

STRAIGHTWAY

“And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.” (Mark 1:18)

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A Forgotten Tragedy in History: The Sinking of the USS Indianapolis

(In Memory of My Dear Father)

Dr. H. T. Spence

Straightway, July/August 2001

On August 16th through the 19th of this year, I was honored by invitation to be a part of the 12th reunion of the survivors of the USS *Indianapolis*, which also was the 56th anniversary of the sinking of that same ship. This momentous occasion took place in Indianapolis, Indiana, with some 86 or 87 of the still living 110 survivors being present. Nearly 1,000 additional individuals attended who made up the survivors' families and friends.

What prompted my attendance to this historical event was twofold. First, my dear father, Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, missed being on that ship by just two hours and was “saved by a substitute,” by a man who perished in the tragedy. Second, a few months after my father's death, through a providential correspondence, I met Edgar Harrell, an ex-ma-

rine who was one of the survivors of that ship. My heart was immediately drawn to this dear man through our correspondence and with the opportunity of having him at Foundations some months later. My love, respect, and friendship continued to grow for him from our meeting. He informed me of this upcoming reunion in Indianapolis and invited me to be a guest of him and his dear wife Ola during those days. It was a few weeks later that I received a personal invitation

from Mr. Paul J. Murphy, the chairman of the survivors' organization (he being a survivor as well), to give a few words concerning my father and anything else upon my heart. It was through these providences that the Lord opened the door for both my attendance and opportunity to speak.



The USS Indianapolis in History

Named in honor of the capital of Indiana, the heavy cruiser USS *Indianapolis* was commissioned on November 15, 1932. She was 610 feet and 4 inches in length, 66 feet and 1 inch at the beam, drawing 24 feet and 10 inches of draft when fully manned and ready for sea. The total rated horsepower was 107,000 delivered through four propellers. Her speed was 32 knots. Main armament consisted of nine 8-inch guns housed in three turrets, and a secondary armament of eight 5-inch guns.

She began her thirteen-year career as the Flagship of the Scouting Force, and later, the Scouting Fleet. Prior to World War II, she served several times as President Franklin D. Roosevelt's personal ship of state. Throughout most of World War II, she served as Flagship of the Fifth Fleet in the Pa-

cific under the command of Adm. Raymond A. Spruance, USN, who was himself raised in Indianapolis. The ship earned a total of 10 Battle Stars. At Okinawa, she was hit by a kamikaze (suicide plane) and suffered 38 casualties. The seriously damaged *Indianapolis* limped back to the United States for repairs in dry dock at Mare Island, California. Fresh from those repairs, she set a world-record run from Hunters' Point, California, to Pearl Harbor and on to Tinian Island, where under great secrecy, she delivered the world's first operational atom bomb. From Tinian she reported to Pacific Fleet Headquarters on Guam for new orders. Her new orders were to join the assembling invasion fleet at Leyte Gulf. She departed Guam without escort (the only capital ship ever to have been so dispatched). At 14 minutes past midnight on July 30, 1945, and approximately halfway between Guam and Leyte, the *Indianapolis* was struck by two torpedoes of a spread of six, fired by the submarine I-58 of the Imperial Japanese Navy. It truly was America's worst naval disaster at sea!

Doug Stanton, in his most recent book *In Harm's Way*, states the following:

On July 30, 1945, after completing a top secret mission to deliver parts of the atom bomb 'Little Boy,' which would be dropped on Hiroshima, the battle cruiser USS *Indianapolis* was torpedoed in the South Pacific by a Japanese submarine. An estimated 300 men were killed upon impact; close to

STRAIGHTWAY

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900 sailors were cast into the Pacific Ocean, where they remained, undetected by the Navy, for nearly five days. Battered by a savage sea, they struggled to survive, fighting off hypothermia, sharks, physical and mental exhaustion, and, finally, hallucinatory dementia. By the time rescue—which was purely accidental—arrived, all but 321 men had lost their lives; 4 more would die in military hospitals shortly thereafter. The captain's subsequent and highly unusual court-martial left many questions unanswered: How did the Navy fail to realize the *Indianapolis* was missing? Why was the cruiser traveling unescorted in enemy waters? And perhaps most amazing of all, how did these 317 men manage to survive?

Several years later, because of the intensity of the hate mail and phone calls Captain Charles McVay received from families who lost their relatives in the sinking of the ship, he took his own life.

But in spite of the tragedies that surround this ship, it would be impossible to account the multitude of providences that also surround it. Many such providences are found in the increasing number of books being written on this tragedy, but these sources are written by individuals who do not know or acknowledge God. Nevertheless, the providences are truly numerous, and it is evident God was in it all, including the survivors. One major providence is to be found in how the pilot of the rescue plane even sighted

the survivors. The plane's radio antenna was malfunctioning as the plane was flying over the area where the survivors were. The pilot dropped himself down in the bomb hatch underneath the plane in order to fix the antenna which was on the outside of the plane. It was in this upside down position, looking down upon the waters, that he saw the men and called out to his copilot, "ducks on the pond."

Amidst the backdrop of such a tragedy in history, the Lord gave me a few minutes to speak on that Friday night of the reunion the following words that expressed my heart and burden:

The Message Given by a Son for a Deceased Father

"I come tonight as an unknown to you, but yet a small part of the ever-unfolding drama of the USS *Indianapolis*. A number of books have been written concerning the ship itself and of the men who lost their lives as well as those who survived. But no amount of books could contain the stories of the rippling effects in history of that ship, and of the men whose lives the USS *Indianapolis* did touch directly and indirectly, who were not on board that fatal night. My dear father was one of those men.

"My father, Othniel Talmadge Spence, was the son of a preacher. He was named Othniel after the first judge of Israel found in the book of Judges of the Bible. Othniel means 'Lion of God.' His middle name was in

memory of a famous preacher T. De-
witt Talmage. My father joined the
Navy on his 17th birthday, desiring to
serve his country and yet to run away
from God and his Christian heritage.
He was in the United States Navy the
last two years of the war.

“His story in connection with the *Indianapolis* is that he was rostered as a
standby alternate for a member of the
crew assigned to the ship. At that time
my father was stationed at Mare Is-
land, California, having completed
two Navy schools for electrician’s
mate. He was placed in the so-called
‘bull pen,’ which was a three-day wait-
ing period to board the ship. The day
before, my father checked up on the
individual who was listed to board,
and the man had come down with a
high fever of 104 degrees and was in
sick-bay. As an alternate, my father
proceeded to make himself ready. The
pharmacist mate had made it clear
that my father would have to be ready,
for there was no hope for the man re-

ther could have been one of them, but
he was saved by a substitute.

