

Standing in the Gap

Gary Bergel

Tensions were “white hot” during recent U.S. Senate hearings investigating the Bernard Madoff \$50 billion Ponzi scheme, said to be the largest investment fraud in human history. Security Exchange Commission (SEC) acting general counsel Andy Vollmer, and enforcement director Linda Thomsen, refused to respond to questions posed by Representative Gary Ackerman (D-NY). “You’ve told us nothing,” Ackerman shouted. “You have totally and thoroughly failed in your mission, don’t you get it?”

Testimony by Harry Markopolos showed that SEC and FBI officials did not “get it” for 10 years! An accountant with the Whitman firm, Markopolos worked for many years at an investment firm in Boston that was a rival to Madoff’s hedge fund in New York. Examining Madoff performance charts revealed “the world’s largest hedge fund operating underground.” Markopolos presented his findings to SEC regulators for nine years—anonously as he began fearing for his life. Markopolos found no SEC or FBI official willing to act on his findings until the U.S. economy began tanking last fall. Bernard Madoff’s “house of cards” collapsed and his sons turned him in to federal authorities.

Markopolos also testified that he has discovered a dozen or more Madoff funds “hiding in the weeds” in Europe. Some analysts now say the entire globalized economy is like a “house of cards,” susceptible to collapse as fiercer financial winds might blow.

What is triggering this severe round of judgments and adjustments? I believe it can be summed up in one word, “corruption.” Ezekiel 22, what I sometimes call “the corruption chapter,” presents a key to understanding our present predicament and to finding God’s mercy and solution. Verses 23 through 31 show the spread and effects of corruption through every level and layer of leadership, government, and society.

Prophets go for gain and manipulation rather than delivering justice to the orphans and widows. Keep in mind that unsaved prophetic individuals



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“I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads, says the Lord God.”

—Ezekiel 22:31

dishonest gain. Corruption progresses and prophets begin to “whitewash,” cover up rather than expose works of darkness, see false visions, fall into divination, and prophecy falsely.

When corruption reaches these extremes the people of the land (citizens) become lawless and unrestrained, use oppression, commit robbery, mistreat the poor and needy, and wrongly oppress the stranger (immigrants and aliens in their midst).

Amazingly, at this point God does not simply judge and end it, instead He seeks “for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap . . . on behalf of the land, that [He] should not destroy it. . . .” (Ez 22:30)

While we as intercessors identify with this verse and “stand in the gap” in repentance and prevailing prayer, we must examine and pray this word in context: God is looking for and legally needing at least one leader / official at every level and in every layer of government and influence to stand before Him on behalf of the land—so that He can work to undo corruption and preserve our nation.

Here is hope in this hour! While wrong personal and corporate “house of card” decisions are releasing suffering and recompense upon the heads of many, even innocent individuals, we are not yet suffering a release of the wrath of God. Let us cry out for more righteous individuals and courageous moral voices in every sphere of rulership and influence. Harry Markopolos is one “standing in the gap.” The U.S. needs thousands more to become a “cleansed land.” (Ez 22:24)

often surface in the arts, and entertainment and music industries, and with accumulated wealth become powerful “culture shapers.” The priests (clergy) violate God’s law, do not teach the Ten Commandments, and no longer distinguish between “clean and unclean.” The princes (political rulers and magistrates) become wolf-like power seekers, destroy people, and become so addicted to political power that they will even gloss over shedding blood for

FIRST FRIDAY March 6 PRAYER FOCUS

DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY

Use the “Top 130 U.S. Officials” bookmark supplied with last month’s Prayer Letter and available on “Current Prayer Guides” at www.ifapray.org. Intercede for the Obama Administration and the 111th Congress. Affirm the Supremacy of Christ. (Ps 2:6,10-11; Col 1:12-18; Rev 1:5) Intercede that “demonic wisdom from below” be cut off, and that “wisdom from above” enter in and prevail (James 3:13-18)—specifically regarding abortion, traditional marriage, fiscal policy, regulation, taxation, and foreign policy. Intercede for the protection of Israel and “the peace of Jerusalem.” (Ps 122)

UNEMPLOYMENT / JOB CREATION

Pray that the unemployed in your state, area, and among family and associates be encouraged, and guided by the Lord to employment at this time. Intercede for mercy and for the Lord to execute His foreordained Kingdom reallocations of wealth, stewardship and ownership, and of human and natural resources during this crisis. Continue to intercede for the exposure and removal of corruption in all realms, but also ask the Lord to grant wisdom, anointing, grace and blessing unto prosperity to Christian and other God-fearing entrepreneurs, small business owners, corporate executives, managers and to all who labor faithfully. (Prov 3:3-10) Intercede for rapid job creation.

CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

Authentic and lasting national recovery will only occur as we return to God’s moral code, The Ten Commandments, and to governing according to principles in the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution. (See Page 3) Intercede for renewed public dialog, more exposure, and media affirmation of the Ten Commandments, Declaration of Independence, and U.S. Constitution.

NO IDOLS

“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything.” (Ex 20:4 NIV) “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (Jn 4:24) Reflect and repent if you have paid homage to deities other than the God of the Bible, bowed to idols or material images of God, or if you have fixated on idolatrous mental images of God. Consider how Jesus centered on abiding with the Father and in doing His will. (Mt 6:6,10; Jn 4:34; Heb10:5-7) Pray that the Holy Spirit inspire and instruct you and Christians in your area to worship and live in this Christ-like manner.

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"This is my hope. This is my prayer."

President Barack H. Obama
National Prayer Breakfast 2009

The following are excerpts from President Obama's remarks at the February 5, 2009 National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, DC. Some 3,500 attended, including Tony Blair and a dozen other foreign leaders, diplomats and members of Congress. A National Prayer Breakfast has convened since 1953 and every U.S. president since Dwight D. Eisenhower has participated.

Michelle and I are honored to join you in prayer this morning. I know this breakfast has a long history in Washington, and faith has always been a guiding force in our family's life, so we feel very much at home and look forward to keeping this tradition alive during our time here.

It's a tradition that I'm told actually began many years ago in the city of Seattle. It was the height of the Great Depression, and most people found themselves out of work. Many fell into poverty. Some lost everything. The leaders of the community did all that they could for those who were suffering in their midst. And then they decided to do something more: they prayed. It didn't matter what party or religious affiliation to which they belonged. They simply gathered one morning as brothers and sisters to share a meal and talk with God. These breakfasts soon sprouted up throughout Seattle, and quickly spread to cities and towns across America, eventually making their way to Washington. . . . I raise this history because far too often, we have seen faith wielded as a tool to divide us from one another.

There is no doubt that the very nature of faith means that some of our beliefs will never be the same. We read from different texts. We follow different edicts. We subscribe to different accounts of how we came to be here and where we're going next—and some subscribe to no faith at all. But no matter what we choose to believe, let us remember that there is no religion whose central tenet is hate. There is no God who condones taking the life of an innocent human being. This much we know.

We know too that whatever our differences, there is one law that binds all great religions together. Jesus told us to "love thy neighbor as thyself." The Torah commands, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow." In Islam, there is a hadith that reads "None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself." The same is true for Buddhists and Hindus; for followers of Confucius and for humanists. It is, of course, the Golden Rule—the call to love one another; to understand [and] to treat with dignity and respect those with whom we share a brief moment on this Earth.

It is an ancient rule; a simple rule; but also one of the most challenging. For it asks each of us to take some measure of responsibility for the well-being of people we may not know or worship with or agree with on every issue. Sometimes, it asks us to reconcile with bitter enemies or resolve ancient hatreds. And that requires a living, breathing, active faith. It requires us not only to believe, but to do—to give something of ourselves for the benefit of others and the betterment of our world. This is not only our call as people of faith, but our duty as citizens of America.

This is my hope. This is my prayer.

I believe this good is possible because my faith teaches me that all is possible, but I also believe because of what I have seen and what I have lived. I was not raised in a particularly religious household. I had a father who was born a Muslim but became an atheist, grandparents who were non-practicing Methodists and Baptists, and a mother who was skeptical of organized religion, even as she was the kindest, most spiritual person I've ever known. She was the one who taught me as a child to love, and to understand, and to do unto others as I would want done.

I didn't become a Christian until many years later, when I moved to the South Side of Chicago after college. It happened not because of indoctrination or a sudden revelation, but because I spent month after month working with church folks who simply wanted to help neighbors who were down on their luck. . . . It was on those streets, in those neighborhoods, that I first heard God's spirit beckon me. It was there that I felt called to a higher purpose—His purpose.

St. Augustine once said, "Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you." So let us pray together on this February morning, but let us also work together in all the days and months ahead. For it is only through common struggle and common effort, as brothers and sisters, that we fulfill our highest purpose as beloved children of God. I ask you to join me in that effort and I also ask that you pray for me, for my family, and for the continued perfection of our Union. Thank you.

