights, but their rights are also limited by respect for the rights of others and by the laws that protect the common good.

If to tolerate is to suffer, to patiently bear and allow something that is not considered to be lawful, without explicitly approving of it, then the most tolerant person I know is God himself, who defines himself as slow to anger, rich in mercy, but who does not leave the guilty unpunished.

God is so tolerant that he patiently bears our sins, and permitted his Son to suffer for those sins on a cross. He is willing to forgive the unforgivable which is sin, yet he does not excuse, approve or ignore sin, but calls us to repentance.

The problem begins when we mistake forgiving for excusing. To forgive means to restore a relationship with someone we recognize as guilty. (One cannot forgive the innocent.) To excuse is to declare that the guilty has no guilt.

God never excuses sin, but calls it by its name. Forgiveness erases the guilt of the repentant sinner, but does not dissimulate, cover up or minimize guilt. Neither does it call right something that is wrong.

I think something similar happens with tolerance. Concord calls us to suffer, to patiently bear and allow something that we do not consider to be lawful, but without explicitly approving of it. It calls for respect and consideration towards the views or practices of others, even if they are disgusting to ours. But it does not call us or require us to call right something that is wrong, or to grant as right something that is a violation of a law.

Perhaps this essay will put to the test the tolerance of those who often reply with insults and accusations to the views of those who oppose them.

> [See other Living Bulwark articles by Carlos Mantica](#)

This article is adapted from the book, *From Egghead to Birdhood (hatch or rot as a Christian)*, (c) copyright 2001 Carlos Mantica.

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The Truth Will Set You Free

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The following is a portion of a sermon on John 8:32 which Bonhoeffer preached in Berlin, Germany on July 24, 1932

Our lies are against God. They arm themselves against the reality and the truth of God, against his communion and grace, and against his love. Our lies hate the love of God, because they imagine that they have no need of it. The substance of our lies is hate, because the substance of the truth of God is grace and love.

One thing becomes clear – truth and lies are not what one says, but what one does. The totality of how one lives. Whoever lives in the lie, lives on hate. That means such people live in chains of their own making. They are bound in fetters. They are slaves to themselves. To recognize this is the beginning of recognizing the truth, which comes alone from God.

Whoever is aware of being the slave of lies, anxiety, and hate has been placed in the truth by God. Such people now see that all their supposed truth was lies. And whoever hears this, experiences an inexpressible yearning to be freed from their bondage: “Lord make me free from myself.” From that new encounter comes to him the words: The truth will make you free.

It is not something that we have to do, not our courage, our church, our people, our truth; but God's truth alone that makes us free. Why? Because to become free does not mean becoming great in the world, not becoming free from your brother, nor even free from God, but to become free from oneself, one's lie. It means to become free from thinking only of myself, from being the center of my world, from hate, by which I despise God's creation. It means to be free to be for the other: the person for others.

Only God's truth can enable me to see the other as he really is. It tears out the twisted image that I have of the other within me and shows him to me in a new light. And insofar as God's truth does that, it bestows upon me the action, the love, the grace of God. It destroys our lies and creates the truth. It destroys hatred and creates love.

God's truth is God's love and God's love makes us free from ourselves for others. To be free means nothing less than to be in love. And to be in love means nothing less than being in the truth of God. The man who loves because he has been made free by God is the most revolutionary man on earth. He challenges all values. He is the explosive material of human society. He is a dangerous man. For he recognizes that the human race is in the depths of falsehood. And he is always ready to let the light of truth fall upon his darkness; and he will do this because of his love.

But this disturbance, which such people bring, calls forth hatred from the world. And therefore this knight of truth and love is not the hero that men long for or honor, not one who is without enemies; but one whom they would do away with, outlaw, indeed kill.

The way of God's truth leads to the cross. From now on, we know that all truth which is true before God must face the cross. The church that follows Christ must go with him to the cross. Because of its truth and freedom it will be hated by the world.

It is also true that a people cannot find truth and freedom unless it stands under the law of God's truth. A people remains in lies and in slavery until it receives and wants to receive truth and freedom from God alone; until it knows that truth and freedom will lead it into love; yes, until it knows that the way of love leads to the cross. If a people would really know this, then it would become the only people who could rightly be called a free people, the only people which does not become a slave to itself, but the slave of the truth of God and therefore free.

We all, each one individually for himself or herself, and as a people, feel the pressing weight of our chains. O God, protect us, that we are not entranced by the deceitful image of freedom and the temptation to remain in our lies. Give to us that freedom which throws us upon Thee and Thy grace. Lord, with thy truth, make us, as our Lord Jesus Christ is, truly free. Lord we wait upon Thy truth.

[This excerpt is from a selection of sermons which Bonhoeffer preached between 1931-1932. The English translation is from *Ecumenical, Academic, and Pastoral Work, 1931-1932* by *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, published by Fortress Press, Minneapolis.]

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An Enculturated People

“What is the number one obstacle to building Christian community?”

by Bob Tedesco

Worldwide Movements

It seems that almost everywhere around the world groups are working to build Christian community. There are worldwide and national movements as well as small, local groups trying to recover something lost: relationships... with God and neighbor. The efforts invariably lead to the question, “What are the blocks to building Christian community?” Over forty years of experience with our particular network of communities (Sword of the Spirit) has led me to the question, “What is the number one obstacle to building Christian community?” My answer: “**Enculturation**”.

The definition of enculturation has some variations over academic disciplines, but for this discussion I mean: **absorbing or acquiring the values and behaviors of the culture that we live in.** All of us do this somewhat, but there is a degree to which we are changed; where our decisions, our recreation and even our schedules are more determined by the world around us than by the Christian life we have chosen. I think the key factor is that we absorb or acquire the world’s values which are frequently opposed to the values of the Kingdom of God.

When worldly success is more important than the Christian life, we’ve got a problem. When education is more important than Christian mission, we’ve got a problem. When Christian parents will not raise the values of the Kingdom of God far above the values of the world, we’ve *really* got a problem. Now, I’m not against worldly success, good jobs, and good education, but the eternal values and consequences of the Kingdom of God far surpass most earthly activities and pursuits in importance. Much of Christianity is involved in living out this reality!

Several years back I put together a hard-bound picture-book of my engineering career: projects, designs, inventions, etc. It was purposely designed to get my grandchildren to say, “Oh, look what Pappy did!” as they turned the pages. And then at the end I let them know that it doesn’t begin to compare to how I value my work battling for souls. I would lay down my entire professional career to help a person to give his life to Christ. I hoped that my grandchildren could begin to see that eternal consequences and salvation far outweigh earthly accomplishments; and while we’re working on education and careers, we should also be firmly invested in the Kingdom of God. A man who is a friend of Jesus, counted as his disciple...what can be smarter than that? Who can be more successful than that?



Community Teaching

Over the years we have taught against becoming a “worldly people”. Our basic initiations courses have taught about the biblical obstacles of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and we’ve coupled these with the need for the repair of wrongdoing. “The world” refers not to the bounty of creation, but to the anti-god focus in the culture: philosophies, values, and mores that do not support godly living. These collective obstacles have a real malignant synergy about them which creates quite a few challenges for the new or young Christian.

When we warn against becoming a “worldly” people, most people envision a hedonistic “party animal” when desires are out of control. We might have a spring-break image in our minds. These courses are usually presented to newer Christians so we might think that more mature Christians are less susceptible to becoming worldly. That might very well be a deadly error. In fact, it’s many of the good things of the world that can lead to faulty personal discipleship or faulty parenting. Sports are good, an active life is good, a well-paying job is good, education is good, success is good. But when any of these things take on more importance than our Christian calling we have become an enculturated person. We tend to think that most of our desires are godly; and some of them are. But, when my plans become more important than God’s we have a colossal error.

Most of us have heard the frog in the pot of water on a stove does not notice that the temperature of the water is rising until it is too late and he is unable to jump to freedom. Some of these earthly values are that way. The desire for success slowly becomes more and more important to us until we seem unable to escape and now it controls us: our decisions, our relationships, and all of our energies.

Some things in the world are good and worth absorbing. All are worthy of caution and many are capable of destroying our lives.

In the early years of our network of communities, a common pattern for developing a talk would be to identify some aspect(s) of the world or culture, apply some scriptures that address these aspects, followed by practical advice. We have become more multi-faceted in our approaches to outlines, but this article is following that common template.

The Common, Repeatable Cycle

There is a recurring cycle presented in scripture: blessings – freedom – good life; comfortable – lazy – malaise; guard down – vulnerable – enculturated; called-out – disciplined – punished; misery – repentance – restored. Or more simply: with God, enculturated, punished, repentant, and restored. This historical cycle is so common that you have to see it as a force to be reckoned with.

Old Testament Scriptures

1. Joshua 23: 6-8 Therefore be very steadfast to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left, that you may not be mixed with these nations left here among you, or make mention of the names of their gods, or swear by them, or serve them, or bow down yourselves to them, but cleave to the Lord your God as you have done to this day.
2. Deuteronomy 12:30 Take heed that you not be ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, “How did these nations serve their gods?” – that I also may do likewise.
3. 2 Kings 17: 14-15b But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been...and they followed the nations that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had commanded them that they should not do like them.
4. 2 Kings 17:33-34, 40-41 So they feared the Lord but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away. To this day they do according to the former manner... However, they would not listen, but they did according to their former manner. So these nations feared the Lord, and also served their graven images; their children likewise, and their children’s children – as their fathers did, so they do to this day.
5. Deuteronomy 18:9 When you come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations.
6. Haggai 1:4 “Is it a time for you to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruin?”
7. Haggai 1:9 You have looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? Says the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while you busy yourselves each with his own house.

New Testament Scriptures

1. 2 Corinthians 5:20 so we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.
2. 2 Corinthians 6:16b-18 For we are the temple of the living God, as God said, “I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”
3. Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
4. Matthew 5:14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before

men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Comments

We are ambassadors for Christ. An ambassador brings his culture to a foreign land. His embassy is a microcosm of the nation he represents. He (or she) is not there to absorb the culture around him but to represent his homeland and its government. The values, culture, and lifestyle of his home nation is represented to the foreign land. He has no lasting home there and he knows it. He is on assignment.