“As a petty officer my father was re-
assigned to the USS *Yarnell 541* de-
stroyer, and later was transported to is-
land duty. He was on the island of
Guam the day the B-29s returned,
many crippled in the last four or five
days leading up to the atomic bomb at
Hiroshima. My father was so moved
by the incident of his being saved by a
substitute, in hearing of the great
tragedy of the *Indianapolis* (the man
for whom he was to be the alternate
died down in the ship), that he volun-
teered to remain in the South Pacific
for the special assignment of the
Bikini bomb test which was planned
immediately after the war.

“When he was released from the
Navy a few months later, he was saved
by another substitute. He accepted Je-
sus Christ as his personal Savior. This
great Savior became my father’s sub-
stitute on the Cross. The Son of God
died in my father’s place, to take his

covering in
time. But on
June 29, 1945,
two hours be-
fore the ‘lock
down’ of the
ship, the indi-
vidual miracu-
lously recov-

**We must never judge a
circumstance by itself; we must
wait and give providence time to
bring about another working, in
another circumstance, that will
balance out what we thought
was a tragedy.**

eternal death of
hell and recon-
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God.

“Some
months later
my father mar-
ried a profes-
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ered and took the place of my father.
That day was also the 19th birthday of
my father. On that day, 30 new officers
and 250 newly enlisted men, many in-
experienced, boarded that ship. My fa-

music singer from Nova Scotia,
Canada. God called him into the min-
istry, and for over 52 years they both
gave their lives to this calling. He be-
came a unique scholar in many fields

of study, writing over 40 books, over 300 hymns and 14 cantatas. Some 27 years ago he started a most unique Bible college and seminary in Dunn, North Carolina, located where Interstate 95 and Interstate 40 cross. His last major accomplishment was the building of a 30,000 square-foot learning center with over 1,600 art pieces presenting the history of the world and the church.

"In the last 30 years of his life, he prayed every day for the survivors of the *Indianapolis* and especially for the exoneration of Captain McVay. He also wrote letters to friends, senators, and congressmen informing them of the tragic story of the improper court-martial of Captain McVay. My father, in 1995, was present here in *Indianapolis* for the celebration days of the unveiling of the most honorable memorial dedicated to those who lost their lives and those who survived that most unique moment in history.

"My father was a man who gave a few years to his country, and the rest of his years he gave to God.

"Over two years ago my father, who was a picture of health, was diagnosed with Bulbar Paralysis, the worst form of Lou Gehrig's disease. In 11 months he went from 185 pounds to 90 pounds, but wrote two large books on *The Human Spirit* and a lengthy musical cantata on the Civil War. In the last four months of his life, I moved into his home to care for him in the evenings and throughout the nights. We did not want to place him in a nursing home,

nor my mother who over five years ago had suffered a severe stroke which left her bedridden. We are thankful for Christian caregivers who are with her during the day so that my wife and I can continue in our ministry as president of Foundations Bible College and pastor of the Collegiate Church.

"My father became comatose the last two weeks of his life, and on July 17, 2000, he passed away. His largely attended funeral included dignitaries from all over the world. But one of his requests was for the flag of his country to drape his casket. The Navy also provided two men to present the flag with the playing of 'Taps.'

"In his latter years I asked my father why he believed God allowed the *Indianapolis* to be sunk. In his strong belief in the providence and sovereign working of God in human affairs, my father responded, 'God uses nations as a check and balance in history; He is also behind their rise and fall. During World War II the *Indianapolis* became one of the most critical moments in our 20th century history. God allowed that ship to carry the key component for the bomb that would not only bring an end to that world war but also change the course of history. He permitted that ship to make its way safely to its destination with its history-changing cargo. He then permitted that bomb to detonate over Hiroshima. BUT, He also permitted the ship that carried the bomb to be sacrificed.' A check and balance even in a war against what America viewed as a pa-

gan nation: A Ship for A City!

"After my father's demise I was perusing the large amount of mail that had poured in over the weeks surrounding his death. I came across a packet from an ex-marine, Edgar Harrell. The enclosed letter requested copies of my father's tract entitled, 'Saved by a Substitute.' But the packet also included a video of this ex-marine's Christian testimony and how he believed God was with him through the devastating days and nights in the Pacific. After several letters in correspondence, I invited Mr. Harrell and his precious wife Ola to come to our Bible Conference, its theme being 'The Providence of God in Human Affairs.' Mr. Harrell gave an hour message on 'The Providence of God in Time of War.' I want to thank him for these months of friendship and furthering my knowledge of the USS *Indianapolis*' sinking.

"My father was saved by a substitute, one who died among 880 men. Some would say my father had a 'religious experience' from being spared. But it was more than that. He found Christ as his substitute in dying on the Cross. The apostle Paul tells us in Romans 5:7 and 8, 'For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'

"My father spent his life as a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I have come this evening to pay his deepest respects to those surviving the tragedy of the USS *Indianapolis*. I have been honored these days to be among you. And may each one of you come to find Jesus Christ to be the substitute of your life in eternity. Thank you."

A Postscript to the *Indianapolis*' History

It was almost one year to the day of my dear father's passing away that the United States Navy gave the exoneration of Captain McVay. The Navy had gone for many years without acknowledging the survivors, and a few short years ago they were ready to give some commendation for their heroism. But the men refused to accept it unless their captain was exonerated. It was at an emotional Saturday morning meeting when the military awards were finally given in recognition of these brave men and the exoneration of Captain McVay declared to the surviving crew. One of the key individuals to bring this about was a young 12-year-old boy (who now is 17 years of age). He had seen the movie *Jaws* in which the incident of the *Indianapolis*' men being eaten by sharks is mentioned. It stirred his young heart to make extensive research about the ship's sinking and the survivors' encounter with sharks. He became so knowledgeable about this moment in history that he appeared before several Congressional hearings, the "Today Show," and many other TV talk shows and radio programs. He truly brought the sinking of

the ship and the stories of the survivors to national attention. His persistence also assisted in bringing the exoneration of the captain. To view the survivors affectionately hugging Hunter Scott was also a heart-moving scene during the recent days of the reunion.