JESUS AMONG OTHER GODS

Ravi Zacharias | Kevin Johnson

At the trial that led to His crucifixion, Jesus stood before the Roman governor of Israel charged with treason against Caesar. Jesus' actions were fascinating. With a calmness that unnerved His questioners, He stood in silence before them. All of the allegations that He had come to "shove religion down our throats" were examined—and exploded—that day.

The silence of Jesus means that God gives people the spiritual freedom to say to you, "I don't want to hear any more." But it's never right when they say, "You can't say any more to anyone else." (Acts 5:27-29) God calls Christians to be ambassadors for Him, "as though God were making his appeal through us." (2 Corinthians 5:20)

The whole Bible is your manual on how to be like Jesus as you explain Him to your world. But 1 Peter 3:15-16 is a passage filled with specific pointers: "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander."

That passage raises some quick questions to ask yourself:

"Christ as Lord"—Are you promoting Jesus or yourself?

"Be prepared to give an answer"—Have you thought about why you believe?

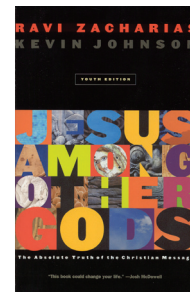
"For the hope"—What has Jesus accomplished for all people? And for you?

"Gentleness and respect"—Are you aiming to win an argument or to persuade a friend?

"Clear conscience"—Is there anything in your life that could cause people to rightly call you a hypocrite?

You can't depend on God if your God is a figment of your imagination.

In a world full of gods, how do you know Jesus is Real?



JESUS AMONG OTHER GODS

Ravi Zacharias
Kevin Johnson

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Working Toward Authentic Recovery

Larry P. Arnn

One of the worst financial crises in American history broke into public view in the first ten days of September, 2008. Several of the oldest and largest financial institutions in the world were wiped out, all of them highly profitable until the very eve of their demise. The government rescued the largest insurance company in the world. Two quasi-public corporations, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, that invest in about half the mortgages in the U.S. were also rescued. For days the regular system of credit transfers that makes commerce possible was nearly frozen. The stock market lost more than 40 percent of its value. Recession is upon us, and it is likely to be sharp and may be prolonged. The economic storm will pass, God providing.

It is time for recovery, both economic and political. The two are related as political recovery will, in the end, determine economic policy for many years. The goal of that recovery is simple to state: we must recover the art of constitutional government. That we have lost sight of it is plain. The means are also simple to state: we must begin by studying that art. Its beauty will call to us as it ever has.

One imagines that there is plenty of greed on Wall Street. Greed is a moral vice, a failure of justice involving taking more than one's due. To eliminate greed would surely be a fine thing, as

“We must recover the art of constitutional government.”

would the elimination of any vice. It would also be an astonishing achievement.

It would be astonishing for the simple reason that the teaching and practice of virtue, and the discouragement of vice, is a necessarily continuous and difficult challenge in human affairs. Not many of us, likely, are simply vicious, simply practitioners of vice. But similarly, not many of us are simply virtuous, simply ready to do the right thing for the right reason all the time.

Should we build our political institutions upon the elimination of greed? A caution stirs the mind immediately at the thought of it. James Madison writes in *The Federalist Papers* about faction, about our making combinations to serve our interests, even when those interests do not correspond to the public interest. One will read in vain to find the chief author of the Constitution suggesting that faction, much less greed, could ever be eliminated. Rather, he writes that “Ambition must be made to counteract ambition. The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place.” In other words, we must build our political institutions to operate around the problem of human vice, to mitigate that problem by discouraging vice, but also to place our inter-



“By constitutionalism I mean the art that provides good laws directed to encouraging free people to govern themselves.”

ests in alignment with the public interest.

“Liberty,” writes Madison, “is to faction what air is to fire.” To eliminate the effects of self-interest would be to eliminate freedom itself. This is, then, just the point. The Constitution of the United States is a document full of safeguards. It sets out to do two things: first, to build a powerful government, competent to defend our rights against oppressors both foreign and domestic; second, to limit that government, and to arrange its powers, so as to render it, itself, harmless to the liberties of those it governs. That is why we have the key devices of the Constitution: separation of powers; federalism, which requires a federal government of enumerated and not unlimited powers; bicameralism; the Bill of Rights.

