

**TALKING POINTS FROM THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION**

Research clearly demonstrates that regular religious practice is both an individual and social good. It is a powerful answer to many of our most significant social problems, some of which have reached catastrophic proportions. The practice of religion is good for individuals, families, states, and the nation. It improves health, learning, economic well-being, self-control, self-esteem, and empathy. It reduces the incidence of social pathologies, such as out-of-wedlock births, crime, delinquency, drug and alcohol addiction, health problems, anxieties, and prejudices.

The Founding Fathers, in their passionate love of freedom, promoted the freedom of all Americans to practice their religious beliefs, but Congress and the courts have begun to crowd religion out of

the public square. It is time to bring it back. Religious practice can and should be factored into the planning and debate on the nation's urgent social problems. Americans cannot build their future without drawing on the strengths that come to them from the practice of their religious beliefs.

For the sake of the nation's future health, it is time to redirect public policy so that the two vast resources of family and religion, instead of being weakened further, can be rejuvenated and encouraged. The widespread practice of religious beliefs can only benefit the nation, and the task of reintegrating religious practice into American life while protecting and respecting the rights of non-practice is one of the nation's most important tasks.

- Regular churchgoers tend to live longer, an average of

seven years longer than those who never attend church.

- Religious practice is related to emotional health. Research suggests "after gender (girls are more likely to attempt suicide than boys), religiousness is the second strongest inhibitor of... suicide attempts."
- Church attendance can be a predictor of family stability. Those children who, "at age 18, attend religious services with approximately the same frequency as their mothers," have "significantly better relationships" with their mothers five years later, as reported by the mothers.
- Married couples benefit from religious practice. Studies have linked more frequent church attendance to lower levels of divorce proneness.
- Couples that pray together, stay together.

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**Jeroboam—The Quintessential Compromiser**

More than twenty times after his death, the Bible reminds us that Jeroboam caused Israel to sin. The "ten tribes" never recovered from this man's clever deception, driven by political ambition. Josephus recorded his speech to Israel.

"I suppose, my countrymen, that you know this, that every place hath God in it; nor is there any one determinate place in which he is, but he everywhere hears and sees those that worship him; on which account I do not think it right for you to go so long a journey to Jerusalem, which is an enemy's city, to worship him. It was a man that built the temple: I

have also made two golden heifers, dedicated to the same God; and one of them I have consecrated in the city Bethel, and the other in Dan, to the end that those of you that dwell nearest to them, and worship God there: and I will ordain for you certain priests and Levites from among yourselves, that you may have no want of the tribe of Levi, or of the sons of Aaron; but let him that is desirous among you of being a priest, bring to God a bullock and a ram, which they say Aaron the first priest brought also."

Jeroboam's deception was worse than all those who preceded him (I Kings 14:9), resulting in God's abandoning His

people (I Kings 14:16). This man destroyed a nation by mixing elements of God's Word with his own brand of false doctrine. The people Jeroboam destroyed had always recovered from the influence of pure idolatry, but they never recovered from Jeroboam's compromise. He managed a revolution, but could not build a stable nation.

A message of partial truth can be more misleading than a complete fabrication. As ministers of the Gospel, we should feel compelled to be sure we can say with the Apostle Paul, that we "have not shunned to declare . . . all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

E. W. Wheeler

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**Baptizing preachers from Vietnam**



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**Mission Statement**

Since our first publication in the early eighties, our mission has been to provide “doctrine and instruction in righteousness” to the churches in the Philippines (II Timothy 3:16). By request, we are expanding our circulation, trusting that God will bless and use it for the benefit of His Kingdom.

**“The Church” By Thomas Weisser**

When studying about something that has existed over time we call it history. History is not a science like mathematics. In math there is a right answer and a wrong answer. In history there is the strong element of the perspective of the historian. Because of time and space and the limits of human senses, the chronicler is forced to depend on sketchy evidence. Eyewitness accounts can even be defective because of the limits of human perspective. Historians are notorious for making general statements about groups without accepting that variations exist within a group. This is especially true when studying religious groups. It is the height of naivety to say that the only “Christian” group in existence for hundreds of years was the Catholic Church.