Conclusion

When a Christian reflects upon such incidents in human history or in his own personal life, he sees with great clarity the providence of God. We never do see the moving of God when the situation is taking place; it is only afterwards, when looking back, that God's hand becomes apparent. And what may have been forgotten has a way of resurfacing years later. How often we view a circumstance in its present distress as a tragedy, but later, when God has worked other matters in time, the situation of the past is now viewed as a triumph. Perhaps, in the experience of a darkness that we wanted to forget, God will work another thing, and then another, and collectively

we will see its wonder for our life. In Romans 8:28 we

read, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." If one thing is judged isolated and alone, it may not be seen as good. But when we view

all the workings of God in our life collectively, then it is for good. We must never judge a circumstance by itself; we must wait and give providence time to bring about another working, in another circumstance, that will balance out what we thought was a tragedy.

In speaking with the survivors of the USS *Indianapolis* during their reunion, I was told that they went for a number of years without ever speaking of the ordeal, not even with their wives and children. But the first reunion in 1960 brought them together, and they began to speak to each other about their experiences in those shark-infested waters. Now they have become heroes of our nation, with books being written and movies and documentaries being made. It is a natural wonder of providence how the tide has been turned for their lives. The sad thing is that most of those dear men, and the books written of their historic incident, do not acknowledge the hand of God. Yet there are perhaps a half dozen of these men who have come to trust God and His Son for their lives.

May we as Christians always live in complete confidence of the continuous workings of God to make all events and happenings fulfill His design for our lives.

May we as Christians always live in complete confidence of the continuous workings of God to make all events and happenings fulfill His design for our lives. He is in control of all things to the very end of our days. What may

be a desire-to-forget tragedy in life could become, with other workings of God, a great moment when God's glory is evident.

Postscript

As of this printing of *Straightway*, entering into the month of August 2023, we acknowledge there is only one survivor from the original 317.

Our dear friend Edgar Harrell passed away on May 8, 2021, being the last of the Marines who survived. But Harold Bray, who joined the Navy in 1943, is now the lone living survivor. May we never forget the greatest sea tragedy in the war: the sinking of the USS *Indanapolis*.

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—Dr. H. T. Spence—

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Saved by a Substitute

Dr. O. T. Spence, Founder

Foundations Ministries

Saved by a Substitute, 1995

Many heart-rending stories have arisen from the tragedy of the USS *Indianapolis* on its fatal voyage after leaving the little island of Tinian near Guam in the South Pacific. It was an overcast night, July 30, 1945, when a Japanese submarine took advantage of a momentary break in the clouds to locate and torpedo the *Indianapolis*. The ship was on its way to the Philippines when the fatal blow was struck. This was the last U.S. Naval vessel to be lost in World War II. Of the 1,198 crew members, including 39 marines, 317, including 9 marines, survived 5 days in shark-infested waters before finally being rescued; only 129 of the crew, as of August 1, 1995, are alive.

The *Indianapolis* was a magnificent ship. She was 610 feet 3 inches in length and 66 feet 1 inch at the widest point. Her design flank speed was 32 knots. Total horsepower was rated at 107,000, delivered through four screws. Her weaponry abounded: nine 8-inch guns placed in three turrets, two fore and one aft. She also had four 5-inch guns, twenty-four 40mm intermediate range guns, and thirty-two 22mm Oerlikon guns.

Following final fitting out, the *Indianapolis* was accepted by the Navy and commissioned November 15, 1932, from the Philadelphia Navy Yard. She

is "still at sea," and especially so since July 30, 1945.

There remains the USS *Indianapolis* Survivors Organization, with one of the thirty-nine crew survivors, Giles McCoy, as chairman. He is listed as a private first class of the Marines on the crew roster of the last voyage. Since 1960, as a founding member, he has worked with great energy for the true story to be memorialized, as well as for the restoration of the name and character of the ship's skipper, Captain Charles B. McVay III, from the indignity of his trial and dishonorable discharge, having been blamed for the tragedy. In reality, it is firmly believed by survivors of the crew that the skipper became a scapegoat for the failures of officers above him. Captain McVay took his own life later in the aftermath of his naval disgrace. We rejoice to see that, finally, a proper memorial will be

The next day roster, however, brought me
within two hours of boarding the
Indianapolis...

erected in Indianapolis, Indiana, located on the new Indianapolis Water Canal, Senate Avenue at Walnut Street, in the downtown area.

Greater love hath no man than
this, that a man lay down his life
for his friends (John 15:13).

I was in the United States Navy towards the end of the War and was rostered as a standby alternate for a member of the crew assigned to the USS *Indianapolis*. I was stationed at Mare Island, Vallejo, California, having completed two naval schools for electrician's mate in St. Louis and New York, and had been placed in what was called the "bull pen," a three-day waiting period to board the ship. The day before, I had checked up on my Navy friend who was listed to board, but he was in sickbay with a fever of 104°F. As an alternate, I proceeded to ready myself because the pharmacist mate informed me, "This crew member will not leave sick-bay tomorrow or this week for any ship going anywhere." The next day roster, however, brought me within two hours of boarding the *Indianapolis* (1600; 4:00 PM), as my sick mate came in packed, ready to board in my place, seeming to be completely well and able. I had been quickly saved by a substitute. That day, June 29, 1945, was my nineteenth birthday, and I was stayed by the providence of God from leaving on that final voyage. On that day, 30 new officers and 250 newly enlisted men, many inexperienced (of which I would have been a "green" one too), boarded the ship. The ship had completed only a few days of "sea trials," after spending about three months in port for repairs from its damage at Okinawa. Captain McVay received orders on July 12 and July 16 to move the ship to Hunter's Point

Navy Yard in San Francisco, where the secret cargo would be carried aboard (a cargo which was the large part of the atomic bomb to be dropped on Japan to end the war).

And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? (Romans 2:3, 4).

While the *Indianapolis* was in Mare Island dry-dock, the War Department chose the ship to transport "The Bomb" even before they were certain it would work. But the Manhattan Project, based at Los Alamos, New Mexico, proved a success for the bomb test in the very early hours of July 16, 1945. In the early morning hours of that very same day, shrouded in security and secrecy, atom bomb components were loaded aboard the *Indianapolis*.

But the bomb was safely conducted about 100 miles north of Guam to Tinian Island by the *Indianapolis* and arrived July 26. Tinian was one of several islands from which B-29 bombing raids were conducted. Tinian Island is along the Mariana Trench, nearly 5,300 nautical miles from California. A B-29, the *Enola Gay*, would carry "The Bomb" by air to Hiroshima and, within a few days, another bomb to Nagasaki as well. The first bombing

was August 6, 1945, when a 6,000-pound payload was delivered by the *Enola Gay* from an altitude of 30,800 feet above Hiroshima and at 1,980 feet detonated over the city, to its destruction.

