

STRAIGHTWAY

And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him [Mark 1:18].

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

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Ministering in the Night—Part One

Dr. H. T. Spence

In recent years it has become more and more difficult for biblical ministries to exist in Western Civilization as far as their divine appointment in purpose, vision, and principles of living is concerned. The spirit and mood of the age has radically changed in the past fifteen years, especially in the past five to ten years. True Christianity, which now is only found in the Remnant, is increasingly viewed with disdain and animosity by the world; it is seen as that which is against everything the world now hopes to birth in its new world system/order. It will become more

difficult to survive in this final, apostate Church age.

The question rightfully should be asked, "Have we entered the final world/age that preludes the coming of the visible Antichrist?" If this is true, we can expect fewer churches to want what the Remnant believe and what they possess in their personal walk with Christ. Likewise, we will witness the intense, aggressive hatred of world governments, including our own, against Christianity. The Remnant will feel the noose tightening in laws to shut down our schools, our network ministries, and our churches. Finally,

This edition includes three more articles

Ministering in the Night—Part Two
Ministering in the Night—Part Three
The Internet and Social Networking

governmental powers will invade the private sanctum of our homes.

The importance of the imminence of Christ's secret coming should ever be part of the Remnant's heartbeat, while at the same time they prepare for what seems to be the inevitable for Remnant ministries in the End Time of the last days.

The Night Season of History

One must always remember that the present Remnant is linked in a chain, yea, a "body" of men and women who have anticipated the day to dawn and the day star to arise (2 Pet. 1:19). Our generation may be the one to witness this glorious event at the very moment when the world is poised at the threshold of the prophesied Man-of-Sin world-rulership. It seems that this generation of saints has become the chosen one in history to bear up under the world's and the Church's climactic hatred against the Lord and

against His anointed. We may witness that which God's men of the past have only anticipated.

Although the Body of Christ is viewed as consummated and complete in God's eyes, yet, on earth, in history, it is still filling up. The Body of Christ in this generation will face the worst of times; we are at the resolve of all the ages (1 Cor. 10:11b). At the same time, the Remnant will also be part of the hindering force mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2. Dear reader, have we arrived at the moment when the Devil, the great red dragon, is poised at the crucial position to devour this man-child that will be birthed by the woman, the institutional Church (Rev. 12)? He will do all that he can to destroy, to kill, yea, to devour that man-child before it is taken in what we believe to be the Rapture. It is our prayer to be a part of those who represent that man-child on earth in the culmination of the Body of Christ. It truly is the darkest hour of history around the world. We find ourselves as those who minister the Gospel before the Lord through the night season of history to the true Body of Christ.

The Bible speaks of the "night" and the "day" from two perspectives. (1) There is first the perspective of all humanity born in the night, the darkness of sin, and through the Lord Jesus Christ, having been brought into the light, into the day, through trusting in Him. Their nature is no longer of the night, but they have become children of the day (Eph.

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O. Talmadge Spence, Founder

**H. T. Spence, Editor
President**

**Foundations Bible College
P. O. Box 1166
Dunn, NC 28335-1166
800-849-8761**

www.straightwayonline.org

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5:8; Rom. 13:12). (2) There is also the biblical perspective of the night/day according to history and God's timetable of Christ's Second Coming. The "night season" has been long with the unfolding of the Body of Christ throughout history finding its appointment at various stages of the night. Its members all anticipated and waited for the day to dawn and the day star to arise in their hearts. Though the past two thousand years has been the night season since our Lord's return to heaven, we must discern our portion of the night of history and not permit its powers to affect our "day" life in Christ. We are witnessing, as no other generation of that Body of Christ in history, the imminent coming of Christ; and yet the near reality of the coming of two great figures—the Antichrist and the False Prophet, men of global leadership proportion. We must remember that Satan has roaming privileges, and perhaps these have greatly increased in the End Time. For the whole world lieth in the Wicked One; he is the god of this world; three times the apostle John declares him to be "the prince of this world"—the high ruler. In Ephesians 2:2 he is the "prince of the power of the air." Demons and all the powers of darkness that are in the air, this lower region around the earth, may be marshaled by Satan at any time. They are ready to tempt men and do mischief in the earth at his command. We are also told in Luke 4:5–7 that he controls the inhabited world. In Ephesians 2:2 we read that he works

in the "children of disobedience."

This world is ripening fast for not only globalism of government but also for hatred of the saints. Christ warned in Matthew 24:9 that we will be "hated of all nations." In Matthew 10:22 we will be "hated of all men." The Remnant must get ready for the culmination of the Night Season.

Strange Things Happen in the Night

The Bible reveals a number of strange happenings in the night season.

(1) We read of disciples sleeping in the night, in a garden, when they should have been watching and praying. We must be on guard for apathy and indifference becoming paralyzing powers in our day. Truly, "lukewarmness" is the spirit that pervades the End-time church. The soul and the life tend to sleep; perhaps the cares of life contribute to this. Tiredness of body often becomes the excuse for our spiritual apathy. Even wise and foolish virgins sleep in the night (Matt. 25). But this is not good for the Christian.

(2) Betrayals under the guise of a kiss take place in the night season. We are going to witness betrayals under the guise of love by friends with whom we once broke bread. Betrayals will happen within families; it will happen in churches and ministries. Court trials against the righteous take place at night as they did with the Lord.

(3) Disciples scattered at night when the Lord was betrayed. The End Time will be a time of great fear.

Recantations of words and life, “I know Him not,” will become more frequent events within conservative Christianity.

(4) Disciples denied their Lord in the night season, as did Peter. The pressure of political and religious correctness will become so strong that many will capitulate to the Neo-Christianity after first abandoning a true walk with God.

(5) We can expect to see more and more offenses come. Jesus told His disciples on the eve of His betrayal, “Ye shall be offended because of me this night.” We tend to be offended when truth steps forward.

(6) Eyes wax dim in the night season, as did Eli’s in 1 Samuel 3. The Word of the Lord is precious or scarce in the night season, and there is no open vision (prime-vision preaching) in the night. This is becoming more frequent among ministers of our day; this is why our churches are so dead and carnal. Church programs have endeavored to bring synthetic life to churches that have been dead a long time now.

(7) Nehemiah viewed the ruins of sacred Jerusalem by night. The sad reality of such a plight today is that the Church has become accustomed to the ruins of their own destruction and death; they believe it is simply part of the Church’s existence.

(8) Warnings came to Joseph in the night season, leading him to flee by night with a young child and His mother. We will need to discern the will of God for these days when the wicked hunt for the godly.