In a splendid essay in *Forbes* magazine, “How Capitalism Will Save Us” (11/10/08), Steve Forbes explains that the problems we face are connected to two major government policies, along with some minor ones. The major ones are the subsidy of mortgages, including risky ones, by the government, and the inflation of the currency over the last four years. This inflation is the reason that gold has more than doubled in value. It is the reason that the dollar, until the last few months, slid relentlessly against world currencies for almost four years. Forbes writes: “Greed and recklessness always run rampant during bubbles, and the mania that engulfed housing and much of the financial sector was no exception.” These things have come together to make trouble.

I mention the art of constitutional government. I mean simply the art that provides good laws directed to encouraging free people to

govern themselves. The national defense, secured so well as human contrivance can secure it, has a high place in this art. So too does the provision of a stable currency. So too does the protection of property and contracts. So too does the maintenance of a tax burden that does not stifle labor, savings, and investment.

Of course this list leaves out most of the federal government as we have it today. Very much and probably most of what we have today cannot be eliminated. It should, however, be managed in a new spirit. Under that spirit, decentralized administration of things would be achieved wherever possible. Under that spirit, the delegation of public goods to private and to local action should be pursued ardently.

There are models in our past of this art that would be worth studying again today. They include the wonderful Northwest Ordinance, which provided the largest subsidy to education in our nation's history, and which contained no element of federal management. They include the great Homestead Act, signed by President Lincoln, which gave federal land to any citizen who would agree to live on it and work it. The way out of our entitlement mess is implicit in such acts as these. One need only read these short, principled and beautiful laws, and compare them to the kind we pass today, to see the difference. It is not details that should be legislated, but rather grand things, especially ends. We should be seeking to recover in our laws the grand and sublime simplicity of which the Constitution is a beautiful example.

“The economic storm will pass, God providing.”

What is fundamental is the purpose and function of our political system. Either we shall have limited government, in which a few vital things are tended to with a careful eye and strong but limited powers, or else we shall attempt to allocate the labor and capital of the nation by force of law. This second will make a disaster of a kind not seen in this country from its first days.

When one sees that these principles are written in the Declaration of Independence and in the Constitution, he begins to see then what a revolutionary thing was achieved here in our nation. He begins to see the reason why for two centuries and more the American people have been the last best hope of mankind on earth. By becoming a student of his country, the citizen becomes again an intelligent lover of it.

Reprinted by permission from Imprimis, a publication of Hillsdale College. Read the entire “A Work of Recovery” speech on the Culture page at www.ifajpray.org or www.hillsdale.edu. Larry P. Arnn, Ph.D., is the twelfth president of Hillsdale College.

SEEK GOD FOR THE CITY TO APRIL 5

Forty Days to Palm Sunday | www.waymakers.org

40 DAYS FOR LIFE THROUGH APRIL 5

★ COLLEGE STATION, TX – More than 123 cities are participating in this 40 Days for Life Lenten vigil. For 40 days, people of faith and conscience are praying, fasting, holding peaceful vigils outside abortion facilities, and conducting grass roots pro-life outreach. Tens of thousands are again participating in this history-making initiative. Many abortion clinics cut back hours or close for entire days during 40 Days for Life. The 2009 spring campaign continues through April 5. Visit www.40daysforlife.com

OBAMA FUNDS FOREIGN ABORTIONS

WASHINGTON, DC – Fifty-eight percent of Americans disapproved of President Obama's executive order on January 23 which reversed President Reagan's historic 1984 Mexico City Policy and now permits U.S. tax dollars to go to overseas family-planning groups, such as Planned Parenthood, that provide abortions or abortion counseling. While saying he is "reaching out to those on all sides of this issue to achieve the goal of reducing unintended pregnancies," Obama vowed to work with Congress to restore U.S. funding for the United Nations' Population Fund, already supported by 180 other nations. (AC 1/25/09 GP 2/2/09)

FDA APPROVES FIRST STEM CELL TRIAL

WASHINGTON, DC – The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted approval January 23 for California biotech company Geron Corporation to conduct the first-ever human clinical trial using embryonic stem cells. Ten patients with severe spinal cord injuries will be treated. Rep. Bart Stupak (D-MI) was critical of the FDA's independent decision saying that by doing so it had "taken it upon itself to determine when human embryos should be subject to research and experimentation." (NYT 1/23/09 W 2/14/09)

GAY ACTIVISTS LOBBY SECRETARY CLINTON

WASHINGTON, DC – Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was asked in an early February letter from nearly 2,200 government employees involved in foreign policy issues to provide "spousal" benefits to same-gender partners. During confirmation hearings, Clinton suggested she might explore the matter. "I think we should take a hard look at the existing policy," she told the Senate panel. "My understanding is other nations have moved to extend that partnership benefit." (ONN 2/3/09)

NUCLEAR TALKS WITH RUSSIA ON HORIZON

★ WASHINGTON, DC – President Barack Obama announced that he will convene the most ambitious arms reduction talks with Russia for a generation, aiming to slash each country's stockpile of nuclear weapons by 80 percent. (F 2/4/09)

For America Today...