“Come out from among them,” seems harsh. “Be separate from them,” seems elitist. But these statements are true; they are the end game...the way things will end up at the end of the day. The promise is even greater, “...then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

Our treasure and our heart... is success more important than the kingdom of God? Is our children's success more important than the kingdom of God? Have we let them know that Jesus and his kingdom is more important than success and education? In the world, education and money are thought to be the solution to just about everything. If there's a problem “throw money at it.” Or maybe a course will solve it. Yet we know the solution: Christ-centered living is in fact the solution to just about everything.

Evangelism and discipleship can bring such life if we just made it our “go to” contribution to society's needs. My wife, Bobbie, just survived a bout of heart failure, and while discussing the great benefits she had received from the medical treatment, she said, “And my recovery was due in no small part to the many people around the world who were praying for me.” (She has a lot of friends!) The doctor questioned, “Do you believe that?” We both said, “Yes!” He said, “Good! I believe that too!” It seemed good that the Lord and the body of Christ got some of the credit since the battle for her life had been fought spiritually as well as physically and medically. It was a good example of the best of our culture and the best of the Kingdom cooperating to save a life. (Actually, the best of medicine is from the Lord. I doubt that the devil is teaching anyone to save lives.)

“A city set on a hill...” “a lamp on a stand...” they are both distinct; they both stand out. Communities of Christians living a Christian way of life are like snapshots of the kingdom of God, and our families are like “wallet-size” pictures of a better way. We should not try to blend in as much as we try to show forth the life of God. That brings hope; that brings conversion.

The Ancient Pattern and Daily Life

Enculturation finds its way into family, parenting, work, church, and even individual or personal disciplines. Some denominations are losing blocks of people as they tolerate and even defend scripturally immoral practices. They have been enculturated. I worked for a company once that lied to the customer about completion dates for prototypes and project goals. The work environment had become riddled with, “anything for a sale.” I wouldn't do it, but my boss found it easy. Down the road, when the customer had become enraged, he was fired.

One of the main effects of the pattern of Christian community life is when our parents model their goals and expectations for their children in the same fashion as the world. Important decisions like the choice of college or courtship approaches can undo years of strong parenting.

So, How Are We Doing? Are We Immune from This Ancient Pattern?

Are the younger generations most affected? We can see some of their enculturation by observing the differences between the younger generations and the older. The roles of husband and wife are different; the roles of men and women, parenting models; life styles and values. Some of the differences are good, some are not. The need to be there each time little Johnny blows a note out of his trumpet is not so good.

In trying to personally assess our own enculturation, we could ask the question, “Am I still other-centered and willing to serve?” If we are willing to serve and can place other’s needs before our own, that’s a good sign. Another revealing question is, “Is ushering in the Kingdom of God a driving force in my life?” Or is it a side interest?

A Few Practical Steps in Response to Enculturation

1. If you’re in a community, remember the covenant, read the covenant...at home and in small groups.
2. A covenant decision is a decision not to schedule things when our small group or the larger community gathers. Decide to protect those time slots.
3. Review your relationship “center of gravity.” This is intentional community; we have given our lives to God and a specific set of people.
4. Discipleship involves a time commitment, a financial commitment, a relational commitment...renew or rededicate as needed.
5. Decide again to look different, be different. In the song, House of God, we ask to be made living lights, set upon the hill.
6. Decide again to be trainable, correctible, and even willing to receive a rebuke! In the world people can no longer handle correction; everyone gets insulted at the suggestion that he (or she) could be doing something wrong. The US Navy SEAL creed says, “My training is never complete.” That’s actually truer of a disciple of Jesus!
7. Work to overcome obstacles that keep you from special offerings of community teaching: retreats, conferences, and regional conferences. Plan and save (one year ahead).
8. Pray and consecrate our lives to the Lord to be free from the influences of the world, the flesh and the devil.

In all of this the Lord knows our strengths, our weaknesses, our influences and our failures. He is able to use it all, transform it all and cause our lives to have purpose in his Kingdom. His plan is truly amazing, surprising, and redeeming...and we can take great comfort in that.

> [See other articles by Bob Tedesco](#)

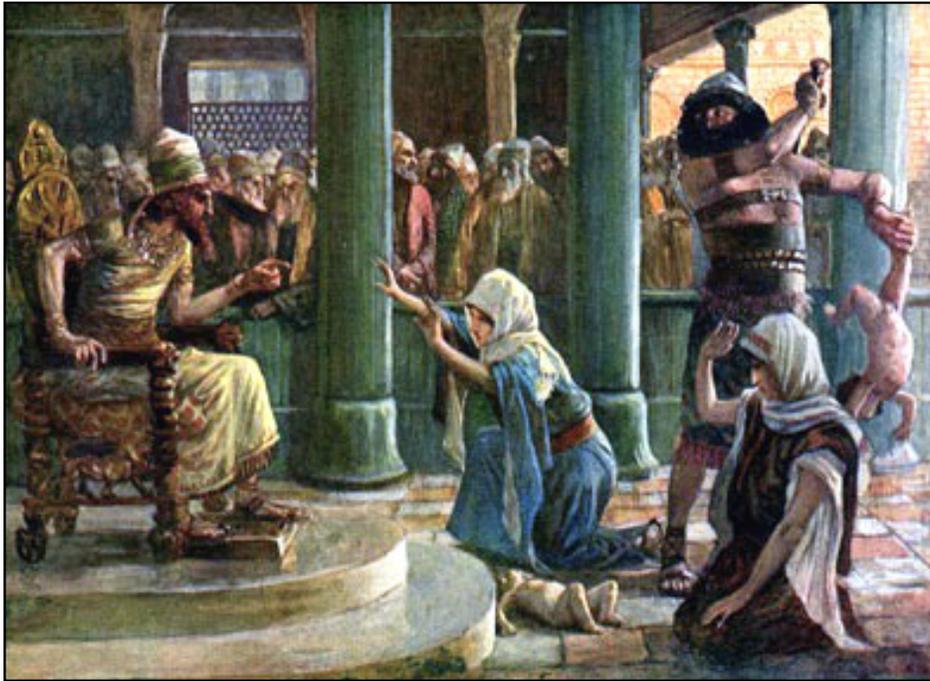


Bob Tedesco is past President of the North American Region of the Sword of the Spirit. He is a founder of the [People of God](#) community in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, and has been one of its key leaders for the past 40 years.

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email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com



Love and Truth: A Plea for Intolerance

by Fulton J. Sheen

What is tolerance? Tolerance is an attitude of reasoned patience toward evil and a forbearance that restrains us from showing anger or inflicting punishment. But what is more important than the definition is the field of its application. The important point here is this: Tolerance applies only to persons, but never to truth. Intolerance applies only to truth, but never to persons. Tolerance applies to the erring; intolerance to the error.

- quote by Fulton J. Sheen, *Old Errors and New Labels* (1931)

There is no other subject on which the average mind is so much confused as the subject of tolerance and intolerance. Tolerance is always supposed to be desirable because it is taken to be synonymous with broadmindedness. Intolerance is always supposed to be undesirable, because it is taken to be synonymous with narrow-mindedness. This is not true, for tolerance and intolerance apply to two totally different things. Tolerance applies only to persons, but never to principles. Intolerance applies only to principles, but never to persons. We must be tolerant to persons because they are human; we must be intolerant about principles because they are divine. We must be tolerant to the erring, because ignorance may have led them astray; but we must be intolerant to the error, because Truth is not our making, but God's...

Keeping the distinction well in mind between persons and principles, cast a hurried glance over the general religious conditions of our country. America, it is commonly said, is suffering from intolerance. While there is much want of charity to our fellow-citizens, I believe it is truer to say that America is not suffering so much from intolerance as it is suffering from a false kind of tolerance: tolerance of right and wrong; truth and

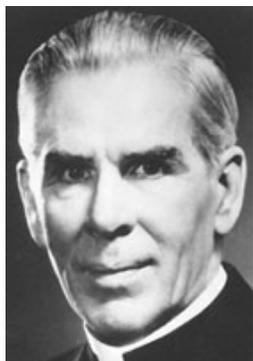
error; virtue and vice; Christ and chaos. The person, in our country, who can make up his mind and hold to certain truths with all the fervor of his soul, is called narrow-minded, whereas the person who cannot make up his mind is called broadminded. And now this false broad-mindedness or tolerance of truth and error has carried many minds so far that they say one religion is just as good as another, or that because one contradicts another, therefore, there is no such thing as religion. This is just like concluding that because, in the days of Columbus, some said the world was round and others said it was flat, therefore, there is no world at all.

Such indifference to the oneness of truth is at the root of all the assumptions so current in present-day thinking that religion is an open question, like the tariff, whereas science is a closed question, like the multiplication table. It is behind that queer kind of broadmindedness which teaches that any one may tell us about God, though it would never admit that any one but a scientist should tell us about an atom. It has inspired the idea that we should be broad enough to publish our sins to any psychoanalyst living in a glass house, but never so narrow as to tell them to a priest in a confessional box. It has created the general impression that any individual opinion about religion is right, and it has disposed modern minds to accept its religion dished up in the form of articles entitled: "My Idea of Religion," written by any nondescript from a Hollywood movie star to the chief cook of the Ritz-Carlton...

The remedy for this broadmindedness is intolerance, not intolerance of persons, for of them we must be tolerant regardless of views they may hold, but intolerance of principles. A bridge builder must be intolerant about the foundations of his bridge; the gardener must be intolerant about weeds in his gardens; the property owner must be intolerant about his claims to property; the soldier must be intolerant about his country, as against that of the enemy, and he who is broadminded on the battlefield is a coward and a traitor. The doctor must be intolerant about disease in his patients, and the professor must be intolerant about error in his pupils. So, too, the Church, founded on the Intolerance of Divinity, must be equally intolerant about the truths commissioned to her. There are to be no one-fisted battles, no half-drawn swords, no divided loves, no equalizing Christ and Buddha in a broad sweep of sophomoric tolerance or broad-mindedness, for as Our Blessed Lord has put it: "He that is not with Me is against Me"...

There are only two positions to take concerning truth, and both of them had their hearing centuries ago in the court-room of Solomon where two women claimed a babe (1 Kings 3:16-28). A babe is like truth; it is one; it is whole; it is organic and it cannot be divided. The real mother of the babe would accept no compromise. She was intolerant about her claim. She must have the whole babe, or nothing - the intolerance of Motherhood. But the false mother was tolerant. She was willing to compromise. She was willing to divide the babe-and the babe would have met its death through broadmindedness.