(9) Imprisonment is found in the night, yet as with Paul and Silas it was with singing and praising of God. There will be the hope such as Paul had in his night seasons: “And the night following the Lord stood by me.”

(10) Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 11:23, “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread.” The Lord’s Supper was appointed in the night season. To partake of the Lord is most important in the night season. It was not a breakfast or lunch; it was a supper late into the night. We will need this privilege as the night season deepens.

(11) There is the hope of the Rapture to take place in a night season: “I tell you in that night there shall be two in the bed, one taken and the other left.” Jesus warned that He would come as a thief in the night.

(12) And, there is the hope, aboard our boat in the storm of life in the night season, that Christ will come to meet us (John 6:15–21), and we will immediately be found at the shore of heaven. Let us pray at this late hour, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

It truly will be very difficult to live in the night season. I have witnessed in my travels that it is becoming more difficult for youth to find the will of God. It is not impossible, but it will take a more fervent pursuit of heart to find the will of God today than in former days. One’s tenacity will have to be so great and aggressive

that unless he takes the kingdom by violence, it will not be taken at this time in history. For this reason, some of the greatest saints that have ever lived will be living at the time of the Rapture: it will take a greater walk with God amidst all the powers of darkness endeavoring to destroy godliness in the earth.

The Need of Watchmen and Priests in the Night

This is a time when we desperately need watchmen telling us of the night season:

The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come (Isa. 21:11, 12).

The Lord knows we need men who have discernment of the night season. Yes, they must preach of the Blessed Hope, to proclaim that the morning cometh, the day is to dawn. Nevertheless, they must also preach of the night season. This is where we are. There is the imperative need of watchmen who discern the times, the seasons, both of global governments as well as the blatant apostasy of the churches, including Fundamentalist churches. Very few see the times in which we live.

Found within the Songs of Degrees (Psalm 120 through 134) is the concluding psalm dedicated to the changing of the priestly watch. In the first two verses, we read of the first band of priests completing

their duties and leaving the temple, but giving instructions to the priests who will take their place on the night watch. Verse 3 gives an antiphonal response of words from the priests now taking the duty of those leaving.

As the priests leaving the temple call back to the ones now taking the duty, the words are heard:

Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD.

They give words of admonition: “We are now departing; we cannot stay on in the House of God; we therefore entrust to you this matter of ministering to the Lord. May you minister well, ye servants of the Lord. Lift up your hands and bless God!” Oh, how these ministers of Israel loved God and loved His House! How they exhorted those servants of the Lord not only to merely watch the night but also to give thanks and praise from their hearts. In the Bible some eighty times the word *blessed* is found in the context of blessing God: giving worship and praise to Him for who He is and for what He has done on behalf of those He loves. Yes, the cry in earnest is, “You must perform your duties, but you must love your God from the depth of your heart amidst the duties.” Then the response comes from the priests who have taken the place of those leaving, “The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.”

Along with watchmen, there is the need for such priests in the relays of

the watch, who have been given the watchword throughout history. Are we that generation that has taken the final watch before Christ's soon return?

In the final year before my father, Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, passed away, we had many conversations about the Foundations Ministries and its future, about Fundamentalism and its falling away, and about what he believed I would face as the next president and pastor of the ministry. He warned me of situations and changes in the world and in Fundamentalism far worse than what he had faced. Though my father could not speak the last four months of his life, in our times together he conversed by writing on paper. He encouraged me in the Word and will of God for the days ahead. He pressed the maintenance of the ministry and its spiritual walk with God. He saw other schools failing and compromising, and he warned me of such dangers.

Dr. O. Talmadge Spence saw Foundations historically as a "Divinity" school rather than a "Scholastic" or a "Mystic" school. The scholastic school arose in Church history with the obvious emphasis upon academics to deepen the Church's knowledge; but such schools became spiritually cold and purely academic. In reaction to this, there was the mystic school, which placed the emphasis upon the inward life to the neglect of the knowledge of Scripture. Finally, the divinity school was born in a desire to wed the two together: a school of academic studies in the Word of God

and adjacent studies with the pursuit of a spiritual walk with God. This type of school was imperative to be maintained before the Lord.

That final year of my father's life was the transitional year as he left this world and I stepped into the burden of prime leadership. Those months were important to both of us: responses of the heart to one another; encouragement to one another as he would go to heaven and I would continue here on earth. There was to be no murmuring or complaining from either heart but simply the giving of blessings to one another. Such blessings are authoritative, for only those who serve the Lord with faithful hearts can bring down the blessing of Zion to others.

The Night Season: Our Divine Appointment

God's men watch the night in God's House. They stand, watch, serve, and testify for the glory of God. The night watch is a very trying period, especially late in the night when the watchers tend to fall asleep. Such men are called upon to guard the interest of the Lord, taking up the long vigil of the night. Amidst their duties, they must also lift up their hands in prayer and praise; they must minister to the satisfaction and pleasure of the Lord. They cannot fulfill their duty merely in a legal way. Such priests of the temple may be guards, or watchers, or porters at the doors, or keepers of the sanctuary, or preparers of the

sacrifices. Nevertheless, they cannot carry out their duties properly without the heart stayed upon the Lord. We can become so occupied with the job, or even make the ministry so much the object of our soul that the Lord is crowded out of the heart. We may do the job well and may perform our tasks correctly, but the Lord may not have been satisfied with our heart in the matter. This is what the exhorters in Psalm 134 called to those of the night watch: “Bless the LORD”—make the Lord happy, please Him, and satisfy the Lord in what you perform. All ministering must be done from the heart of love for God; everything must be done with a spirit of praise.

The Duties of the Night Priests

Around 6:00 PM the night watch of the priests began. They had to perform many duties and responsibilities. First Chronicles 9:33 states, “And these are the singers, chief of the fathers of the Levites, who remaining in the chambers were free: for they were employed in that work day and night.” Yes, there was music even during the night. We can envision the scene: the laborious work of the day over, and thus the night in the temple begins. The last notes of the temple music of the public worship have died out, and the worshippers have slowly retired, some after lingering for private prayer or else tarrying in one of the marble porches. The temple faced the east and now the sun was sinking in the west. The new company of priests and Levites who were to conduct the

services on the morrow would come up from Ophel. Those who have officiated during the day are preparing to leave by another gate. They have put off their linen breeches and coats, depositing them in the appointed chambers, and have resumed the dress of ordinary laymen, and with their sandals. The priests were required to be barefooted during their actual ministry but could wear sandals when they were not on duty.