Captain McVay was informed only that his precious cargo was “a secret weapon that could end the war swiftly.” But none of the sailors could have guessed that the crate which was loaded with the detonating mechanism of a bomb that could blow up an entire city and more had boarded their ship. The canisters contained the fuel for the bomb, a subcritical quantity of uranium 235, about half the amount available in the United States, with the other half being sent to Tinian by air. At 8:00 AM, the *Indianapolis* cast off and glided through the Golden Gate Bridge, July 17, 1945. The ship made an almost record-breaking voyage, at 29 knots per hour, left its precious cargo, headed toward Leyte in the Philippines and the last leg of its fatal journey after a brief stop at Guam, and then proceeded in the Mariana Trench.

As a petty officer at that time in the field of electronics, I had been reassigned to the USS *Yarnall* 541 destroyer, and later via a transport to island duty. I was on the island of Guam the day the B-29's returned, many crippled in the last four or five days leading up to the atomic bomb at Hiroshima.

For scarcely for a righteous man
will one die: yet peradventure for a

good man some would even dare
to die. But God commendeth his
love toward us, in that, while we
were yet sinners, Christ died for us
(Romans 5:7, 8).

Although I was not a Christian during my brief two years in the Navy, I was deeply impressed about my missing the crew membership of its last voyage. I could not imagine a greater privilege in the Navy than to be on a heavy cruiser, a famous flagship like the *Indianapolis*. However, as the son of a minister, I immediately thought that the goodness of God spared my life. I had been taught the Bible from childhood, supported by the family altar. At that time in the Navy, however, I was so very much moved by my unfulfilled crew membership to the *Indianapolis* that I volunteered to remain in the South Pacific for the special assignment of the Bikini bomb test, witnessing this controlled detonation immediately after the war.

Now, in my seventh decade of life, and forty years in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, I do not consider this experience that came to me early in life as something that magnifies me or my ministry. I simply believe that the goodness and mercy of Almighty God kept me from the experience of that fatal voyage so that I might become a born again, Bible-believing minister.

Discharged from the U.S. Navy in my nineteenth year of age, I was saved by the grace of God when I was twenty years and ten months old at Bob Jones

College. I was in my freshman year, under the able ministry of my esteemed friend, Dr. Bob Jones, Jr. He had faithfully preached that morning in Chapel as the Holy Spirit convicted me of my sins.

In these days of increased world crisis, I am confident in the hope and word of the Saviour that His mercy and goodness will endure forever. To God be the glory! Amen!

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time (1 Timothy 2:5, 6).

My dear wife and I were present for the three-day sessions and the final ceremony and unveiling of the large blue-black granite memorial stone with the engraved names of the 1,198 members of the crew. These were the days of July 31, to noon of August 2, 1995. It was the largest meeting in my life with people of deep and genuine emotion who had been involved in a most heart-rending experience. The sessions always had a thousand present; the banquet, three thousand; and the estimate of the final memorial and unveiling was given as ten thousand people.

In one of the Tuesday sessions, each of the 129 remaining survivors was given a blue marbleized plaque with his name inscribed. However, it was emphasized over and over again that the three-day memorial services were to honor the entire crew and Captain Charles B. McVay III, along with the

survivors. Not one person was magnified above another. I could not tell the difference between the lowest crew member and the highest officer. Their "fatal voyage" had brought them all to the same position of esteem as a survivor.

In the Tuesday afternoon session, Giles McCoy, a marine attached to the *Indianapolis*, was honored for a job well-done and presented with a picture by another survivor, Paul McGinnis.

A new board was elected to continue the Survivors Association with reunions set for every two years.

A "Second Watch" had been organized for the memory to be perpetuated through a second-generation of the children and grandchildren for future years.

I believe only one electrician's mate remains among the survivors of 28 who served the *Indianapolis*.

But further details and even corrections were brought forward by the various sessions, including captains or crew members from ten ships (water and air) who assisted in the rescue operations at last. This session was filled with passion and compassion, and was one of the most moving sessions of all.

However, some items which were corrected were set forth in the official USS *Indianapolis* Memorial Dedication booklet of 126 pages. Although I have read three other larger books about the *Indianapolis*, I had not known these facts before. The following is quoted from pages 33–36:

As the news of the sinking of the *Indianapolis* spread, the American public became outraged. This was compounded by the ship's illustrious war record, which had been extremely well publicized by the media of the day, and exploits of the famous Flag Officers who had utilized her as their flagship throughout the Pacific Campaign. Many sons of wealthy and influential, mostly East Coast families, with sons aboard the *Indianapolis*, began to bring pressure to bear on their congressmen and senators as well as directly on the Navy itself. Someone had "to pay" for this tragedy! These self-same families had earlier "pressured" the same people to get their sons assigned to this very high profile ship (pages 33, 34).

Fleet Admiral Ernest King led the court martial against Captain McVay and made him the scapegoat, believed by Navy scholars since then to have been a mistake.

In 1960 Charles McVay and his wife attended the INDIANAPOLIS Survivors' Reunion which was held in Indianapolis (this was the first reunion). Typical of the man, was something so minor as his name tag. The name tag for the guest of honor listed his title as Admiral McVay. Stating "He'd never really been an Admiral," he asked that the tag be changed to read Captain McVay. His crew welcomed the man with open arms and hearts. It was to be the last time they would ever see their beloved captain again.

Tragedy continued to stalk McVay. In retirement he continued to receive what could only be called "hate mail," and emotionally charged phone calls. His lovely wife contracted cancer and passed away within a few short years of their move home. Eventually, the weight of loneliness and approbation [sic] took its toll on the man. In the fall of 1968 Charles Butler McVay III, last captain of the USS *Indianapolis*, stepped out on his front home stoop and took his own life using his navy issue service revolver. The *Indianapolis* had claimed its final victim (page 36).

Captain McVay was given a dishonorable discharge December 19, 1945, but reputedly had been restored and given the office of Admiral. But his words given in 1960 at the first Survivors Reunion Association make it all questionable indeed.

I look back upon my own modest involvement with the *Indianapolis* and often contemplate both the puzzle of man and the providence of God. For so many, it was a puzzling tragedy; for others like myself, it was the merciful providence of God.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).

The Powers of Terrorism on the Planet Earth

Dr. H. T. Spence

Straightway, September 2001

Tuesday morning, September 11th, 2001, our nation both heard and saw the staggering reality of the capabilities and powers of terrorism upon our country. A terrorist's purpose is to instill terror, to intensify fear upon a people. Terrorism is the use of violence and threats to intimidate or coerce submission to a political belief or ideology. It is the hope to fill or overcome a people with terror, thus causing them to yield in absolute submission to the desire of the one who terrorized. Terrorism is built upon disruption and disintegration of life, to alter the life of a people by producing widespread fear through shocking acts of violence.