[Excerpt from the book, *Moods and Truths*, by Fulton J. Sheen, 1932]



Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen (1895-1979) was an American theologian and bishop, first in New York City and then in Rochester, New York. He became well-known for his preaching, especially on television and radio. He hosted the night-time radio program *The Catholic Hour* for twenty years (1930–1950) before moving to television and presenting a weekly program called, *Life Is Worth Living*. The show ran from 1951 until 1957, drawing as many as 30 million people on a weekly basis. He wrote 73 books and numerous articles and columns. Mother Theresa of Calcutta always kept a copy of Sheen's book, *Life of Christ*, with her wherever she travelled for daily reflection and meditation.

* illustration above of *The Wisdom of Solomon*, by Francois Tissot.



Tolerance Decoded

How the original meaning has been altered by relativistic thinking

by Bobby Maddex

TOLERANCE

dictionary definition: A fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward opinions and practices that differ from one's own.

History: The first use of the word “tolerance” dates back to 1412, and it originally meant “endurance” or “fortitude.” Thus, to “tolerate” something (the verb form became an acceptable variation in 1531) was originally to survive or remain unaffected by an unpleasant or unwanted phenomenon. By 1539, however, “tolerance” was likewise associated with permissiveness, particularly on the part of government officials or others in authority, and by 1868, the word came to mean “an allowance of variation.”

Note that in all three cases “tolerance” did not suggest an acceptance of that which was being tolerated. On the

contrary, if one was “permissive” or “allowing,” it was always in spite of how one actually felt (usually negatively) about what was being permitted or allowed. This held true all the way through the end of the 19th century, when “tolerance” was first used to describe an acquired physical resistance to poisons, viruses, or other potentially harmful toxins. Indeed, it wasn’t until the late 1950s that users of the term started to insist that it also implied the supporting of ideas, values, and practices that differed from one’s own.

Etymology: “Tolerance” is derived from the Latin *tolerantia*, which means “putting up with something that is undesirable.” Consequently, inherent in its origins is the notion that the tolerant individual believes that his beliefs, practices, and behaviors are superior to those that he tolerates – that he has graciously refrained from deporting, imprisoning, executing, or otherwise humiliating those whose beliefs, practices, and behaviors are inferior to his own.

It’s not surprising, then, that with the emergence of moral relativism in the early 20th century – and, later, the American political radicalism of the 1960s – came an intolerance of tolerance as it was originally defined. In other words, the idea that some people were merely tolerating the beliefs and actions of others was unacceptable in light of the “fact” that all beliefs and actions were equally legitimate. To remedy this situation, tolerance itself was reconceived as a rejection of moral absolutes in favor of an ethical framework that respected all viewpoints, no matter how ludicrous. Of course, the one viewpoint excluded from this scheme was that which opposed its central premise.

Effect: While it is definitely true that the U.S. was in part established as a haven of tolerance, it is also true that the type of tolerance that it has historically implemented is the “endurance” variety. That is, America has always tended to put up with a broad assortment of religions, lifestyles, and perspectives, allowing for their expression without threat of punishment, but it has also typically protected those who object to such diversity, and it certainly hasn’t insisted that all opinions are equally valid.

Unfortunately, this situation has changed. By conflating the concept of equal rights – a foundational American premise that, admittedly, has not always been put into practice – with a relativistic stance toward truth, culturally liberal activists have managed to make sheer disapproval, whether public or private, anathema, if not criminal. These days, it is no longer acceptable to just live and let live; one must also internally suppress any form of moral opprobrium toward so-called alternative ways of life or else stand accused of bigotry and hatred.

[Bobby Maddex is senior editor of Salvo Magazine. The article on *Tolerance* is from [Salvo Magazine](#), Issue 10, Autumn 2009. Used with permission.]

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Speaking the Truth in Love

On Waging Peace in the Culture Wars

by R.R. Reno

This article is excerpted from an essay written for the Summer 2015 issue of *Plough Quarterly*. Used with permission. Reno's full essay is available online at [Plough Quarterly](#).

Christianity is a fighting faith. We're called to gird our loins with truth and to put on the breastplate of righteousness, so that we can contend against the principalities and powers that rule in the present darkness (Ephesians 6:11–14). And rule they do. We are living in an era of transition. Increasingly self-confident secular Americans, many very powerful, are frustrated with the residual influence of a Bible-formed worldview. They tire of the limitations Judeo-Christian morality puts on personal decisions about sex, family, and marriage. They're indifferent to the soul-destroying effects of pornography. They turn away from the now widespread moral chaos among the poorest and most vulnerable, focusing instead on the things they want: abortion on demand should contraception fail, greater freedom to use an accelerating technology of reproduction should nature not cooperate, and the option of doctor-assisted suicide at the end of life should the trials of suffering and death be too daunting.

The truth demands our loyalty

All of us feel in our bones that a great deal is at stake, and we can't simply step aside. "Take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13). The truth demands our loyalty. Furthermore, Christ's commandment that we love our neighbor surely means speaking up for the moral order God has inscribed into every heart. We owe our neighbors, Christian or not, a faithful witness to truth, even when those truths are controversial. Even when our witness gets us labeled as "culture warriors." Even when our witness upsets the status quo and enflames political passions. The prophets of Israel did not come to bring peace, but the sword that is the Word of God.

Though we feel the dark undertow of post-Christian culture, Christ calls us to do more than stand against evil, denounce error, and fight against the corruptions and betrayals of moral truth. The armor of God includes a sword, but we're to beat it into a plowshare. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). Our Lord arrays us for battle, yes, but he does so with the "equipment of the gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15). The most profound Christian vocation in the public square is not to win debates and elections, but to build a civilization of love.

This is not easy today. In my view, the rancor that now greets Christian morality presents a significant spiritual challenge. When our witness is part of a society-wide cultural conflict, when once widely accepted moral truths are viewed as partisan political stances, our words can too easily rend the fabric of society. Our witness can heighten conflict rather than contribute to a civilization of love. Thus an important question all of us face: How, for the sake of peace in our society, are we to wield the sharp, sometimes flaming words of truth?

Love seeks the higher peace of unity in Christ

Saint Paul gives us a clear principle: We are to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Love seeks the higher peace of unity in Christ. In all we say and do, we should aspire to love's heights. However, in civic life we may do better to start with a more modest enterprise, which is to develop good habits of public speech, beginning with the virtue of civility.

The Bible itself can help us become more civil, and in so doing turn our truth-telling, if not into peacemaking, then at least into something that preserves the possibilities of peace in our era of intense cultural conflict. In this regard, the Golden Rule teaches the most obvious lesson: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you (Matthew 7:12).

I don't want others to pretend that they agree with me when they don't, and I find it condescending when people remain silent because they think I might be hurt by disagreement. The Golden Rule does not warrant shrinking from sometimes tough and sharply worded encounters. It is not a counsel of niceness, which at best produces an artificial peace in which everyone works very hard to avoid controversial topics. Admittedly, to agree to disagree makes a truce of sorts, and there's a proper place for it in public life – we may need a cooling-off period, as it were.

But the peace of Christ that passes all understanding is not the merely negative peace of an absence of conflict. It's the peace of union with him, and with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Peacemaking involves community building, which can't be done if we refuse to engage each other about the moral underpinnings that shape the civic life we share. That requires us to do unto others as we would have them do unto us:

engaging them as adults who can bear disagreement without rancor.

So by all means there should be public debate. The question is, will such conversations be civil, or will they be saturated with ad hominem attacks, as today's debates often are? Here the Golden Rule's lesson for civility is obvious. I don't like having my views distorted, nor do I enjoy it when others suggest that I have mean, selfish motives; accordingly, I must refrain from treating my opponents in these ways. While it may be true that the thinking of today's secular liberals has been distorted by the modern diminution of moral authority to the sovereign self, it's not true that they are motivated by a selfish interest to make moral truth revolve around themselves. On the contrary, many are motivated by a profound regard for the rights and freedoms of others. The same goes for me, of course. I'm often the "conservative" voice arguing against secular-liberal efforts to change our laws and social norms to reflect "progressive" views. But that does not mean I "fear change" or am in some way psychologically incapable of engaging other views.

One of the most uncivil and destructive aspects of today's progressive project in morality and culture has been to label morally reasoned opposition to same-sex marriage as "homophobia." It is politically convenient to summarily dismiss those who disagree rather than showing how they reason wrongly. But doing so erodes civility. The Golden Rule stipulates that, no matter how deeply we disagree, we must take others seriously as moral agents who seek to promote the common good.

"Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves"

To the Golden Rule we can add another basic moral principle: Saint Paul's exhortation to refrain from doing evil for the sake of some greater or higher good (Romans 3:8). Political debate is a contact sport. It involves sharply worded polemics, and rightly so, because a great deal is at stake. It's no sin against the Golden Rule to refuse to speak of abortion supporters as "pro-choice," saying instead, "pro-abortion." A picture of an aborted child is shocking, but then the reality is as well. Civility does not shy away from forceful words and images that our adversaries would like to parry, dismiss, and hide....

When biblical morality becomes a political football, we need to follow another of Jesus' teachings: "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16). We should be aware of how our convictions are being manipulated in the political process. Still, we cannot let the cynicism of the world silence our witness, which is what happens when we shy away from issues in order to avoid being partisan. If our attempts to do justice to the Bible's vision of the common good lead to us being labeled -partisan, then so be it.

> See also an excellent related article, [Grace and Truth On Campus](#),
by Matthew H. Young, published in First Things, July 27, 2015

R. R. Reno is the editor of [First Things](#) magazine and the author of [Fighting the Noonday Devil: And Other Essays Personal and Theological](#) (Eerdmans, 2011).

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Helping Youth See the Truth

by Michael Shaughnessy,

What is so amazing about Scripture? What was written thousands of years ago continues to speak so clearly today.

Although the passage below was written to the Romans about the culture in which they lived, it could have been written to us about our culture. (It is edited for brevity.)

Paul simply notes that when we fail to honor God (obey him) our minds grow dark. That leads to wrong behavior, which brings bad consequences, and finally the outright approval of evil.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. Although they knew God they did not obey him as God but became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools.

Therefore God gave them up to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error. They were filled with all manner of wickedness. Though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them.

- Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter Romans 1

Youth struggle with the desire to fit into the culture of the world around them, especially when that culture speaks strongly but wrongly.