A variety of duties were set for the night watch of the priests. By day and night it was the duty to keep guard at the gates, to prevent, so far as possible, the unclean from entering. To them the duties of temple police were also entrusted under the command of an official known to us in the New Testament as the “captain of the guard.” At night, guards were placed in 24 stations about the gates and courts: 21 of these by Levites; the other 3 were in the inner gates by priests. Each guard consisted of 10 men; so that in all, 210 Levites and 30 priests held these posts. The temple guards were relieved by day but not during the night. The Romans divided the night into four watches; the Jews, however, had only three watches, with the fourth being really the “morning watch.” When Jesus said, “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching,” He was expressly referring to the second and third watches as those of the deepest sleep seasons of the night.

During the night the captain of the temple made his rounds. On his

approach the guards had to rise and salute him in a particular manner. Any guard found asleep when on duty was beaten, or his garments were set on fire. We read of this urgent warning by Christ in Revelation 16:15, “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” Much was needed in preparing the wood, the oil, the incense, the animals for the next priests who would come on duty. The priest whose duty it was to superintend the arrangements might any moment knock at the door and demand entrance. He came suddenly and unexpectedly; no one knew when. He came and knocked, and the priest on the other side had to open to him. Then all who had prepared, and were ceremonially washed, would come and cast lots for the appointment for their night duties.

Conclusion

We must carefully note those words of Revelation 16:15, “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” This blessing is given at a peculiar time in the unfolding of the Book of Revelation. Christ comes as a thief in the night (which we noted in Matt. 24:43). It is to be observed that in the two advents of Christ (one for the saints out of the final Church age, and the other to set up His Kingdom), the first one is that of the Rapture, His coming *to* the clouds *for* His saints;

the other is of His coming *from* the clouds *with* His saints to Armageddon. It is in Revelation 16:15 that He gives the warning of His coming and how will he find His servants, His priests. He will come suddenly and unexpectedly. Therefore, His priests must be ever watching and alert. Whatever God has called us to—whether preacher, teacher, musician, layman—the priority must be Christ for our lives. Will we be ready at the door of His coming? Or will our garments be burned? Our calling and duties for Christ must be in the light of His coming—to be ready for the summons.

Proverbs 8:34 states, “Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, and waiting at the posts of my doors.” One of the great deficits of this night season is lack of wisdom in living and thus making decisions that draw us further and further away from God and His will for our lives. This is why wisdom is so important to the Christian life: to hear her call, to listen for her. This wisdom personified in the Book of Proverbs is Christ. We must listen to the Word of God, anticipating it for our lives. May we long for His coming, watching daily at His gates, and waiting at the posts of His doors. This watching and waiting are most needed at this last watch of the night season.

In our next article we must view God’s providence in this night season, and then in a third article what we will face in this final watch before His coming. [S]

Ministering in the Night—Part Two

Dr. H. T. Spence

The night season is the most difficult for watching and praying. The tendency is to spiritually sleep and to enter into periods of apathy and indifference. Christ warned in the Olivet Discourse that because of the abounding of iniquity (lawlessness), the love of many would wax cold. We truly are witnessing the lawlessness of society, of government, as well as of the churches throughout the world. Without the Bible, Christians cannot maintain a proper worldview of life and will be drawn into the powers of lawless and loose living. As a result, our burning love for God will “progressively cool” down (Greek translation of “wax cold,” Matt. 24:12), and lukewarmness will take over the heart and the living. Amidst the aggressive side effects that have come because of global apostasy, even in the most conservative camps of Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism, compromise has become commonplace.

We must acknowledge that God has sovereignly appointed our lot to be in this generation. Therefore, Christ’s grace will be there to enable us to overcome the worst of the night season. If we enter into spiritual passivity, we will fall away. We must carefully ask, what is this “lot” to the appointed priests of the night season?

The Providence of God

According to the early writings

of the Jews, the casting of lots was important. Through this method the priest learned what his appointment by God was for his watch. The priests at the beginning of the watch would pass into the “hall of polished stones” to cast lots for their services. The lot was cast four times, though at different periods of the service. This occurred in the following manner: The priests stood in a circle around the president, who for a moment removed the bonnet of one of them to show that he would begin counting at him. Then all held up one, two, or more fingers of one hand (whatever number they desired). Because it was not lawful in Israel to count persons, the president could count fingers. After announcing a chosen number, he began counting the fingers of the priests until he reached the number announced. This process meant that the lot had fallen on that priest.

The first lot cast was for cleansing of the altar and preparing it. The second lot was for those who were to offer the sacrifice and to cleanse the candlestick and the altar of incense in the Holy Place. The third lot was the most important, for it determined who was to offer the incense. The fourth lot fixed those who were to burn the pieces of the sacrifice on the altar and to perform the concluding portions of the service.

The lots in history were the sign of providence’s choice in a moment

of circumstance. This held true to the context of the singers (1 Chron. 25:7, 8) and for the porters or the doorkeepers (1 Chron. 26:13). “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD” (Prov. 16:33). We must keep in mind that the Bible had not been completed; man relied on providence for finding the will of God, and this included the Urim and Thummim which were a form of the lot. In Acts 1:26 the lots were cast for the man to take Judas’ place among the Twelve. But we must carefully note that prayer preceded this lot, and we are not told how it was done. By Acts 13:2–4, there was no casting of lots, but prayer and fasting and the guidance of the Spirit were now the means of finding God’s will.

God has divinely appointed all of our lives for this season of history. How will we live our lives in this dispensation? How will we find out what we are to do in the decisions of life? As we have all been made kings and priests unto our God (Rev. 5:10), the ministers in the night must live by the Word of God. This written Word must direct us; it must guide us from the smallest part of life to the largest. It must guide our words, our actions, our thoughts, and our motives because the Bible declares God’s thoughts about all of these. It tells us how to live with self, with others, with one’s wife or husband, with children, and with business acquaintances. Everything is to be found in this Book.

We must ever find the Word of God for our lives. The written Word has taken the place of living by the casting of lots; certainly we must not live by the philosophy of “whatever will be, will be.” Although providence is with us twenty-four hours a day, it should not take preeminence over my conscious life. The Word of God is preeminent. We must always be careful how we interpret providence, for we may read into it at the moment that which is not true; we could follow our interpretation of that circumstance at that moment and think we know why it is happening, when we do not. As William Cowper, the great Christian poet, declared, “God is His own interpreter [of providence], and He will make it plain.” Providence is to be viewed by the Christian only as a witness and confirmation to the Word of God and not the reverse.