A logical mind cannot accept that the “so-called” heretics that were persecuted so severely during the Inquisition did not have a history prior to the Inquisition (which began around 1200). Other groups did exist and, in some areas, thrived during the “so-called” Dark and Middle Ages. What source do we have that is not limited by human perspective?

The Bible. It is a unique book in that it claims divine inspiration and authorship. If we believe what the Bible says about God and accept that it came from God we have a source much more pertinent and valuable than any human historian can give us. If God is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent He can see all sides of an event or group

and give us a much better account than any mere human.

It is a biblical fact that God was manifest in the flesh. It is a biblical and historical fact that Jesus lived on this earth approximately 2,000 years ago. He claimed to be starting a kingdom that was not earthly, but heavenly. He claimed unequivocally that death would not prevail against it; “upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell (death) shall not prevail against it” (Mt. 16:18). He claimed to have all power in heaven and earth (Mt. 28:18). If He said He would build His Church and He has all power then what could stop Him from doing what He said He would do? The only logical answer is nothing.

Those in the Church are involved in planting and watering seeds of truth. God is giving the increase. At the beginning of the Church, “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). To say that this stopped somewhere along the line since the Church began would be denying the power of God to build and preserve. Gamaliel, a leader among the Jews in Palestine during the first century cautioned his fellow leaders to leave the early Church alone. He declared that if this new group growing in the area of Jerusalem was of God it would not be overthrown. It was of God and has continued since its beginning.

The concept that the early Church ceased to exist for hundreds of years and then came back to life in the early twentieth century is not

biblical. This idea has birthed other unscriptural ideas. For example, the idea that a new birth experience according to Acts 2:38 was not essential during these hundreds of years with no true Church. This opens the doors to false teaching that denies the necessity especially of Jesus’ name baptism. Baptism constitutes New Testament circumcision and is unto the remission of sins. To deny its necessity at any time since the establishment of the Church is to negate the basic scriptural teaching concerning it.

There is no indication in the New Testament that the requirements for entry into the Church would change over time. On the contrary, we are exhorted by Jude to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). The New Testament is prophetic but we don’t see an indication that the future would see a death and rebirth of the Acts 2:38 Church.

We need to ask some hard questions concerning the history of the Church. Is it possible that a Church has existed for 2,000 years propagating the same message of the early Church? Definitely! With God all things are possible! Is it difficult to find historical documentation to back this up? Yes, but if we approach it from the premise that the Word of God is true we can be assured that the Church was there. Any indication in historical documentation of its existence would constitute a refreshing affirmation of what is already true.



## Sandy Foundations Shaken—William Penn

### *THE TRINITY OF DISTINCT AND SEPARATE PERSONS, IN THE UNITY OF ESSENCE, REFUTED FROM SCRIPTURE.*

And he said, “LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee.” (1 Kings 8:23) “To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.” (Isaiah 40:25.) “I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me.” (Isaiah 45:5,6.) “Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” (Isaiah 48:17.) “I will also praise thee, O my God: unto thee will I sing, O thou Holy One of Israel.” (Psalms 71:22.) “Jehovah shall be One, and his name one.” (Zechariah 14:9.) Which, with a cloud of other testimonies that might be urged, evidently demonstrate, that in the days of the first covenant, and prophets, but One was the Holy God, and God but that Holy One.—Again: “And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is,

God.” (Matthew 19:17.) “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God.” (John 17:3.) “Seeing it is one God, which shall justify.” (Romans 3:30.) “There be gods many—but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things. (1 Corinthians 8:6.) “One God and Father who is above all things.” (Ephesians 4:6.) “For there is one God.” (1 Timothy 2:5.) “To the only wise God be glory now and ever.” (Jude ver. 25.) From all which I shall lay down this one assertion, that the testimonies of Scripture, both under the testimonies of Scripture, both under the law, and since the Gospel dispensation, declare One to be God, and God to be One, on which I shall raise this argument:

If God, as the Scriptures testify, hath never been declared or believed, but as the Holy One, then will it follow, that God is not a Holy Three, nor doth subsist in three distinct and separate Holy Ones. But the before-cited Scriptures undeniably prove that One is

God, and God only is that Holy One. Therefore he cannot be divided into, or subsist in a Holy Three, or Three distinct and separate Holy Ones—Neither can this receive the least prejudice from that frequent, but impertinent distinction, that he is one in substance, but three in persons or subsistences; since God was not declared or believed incompletely, or without his subsistence: nor did he require homage from his creatures, as an incomplete or abstracted being, but as God the Holy One: For so he should be manifested and worshipped without that which was absolutely necessary to himself. So that either the testimonies of the aforementioned Scriptures are to be believed concerning God, that he is entirely and completely, not abstractly and distinctly, the Holy One, or else their authority to be denied by these Trinitarians. And on the contrary, if they pretend to credit those holy testimonies, they must necessarily conclude their kind of trinity a fiction.

## MORALITY VS. SANCTIMONIOUSNESS

by Thomas Sowell

There are so many substitutes used in our society—substitutes for eggs, substitutes for wood, substitutes for diamonds—that perhaps we should not be too surprised to find substitutes for morality as well. One of the most widespread substitutes for morality, especially among intellectuals, is sanctimoniousness.

How do you tell morality from sanctimoniousness? For one thing, morality is hard and sanctimoniousness is easy. Anyone who has succumbed to temptation, and then felt deeply ashamed long afterwards, knows how hard morality can be.

Sanctimoniousness is easy. There are editorial writers who are sanctimonious every day of the week, without any visible sign of fatigue. As far as they are concerned, those who disagree with them are not merely in error, but in sin. Morality means being hard on yourself. Sanctimoniousness means being easy on yourself—and hard on others.

### William Bennett—Teaching The Virtues—Excerpted From Imprimis

Some of us, frankly, had our doubts about whether this moral dilemma could be solved. I authored a series of studies called the “Index of Leading Cultural Indicators,” which, instead of measuring inflation or interest rates, measured things like school dropout rates, drug addiction, illegitimacy, divorce, SAT scores and crime. A lot of the numbers were quite alarming. I wrote in the introduction to one of the studies that if we kept moving in the direction we were going, this great republic—this great experiment in self-government—could conceivably unravel. So “teaching the virtues” seemed very much to me then, and still seems to me today, a concern of prime importance for the American people. And I think the answer regarding how to teach the virtues is pretty straightforward. Aristotle had a good read on it, and modern psychology and other contemporary studies back him up: We teach by habit, we teach by precept, and we teach by example.

Precepts are also important. The Ten Commandments, the principles of American democracy, rules of courteous behavior—these and other lists of rights and wrongs should be provided to young people. But as we provide them, young people need to know that we take these precepts seriously. That leads to the third part of teaching virtue that Aristotle talked about, which is example. And that, probably, is the one we should emphasize the most. I have been to school after school where the administration thinks it can solve its “values problem” by teaching a course in values. I don’t believe in courses in values. I don’t think that’s the way to go about solving the problem. If we want young people to take right and wrong seriously, there is an indispensable condition: They must be in the presence of adults who take right and wrong seriously. Only in this way will they see that virtue is not just a game, not just talk, but rather that it is something that grown-up people, people who have responsibilities in the world and at home, take seriously.

## THE GREATEST CHILDREN'S STORY

The story of David and Goliath is one of the greatest of all children's stories. It's the first full-blown story about David, and the most memorable. If you know anything at all about David, you know the story of Goliath. People who've never so much as heard that there is a Bible, know the story of David and Goliath.

The David/Goliath story is a great children's story because it conveys an important meaning. It's not an obvious meaning, but all children must learn it if they're going to make it in the world.