Helping youth to see the truth amid a flood of lies is not easy. Sometimes the “naked” Scripture says it best. When we fail to obey God, the consequences lead from bad to worse.



Michael Shaughnessy is the [Kairos](#) director for the Sword of the Spirit both in North America and Internationally. He is the editor of the [Kairos Youth Culture Newsletter](#). Kairos is an international federation of outreaches to high school, university and post university aged people.

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Finding Peace Through Christ

“God has affirmed me as His son and helped me to grow in so many ways”

by Jerel Merrill

I grew up on the east side of Detroit about 2 miles from downtown. I am an only child and my mother raised me by herself. I have never met my father, but, thankfully, this has never produced any anger or bitterness in me. My mom is the greatest woman and raised me with much love and encouragement. She is truly a blessing.

Transitioning from middle school to high school was a big struggle for me and was the first time that my faith was tested. I had been a part of the same school for nine years. Now I was moving to a new building with new people. Nothing was the same. I used to be a part of a group of friends and teachers that I had known for a while and had grown to love. In high school I didn't know anyone and didn't feel like I belonged anywhere.



I remember being outside my high school after class one day, waiting for my mom. As was customary for the time, I was crying and wondering what I was doing there. I was pacing back and forth praying and trying to make myself feel better. At the time, the sky was very dark and grey. It looked like a storm was coming. But as I continued to pray, something amazing happened. The sky went from dark and stormy to bright and clear. It seemed to happen really slowly, but in reality it probably only took a few minutes. As the sun came out and the blue sky returned, I was met with a greater peace. I knew that God had cleared that sky for me - to show me that I was where I needed to be and that good things were coming. Things weren't perfect after that, but they slowly started to get better.

Well, that was 6 years ago... and since then life has been a wild ride. In a lot of ways it's actually gotten much harder since I've decided to live for the Lord. But God has shown me so much love and grace. He has affirmed me as His son and helped me to grow in so many ways. He has seen me through very difficult times and shaped me through those times. My life has gone from being about being "good enough" to accepting The Lord's goodness to me. I'm excited to see things come full circle by serving on the same [Detroit Summer Outreach](#) (DSO) staff that led me to the Lord.

See other recent stories from Detroit Summer Outreach and [YouthWorks-Detroit](#):

- [Broken and Beautiful](#), by Chelsea Duff
- [Finding Peace Through Christ](#), by Jerel Merrill
- [Called](#), by Fran Dunlop
- [He Ain't Done With Me](#), by Ryan Corr
- [God Is Enough For Me](#), by Grace Fahd
- [God Is My Rock](#), by Peter Mayoros

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God Is My Rock

“ I had tried to fill the place in my life that the Lord was supposed to fill with worldly things and they did not satisfy me”

by Peter Mayoros

Through High School I was always a “good kid” someone who was leading retreats and praying and in general trying to live for Christ. I then went to the University of Michigan, my first time living on my own, outside my Christian bubble. I made a lot of decisions for myself instead of for the Lord. I chose to drink and party, I chose to get into a relationship that I was not ready for and I kept justifying these decisions and making excuses.

Then toward the end of my freshman year one of my friends saw what was going on with me and she called me out on it. It shook my perception of how I was living and I saw the life I was leading for what it was a lot of emptiness. I had tried to fill the place in my life that the Lord was supposed to fill with worldly things and desires of the flesh and they did not satisfy me.



It was the first time in my life when I realized how much I truly needed God. Luckily, I had a solid community around me and I was able to learn how to live for God in college and how I needed to walk with Christ.

Ever since that point I have striven to choose for God in all areas of my life, and I have failed many times but I continue to try to choose for Him with the support of my community and with the strength of God.

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Broken and Beautiful

“It is true that God’s love and strength are made perfect in our weakness”

by Chelsea Duff

I came to Detroit last summer with a lot of hurt and brokenness which I didn’t think I could ever be freed from. I had accepted the fact that it was something I just had to deal with. Seeing the people who live in Detroit; from Sister Judie to the youth we worked alongside, to the homeless and the people in the soup kitchen, God revealed to me some of his perfect love. He showed me that he loved every single one of his children and he was calling me to love them as well. Though, I had to learn to be loved first before I could show love. I saw how much Sister Judie loved her “treasures” and every volunteer that entered her kitchen. I saw how the other members of the 12-step meetings loved each other and were so quick to call each other on. I also saw that the other people in [Detroit Summer Outreach](#) (DSO) loved me.

Through lots of prayer and being aware of what was going on around me in Detroit, God began to heal the brokenness in me so that I could accept love. I noticed a dramatic change in the way I felt about my past, I felt whole again, I felt loved. I realized that I had not felt truly loved by people outside my family in years. Since then I have grown in this new found love. It has been difficult at times, but I have learned to trust God.

Sometimes I have my doubts but through it all I remember the love He showed me in Detroit and I know that I really have been healed.



Detroit Summer Outreach Team

This summer God has called me back to Detroit. He even changed my plans for the summer for me to be here. I know that he has a reason for me here this summer. Recently he has been speaking to me about joy: Isaiah 55:12 says “You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.” God has been showing me how to be joyful and I know that He wants to restore my joy this summer. I never realized that I was missing “joy” but seeing the people around me, I know that I am. Many of the people here have much less than I do materially, but their joy from the Lord is much greater than mine. I have been struck by how grateful they are with so little. It is true that God’s love and strength are made perfect in our weakness. God is showing me that I need to humble myself, be meek and let him have control as so many of the homeless I have encountered here do. God’s work in me is not done. I know that there is much He still wants to do this summer and I look forward to discovering what it is.

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Called

“I was called out of my comfort zone and into serving on mission”

by Fran Dunlop

Last summer during Bible Week - a week long retreat that took place in Belfast - I felt the Lord calling me to do mission work with my life. I had been doing mission work back in Glasgow for the past few years, but I felt the call to do mission work outside of Glasgow. This calling quickly became close to my heart.

I know a lot of people from Glasgow who had previously done [Detroit Summer Outreach](#) (DSO) and I had seen a massive change inside of people who had done it. It seemed like their faith had flourished and they had matured while they were serving here in Detroit. This was something that I wanted in my life too.

Before coming to Detroit, I found myself becoming very nervous, and that put me off from coming over to serve. As soon as I arrived, the staff here and my fellow interns were so welcoming and excited to be here to serve, that I was calmed and knew that this was where I was supposed to be. Now that I have experienced the 12-step meetings in the Soup Kitchens and have gotten to meet the youth that I will be working with this summer, I have seen an abundance of joy through their pain and suffering. This has given me a much more

positive outlook on life and a want for the same joy and love in my life.

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He Ain't Done With Me Yet

“God is so present here and at work in a new way”

by Ryan Corr

Just over 2 years ago, I had just given my life over to the Lord and was trying to live my life for Him at home, but it just wasn't working out. I could either stay in Belfast and forget about the God things, or leave and go somewhere where I could focus on the Lord without the distractions of my life back home. I decided to do a GAP year of service and was chosen to serve in Detroit.



Words cannot explain the type of year I had. I got to know the Lord in a deeper way, served the poor at the soup kitchens and on the street, worked with K-3 grade kids at a local school, and helped run a youth group for high school youth. The main blessing is the relationships which I have built; with the poor and needy, those that help serve them, and most importantly, the high-school youth. They have impacted my heart and my time here. Hearing their stories, sharing in their struggles, and helping them is why I came back for a second year.



I knew God wasn't done with me yet. During this second year, I have grown in my love for the Lord and my understanding of Him and who he is. God is so present here and at work in a new way and I am excited to see it. I see him in the youth and especially the homeless I work with. My life has truly changed. Detroit will always have my heart

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God Is Enough for Me

“I was called out of my comfort zone and into serving on mission”

by Grace Fahd

The Lord has been opening several doors for me to serve and grow; and through this, I’m experiencing more and more of His personal love. I grew up in a strong Christian family in Lebanon. I’m the youngest of six children. My family has had a tremendous impact on me and my faith, and has been a very real example of Christian discipleship. I grew up in a comfortable bubble of support from my family and community.

Last year, however, I was called out of my comfort zone and into serving with University Christian Outreach in Ann Arbor on a mission year, and joining [Detroit Summer Outreach](#) (DSO).

DSO has been a confirmation that God alone is enough. Detroit has been challenging in a beautiful way. I’ve learned more and more the extent to which I can depend on the Lord. I have found so much life through the people here and have learned more and more about myself by being exposed to so many diverse realities. I’m super excited for what the Lord has planned for me during DSO. I have a conviction that it will be life-changing.

[Grace grew up in the People of God community in Lebanon.]

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Report on the New Movements Conference

Held in Glasgow, Scotland, June 19-20, 2015

by Michael Jordan

The [Community of the Risen Christ](#) from Glasgow recently organized and hosted a “[New Movements Conference](#)” for communities, movements, and groups in Scotland. Over 200 people attended the conference, representing some 20 groups in Scotland, including Sword of the Spirit, Focolare, Neocatechuminate Way, Marriage Encounter, Schoenstatt Family Movement, and Charismatic Renewal in Scotland.

The conference was designed as a teaching conference looking at the place of the [New Movements in the Church](#) - but with such a wide representation of participants it was much more than that. It was a witness to the action of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of individuals and their various groups and their faithfulness to the call of God.

Bruce Yocum, an international leader in the [Sword of the Spirit](#), gave the opening address on God’s call to movements in service to the church. He summed up this call as a simple sequence of God's initiative and our response: God calls us, we respond, then God equips us with the charism to fulfill that call. Bruce gave several examples from the Scriptures - from the call of Abraham, David, Isaiah, and the call of the Apostle Paul - to illustrate how God equips people to carry out the call given to them.

Monsignor Bob Oliver, a member of the [Brotherhood of Hope](#) who works in the Vatican as Secretary of the



Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, addressed the role of movements in the church from an historical perspective. He traced the action of the Holy Spirit in raising up movements throughout throughout the life of the Church.



Drawing from an address from the then Cardinal Ratzinger in 1998 to a gathering of the leaders of New Movements in Rome, Oliver described the waves of the Spirit that came about in response to the needs of the time. From the time of Antony and the early desert fathers, through the time of the monasteries of Cluny, the mendicants of Francis and Dominic in 12th century and the missionary expansion of the 18th and 19th centuries we are now seeing a new age with a new need.