Providence: Direct Hand or Divine Permission

Providence is very important in the night season of history; it is the “left hand” of God found behind our head (Song of Sol. 2:6) away from the sight of our eyes. It is ever going before us through circumstances and situations to pave the way for our living. However, we must be careful how we view the circumstances that are happening in this wicked and perverse generation. God is working both in the earth in global proportion and also in individual lives. In this night season, how am I to view providence or the workings of God?

Such circumstances come either by the direct hand of God (His divine appointment) or by divine permission, which must be viewed as His will though perhaps not for the reason we think. What is the distinction between the direct hand of God and His permission of certain situations?

In Galatians 6:7–9 we read of the biblical law of sowing and reaping. This means that there could be circumstances of blessings or tragedies that come to my life because of how I've sown. If I have sown to the flesh as a Christian, secretly or openly, God has placed in the law of that sowing, the outcome of corruption. It is not something directly from God, but He permits it. Some casualties of life come because of how I lived and to what I invested my life. If I sow into the Spirit, the Bible reveals I will reap life everlasting—victory and godliness. We are told in Galatians 6:9, that in the proper season we will reap if we faint not. This is a law of providence. How often we have reminisced and wished we had made different choices because of certain consequences that have come to our lives.

In the Book of Haggai we find another view of providence. Fifteen years had elapsed since the laying of the Temple foundation; no additional work had been done for fear of the Samaritans who had surrounded them. The Jews had immersed themselves in their living, their houses, and their accumulated materialism.

Beginning in Haggai 1:5, five times the prophet calls to them to “consider.” Haggai was calling them to view the circumstances that were against them. The deeper they had gone in decisions to get ahead materially, the worse their circumstances had become. He called their attention to the fact that something was wrong. They needed to stop and consider what had been happening: how many wrong decisions had they made that brought this about? God could not be blamed, yet He permitted such circumstances to come continually upon them because of their own doing. In 1:6–10 he declared,

Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough: ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink: ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house: and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.

They had been caught up in trying to live; in doing so, they left God out. The burden of the prophet was not for them to leave Jerusalem because of the failure; they were to get right with God and build a life for God.

One of the most fearful passages

of Scripture concerning providence is found in 2 Chronicles 32:31:

Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him [Hezekiah], to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.

We never know when such situations in God's providence will arise. We never know how they will be dressed or presented to us. They may look like God's blessings yet not be of God, such as these men of the world coming to visit Hezekiah. Nonetheless, this testing was of God. The pretext of this embassy from Babylon was one of friendship, to congratulate the king for his recovery, to see the wonder in the land which included the deliverance from Sennacherib. The visit truly was for secular and not spiritual reasons. However, Hezekiah interpreted it as being from God. Oh, dear reader, we may even pray over things, and yet our hearts may not have the pulse of the Word of God. We may have the words of truth, but not the heart of truth.

In Acts 16:6–11 we view another perspective of providence. The apostle Paul was in his second missionary journey:

Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

Sometimes we may wonder why God shuts doors that look so promising with the hope for His glory and the promotion of His Word. Truly, Paul had a consuming desire and heart for God and His Word. But God brought hindrances and restraints in providential circumstances that closed the door to Asia and Bithynia. It was only later in receiving the vision to go into Macedonia that he saw what providence was saying: “assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.” We must wait at times in the closing of doors and avenues by the Lord to find out what it means. There will be an increase of this kind of workings of providence in this night season of history. We must not become frustrated, impatient, or discouraged by them. The English translation “assuredly gathering” comes from a Greek word *sunbibazo* meaning “to bring together or unite.” When Paul, in reflection, brought together in his thoughts the closing of the doors of a hopeful venture for Christ along with the vision that came later, he was able to interpret the events.

Perhaps a final view of providence is to be seen in 2 Corinthians 12, when Paul prayed three seasons of time for God to heal him of a thorn in the flesh. Perhaps these seasons were when there was an increase of pain or discomfort, or because he thought it was affecting his ministry. God was silent in the first two seasons of prayer; but the third time God told him, “My grace is sufficient for

thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (12:9). It was at this time that Paul realized the reason for this providential gift that God had given him: “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh.” Twelve reasons are given in Scripture for physical sickness; we must find the right reason why we suffer when we do. God may heal to His glory, or the suffering may be an appointed gift to bear, given by God to preserve the soul from certain failures or even sins. The Charismatics have pressed in their theology that sickness is always of the Devil and that it is a result of lack of faith or sin in the life. Only the Word of God can reveal to us what the reason may be. If it is revealed that no healing will come (at least at the time of prayer), we must surrender to this appointment of the Lord and get in harmony with it.

End-time Suffering in Providence

As the End Time deepens, we will witness more and more the suffering for righteousness’ sake. The night season may make it appear as if the Lord will not come. The Christian Faith is the only faith of world religions that gives knowledge and assurance from God in the hour when it seems that He is silent in His manifestations. It may seem, as it did with Job:

*Behold, I go forward, but he is not there;
and backward, but I cannot perceive him:
On the left hand, where he doth work, but*

*I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on
the right hand, that I cannot see him: But
he knoweth the way that I take: when he
hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold
(Job 23:8–10).*

God’s Word gives us the assurance that no matter how dark and how silent the days become, God is ever with us. My dear father, Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, made the following observation in his book *The Quest for Christian Purity*:

Silence is like suffering in that neither of them, of themselves, is sin. It is the reason for God’s silence that will determine whether there is sin or not. The fact of God’s silence, in this universe, may be universal at times. We cannot say that just because God is silent concerning a matter that He is dead or we are lost!

When God begins to give this world over to the final delusion and the “Lie” of Antichrist powers and Interfaithism, we as the Remnant may suffer. But God has promised to bring deliverance in that hour. The Bible reveals two perspectives of deliverance found in two Greek prepositions, *apo* and *ek*. Both are translated “from” but have very different meanings indeed. For example, an individual may be delivered “from” (*apo*) falling into the Mediterranean Sea, which in this case means he was delivered *from* even experiencing a fall into the Mediterranean. However, if he were delivered “from” (*ek*), “out of” the Mediterranean Sea, this would mean he *was rescued* after having fallen into the Sea.

There may be some circumstances that God will deliver us from ever experiencing. There will be other circumstances into which we will go and no doubt experience pain, suffering, and burden; but God will bring us *through* and ultimately *out* of them. We tend to want the former deliverance, but God may appoint us to go through the suffering with the understanding of deliverance in the context of *ek*.