The Scriptures Foretold

From the perspective of the Scriptures, this atrocity is certainly a part of the End Time before the coming of Christ in the Rapture and the coming of Antichrist in the Tribulation Period. God's Word prophesied that the End Time would see a proliferation of violence in the earth. The term *violence* in the Hebrew has the understanding of plucking off or away, of tearing away, of taking by force, in the context of the terrible, the fierce, and the lawless. Genesis 6:11 reads that "the earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." In 6:13 we read, "And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for

the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." Christ Himself stated in Matthew 24:37, "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." The prophets describe in several of their prophecies how violence will fill the land and the powers of oppression will rule with violence.

There are those who believe that if sin could simply be confined to the pleasures it affords, a life alienated from God would not be that bad. But it must be understood that sin in its root has no goodness, no truth, and no law. Sin's ultimate manifestation is a hellish reality. Sin hates humanity; it abhors any concept of law and principle, even for itself. The manifestation of violence, darkness, destruction, damnation, and death is the true root of sin. This root of sin has no concept of mercy, compassion, love, tenderness, and ethics.

The frontier of sin will always take one deeper. It progresses from the context of man to the context of the devil. With Satan's empowering, man enters a new frontier of sin, but it is sin nevertheless. There will come a man in the future who will be the personification of sin in human form, the Antichrist. He will come with the appearance of a friend to mankind, but his ultimate goal is to unite the two worlds

of the demonic and the human into one. This unity will be realized in the last 3½ years of the Tribulation Period. Before the coming of Christ in Revelation 19, the whole world will end in massive violence perpetrated by Satan through the Antichrist to bring all of humanity to its knees.

How often the devil uses violence to alter life. Our nation will no longer be the same after the atrocities of September 11th. We may have to give up certain freedoms in order to secure life. Out of necessity, the liberty of movement throughout the country may be hindered. Greater surveillance of our private lives may take place for the sake of security. We must remember that when the Antichrist comes, humanity will believe him to be the one who has the answers to all national and global perplexities. The nations will be in perplexities, or problems for which they have no solutions. In these last decades the sea of humanity has become increasingly restless; the waves are churning in its dilemma. Out of such dilemma, Antichrist will arise.

America—At a Crucial Crossroads

With these deep concerns, America is at a crossroads of deep desires. Our country is vulnerable not only to terrorists, but now also to the altering of its lives, its liberties, and its freedoms for the sake of security. America is now crying out for global action, which will necessitate a greater solidifying of the nations. The brief solidar-

ity of the nations during the Gulf War will now be cemented because of the powers of terrorism. We must understand that some circumstances of life force us into the changes. But changes of this magnitude take us deeper into the course of life that Satan wants for the earth to bring about his principal son, the son of perdition, and the Antichrist. For Antichrist to rule, a true republic or democratic government must cease. How will such governments come to their end? They will be forced into such demise. Its end may not happen by the government being taken over by another government, or by the government forcing the people into a submission they do not initially want. A people could be manipulated through subtle workings to cry out for greater liberty and greater security. Yet such a cry would yield the will of society toward a greater controlling of the populace that would prepare a trans-global government. How subtle the serpent was with Eve: she was convinced by the God-questioning serpent that eating the forbidden fruit would give her greater liberty and a great quality of life. But in reality, it brought her death; her life and her husband's life (and the rest of human civilization) were truly altered forever.

But we do not want to leave the impression that Satan is in control of history and the destiny of mankind. God is the superintendent of history; but He often permits the devil to have his way (as He did with Job). When He does, it is to bring about His own end.

There must come a time, and it could be before the Rapture, that God will give the world over to Satan's planning and preparations for the coming of Antichrist. There must come a day when America's lifestyle with its liberties and comforts changes; there must come a day when it is assimilated into the global powers. What epochal event will usher in this change?

Forcing something upon an individual can be viewed in several contexts. We read in Proverbs 7 of the strange woman meeting at the street corner the young man void of understanding.

With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life (v. 21-23).

The world is now being forced into changes for the sake of quality of life. The world is now in such a complicated situation of living that we have no alternative but to take more steps toward loss of liberties. We are seeing it in so many areas of society. Here in America, the medical and financial needs are so astronomical that insurance is becoming extremely expensive for the individual to purchase. This situation eventually will force us as a country into socialized medicine. We may fight the change at the beginning, but when it comes, we will appreciate

it and wonder how we could have lived without it. But each step brings greater control by the system and the State over the life of its people. Even now on the 1040 tax forms, children are simply called "dependents." Will there come a time when they will no longer be viewed as being "dependent" upon parents but "dependent" upon the State? Socialization is certainly leading us to such forced acknowledgment.

Without any doubt, something must be done about greater security. How often we have gone through the security checks at an airport, placing our bags on the x-ray conveyor belt, realizing those who were to be observing the monitor were talking and laughing with others, with no regard for the content of the bags. These incidents of September 11th will force us to needed changes, changes that we will seek for the sake of the security of our lives. Yet, the changes will bring about forfeiture in other areas, areas that we have come to take for granted in liberty and independence.

But God is in control! The End Time is here! Antichrist is definitely coming; the world will become one under his authority. Somehow, it all must come about. Nevertheless, God is still in control!

Good Things Seen and Heard These Days

Before leaving this burden, it must be acknowledged that some precious things have been seen through these

atrocities. It has been good to see a patriotic spirit returning to America, an honorable united effort and appropriate compassion for humanity. So many stories reveal how individuals by the providence of God were able to escape from what seemed to be impossible situations. Men openly acknowledged that they prayed to God as they ran down some one hundred flights of stairs; they were

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not ashamed to give God the glory on national television. The president quoted from the Bible, and an agnostic commentator acknowledged the appropriateness of the quotation. What a wonder in days when prayer is denied in public buildings and public schools that no one will deny the appropriateness of it now in such circumstances! What a wonder to hear a news commentator on the ground viewing the first tower of the World Trade Center on fire and then witnessing the second tower hit as he cried out over and over, "Oh my God, oh my God!" It reminds us of the days of Jonah, that during the fierceness of the storm "the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god" (Jonah 1:5). These are times when men realize a higher power is needed. There is nothing else to call upon in such destitute moments. God is the only one.