Oliver quoted from Cardinal Ratzinger who described the new movements in the church as a 5th wave of the Spirit. Where God is raising up in our time men and women, Movements and Communities to respond to the call of God in response to an age of widespread apostasy.

Oliver posed the question 'What does the Holy Spirit want of us?' In answer he explored the two terms 'vita evangelica' and 'vita apostolica'. Our 'vita evangelica' is a new response to the universal call to holiness in our local groups but also in our personal lives. Our 'vita apostolica' is our active engagement in mission through building Christian communities to draw others to Christ in service to the Church, society and the world - a mission that Pope John Paul II called a 'new evangelisation' for our time.



In the homily at the final Eucharist, celebrated with Bishop emeritus Maurice Taylor, and four other priests, Archbishop Philip Tartaglia gave a resounding affirmation and encouragement to all the Movements represented, saying:

A feature of the 2012 Synod of Bishops in Rome on New Evangelisation was the great appreciation for the new movements among the bishops as a really important locus of evangelising power and energy in the Church. In fact, I would go as far as to say that the new movements may well be the single most important catalyst in the Church for evangelisation in the future.

Quotes from participants

"The Holy Spirit is at work here. There is a clear plan of God in the unity of the Movements and in the witness to the world. *Grazie a Dio.*"

Maria Grazia Niola, Focolare

"A fantastic witness of community; seeing the different works and charisms coming together to show the beauty, the richness and the fullness of the Church represented in all ages and gender and in laity and religious."

Kate Curran, Catholic Youth Office

"Exceptional, well organised, uplifting and joyful experience, bringing us all together and enhancing the Community Spirit".

Tom Catterson, Life in the Eucharist

"The most inspiring and reassuring conference I have ever attended".

Michael Mitchell, Charismatic Renewal

"Inspiring and encouraging. I hope this leads to other fruitful ways to listen and share with each other"

Tony Coultas, Community of Our Holy Redeemer

"It was very interesting - the historical perspective and the talk of the *vita evangelica* and *vita apostolica*. We

are all in the same way.

Mari Carmen Sanchez, Neocatechumenate way

"There is nothing so uplifting as being in the presence of people, especially young people, who are open to Jesus and to the Church; to be in company with people whose eyes are fixed on The Lord. Your freshness, energy, enthusiasm and joy in Christ Jesus is so good; it is so good to see you today... The gift of New Movements to the Church, fixed on Jesus and his Word brings new faith, hope and energy to the Church".

Archbishop Philip Tartaglia (closing homily)

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“Take Me Higher Up - Being Accountable for Our Lives Before God”

Auckland Men's Conference Highlights

by Cosmos Misquita

Cosmos shares some of the highlights of the recent Men's Weekend Conference held for the community men in the Auckland branch of the [Lamb of the God Community](#) in New Zealand.

"He who sows bountifully shall reap bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6). This passage from the Apostle Paul highlights for me how the men who attended the weekend conference were blessed and built up. During our weekend together I could see God's promise bearing fruit for my brothers in the Lord.



Auckland Mens Weekend Conference

The men's conference was based on the theme, “Take me higher up - being accountable for our lives before God.” During these 3 days the men had the opportunity to pray, worship, listen, share, reflect and have lots of fun.

We started off the evening with a party atmosphere similar to an entrée; the momentum continued throughout the entire weekend. It was wonderful to see men opening up and sharing their inner lives with like-minded brothers. Praise and worship were Spirit-filled that helped build a platform for each talk.

The talks given by John Tham, Tom Caballes and Jonathan Hesp gave food for thought regarding our roles as husbands and fathers and touched on commitment, faithfulness, transparency, etc. Group sharing amongst the brothers provided enough evidence of soul searching by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

The committed men in the kitchen raised the bar and did a fantastic job of a normally daunting task; providing physical nourishment. The upward trajectory continued until the last day when every action taken and word spoken was spontaneous. We were all edified by the music team and felt they all performed to a very high standard. Truly the power of the Holy Spirit in action.

The conference was truly an exhilarating experience. All praise, honor and glory be to our Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.



Some Key Points on Family Life

shared during the Auckland Men's Conference

Recognize the spiritual battle we are in

We are in a Spiritual battle. At stake are our own souls – and also the souls of our spouses and children, and their children's children. The need of the hour is strong, mature, and responsible men of God who can take their place in their families.

Because of what society is now, it is no longer acceptable to be just a 'good' husband and father. God is calling us to be the best husbands and fathers we can ever be. We as husbands need to take the role of leadership in our marriages: if things are not working well, it is our responsibility to make them work!

Most marriages around us break apart because men do not take seriously their roles as husbands – or do not know how. The key to a happy wife [and a successful marriage] is a loving and a caring husband!



Don't miss the opportunity to influence before it is too late

Our window of opportunity to influence our children is slowly fading away as time passes by. When our children are young, they are like sponges – they absorb what we give them. That ‘sponge’ gets firmer and firmer as time passes by and the values, priorities and character of our children gets formed more and more.

As our children mature, we become more like advisers and friends to them rather than telling them what to do. Deep down inside, children yearn for their father’s approval. It is in-born, as God designed it. Our roles as fathers are very powerful – in fact, life-changing to our children.

When children do not get their father’s approval, they seek that approval from someone else. Missing fathers create a massive vacuum of unmet needs in the lives of their children, which only their fathers can fill.



God's eternal purpose for fathers

God created fatherhood for one eternal purpose: to reveal and represent Himself. Every human father is called to be a physical representation of God to His children, to reveal Himself to the next generation. There is no other most influential person in a child's life than his dad. Mums are very important and priceless in their roles, but they were never created to be dads. Why?

Children get their identity from their dads; they get their values from their dads; and they learn their self-worth from their fathers.

If our fathers had not been good ones to us, we need to forgive them and break the chain of ungodly fathers in our line of ancestry. Our fathers probably just did what their fathers did – either for the good or the bad. You can break the chains of the past generations of anger, abuse, negligence and rejection. You do not have to follow the footsteps of your own father if he was not a good one. Be a chain breaker! Let us start a new 'line' of godly fatherhood that can be carried on from this generation onwards.



Five legacies to pass on to your children

There are five areas of legacy we can leave our families behind: (1) a loving provider, (2) a strong protector, (3) a truthful leader, (4) a respectable authority, and (5) an intimate friend.

We need to be the spiritual leaders at home – and it all boils down to our relationship with God. We cannot give what we do not have. We cannot teach what we do not practice. Our families can smell hypocrisy from afar. We need to be credible leaders and authority at home. We need to be faithful to our own prayer time and lead our families in spiritual undertakings like family prayers, celebration of the Lord's Day, etc.

As leaders of the family we need to swallow our pride many times. We need to acknowledge our shortcomings to our spouses and children and resolve to do right.

We need to develop a 'heart to heart' relationship with our children. When their hearts are open to us, the more they can receive what we tell them. If deep inside your children feels you love them, you have their hearts. We need to 'capture their hearts.' How? By giving them undivided attention, generous affirmation and loving affection.

On the other hand, we lose our children's hearts by our absence [physical and/or mental], our uncontrolled and unrighteous anger, unjust and unexplained discipline, harsh criticism, lack of compassion, favoritism and comparing one child to another, hypocrisy, hurting, abusing or disrespecting their moms, misunderstanding and not truly listening, and setting unrealistic expectations for them.

The challenge before us is to be the best husbands and fathers we can ever be. It is not an easy task. It takes a real man to do the job. Are you ready to take the challenge?

[Source of some materials are from the book *The Resolution for Men*, Stephen and Alex Kendrick and Randy Alcorn, B and H Publishing Group, Nashville, Tennessee.]

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email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com



The Role of Fatherhood in Faith, Family, and Culture

by Dr. Paul Vitz

The following interview by Culture of Life with Dr. Paul Vitz, Professor and Senior Scholar at the Institute for the Psychological Sciences in Arlington, Virginia, USA and author of the book, *Faith of the Fatherless: The Psychology of Atheism*, discusses the role of fatherhood in faith, family and culture.

Faith of the Fatherless

CLF: Dr. Vitz, in your recent work “Faith of the Fatherless” you wrote about the role of fathers in the development of their children. How did this interest in the role of fathers in family life come to interest you as a psychologist?

“Well, it came partly because of my personal life. I have six children and so people began to ask me about what it was like to be a father of six. And because one’s own experience is not always the same as others, I looked into the research on fatherhood. What I found was mostly on the negative effect of divorce, on children with the father leaving the family. However, the questions I received from others often related to other issues and so I began to look at the research related to other topics.”

CLF: With regard to prominent atheists having absent or difficult relationships with their fathers, could you talk about what led you to make this interesting connection?

“It began with reading Freud who made an off-hand comment that it is common for a young person to lose their belief in God when they lose respect for their own father. Freud never followed this up although it fit his own life. I noticed when reading biographical material of the lives other atheists, not ordinary run-of-the-mill atheists but those who were adamant and public in their unbelief that bad fathers or dead fathers were extremely common. No one seemed to have looked at this. This is covered in detail in my book “Sigmund Freud’s Christian Unconscious”.



Fathers are essential to the development of faith in children

CLF: What other psychological evidence supports this notion that fathers and fatherhood are essential to the healthy development of children, both their faith as well as other areas?

“There are studies that indicate that the mother’s faith is positively related to the faith of her children, but the father’s faith is positively related to his children’s faith even more. The father’s function is to introduce the children to the outside world, outside of the family (e.g., sports, camping, business). That is he takes the child out into the world as a kind of guide. In doing this he helps his children in a major developmental task, to separate and individuate, to guide them toward independence and confidence.



Fathers provide a healthy gender identity for boys and girls

Another thing for which the father or father-figure (e.g., could be older brothers, uncles) is very important is in establishing healthy gender identity, especially in boys. The father models what it means to be masculine.



While girls can achieve their gender identity from mothers, the fathers are also important by supporting their

daughter's femininity, that is, to have a man who respects and admires her for her femaleness. Girls without a father when they hit puberty look for a male who will like them because they are female; this often leads to potential problems with premature sexual activity by seeking affection and affirmation from boys who are older. So you have a 14 year old girl looking for affirmation of her femininity from an 18 year old boy who she sees as mature and masculine. Then they get involved which of course leads to all kinds of problems: pregnancy, difficulty completing education, poverty, etc.