Conclusion

Every true Christian has a divine appointment in this night season. The lot of providence has fallen to every one of us in a variety of places. The remnant are scattered throughout the world wherever God has placed them. They are to find God's will for the purpose of their lives and to be true to the commitment of His Word in a time when the fears of the night fall upon the human heart. Radical changes have come to our beloved country with no horizontal hope in sight of ever returning to its former days of glory and liberty. Every day of life must count for Christ.

If you find yourself standing at God's doors appointed for your life and it seems that nothing has knocked on the door, remain true to Christ. Remain in readiness for His knock. One of His doors is communion. While the institutional Church has placed their Lord outside, He is now looking for anyone within to hear His knock and open that door of private, personal, precious communion. The

word *knock* in Revelation 3:20 is a very soft knock, not a loud, banging one. In these days when the public Church is looking for Christ in the "big" and "the shout," He is quietly knocking. As men look for the thunder, the earthquake, and the wind, we must have our ear tuned to that "still, small voice." Yes, as the Church is getting louder, God is becoming more silent, and we must discern Him in the silence. Though the Church declares that we are in an awakening, remnant Christians know that the Church is in apostasy. Only a few will hear the Christ and His Word; only a few will hear the knock and open to Him for this "night" meal, the supper. Christ left this world at the first coming after a "breakfast"; but He will be coming after the "supper" (Rev. 3:20) with His saints. More and more we must be looking, praying, watching, and longing for this intimate supper promised to individuals who have opened that door within the Laodicean Church.

"The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant" (Ps. 25:14). The "secret" is personal, moment-by-moment communion with the Lord. There will come a day, and we pray it will be very soon, that Christ will call us to the air. "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Ps. 50:5). God the Father through His Son made a covenant with us on the cross of Calvary. But there must be the response of the human

heart to that covenant from those who will make up the caught-up ones. It will be those who have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice. The key of this sacrifice may be found in Romans 12:1. Modern Christianity of the night season of history has made the Christian Faith impotent and without accountability. But we must be watching and waiting for His Return: “and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28).

Providence will be most crucial for God’s people in this final season before the catching away of His own. This continuous, unbroken, silent miracle of God is ever working to bring about the consummation of the ages in accordance to God’s will, as well as working to the good of each individual within the Body of His Son. Though we often pray for the “right” hand of God, His “seen” hand, to work miracles, the right hand of providence will be that miracle in which we will daily live, yea, moment-by-moment. God’s saints will find themselves relying on this miracle in

a greater way as we near the coming both of Christ and the Antichrist.

In our next article we are called to unveil the night season in which we find ourselves.

May God grant us His continuing grace as we come to the last watch of the night season, as we minister for Him unto His saints.

The race of God’s anointed priests
Shall never pass away;
Before His glorious face they stand,
And serve Him night and day.
Though reason raves, and unbelief
Flows on, a mighty flood,
There are, and shall be till the end,
The hidden priests of God.

His chosen souls, their earthly dross
Consumed in sacred fire,
To God’s own heart their
 hearts ascend
In flame of deep desire;
The incense of their worship fills
His Temple’s holiest place;
Their song with wonder fills
 the Heavens,
The glad new song of grace.

—Gerhard Tersteegen—1697–1769



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Ministering in the Night—Part Three

Dr. H. T. Spence

Ministering in the night season—just how critical is this night season of our providential appointed watch? The ever-mutating political and religious powers in recent months, both in our country and globally, have escalated to such staggering proportions that only the Bible's promises and prophetic hopes can calm the heart. Note Daniel 9:2:

In the first year of his [Darius] reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

It is through the reading of the books of the Bible in the light of prophecy that we must view our age, an age swiftly culminating and ripening for the coming of the one-world government and one-world religion. How near will we get to the uniting of this now fragmented globalism before Christ calls His own in a secret Rapture from the earth? The very reading of the Bible in our day and time should inspire the heart in both living and praying without ceasing for the coming of our Blessed Saviour!

The Night Season of Our Time in History

Major changes in several countries throughout the world are setting precedent for other countries to follow in the pursuit of global unification. Our country's present

administration is in full sympathy with these precedents. Let us note several of these governmental decisions working to exert greater control over the people.

(1) In the Netherlands recently, the Royal Dutch Medical Association began to permit euthanasia upon children. Now, parents can order the deaths of their children who are terminally ill. Doctors first remove the child from the ventilator and the feeding tube and halt hydration. According to Dutch doctors, the child usually dies shortly thereafter; however, he may remain alive for a time and suffer. That's when they administer muscle relaxants, and within minutes the child dies. Belgium is also considering legalizing euthanasia for minors as long as there is parental consent, and the minor is considered by a psychiatrist to have "capacity for discernment." "Some children need to have an answer to their demands because they are suffering so much. They are asking for this," said [Professor and Dr. Dominique] Biarent. The Brussels-based doctor said her fellow colleagues have faced this issue for years and need some legal clarity to take away the fear of possible criminal prosecution.

"Death with dignity"—that's the sugarcoated phrase used to describe killing someone who is considered

“beyond treatment.” Recently here in the U.S., Vermont became the fourth state to allow euthanasia through the passage of the Death with Dignity Act. The *LA Times* reported the following:

Under the bill, a qualifying patient must be at least 18 years old, a Vermont resident and suffering from an ‘incurable and irreversible disease,’ with less than six months to live. Two physicians, including the prescribing doctor, must make that medical determination. The patient must also be told of other end-of-life services, ‘including palliative care, comfort care, hospice care, and pain control,’ according to the bill.

It seems that as long as it is deemed “compassionate,” any act is permissible—even murder. The Bible remarks that “the compassion of the wicked is cruel” (Prov. 12:10).

(2) An atheistic monument to be erected in the courtyard outside the Bradford County Courthouse in north Florida will include quotations from Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Madalyn Murray O’Hair, the founder of American Atheists. It will also include a list of Old Testament punishments that mandate the death penalty for what they believe are absurd “sins.” This monument will stand next to a copy of the Ten Commandments.

We must remember that atheists have no moral standing in critiquing any moral law system. Atheism cannot account for morality in its worldview. Morality is not a thing; it is not made

up of atoms. Morality cannot be derived from the stuff of the cosmos or extracted from our DNA. As a result, atheists can’t argue against murder, genocide, rape, theft, or any other moral aversion. In fact, the category “morality” does not exist in a matter-only worldview. Atheists have put together the “enjoy-yourself” campaign. Their growing slogan is, “There’s no God; now stop worrying and enjoy your life.”