It is our hope that our beloved nation would be greatly humbled by this devastating incident, that we would cry out to God for mercy and grace. It would be refreshing to hear when we get to heaven that several individuals

on the plane, before it hit its target, cried out to Jesus Christ for salvation. It would be refreshing to hear that someone, finally rescued after many hours, stepped

forward before the camera and acknowledged God and his faith in Jesus Christ. But I fear we will use His Name in the moments of trauma, and then turn to the arm of flesh in medicine, in military, in intelligence, and in human ingenuity to bring about our triumphant moment. God truly has been very merciful to our beloved country; He has not rewarded us according to our iniquities. Oh that we as a nation would acknowledge His mercy in our recoveries of life!

America's True Heart

In his classic literary history of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Edward Gibbon gave five major reasons for the empire's fall. They may be summarized as follows:

1. The spiraling rise of taxes and extravagant living;
2. The great craze for pleasure and

brutalization in sports;

3. The increase in divorce and undermining of the sanctity of the home;
4. The outward form of religion without heart;
5. The moral decay of its people within the gates, an enemy greater than those without the gates.

America, amidst this humbling moment in history, is marked by these same five weaknesses of the Roman empire. We rightly weep over our nation and its death toll of innocent ones. But oh, God, where are we as a nation with regard to righteousness and morality? The powers of sexuality, fornication, and pornographic addiction are becoming unprecedented in our country. Some 25 million Americans visit online sex sites between one and ten hours a week. It is now estimated that 60 percent of all website visits are sexual in nature.

The reality of history predicts that this lull of proper compassion, sympathy, and words about God in comfort will be only temporary. Once the crisis passes, the nation will be back to its sinning, secularism, and God-hating aggression. Who will be the terrorists of the future? Will the government, the medical world, and the scientific and educational worlds be persuaded that God's true people are instilling mental fear among the people about God, about a coming judgment, and about hell? Universalism is the rising world religion; any belief contrary to this will be confronted, condemned, and

extracted from public acceptance. Many would find it hard to accept the fact that not everyone who died in these recent atrocities went to heaven.

This may lead to another "forcing" in that we are witnessing the coming together of all the religions and declaring them to be as one. An example of this was the religious services held at Washington National Cathedral and Yankee Stadium in memory of the victims of this atrocity. The subtle misinformation being given to us about the Islamic religion is "forcing" us as a country to believe that all of the gods of all the religions are one and the same. More and more, the true child of God will be terrorized by government and ecumenical movements to accept the American "pantheon" of gods. The grief and passions that the people are experiencing now will open their hearts to any religious sympathy. America's view of religions may totally change because of this great tragedy.

Spiritual Terrorists—Rome

In addition to the physical terrorism we are seeing, another terrorism is more far-reaching. It is the terrorism upon God's people to intimidate them to leave their God and His truth. The Inquisitions of the Roman Catholic Church were to terrorize the saints. They were calculated to instill fear within the saints to leave their Lord and to return to or to join the religious apostasy of Rome. The burning of homes, the flagellation of the body, the stretching on the rack and the

burnings at the stake all were part of the terrorist attacks by Rome. During those years in the throes of the counter-Reformation, the Romanists terrorized Europe. People became afraid of praying directly to God; they were afraid of throwing away the rosary and the crucifix, and of giving up praying to Mary. Read John Foxe's book of martyrs—there you will see the powers of spiritual terrorists. The Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 10:26–28 gave the following warning to His disciples:

Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

In the Olivet Discourse, the Lord also spoke the following:

Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by ... Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fear-

ful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls (Luke 21:8–19).

Dear reader, these days are coming upon us. Islam has always used terror to convert its followers, and so has Rome. But the world will join in the terrorizing of God's people in the future.

Spiritual Terrorism—Ever Growing

But there is also another action of terrorism that is ever increasing in these last days before the Rapture. It is to terrorize us from going on with God! It is to terrorize us from following holiness, from giving all to God, from coming to a sanctified heart, and from coming to a consecrated life. It is to cause us to fear that God cannot give us these spiritual blessings and experiences, or that we cannot yield to

what it will take for such spiritual realities to come in our lives. Some theological systems of Church history have been filled with error concerning a personal, spiritual relationship with God. Other theological systems have intimidated the Atonement of Christ and denounced its power to save us not only from sin but also from its power. These words have terrorized dear, precious people by saying that there is no hope to have such a life, or that the swelling Jordan is too great to cross, or that the land of Canaan is too great to conquer, or that one will become a fanatic or a charismatic if he pursues a greater love and life with God. Carnality terrorizes us by instilling fear that the Cross-life will destroy our liberties and freedoms as human beings and that such a life will destroy any hope for happiness. Such systems have collaborated with the devil in aggrandizing our failures, exploiting our weaknesses, and convincing us that a godly life cannot be lived. Such spiritual terrorism asks, "Why even hope for such a life? Why even contemplate that God can break the power and dominion of the flesh in your life?" When the devil roars, he roars loudly, he shows his teeth, and he intimidates the child of God to run in fear and hopelessness.

But God is greater; God is faithful. God is able to do exceedingly and abundantly above all that we could ask or think. He is able to do what He has promised to do. The Cross-life is possible in Christ. Look to Him, not to

the giants of doubt and fear. Look to the Christ Who died so that we might be sanctified from the power and the reputation of sin. The devil has a way of cheating us out of the things of God, terrorizing us to believe that a godly life and revival are impossible for us. It is time that we looked away from our adversary and turned to the One Who can give us a perfect love that will destroy all fear and timidity.

Do not be afraid of going on with God! Do not be afraid of praying, "More love to Thee, O Christ!" Do not allow the heresies of our day to keep you from praying for the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit! We dare not leave God! Others, greater than ourselves, may compromise, and even try to intimidate us for not doing the same. But it is the "terror of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:11) that compels us to maintain the principles of God's Word and to not follow the ecclesiastical correctness. We dare not compromise our music and message because we are afraid we will lose members of our congregations or students from our schools. We dare not change the standards! We dare not defect to a more accommodating theological system!

May God help us in these days when the hearts of men are failing them because of fear. No matter the earthly cost, may we not be afraid to go on with God, to be spiritual, and to withstand terrorism against the soul!

The Death of Character

Dr. H. T. Spence

Straightway, February 2000

That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things (Titus 2:10).

Although historians are still debating whether this country was truly “Christian” from its inception, America definitely was a righteous nation in its beginning. Proverbs 14:34 states that “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.” This righteousness is not in reference to the righteousness found in Christ for salvation; rather, a natural righteousness to be found in a nation’s morals and leadership. Because of America’s respect for righteousness in its early years, God honored and exalted this nation.