However, if they have a father, who helps them realize they are terrific, and takes them out to have lunch, she will feel much more capable of saying "no" to premature sexual involvement. There is a lot of evidence that females feel strong, empowered, self-assured, and respected by other men, when they have a father or father figure who is present and involved in their lives."



CLF: So the role of the father, while obviously is important for males in their development, is also important in providing support to daughters.

"Yes, fathers do a great good by staying connected to their daughters, for example, when she is older, taking her to father-daughter events at school, etc. She will find these times important and will not have to go looking elsewhere for affection. Also, at times, particularly as a teenager, she will need to separate from her mother and may critical of her. Then she can turn to her father as somebody who supports her but also supports the mother, and so can help her sort through their tension."



Developing a father-son and father-daughter relationship is essential

CLF: How does having a stable relationship with your father in childhood help develop a sense of true dignity? In other words, is there something unique to the father-son or father-daughter relationship that helps a young person know their self-worth and promote self-respect and respect for others?

“People want to know who their father is or was because this gives them a sense of social or public identity. Even those who are adopted or who are the result of artificial insemination try finding the father. I’ll give you an example: Let’s say it’s a family where the father has died in World War II or the Vietnam War. It is important that the mother keeps an honorable presence of the father in the home, e.g. a photo of the father in the living room perhaps in uniform. This helps the children have an image of the father as a strong, respected figure who died an honorable death. This helps the children develop a clear positive identity and dignity.

The mother provides emotional strength and interpersonal skills and confidence about life in general; basic trust and hopefulness. The father gives public strength and status. So in this example, the children would feel protected by the image of their father, that he was a great fighter pilot, a strong image preserved by their mother’s honoring of him. This is even more so if the father is alive and a positive figure.”

CLF: If we could re-visit your initial comment, that the children of sperm donors have interest in fathers is there any scientific evidence of the impact of this?

“I don’t know of any scientific evidence, but I do know there are children who find out who their sperm donor father was; they then have meetings with any other children who have the same father. This has a lot to do with the meaning of identity in both a social sense and a public sense.”



Grandfathers have an important role

CLF: Part of the Culture of Life mission is to understand the truth about the human person at all stages of life. I am wondering if you have any comments on the role of grandfathers, especially if they are aging or infirm, in fostering healthy family functioning or development?

“I don’t know of studies on grandfathers. (Somebody should do some research on the important contributions of grandparents.) But grandfathers are very important; they can help sometimes be a substitute father, and they give their own children who are now parents a sense of support and family solidarity.

The grandfather’s job and social identity can provide the sense of strength and status that usually comes from the father ... the doctor that everybody knew, or the upright businessman, etc. ... This provides a sense of tradition, of connectivity, and a sense that [the children] are honorable and respected in their community.

Finally, a frail grandfather can also teach his grandchildren to be comfortable with old people and to respect them. He can show wisdom and easy going kindness that is often greatly needed and loved by children.”

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Dr. Paul Vitz is Professor and Senior Scholar at the Institute for the Psychological Sciences in Arlington, VA and author of the recent book, “Faith of the Fatherless: The Psychology of Atheism.” He received his Ph.D. in Psychology from Stanford University and is widely published on the integration of faith and psychology.

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Father Knows Best

by Michael Shaughnessy

Sometimes the abandonment of authority happens subtly. Dad hardly noticed that he shared his authority with the script writers of CBS television by allowing his children to watch *Father Knows Best*.

Soon they were watching *All in the Family* with its message that Dad, like Archie Bunker, clearly did not know best. Dad heard something idiotic and might have voiced his disagreement with the script, but the kids heard, "Parents aren't with it. Why even listen to them?" Television brought another authority into the house, shaping the children's world view, and dad and mom allowed it.

Farewell Norman Rockwell

Today's family might be captured in this scene from an episode of *Modern Family*. Mom is serving dinner to the family at table where each person is on a device. She says, "O.K. That's it! Everybody, gadgets down, now! Families are supposed to talk." The daughter says, "Mom's insane," and they all return to their screens. Cue the canned laughter. The lesson is clear – parents should not control the use of gadgets.

A modern family of four may sit together in the living room, yet be in four different realities. Dad is watching sports on his computer, mom is checking her flickr photos on her iPad. Their daughter is sending her 197th text of the day on her phone and their son is playing Super Mario on his Xbox with a boy living in Hong Kong.

Authority Under Fire

Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Ephesians 6:1

Why does God command this? God doesn't command us to sleep or eat. He doesn't need to.

Commandments are intended to address our sinful state so we will not do what is wrong: lie, slander, steal, commit adultery or disobey.

God orders children to obey their parents because parents teach children to obey God and his truth. It is hard for children to obey their parents if parents don't expect it.

A news story about a Toronto couple raising a gender-neutral child makes a point. "What we noticed is that parents make so many choices for their children. It's obnoxious." So say parents who are making a huge, and foolish choice for their child.

Parental abuse or abandonment of their authority is part of their sinful condition. That's obnoxious!

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

- Ephesians 6:4.

An iPad, smart-phone, television, mp3 player, Gameboy, or Kindle can hold the modern family captive in an odd sort of unity as each periodically interrupts the others with the latest, funniest, most awesome, or coolest picture, video, joke or news, before they all go back to what they were doing: sucking giga bytes of digital data into their cozy family cocoon.

Sharing Your Shaping

Children's lives are now regularly being shaped, not by the parents, but by whoever is at the other end of their children's gadgets. In the modern world you probably can't get rid of all the gadgets, but it is still the parents' responsibility to "authorize" their use, knowing that they are giving away authority every time they buy a new gadget.

Parents should know the power they are giving into the hands of others before they give it. It is hard to take back.

Michael Shaughnessy is the [Kairos](#) director for the Sword of the Spirit both in North America and Internationally. He is the editor of the [Kairos Youth Culture Newsletter](#). Kairos is an international federation of outreaches to high school, university and post university aged people.

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email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

CHALLENGES IN LIVING TOGETHER AS COMMUNITY



The Choices You Make

by Tom Caballes

“He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.”

- Romans 2:6–8

One of my favorite movie series as I grew up is “Back to the Future.” It shows how a decision of a person in the past affects what happens to him in the future, and in the movie, Marty McFly was able to travel back in time to correct the mistakes made in the past, although he messed it up more. How I wish such a machine is available now! But what I learned from that movie is that the decisions we make today forms what our future will be. We are all laying the foundations of our future based on the small and big decisions we daily make. Of course circumstances affect a lot of what we become, but circumstances work in tandem with our decisions to form our future. We essentially are the product of the choices we make – not by our parents, or whoever else influenced us in our youth. So, are you responsible to where you are at the moment, or is it someone else? Are you ready to face the future based on the decisions you made in the past and the decisions you will be making from now on?

So How Do I Make the Right Choices Now?

1. Have you clearly identified what are the goals of your life? Everyone has written or unwritten goals for their lives. It forms our beliefs, our values and priorities, and it eventually dictates your choices. So, what are you passionate about? Know who you are and what your life is about, then pursue them with passion and purpose. If you have not written them before, now is the time to clearly identify them.
2. Make careful decisions about your life – the bigger the decisions are, the more discernment is needed. It would be great to have pastoral help when you make significant, life-changing decisions in your life. *Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future* [Proverbs 19:20].
3. We need to be deeply entrenched in the Word of God, because it deeply affects how we think about things and how we decide. *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path* [Psalms 119:105].
4. It is easier to decide when things are black and white, but it is much harder when issues are in different shades of gray. Sometimes the choices we face are between good things – and which ones are better. Sometimes we are faced to choose the lesser evil. Again, this is where practical wisdom in the form of brotherly or sisterly advice comes in. Seek advice and wisdom and you will appreciate it!
5. We need to be mindful of the eternal consequences of our decisions: will this decision bring me closer to God or not? Will this decision make God's will be done? Is God pleased with this decision?
6. Lastly, we need to ask ourselves: will we regret or be thankful for that decision later in life? Will my life be blessed by this decision, or will my life turn for the worse? Aim to live a life with no regrets!

Other Scripture references:

1. *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.* [Proverbs 3:5-6]
2. *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit ... and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.* [Hebrews 4:12-13]
3. Other references: Proverbs 24:6; Deuteronomy 30:19; Proverbs 14:12; Joshua 24:15; and Galatians 6:7-8.

For personal reflection or group sharing

1. Am I the person of my own decision, or do I blame someone else for who I am?
2. How often do I seek advice and guidance from those who can help me, or am I very independent?



Tom Caballes is the National Senior Administrator and a National Coordinator of the [Lamb of God](#), a community of the Sword of the Spirit with 7 branches located throughout New Zealand. Tom also leads [Kairos New Zealand](#), an outreach program for high school, university, and post-university aged people.

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email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

CHALLENGES IN LIVING TOGETHER AS COMMUNITY



An Inheritance Awaits

by Tom Caballes

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you... [1 Peter 1:3-4]”

- 1 Peter 1:3-4

At times I ponder: what if I was a son of a very rich father, say Bill Gates, whose riches will seemingly never run out? What kind of life would I have lived? Obviously I would never worry about money. I would find a worthy cause to devote my life to. I would want to enjoy my riches too, but not waste it. I would like to help the needy.

How about you – what would you do if you were that rich? But then, guess what? We do have a heavenly Father that has unfading, infinite and imperishable riches! The Bible has full of promises of unfathomable treasures for those who follow God and remain faithful to the end. Are you aware of your eternal inheritance? Aren't you excited about it? Do you anticipate it?

So What Do You Do as You Await Your Inheritance of Incomparable Value?

1. Being a Christian is the best investment in life, because even if the costs sometimes are high, the dividends are out of this world. Is your life centered in Christ? Have you decided to leave all else behind and follow Him? Have you decided to follow Him to the end, come hell or high waters? If not, now is the time to do so. Think about it: what can compare with eternal life with God? Absolutely nothing.
2. Start *'putting on Jesus Christ'* now [See Romans 13:14]. God wants you to grow in the character of Christ now and be like Him in all things. God wants others to see Jesus in you.
3. Do good by loving God and loving others in whatever situation you are in. *And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.* [Galatians 6:9-10]
4. Sometimes it is easier said than done, but you need to withstand challenges, trials and difficulties in this life because only those who complete the race wins the prize. So do not give up! Focus on the prize!
5. Use your talent, time, money, and resources wisely, especially in building God's Kingdom. Of course you want to enjoy life too as God's sons and daughters; yet be mindful that you will also account for everything you will have done in this life one day. Have a balance in your life in this area.
6. What is the best thing you can ever give to your friends and relatives? It is not money or riches. It is Jesus Christ Himself. If you give Jesus to others, they will also have the same infinite inheritance that you will have. A relationship with Jesus is one gift you can freely give to others without lessening any of your own. Actually, the more you share Jesus to others, the more your eternal wealth will be!
7. Start looking forward to your inheritance! Have you imagined life without pain, sorrow, sin and death? Have you imagined walking with God and seeing His face? Yearn for that day and time when this will happen – because in due time, it will, as long as we are faithful to the end.