"The Birth of Old Glory" oil painting by Percy Moran, 1917

George Washington

A Daily Prayer

Almighty God,

We make our earnest prayer that Thou wilt keep the United States in Thy holy protection: that Thou wilt incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government, and entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another and for their fellow citizens of the United States at large.

And finally that Thou wilt most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, and without a humble imitation of whose example in these things we can never hope to be a happy nation.

Grant our supplication, we beseech Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

CALIFORNIA HEARS MARRIAGE CASE

★ SAN FRANCISCO – [Note: Since oral arguments will be heard Thursday, March 5, please include the Court's decision making in your First Friday prayers.]

California's Supreme Court is deliberating to decide whether to allow the Proposition 8 referendum passed by California voters on November 4, 2008 banning same-sex marriage to stand. The constitutional amendment defines marriage as between a man and a woman. Advocates on both sides presented dozens of briefs to the California Supreme Court. The Court agreed to hear the case on March 5, extremely quickly by judicial standards, and it has three months after oral arguments to rule.

State Attorney General Jerry Brown wants the court to reject the ban, arguing it curtails the right to liberty, paramount in the state constitution. Ban proponents say California's charter gives the people broad latitude to make laws and set policy, which the court cannot change. (R 2/3/09)

DRAMATIC RISE IN HOME SCHOOLING

★ WASHINGTON, DC – A December report by the U.S. Department of Education shows an ever-growing trend toward home schooling. Approximately 1.5 million children (2.9 percent of school-age children) were being home schooled in the spring of 2007, representing a 36 percent relative increase since 2003 and a 74 percent relative increase since 1999. One private researcher estimates that as many as 2.5 million school-age children were educated at home during the 2007-2008 school year. The new report shows the importance of federal and state policymakers safeguarding families' right to educate their children at home. (HF 1/28/09)

CHARITABLE GIVING STILL A PRIORITY

★ ADDISON, TX – A new Wilson Research Strategies survey commissioned by Dunham+Company finds that U.S. Christians don't plan to cut their giving to faith-based groups, despite the sluggish economy. While 58 percent said they are cutting back on entertainment and short-term savings, only 43 percent said they had reduced or stopped giving to charity. Of those who attend religious services more than once a week, 60 percent said they intended to keep giving the same in 2009, while 21 percent said they intended to give more. Rick Dunham said the survey presents "a great opportunity for pastors to remind people to make sure they put a priority on investment in Kingdom work, so that in fact the Kingdom can move forward even in this economic climate." (ONN 2/2/09)

GLOBAL DAY OF PRAYER MAY 31

Unite with millions worldwide | www.gdopusa.org

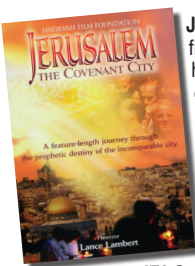
NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER MAY 7

Plan and participate in your state | www.ndptf.org

JUST PRAY NO TO DRUGS APRIL 18-19

Global Anti-drug Abuse Day of Prayer | www.justprayno.org

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JERUSALEM: THE COVENANT CITY by Lance Lambert / Hugh Kitson – Why do world leaders wage war for the Temple Mount and rage over "the final status" of Jerusalem? Part 1 of "Jerusalem: The Covenant City" traces the prophetic history of the Holy City. Part 2 explores what the Bible has to say about Jerusalem's present and future destiny. We discover that as we move into the third millennium of the Christian era, the destiny of the whole world hinges upon the destiny of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel. This 108-minute documentary will bring you a memorable message of challenge and hope. Order IFA Item #DV046, \$15.95 + \$3.50 shipping. Credit card orders toll-free 1-800-872-7729 or via IFA's secure eBookstore www.ifabooks.com.

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A higher standard. A higher purpose.

"Son of man, say to her: 'You are a land not cleansed or rained on in the day of indignation'. . . So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap . . . on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.'" —Ez 22:24,30