Arthur Leff (1935–1981), who taught law at Yale Law School, concluded that, given atheistic assumptions, there is no way to prove that “any particular act, no matter how horrible, is normatively wrong.” Leff stated the following:

I will put the current situation as sharply as possible: there is today no way of ‘proving’ that napalming babies is bad except by asserting it (in a louder and louder voice), or by defining it as so, early in one’s game, and then later slipping it through, in a whisper, as a conclusion.

Many don’t remember how then-Senator Joe Biden grilled Clarence Thomas on his belief in Natural Law. Thomas knew that any dialog with Biden over the idea that there is a God-given law would have doomed his nomination. Thomas was smart to let Biden ramble and get his analysis of Natural Law wrong and impossible to account for, given evolutionary assumptions which America’s new religion is based upon. To the growing atheism in America there is no basis for the categories “good”

and “evil” in a matter-only cosmos. Anything that’s left of the idea of fixed moral laws is an illusion that will soon fade as our nation becomes consistent with what it has mandated from the courts and taught in our schools.

The acceptance of the atheist monument by civil officials and the courts as somehow being equal to the Ten Commandments is a prime indicator that secularism has become the public voice in America. It truly will bring our nation to its deathbed.

(3) Over the decades of the past 150 years, America has tended to follow the course of Great Britain in many ways. For instance, the hippie and free love movement back in the 1960s started in Great Britain and quickly made its way to America. It was at that time that the Beatles came to America and literally altered the course of Western culture through their music. National Health Care was established in Great Britain back in 1948; through our present administration in Washington, it is now coming true here under the guise of Obamacare. In the 1980s the number of Christians in Great Britain began to drastically decline. Church congregations in many areas became so small that they had to close the church and sell the buildings. Some of those church buildings were converted into pubs, some into hotels, and others into mosques.

In Great Britain entire communities have been taken over by Muslims;

through much pressure, professing Christians have been driven out of communities where they have lived for generations. It is very evident now in Great Britain that there are more Muslims than Anglicans, and every day there is a growing influx of Muslims into that country. It is also true that there are more worshipers attending the mosques than the Church of England, and the latter continues on a steep decline in attendance. This is not only true of the Anglican Church but also of virtually every other Christian denomination in the United Kingdom. A more startling report came out in the 2011 census stating that the number of people in England and Wales who identify themselves as Christians is 4.1 million fewer than in the previous census. That is an overall decline of 10% in a relatively short time. But from the Muslim perspective, there has been a massive increase of their adherents in the country. The number of Muslims in England and Wales during the same time frame has increased by 75%. This influx is having a dramatic effect on the overall religious climate of the British Isles so much so that 1 of every 10 British under the age of 25 claims to be Muslim. The number of people under the age of 25 that claim to be Christian has dropped to less than 5 of every 10. Many in England have agreed with the words of Keith Porteous Wood, the Executive Director of the National Secular Society, who commented on the latest findings, saying:

In another 20 years there are going to be more active Muslims than there are churchgoers. The time has now come that Institutional Christianity is no longer justified; the number has dropped below critical mass for which there is no longer any justification for the established Church.

Since Obama became president, Muslims are rapidly taking over communities and cities in the US including Dearborn, Michigan, and Murfreesboro, Tennessee. We have seen Muslim judges rule on sharia law instead of American law with more and more courts turning to the Muslim law for their community. All of this is being done without the media informing us of such overwhelming changes in our courts. The concept of even Neo-Christianity is dropping in our country. All of this is drastically affecting America's culture. We will soon be at Great Britain's perspective of the concept of Christianity and Islam. In both these countries more and more killings and brutalities fall under the public cry of "in the name of Allah," and especially in America the call for "one nation under Allah."

(4) Another evidence of the night season in which we live is the vote by the leaders of the Boy Scouts of America on May 23, 2013, to allow sodomite youth into its membership. This more-than-a-century-old organization has been at least a beacon of morality, integrity, and honesty, commingled with a respect for God

in our country. But its leadership has fallen into the pit of secularist vipers who have poisoned the organization with a death that will be permanent. The organization for the promotion of morality and God among male youth has in more recent years been led by godless men who believe that political correctness is more important than the organization's birthright.

Some 1,400 adult BSA delegates from around the country gathered in Texas and voted to welcome open and avowed homosexuality into its ranks, and doing away with its "morally straight" Scout Oath. This organization was one of the last national bastions of moral decency left in our country. Those who are given to immorality cannot swear the oath, "On my honor I will do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout's law." Such a sympathetic vote by the leaders may indicate how aggressively the powers of sodomy have already invaded this organization. It truly will be a capstone to the intentional demoralization of our boys coming into manhood. May God have mercy on us.

Even by its own estimates, BSA leadership admitted that the decision would likely result in a mass exodus from Scouting. The anticipation was estimated at nearly 400,000 Scouts and Scouters to leave the organization. When Canada voted the same back in 1998 with its version of the Boy Scouts to welcome open homosexuality, its membership lost over half in the next five years.

Before the passage in America, the membership was some 2.5 million boys. What will the final walkout be? Some have estimated nearly 1.5 million in the next months. It must be remembered that over 70 percent of America's Scout groups are sponsored by churches and religious organizations. Thus, another organization in America for moral righteousness has now been destroyed by the present political-social climate.

We truly have come to the Post America that Obama has worked so hard to bring about. This vote has been part of the continued proof that our country is paralyzed with fear of this administration. We are escalating down the precipice of Romans 1 and God is giving us over to our flesh, to one another in sin, and to a reprobate mind. As for the changes to the Boy Scout organization, the pressure for more changes will not go away. Though they accept "boys" who are sodomites, the next step will be the permission of sodomite leadership. As the YMCA and other organizations have been taken over by such a sin, the Boy Scouts of America will resolve itself and its identification with this End-time, "strange flesh" sin.

(5) Another power that is ruling the night season of the End Time is that of increased government surveillance of a country's citizens. This is not anything new. It was found during the days of Daniel (chap. 6) when they spied on everything he

did, every word, every action, and every decision, even to his private life with God in his home. However, technology has now brought us to an hour when all transactions of life now can be monitored globally. This administration has been overt in its financial payoffs afforded to, and the campaign finance contributions offered by, private companies like, Google, Verizon, Yahoo, Facebook, Microsoft, and Apple aiding FISA court-authorized surveillance (Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court).