Other Scripture passages:

1. *And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."* [Mark 10:21]
2. *But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him."* [1 Corinthians 2:9]
3. *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.* [Colossians 3:23-24]
4. Other references: Matthew 13:44-46; Ephesians 1:13-19; Galatians 4:6-7 and 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

For personal reflection or group sharing

1. How much is my life invested towards eternity?
2. Am I reflecting the character of Jesus to others? In what way can I improve?



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The Inner Captivity of We Who Are Free

... and what we can do about it

by Sam Williamson

We've been remade through a re-birth; we've become new creations and given *new* hearts; and the walls that imprisoned us have been bulldozed. And yet . . . we still fear our bosses, speak harshly to friends, dwell on anxious thoughts, and obsess about ourselves. Why is that?

Years ago I read an article written by a counselor who worked with concentration camp victims shortly after World War II. The sheer breadth of the war's destruction restricted the Allies' ability to help feed and shelter people, so refugee camps were built for the victims.

The counselor noted that many of the victims in the refugee camps acted as though they were still in prison. While they had been freed from the camps, they asked permission for the smallest liberties, such as a nighttime stroll outside their dormitories. The therapist made this observation:

We took the victims out of the camps in an instant,
but it may take decades before the camps are taken out of the victims.

Their story is our story. God has opened the prison doors on the outside, but we still need him to free us from the prisons walls within.

The inner prison dilemma

Do you ever wonder why we still do what we do? We've been given new hearts, but we ignore our friends or we bristle at their tiniest correction of us; or we scratch and claw for recognition or succumb to that enticing temptation for the seventeenth time this month. Or week.

When we recognize how badly we just acted, what is our typical reaction? We either try self-speak or we despair. (Unless, of course, we simply refuse to admit the pain we inflict on others.)

First we try to buoy up our sinking spirits with an inner, positive pep-talk. We say: "I've been born again," "I have a good heart," or "I've been baptized in the Holy Spirit." Our self-talk works for a time, but the feelings don't last. And pretty soon we're criticizing our spouse again.

Or we despair when we read, "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth" (1 John 1:6). We honestly acknowledge the darkness of our walk—and the pain it causes others—and we stagger into gloom.

The concentration camp counselor experienced the same problem with the concentration camp victims. She repeatedly told them that the camps were demolished and that they were free. Yet the former prisoners continued to defer to the therapists as though they were prison guards.

Like us at times, when the pep-talks failed, the therapist despaired.

And then . . .

One day a maimed Allied soldier visited the refugee camp to find a long lost cousin. When the former prisoner saw his cousin's debilitating wounds, something inside just broke. He whispered, "*You suffered for me? You sacrificed your body to set me free?*"

The therapist noticed an instant change in the former prisoner: he stood taller, he acted less subservient, he took more initiative, and he smiled more. Inner walls had begun to crumble.

The therapist began to ask other grievously wounded soldiers to share their own stories of hard-fought battles, and she took busloads of former prisoners to Allied gravesites. And bit by bit, victim by victim, inner prison doors began to open. What they had only heard about became real.

The former victims shook off victimhood, and their fears morphed into peace.

So what does this have to do with us?

Sometimes all we need is a gentle reminder of the truth: *We've been made into new creatures with God-given hearts and the gift of God's Spirit dwelling within us.*

But usually we need that truth to penetrate a little deeper, for its roots to reach our inner being, to be captured again by the love of the one who set us free. We need it to become real. It's his love that frees us (over and over) not our self-talk.

The way to gain inner freedom is to visit his gravesite and gaze on the wounds of *The Soldier* who set us free.

It's not the self-proclamations of "I'm free" and "I've been made new" that we need; at least not as much as a deep heart knowledge of the love of the one who did it.

We need to know the love of Jesus. It's what set us free in the first place, and it's what continues to set us free from our inner prisons. John Donne wrote a sonnet that answers our need for inner freedom. He ends it with,

Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

Sam

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Sam Williamson grew up in Detroit, Michigan, USA. He is the son of a Presbyterian pastor and grandson of missionaries to China. He moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1975. He worked in London England from 1979 to 1982, helping to establish [Antioch](#), a member community of the Sword of the Spirit. After about twenty-five years as an executive at a software company in Ann Arbor he sensed God call him to something new. He left the software company in 2008 and now speaks at men's retreats, churches, and campus outreaches. He is married to Carla Williamson and they have four grown children and a grandson. He has a blog site, www.beliefssoftheheart.com, and can be reached at Sam@BeliefsOfTheHeart.com.



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Overcoming Chronic Sin

by Sam Williamson

My twelve year old self had a violent temper. My fuse was short, and my blasts of anger detonated at insults as unexpectedly as bursts of laughter explode at well-timed jokes. Without the mutually pleasant consequences.

I remember once chasing my older brother Andy around the house with a knife. I don't remember what he had done (probably something HEINOUS), but I do remember him chuckling as he easily evaded my thrusts. His laughter did nothing to calm my storm.

I hated my uncontrollable anger, and I memorized over fifty verses about the angry man:

- A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.
- A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.
- Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty.
- But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.

When I felt an outburst rising, I tried to calm myself by repeating those memorized verses. It even worked a few times, but not for long. I soon boiled over again.

When I was thirteen, a friend offered to pray for anything I wanted. I asked him to pray for my temper. Six months later, he asked how I was doing, and I realized I hadn't once lost my temper since his prayer. I hadn't even had to fight it. My explosive temper had been defused.

It was a miracle.

Since then, I've asked God to take away other bad habits, and he's never acted again so instantly. He usually works slower, a little less dramatically, and (it seems) less miraculously.

Chronic sins

When we first become Christians, we think all our problems will disappear. Some do. And some don't. We still find ourselves anxious, thin-skinned, lustful, self-focused, or critical.

Some temptations are daily companions while others are only occasional guests:

- Some of us are anxious all the time (rare is the day we feel free of fear) while others of us experience worry once in a blue moon.
- Some of us constantly tell stories about ourselves (often with embellishments that spotlight our greatness); others of us exaggerate our prowess only on leap-years.
- Some of us fly off the handle at the slightest hint of an insult; others of us explode only on the fourth of July.

Each of us have chronic habits that are constant companions; we wear them like comfortable slippers. The Puritans called them "besetting sins" (taking "beset" from the King James translation of Hebrews 12:1, "The sin which so easily doth beset [or cling to] us").

We know our chronic failures as well as we know our best friends. (Our best friends probably know them too.) We've worked relentlessly to rid ourselves of these unwelcome guests: we memorize scripture, tell ourselves to stop being anxious, ask friends to pray for us, and berate ourselves when we fall once again—for the third time this morning.

And sometimes God miraculously takes the problem away. Yippee! But most of the time, it doesn't work that way. There has to be a reason.

Here's what I think

God wants to be our daily companion. If he removed our chronic failures in the blink of an eye, we would go on our merry way without him. (Come on, we do it in other areas; God gives us a blueprint for our lives, we say, "Thank you very much," and we start building without him.)

God wants to teach us a deeper lesson. More than perfect robots, he wants us as constant companions. So he doesn't just remove our chronic failures with the snap of his holy fingers.

I taught each of my kids to ride a bike. Each one fell multiple times. They skinned their knees, bruised their

elbows, and learned the meaning of fear. But each persisted, learned to face the fear, and each one learned to ride. Learning to ride a bike was a multi-dimensional lesson.

If I could teach my kids all over again—and if I also had the magical power to snap my unholy fingers to make them instant bike-riders—I would restrain my own power. Because my kids learned far more than how to ride a bike. They learned persistence, boldness, hope, and trust.

Learning to take a risk, in the long run, was far more important than learning to ride a bike.

Sometimes slow-cooked is better

God could snap his holy fingers and I'd instantly be free of those frustrating habits that irritate me (and others). But he hasn't. (Ask my family.) He wants to heal me of something deeper.

What is the trigger that produces our habitual sins? We're anxious because we "know" what we need and we're pretty sure that God won't get it right; we exaggerate stories about ourselves because we feel unappreciated and we want friends to value us; we explode in anger because we don't like our circumstances, and we try to control them with blunt force.

Our anger, anxiety, and self-serving stories are symptoms but not our deepest problem. If we really believed that God wants the best for us and that he's making it happen, anxiety would disappear; if we believed God values us beyond the world and he's orchestrating circumstances to bring about something glorious in us, our exaggerations and anger would evaporate.

More than the miracle of getting more sin out of our lives, we need the miracle of getting more of God into our lives. More than the miracle of God's power, we need the miracle of God's presence. From there, it's always easier to push than to pull.

Of course, you can feel free to disagree with me. It won't tick me off. And that's a miracle.

Sam

P.S. God really did a miraculous healing in me when I was thirteen years of age, but I don't claim to have reached *Serenity Nirvana* (as many [who know me can attest](#)). In other words, if you think I'm bad now, just think how much worse I'd be had God not intervened then.

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Peach Trees by Vincent Van Gogh, 1888

From The Hunting of the Bees

Two Poems by Sean O'Neill

Peach tree

The tender peach tree that used to grow wild
at the back of the garden when we came
to live at the new house, a specimen
from some old idea of home defiled

by the years of sheer neglect, was cut down.
Here there was no biblical sense of growth
through watering. The new gardener was loath
to tend it. Then there was the cost of loam.