One of the crucial attributes found in the birth of our nation was the “character ethic.” In spite of the fact that America’s founding fathers held a variety of religious beliefs, these men mutually believed that this new nation could experience the benevolence of God and a providential success if character were the foundation of living. Such men believed that in order to succeed, an individual had to possess inner values. The fruit of such principles in the founding of our beloved nation has proved the fact that *who we are* is more important than *who we appear to be*.

Early American Education

Noah Webster, the Father of Ameri-

can Education and compiler of the first American dictionary, imperatively advocated *moral* education to be an inseparable part of education itself. If one were to carefully study the early curricula of American’s education, he would see that the training of the student’s heart and mind toward a good life involved many things. These curricula required the student to learn rules and precepts, do’s and don’ts, concepts of right and wrong, and to distinguish between good and evil in order to produce a successful life. These have been part of true education all the way back through our America’s history.

The early educational principles also necessitated a central importance of “moral example.” This importance required the adult world to give an example to the student world of a life of character. Men like Noah Webster believed that there was nothing more influential in a child’s life than the moral power of example. They knew that for children to take morality seriously, they must be in the presence of adults who take morality seriously.

The Character Ethic Versus the Personality Ethic

With the rise of the Industrial Age, America entered a very sad period, especially in the years following World War I. The basic view of success at this time shifted from a “character ethic” to

a "personality ethic." Success began to be measured on the basis of the charm, skill, and artful technique of one's personality. Rather than struggling with what is right or wrong, society's leadership—through men such as Norman Vincent Peale and Dale Carnegie—learned how to make things run smoothly. Pragmatism and Positivism became the cloaks to cover up wrong. Whatever was expedient and yielded good results was justified in life.

This personality ethic brought a new breed of leaders into the arenas of politics, music, sports, education, etc. They denounced the need of character as an important factor to be a role model for the world; character was no longer an essential to become a leader in society. They belittled and even intimidated the belief that inner values in a man or woman mattered.

Modernity and the "contemporary" have brought us into a great quandary: are talent, human energy, and personality the only things needed for success? The evident casualties of recent decades have proved that a country, a family, a ministry, or even the individual cannot ultimately survive without character. This is why in the great folly of characterless and immoral leadership in Washington we have heard the cries of a few who continue to warn us of such folly. General Schwarzkopf

pleaded two years ago in his address to the West Point graduates that character was absolutely essential for its cadets. He made it clear that morale, respect, and fidelity would never be known among soldiers in battle with-

out character in the leadership. As another voice of equal alarm, William Bennett, the former Secretary of Education[†], has pub-

lished numerous books pleading with American educators to return to the teachings of virtue and character. He firmly believes that American education has become bankrupt of it all.

The rhetoric of risqué leadership through the modern media has Americans believing that character is no longer needed in order to give direction and stability to a society. In fact, present society mocks, maligns, ridicules, and intimidates character, while tolerating lying, dishonesty, and infidelity in the norm of public leadership. However, the history of civilizations has proved that when character dies, a nation dies. When character dies in a politician, he or she is not fit to lead. When character dies in a minister, he is not fit to minister. When character dies in a teacher, he or she is not fit to teach. When character dies, the quality of living dies. We are witnessing in the White House, Congress, America's sports arenas, music halls, and educational systems, and even in

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the pulpits of conservative churches the death of the “character ethic.”

Biblical Character

What is character and of what is it a product? The term *character* itself comes from the Greek word *charakter*, extending from an older term *charasso*, meaning “to cut, to scratch, to mark.” It was first used as the agent (thus seen in the ending “ter”) or tool that did the marking, as the mark or impress made, and finally the exact reproduction. The “exact reproduction” of a person is the better understanding of this Greek word. Character to a Christian is the cutting of the image of Christ into the life by the tools of grace, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit. Sharpening our focus on the word, character is a life dominated by biblical principles. It becomes the clothing for the *self-life* in Christ. Character comes from within and then works outward. Character is principle and integrity laying hold of a person’s inner fountain—his heart—and dominating him in motive and actions of life. In the Christian realm character is Bible principles dominating the purpose and doings of the Christian life. The Bible beseeches all Christians to seek biblical character. God demands it in a leader’s life. The Pastoral Epistles not only call for “sound doctrine” to be among God’s people but also exhort for sound doctrine to be “adorned.” Godly character is this adorning of sound doctrine.

Character: A Need Among Preachers

We will readily acknowledge that preachers have infirmities, and they certainly have their weaknesses and shortcomings. But there are some “weaknesses” that are inexcusable and become insights to the very weakness of character. Every preacher must pray and long for character to be in every compartment of his life. When character is lost, all his influence is lost. It is better to be poor, better to be cast into prison, or condemned to perpetual slavery than to be destitute of character and endure the pains and evils of a conscious worthlessness of godliness. Do not confuse character with reputation. Character is what a man is in God; reputation is what he is thought to be by others. Character is always real; reputation may be false. A preacher may have good character and a bad reputation; however, he may have a good reputation and a bad character. Most men are more anxious about their reputation than they are about their character. While every minister should endeavor to maintain a good reputation, he should especially guard his true self in God. Character is not something that can be attached to a minister’s ordination certificate, nor does it come by the laying on of hands. It is not an inheritance from parents; it is not created by external advantages; it does not come as a benefit in pastoring the largest church in the city. It is the result of a life lived with Christ! One can have his or her sins forgiven instantly by the provision

of the blood, but it will take a life to produce character.

Our influence will not only be our sermons, prayers, visitation, counseling, etc. but also our character from which these things will flow. Wherever we are or go, our character is affecting others.

The Character of Sobriety

Within the thesaurus of attributes and virtues to be found in the building of character, there are two needs imperative for a true and stable life. The first need is found in the word *sobber* or *sobriety*. The Greeks used this word originally in identification with the physical world, meaning to “be free from intoxicants.” But as this word unfolded in history, sobriety came to mean “soundness of mind,” or sound judgment. By the time *sobriety* was used in the Kione Greek of the New Testament Scriptures, it was presented as the habitual, inner self-government with its constant reign on all the passions and desires. Such passions and desires are to receive no further allowance than what the law and right reason admits. Jeremy Taylor, the great preacher of the 1600s, in his book *Holy Living and Holy Dying* called sobriety “reason’s girdle” and “passion’s bridle.”

The word *sobriety* in this context is of great importance for our society that is given over to passions. Many years ago a number of thresholds in human desire were not crossed until an individual had reached his or her

late teens and early twenties. However today, desires in the human body are being prematurely awakened and intensified by the various forms of media and technological enhancements of virtual reality. The media, and in turn the peer pressure of society, are forcing our youth into a sexual explosion of mind and body at a much earlier age. The call to sobriety, with its inner self-government and constant reign on all the passions and desires, is being thrown to the wind. Because of the abounding of promiscuity and loose living in today’s society, sobriety is no longer believed to be essential. And because of the “abounding of iniquity” (or lawlessness: not living under law and principle), the love for God and right living is waxing cold.