HR 624, the "Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act" (CISPA), which passed in the House in April 2013 with bi-partisan support, allows private Internet companies to surrender information about its users to law enforcement and security agencies "in the event of a cyber attack." In recent committee hearings, FBI Director Robert Mueller recommended the expansion of the "Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (CALEA)." CALEA requires internet providers and phone companies to maintain the technology necessary to comply with wiretap orders. The FBI requested CALEA be amended to include Skype, Facebook, and other budding electronic communications platforms. Apparently, the FBI was not aware of the "Prism" program set up by the NSA, supposedly overseen by Congress, which already provides for the funneling to the government of information gathered on targeted individuals by Microsoft, Yahoo,

Google, Facebook, Paltalk, YouTube, Skype, AOL, and Apple.

The “Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act of 1996 (COPPA)” was designed to prohibit websites from gathering “personal information” data on users under the age of thirteen. COPPA has undergone various government reviews and revisions redefining the term “personal information.” In addition to a child’s name, home address, email address, SS number, and other contact information, COPPA now protects cookies, IP addresses, and mobile device ID’s that can be used to target children for product advertising based on their online behavior. The Internet Industries of US minors between the ages of 14 and 18 are not covered by the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act.

The World Wide Web has become America’s seduction of convenience; Americans have passively allowed publicly traded companies to archive information it initially assumed was private. Everything we do electronically is compiled, sorted, stored, and analyzed by the companies we employ to service our on-line purchases, searches, e-mail, texting, tweeting, and telecommunications needs. It should come as no surprise that information now used to profile Americans for the government was acquired while information superhighway clearinghouses serviced advertisers’ prospective customer identification needs. Hundreds of

billions of tax dollars have already been used to develop software and hardware required by the laws already passed by the federal government. These have been financed with government grants and subsidies. The purpose of this is to monitor and document every individual using an electronic device during some form of electronic communication.

Bluffdale, Utah, has now become the storage and processing center of global surveillance by the National Security Administration. It is in the heart of Mormon country. Bluffdale is home to one of the nation’s largest sects of polygamists, the Apostolic United Brethren, with upwards of 9,000 members. The NSA is focused on deciphering cryptic messages that only they have the power to understand. Just off Beef Hollow Road a massive complex is being constructed that is so large that it necessitated expanding the town’s boundaries. Once built, it will be more than five times the size of the US Capitol.

The NSA has become the largest, most covert, and potentially most intrusive intelligence agency ever. Its purpose: to intercept, decipher, analyze, and store vast swaths of the world’s communications as they zap down from satellites and zip through the underground and undersea cables of international, foreign, and domestic networks. The heavily fortified \$2 billion center should be up and running this month

(September) of 2013. Flowing through its servers and routers and stored in near-bottomless databases will be all forms of communication, including the complete contents of private emails, cell phone calls, and Google searches, as well as all sorts of personal data trails—parking receipts, travel itineraries, bookstore purchases, and other digital “pocket litter.” It is, in some measure, the realization of the “total information awareness” program created during the first term of the Bush administration—an effort that was killed by Congress in 2003 after it caused an outcry over its potential for invading Americans’ privacy. It is also critical for breaking codes. And code-breaking is crucial, because much of the data that the center will handle—financial information, stock transactions, business deals, foreign military and diplomatic secrets, legal documents, confidential personal communications—will be heavily encrypted. The NSA made an enormous breakthrough several years ago in its ability to crypt analyze, or break unfathomably complex encryption systems employed by not only governments around the world but also many average computer users in the US. In the process the NSA has turned its surveillance on the US and its citizens. It has established listening posts throughout the nation to collect and sift through billions of email messages and phone calls, whether they originate within the country or overseas. It has

created a supercomputer of almost unimaginable speed to look for patterns and unscramble codes.

Finally, the agency has begun building a place to store all the trillions of words and thoughts and whispers captured in its electronic net. And, of course, it is all being done in secret. The surveillance of one’s complete life is now becoming a reality. Foretastes of this were certainly known in the first two world wars, under Hitler, and under communist countries (where it is still a reality), but this global reality has now fully claimed America.

We must realize as Christians that all of these observations are a part of the reality of the times in which we live. And we must get ready, as in the days of Daniel, for our every move to be known by others. In our next issue of *Straightway*, we will present the need for the Christian to be prepared to live in this conceptual Big-Brother society.

Conclusion

Amidst the “powers that be,” and God has permitted them to come, we do not believe the Antichrist has come into full power at this time in history (though he may be living somewhere on the planet waiting to step forward at the appointed time in God’s plan). There will also be the False Prophet and the Harlot that are soon to be manifested in the unification of all the religions of the world. The End-time powers will include the return of the powers from previous empires

mentioned in biblical history. This will be seen in the rise of the beast with the seven heads, ten horns and crowns.

God's preachers must be ready for these days. Our ministerial burdens may shift in the light of the radical changes that have come and are coming. There is no turning back to better days; there is no spiritual awakening to take place in the institutional Church; there is no hope of the government's return to moral righteousness. We have come to the morality of evil and the utter chaos of humanity. Only God's providence is keeping the world from absolute destruction. We are certainly in the darkest hour of history.


Still we pray for God to raise up a remnant of men to lead us with insight and a spiritual heart through this final generation before the Trumpet sounds. The Fundamental churches are so caught up in their self-perpetuating ministries that they have lost sight of the greater economy or dispensation of God's leadings concerning the Kingdom of Heaven at this time in history. Very little is being said from the pulpits about the apostasy; very little is being said about the contemporary now controlling Fundamentalism. Fundamentalist churches and schools have become enamored with their new ventures in sports and competitions in the secular world. As for those who are against such involvements and changes, they simply are viewed as the child in the

womb who is giving difficulty and pain to the churches. They long for the voice of the Remnant to be silenced and their discomfort and nuisance to be done away with soon.

Dear reader, the only lamp we have to get us through this ministering in the night will be the Word of God:

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts (1 Pet. 1:19).

We are at the end of this dark place, anticipating the day to dawn and the day star to arise in our hearts. Let us pray for those who minister in the night by the Word of God, accompanied by the appointed providences of heaven.

In our next issue of *Straightway*, we must further the sights, sounds, and powers of the night season that will affect our ministering in a public way. May God have mercy upon us: to keep and preserve us unto the coming of the Lord. 