But once we've learned the story and assimilated the meaning that goes with it, the story isn't over and done with. Learning stories isn't the same as learning the multiplication tables. Once we've learned that three times four equals twelve, we've learned it and that's that. It's a fact that doesn't change. The data is stored in our memory for ready access. But stories don't stay put; they grow and deepen. The meaning doesn't exactly change, but it matures. Having learned the meaning of love, for instance, we don't for a moment suppose that we've passed that course and can now go on to other things, deciding perhaps to sign up next for computer science.

No. We keep on telling stories, the same old ones, over and over and over again, in a way quite different from saying the multiplication tables over and over again. The stories keep releasing new insight in new situations. As we bring new experience and insight to the story, the story gathers that enrichment in and gives it back to us in fresh form.

And so it turns out that the David/Goliath story is as important for adults as it ever was for children. One of the great impoverishments of many adult lives is the absence of children's stories, whether read or told or listened to.

LEAP OVER A WALL—EUGENE H. PETERSON

**WE FLATTER THOSE WE SCARCELY  
KNOW, WE PLEASE THE FLEETING  
GUEST, AND DEAL FULL MANY A  
THOUGHTLESS BLOW TO THOSE  
WHO LOVE US BEST.**

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX—LIFE'S SCARS

**"To humble ourselves means to turn  
away from the arrogance in our hearts  
that would resist God's authority"**

Building Christian Character, by Blair Adams

## David McCullough—Knowing History And Who We Are—Excerpted From Imprimis

We have to do a far better job of teaching our teachers. We have too many teachers who are graduating with degrees in education. They go to schools of education or they major in education, and they graduate knowing something called education, but they don't know a subject. They're assigned to teach botany or English literature or history, and of course they can't perform as they should. Knowing a subject is important because you want to know what you're talking about when you're teaching. But beyond that, you can't love what you don't know. And the great teachers—the teachers who influence you, who change your lives—almost always, I'm sure, are the teachers that love what they are teaching.

## HERMENEUTICS—From Text to Context

Grant Osborne's book, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, defines "hermeneutics" as: (1) a science, because "it provides a logical, orderly classification of the laws of interpretation. And (2) an art, "for it is an acquired skill demanding both imagination and an ability to apply the 'laws' to selected passages or books." He also states that the most important aspect of the interpretive task is a spiritual act, which requires that the interpreter be led by the Spirit of God.

"Hermeneutics," he says, "is important because it enables one to move from text to context, to allow the God-inspired meaning of the Word to speak today with as fresh and dynamic a relevance as it had in its original setting." And that, "preachers and teachers must proclaim the Word of God rather than their own subjective religious opinions. Only a carefully defined hermeneutic can keep one wedded to the text."

Nehemiah 8:8 says, "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." Another translations says, "They read the Book of God's Teachings clearly and explained the meaning so that the people could understand what was read." What a tremendous task: not only did they teach the Word of God in a "clear and distinct" manner, but they also "gave the sense, and explained the meaning." That's easier said than done. There are so many "meanings." And in what "sense" is the verse in question to be taken. Is it to be taken in a literal sense, or is it to be taken figuratively? Or, is it both? The task is completed when we can cause them to understand its meaning.

Grant also states that the "hermeneutical enterprise" has three levels. (1) "The third person approach, asking 'what it meant' (exegesis)," (2) "then passing to a first-person approach, querying 'what it means to me' (devotional)." (3) The "second-person approach, seeking 'how to share with you what it means to me' (sermonic)." He emphasizes that the "author's intended meaning" is just a place to start. "The task of hermeneutics must begin with exegesis but is not complete until one notes the contextualization of that meaning for today."

Ignoring the first level (exegesis), he states, "is to enter a subjective world without controls, so that anyone's opinion is as good as another person's." While ignoring the second (devotional), "is to remove the very basis of Scripture, an individual's encounter with the divine, which demands a changed life." Ignoring the third (sermonic), "is to remove the other biblical imperative that the divine revelation must be shared as the good news." The main thrust of his book is that "biblical interpretation entails a 'spiral' from text to context, from its original meaning to its contextualization or significance for the church today."

The Hermeneutical Spiral—Grant R. Osborne