For centuries Roman Catholicism has taught that God created man with intense desires which they have called “concupiscence.” The priests have been taught in the seminaries that man must live with concupiscence and suppress it the best he can. They do not believe it is a result of the fall of man. For this reason it is almost unheard of for a priest’s orders to be revoked as a result of any act of fornication. The diocese simply transfers him to another diocese where the parishioners do not know of him or his sins of fornication. There is a growing cover-up of such insobriety among Roman Catholic priests across America. This belief has carried over to the Protestant camp, evidenced in the proliferation of adultery and sodomy

among laymen and ministers. Men today give in to rape, child molestation, drugs, infidelity of marriage, and other lawless passions. Society's judiciary system even caters to a people without sobriety by providing financial and institutional assistance to either alleviate the fruit of their sin or force society to tolerate their sin. It is a growing belief in America that man is no longer accountable for his failures and sins; these are often blamed on his family background, his genetic deficiency, his lack of education, his underprivileged childhood, or even society itself.

However, the Bible is emphatically clear that man is accountable for what he does. In spite of teachings on the theological decrees and allegiance to Sovereignty, one can never blame God for giving into sin and its passions. One cannot blame astrological signs for his failures; one cannot even blame the devil. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway."

In Titus 2, the word *sobriety* becomes the common de-

nominator of character among the various ages of Christians. In verse 2, the "aged men" are to be "sober"; in verses 3 and 4, we read that the "aged women" are to "teach the young women to be sober"; and in verse 6, the "young men

likewise exhort to be sober minded." First Timothy 3 addresses the need of bishops being "blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, *sober*, of good behavior." Verse 11 states that this character is also to be found of a deacon. Sobriety is becoming a rare character trait of church leaders today. We are called upon to live a self-disciplined life with control over our passions and desires.

The Character of Shamefacedness

But there is another imperative need of equal importance with sobriety. It is found in 1 Timothy 2:9 in the word *shamefacedness*. To understand this particular word we must see how it has changed over the years. The word *fast*, which simply means, "to hold firmly," has been used as a suffix to other words: *rootfast*, *handfast*, *bedfast*, and *weatherfast*. *Shamefast* was a word that meant, "made fast by an honorable shame." In the original Authorized Version of 1611, the word used in 1 Timothy 2:9 concerning women was

Men like Noah Webster believed that there was nothing more influential in a child's life than the moral power of example. They knew that for children to take morality seriously, they must be in the presence of adults who take morality seriously.

shame-fastness. But in the 1700s the word was changed to *shamefacedness*. This word is a synonym to *prudent* meaning "to blush" or "shame of the face." It is a term of modesty and an insight to a woman who would shrink

from crossing the limits of womanly reservation. Yet, it is also a word that clearly marks the reason a woman would not perform an evil—it is not in her *heart* to commit the evil.

An important distinction must be made between the character of sobriety and shamefacedness as noted of godly women in 1 Timothy 2:9. Sobriety is the sign of inner self-government with a constant reign on all the passions and desires. It is when a person masters or has control over the passions and desires of his life. But shamefacedness is modesty of thought about self; it is “fast” or rooted in the character of the heart. Sobriety is calling upon self-control over the cry of physical and fleshly desires. But shamefacedness declares that it is not in the root of one’s character to yield to those desires. It is one thing to not do a wrong because of self-control over the temptation, but it is a higher principle to not do the wrong because it is not in the heart to do it.

The Example of Samson and Joseph

Samson and Joseph, step forward from the sacred annals of Scripture as classic illustrations of the distinction between sobriety and shamefacedness. It is evident in the book of Judges that Samson, though used of God, was a man of loose living. Chapter 16 depicts Samson’s meeting the woman Delilah in the valley of Sorek. For several days she enticed him to find out wherein lay his strength. Each time his response brought him closer to the truth of the

matter. For a season Samson gave evidence of sobriety by marking his answers with self-control. But then the Scriptures read, “And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; that he told her all his heart....” (Judges 16:16, 17a).

On the other hand Joseph was enticed by a woman in Genesis 39. In verses 8 and 9, his response to the pressing of Potiphar’s wife was that “he refused, and said unto his master’s wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” Potiphar’s wife spoke to Joseph day by day, as Delilah did to Samson. But it is said of Joseph that “he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her or to be with her” (Genesis 39:10). The conclusion of this story reveals that Joseph had not only sobriety but also shamefacedness, for it was *not in his heart* to commit this sin.

Final Thoughts

We are living in a scandalous time in the history of our country. Sobriety has been thrown to the wind in order for men to satisfy their lusts. We have had a president in the White House for the past eight years whose immoral living has become the brunt of media comedy and has been openly dis-

cussed by other politicians. In recent months the “strange” insobriety of the Hillsdale College president George Roche, has grieved the conservative camp of America. The insobriety of Jimmy Swaggart and other ministers are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to uncontrollable lusts evident among many in the ministry. The telling tale is that though many preach the Gospel of Christ, the principles of the Gospel are not part of their own heart and life. The vows of marriage have become meaningless as separation and divorce are of epidemic proportion. In our day and time, sobriety is certainly needed—yea God demands it—among God’s people, especially in church leadership. But shamefacedness portrays character with a deeper meaning. It goes beyond self-control over passion and lusts. Shamefacedness is in the heart, empowered by God and His Word, crying out, “No!” It is the evidence of a heart and life dominated by biblical principles.

Our society has been convinced that it does not matter what a person “is” so long as he is able to “perform” and “function” in a positive manner in his job. Whether it is running a country,

keeping the program going in a church, or providing for family, results, not character, is what counts today. Yet the unalterable law of providence decrees that a collapse is inevitable. As we witness the death of character in our nation and the rise of personalities in society, let us keep true to a self-controlled life in sobriety as well as the evident heart against wrong in shamefacedness. Yes, there is an urgent need in Christianity today for the adorning of the doctrine of Christ with godly character. For it is still a true statement: the greatest attraction to Christ is a godly life.

The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee (Psalm 45:13, 14).

May God give us such clothing within, the clothing of the self-life in Christ: Godly character.

†It is sad to acknowledge that since the publication of this article, it has been made public that William Bennett is an obsessive gambler. This certainly does not bespeak a man who has written on virtue and character.

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