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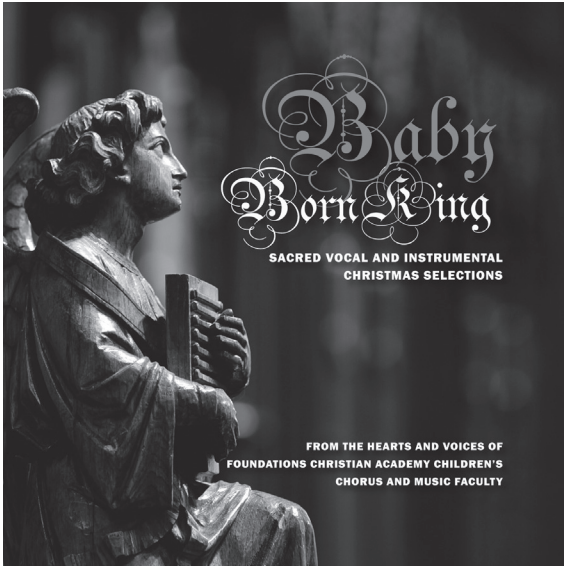
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The Internet and Social Networking

Rev. Christopher Nighswonger

Networking & Systems Director

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We must be mindful of the subtleness of the age, our Christian testimony, and our spiritual life when interacting with the Internet. The Internet is essentially an ungoverned venue. Now as Christians, we know that our lives must be always governed by the standards of God's holiness. However, entering into the Internet is much the same as entering into a room in which you are all alone. Only in this room you are only alone in the sense that there is no material authority present. What is present is the avenue to every conceivable manner of sin and the ease of entering those avenues. In light of such scriptural imperatives as "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me" (Ps. 101:3), "Incline not my heart to *any* evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties" (Ps. 141:4), and "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil" (Rom.16:19), it is imperative that we take some action to at least bar, if not remove as many of these avenues as possible.

In the first verse we find that we must carefully guard the eyes, the most direct route to the heart. Whether we speak of the literal eyes or the eyes of the mind, we must not be guilty of setting (notice the sense of duration communicated by the verb here)—pondering, contemplating, considering, meditating—wicked things before them. And as we know that the devil is fond of utilizing fiery darts which are so often successful in reaching the heart, it behooves us to take the offensive and avoid situations where wicked things may be presented to our eyes. This is one of the primary reasons for utilizing content filtering between us and the Internet. It is nigh impossible, as long as we are in this world, to avoid every situation where a wicked thing can come before our eyes; however, there is in warfare an often fatal mistake made in attempting to defend too large of a front. Taking note of this tactical mistake, we can apply it in the spiritual warfare by reducing the size of the front presented to us through the Internet by the careful application of content filtering.

We must also note in this first verse the active tendency of "the work of them that turn aside" to "cleave to me." Herein lies another issue which we must be aware of: Even when we are unavoidably exposed to "the work of them that turn aside," it will be the tendency, the proclivity of those works

to cleave to us. Furthermore, the imperative nature of this last phrase reveals that it is with us that the responsibility lies to cut off this cleaving of these things. Thus, we must be careful that when such works do come before our eyes, we apply the truth of 2 Corinthians 10:5 by casting down any ensuing thoughts springing from them. The second verse is part of a prayer to God for protection against sinning. This verse is a plea for protection against the very things spoken of in Psalm 101:3. However, the verbs here are passive on the part of the one praying. Dear Christian, if we are desirous and expecting of God to keep us from sinning, how much more careful should we be to keep our own hearts in so much as God has given us the grace, strength, and insight to keep it?

In the last verse, Romans 16:19, we find that obedience is tied to a certain simplicity concerning evil (as well as wisdom of good). The underlying Greek word for “simple” means “unmixed” and “free from guile” and indicates that we are to be, in a holy sense, ignorant of evil as a defense against falling into sin. The Internet can very quickly and without warning deepen our understanding of sin. This simplicity must not, however, extend into the area of discernment of evil. Dr. O. T. Spence often spoke of “the artistry of error.” We face a mature devil who has perfected the art of shrouding evil in good and innocent appearances. And so it is that even after we exercise our best efforts to narrow the front in the battle presented by the Internet, we must ever be careful that we are not deceived into viewing something as good or innocent which has the potential to either directly lead us into sin or enlarge the battlefield to a proportion which we are unable to ably defend. In short, we must “approve things that are excellent” that we “may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ” (Phil. 1:10). “Approve” here carries with it the understanding of trial by fire, and “things that are excellent” are things that differ or things that differ from one in the sense of excelling or surpassing one. The King James translators chose here the word *excellent* to convey the full understanding of this command: We must try in the fire of God’s Word things which appear to be superlatives to our life, things that appear to be of some benefit in bringing us beyond the point we are presently at in our Christian life. This extends down to the most granular level of our life. It includes not only those things which we obviously and logically recognize as things which would contribute to the advancement of our Christian life, but also the things which we see and believe will enhance the execution of the daily duties and pleasures of the appointment of God’s will for our life (which, in turn, will forward our walk with God).

The pivotal question then is this: In the light of the principles of God’s

Word, is this thing truly excellent? Will it be a thing to draw me on to God? In the context of the Internet it is in this manner that the Sword of the Spirit must ever be drawn and on the defensive. It is here that I must point out that anything which through my own volition and will broadens a front in my life cannot be considered an excellent thing. If God, either directly or through providence, broadens the front, then I can rest assured that along with that broadening will come the resources of grace to defend that front. Again, some things we cannot avoid: they are thrust upon us in providence because of the age in which we live. In spite of that, the imperative remains: "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes."

I would suggest to you that social networking Internet sites only needlessly enlarge the front line of the battle of our lives. There really is nothing available there which cannot be accomplished through other more benign avenues. And due to the anonymous nature of them they present a myriad of not only avenues to sin, but also simple natural dangers. They are, in reality, simply an avenue for self promotion. I do not say that is the conscious motive behind all who participate, but it is the spirit of this age in which existentialism is the governing philosophy. And the concept of social networking is deepening into a concept of virtual reality with some sites offering the experience of a total virtual world in which the individual can live out a second life through avatars (characters) which are basically free from all moral accountability. We must remember that man is working his way back to Babel. And this powerful observation made by God (not man) about man is again surfacing as a real possibility: "And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Gen. 11:6). Social networking is finally an attempt to accomplish what the ungodly line set out to do at Babel: "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:4).

Dear Christian, we do not want to be in any way associated with the spirit and thrust of this age. And we must observe that we could take this to an extreme and just unplug the Internet. But that would be an imbalance. It is clear that there are some very legitimate uses of the Internet and that the work of God can be forwarded both in the ministry as well as in our own lives personally through this avenue. It is only a matter of approving things that are excellent and casting off things that are not. May God grant to us a receptive heart that ever desires to be deepened in its discernment of this wicked age so that it may be drawn into an ever-deepening walk with God.