But in memory the tree's spirit lives
still, and haunts the idle yard with its bright
presence, carefully reminding us all

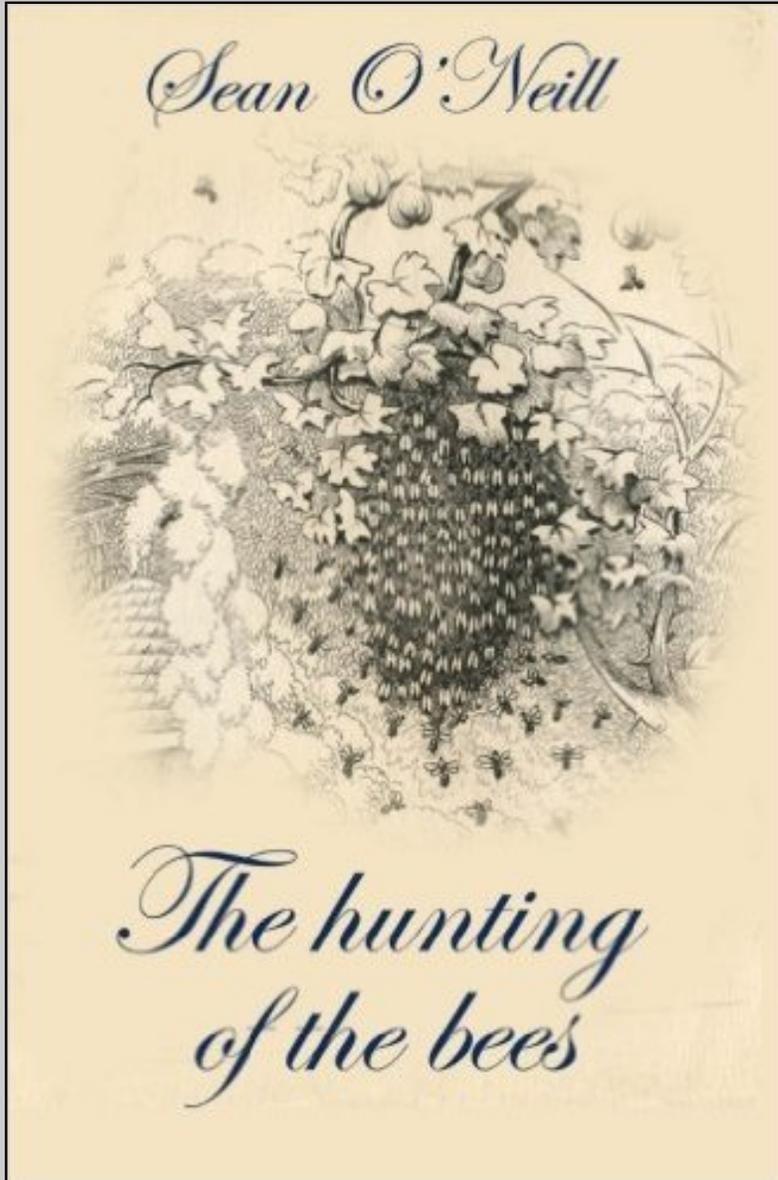
that love is not an abstract thing that gives
the mind its steady purpose and its light,
but a strong embrace, a caress, a call.

The mercy cup

Whatever tempest rages in the skull,
whatever malcontent rends the gut,
whatever illness or dysfunction,
eats the living flesh from bone,
there is a love that sees that pain,
and hides it under mercy's tender rain.

Our maladies are of our making,
painstakingly constructed of small acts.
We court and tease the wrong,
and truth is always repressed
by man's mean, insolvent store
of wild rebellion, treachery, mistrust.

Yet even in this parlous state
the wall we beat our head against
is not the brick and mortar
of the outhouse or the shack,
but the yielding, father hand
where love hides us in the crack.



This is Sean O'Neill's fourth poetry collection in print and it marks a progression from the sonnet forms of his previous book "The snipe in winter."

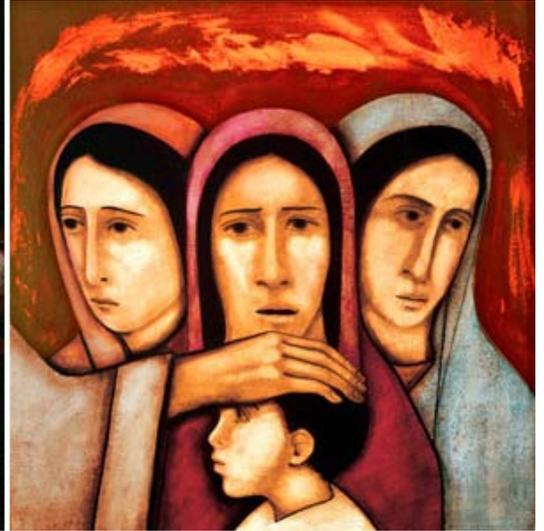
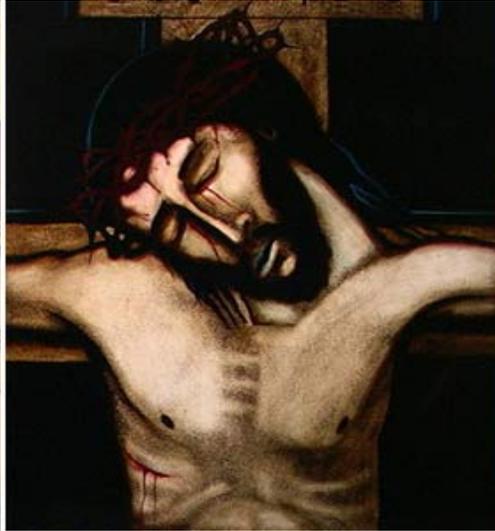
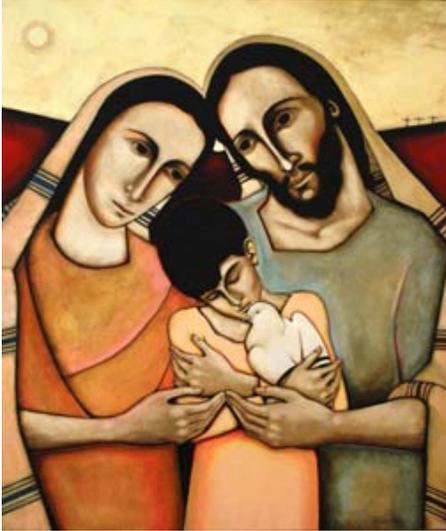
These poems range from the memories of childhood in the country to darker memories of foreign hotels and sleepless nights. As always, the lyrical language shines through in both the free-verse and formal poems alike.

Book available at [Amazon](#).

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publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom

email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com



Truth, Goodness, and Beauty - the Three Transcendentals

by Peter Kreeft

The following excerpt is from Peter Kreeft's essay, "Lewis's Philosophy of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty," published by [IVP Academic](http://www.ivp.com); Print on Demand Edition, June 15, 2008.

There are three things that will never die: truth, goodness, and beauty. These are the three things we all need, and need absolutely, and know we need, and know we need absolutely. Our minds want not only some truth and some falsehood, but all truth, without limit. Our wills want not only some good and some evil, but all good, without limit. Our desires, imaginations, feelings or hearts want not just some beauty and some ugliness, but all beauty, without limit.

Three Attributes of God

For these are the only three things that we never get bored with, and never will, for all eternity, because they are three attributes of God, and therefore all God's creation: three transcendental or absolutely universal properties of all reality. All that exists is true, the proper object of the mind. All that exists is good, the proper object of the will. All that exists is beautiful, the proper object of the heart, or feelings, or desires, or sensibilities, or imagination. (This third area is more difficult to define than the first two.) ...



We are head, hands, and heart. We respond to truth, goodness and beauty. We are this because we are images of God. Each of us is one person with three distinct powers.



Image of the Holy Trinity

God is one God, but in three distinct persons. The Son, the Logos, is the mind of the Father and performs his good will in redeeming the world. The Spirit is the poet, who composes and choreographs the operatic love between the Father and the Son in both creating and redeeming, and so is the Sanctifier, the saint-maker – and the saint is the most beautiful thing on Earth.

As the Spirit proceeds from Father and Son, children proceed from husband and wife, the holy family on Earth manifesting the holy Trinitarian family of heaven, though very imperfectly and obscurely, through a glass darkly. As the Son, though equal to the Father in all things, willingly and lovingly submits to the Father's good will, the loving wife lovingly submits to the loving husband's loving good will, though she is equal to him in all things. For this is not politics, but music; not equality, by harmony; not justice, but love...



Beauty derived from truth and goodness

According to Aquinas, beauty is “that which, being seen, pleases.” Though beauty is derived from truth and goodness, it has the greatest power over our souls. This is why most addictions come from something that appears beautiful, whether Gollum’s ring, a false “precious” (The Lord of the Rings trilogy), or a drug or alcohol high, which is a false mystical experience, or a false love that apes married love but lacks its truth. And therefore the only effective cure for addiction must come from something that appears even more beautiful than the addiction. As Aquinas says, the only thing strong enough to overcome evil passion is a more powerful good passion.

The beauty of a sober saint, to which the alcoholic aspires, is a powerful cure for alcoholism. The beauty of the bloody love of Christ can overcome the beauty of the forbidden love of a beautiful body.

Augustine in his *Soliloquies* imagines God asking him, “What do you want to know?” And Augustine replies, “Only two things: Yourself and myself.” That is not narrow; that is broad. For a self, or person, involves all three of the things we need and want infinitely: truth, goodness and beauty. So there really are six things we want to know in knowing these two, but the six are really three, since our three are reflections of God’s three.

[Peter Kreeft](#), Ph.D., is a professor of philosophy at Boston College and also at the King's College (Empire State Building), in New York City. He is a regular contributor to several Christian publications, is in wide demand as a speaker at conferences, and is the author of over 55 books including: *Back to Virtue*; *The God Who Loves You*; *Heaven, The Heart's Deepest Longing*; *Everything You wanted to Know About Heaven*; *Your Questions - God's Answers*; *How To Win The Culture War*. See more of his work at his [online website](#).

*paintings from Biblical themes by Michael O'Brien: top trio paintings depict Holy Family at Nazareth, Crucifixion, and Jesus with Women of Jerusalem; middle painting depicts the Wedding Feast at Cana with Jesus and Mary; bottom trio paintings depict Joseph's coat of colors, Angel directing Joseph in a dream to flee with Mary and the Christ Child to Egypt, and a Birthday Celebration for the Boy Jesus at Nazareth.

**icon of the Three Angels who appeared to Abraham symbolize for the Orthodox the Holy Trinity

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