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Gleanings

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Connecting the Dots



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President

Since childhood, Kay (a real person but not her real name) had been gifted in horticulture. Through the course of her six decades of life, she had always been able to grow beautiful flowers. It was easy, effortless, and natural for her. The life and beauty of flowers brought her a sense of tranquility.

Like many sexagenarians today, Kay is divorced and lives meagerly. She has two grown daughters; the oldest is forty-one. During the time Kay was raising her girls, she was a nominal Christian. After her daughters were grown, Kay experienced a spiritual awakening and began to grow in Christ. Her worldview changed and this led to changes in attitude and lifestyle. At the time these changes occurred, her daughters were grown and married. Because of their own narcissistic focus, they knew little of their mother's transformation.

Today Kay's daughters are divorced. The oldest is bitter and angry. She lives with Kay and feels free to vent her anger on her mother. Kay is patient and kind with her dysfunctional daughter.

Kay's home was always filled with beautiful flowers. But one day Kay noticed that her flowers were dying—something she had never experienced before. She began to pray and seek the Lord. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, she began to search her home. In her daughter's bathroom, she found a statue of Buddha. Through a conversation with her daughter, Kay discovered her daughter was worshipping the idol. Kay then knew why the flowers were dying—spiritual warfare in her home was being manifested in the tangible realm.

Kay connected the dots. She understood the truth that spiritual reality drives physical reality and therefore solutions to physical problems must begin with sound spiritual truth.

This concept is illustrated by the nation of Israel's history in the Old Testament. Israel was given a simple test:

- Obey God and be economically and politically blessed.
- Disobey God and be economically and politically judged.

Many texts convey this truth. Consider, for example, Deuteronomy 28 and Psalms 1.

The connection between spiritual obedience to God and physical blessings remains true today. Those who profess to know Christ and live consistent with their profession will be blessed (Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:11–13). Therefore sound spiritual reality is the foundation for sound physical living. An adroit solution to any problem in the physical realm must begin with sound theology. Any attempt to solve physical problems without addressing the underlying spiritual reality will be marginally effective at best.

Today the world is enveloped in economic calamity. With few exceptions, it appears political pundits offer solutions that, at best, mildly recognize the underlying spiritual errors and, at worst, totally ignore it. These leaders will not profoundly solve the problems because their approach is naturalistic. Naturalists believe the only relevant reality is physical reality—all problems are rooted in nature and are therefore solved in the natural.

One can see this worldview at work by looking at Greece's economic calamity and other European nations immersed in a quagmire of debt. In all the articles I have read during the past year about this situation, I have yet to find a leader seeking to address the underlying spiritual problems that are being manifested as economic problems.

May I suggest that the root cause of the European financial crisis is idolatry? By this I mean that Europeans

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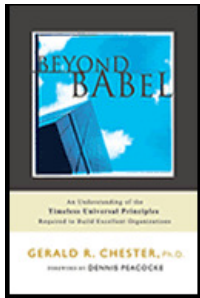


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have abandoned the worship of the one true God, Jesus Christ, and have embraced false gods, such as money and pleasure. Consequently, Europeans are seeking solutions to their economic problems as naturalists. Europeans have not connected the dots.

But Europe is not alone. The situation in Europe may be a harbinger of future economic issues for the United States.

In his recent State of the Union address, President Obama offered an optimistic spin on myriad problems in the United States. He addressed many issues, such as, unemployment, worker skills training, education, equal pay for women, illegal immigration, energy independence, renewable clean energy, financial reforms, global warming, nationalism, foreign affairs, VA benefits, taxes, deficit reduction, mortgage refinancing, financial crimes, congressional conflicts of interest, judicial approval of presidential appointments, and the trade deficit. Though nationalistic in tone, he claimed America is the one indispensable nation in world affairs. Though he was optimistic about America's future, he also acknowledged that trust in the federal government needs to be rebuilt. Government must become more efficient and clearly focused on regulating irresponsible behavior but not unduly interfere. He embraced Lincoln's philosophy—government should do for the people *only* what the people cannot do for themselves. President Obama stressed the need for fair play and shared responsibility, noting that an America built to last will be built on shared responsibility.

In all his rhetoric, the president never mentioned God. His worldview is naturalistic and pragmatic. Ideology, he commented, is not the issue but collaborating on ideas that make common sense will enable America to return to her former glory. Like Europeans, President Obama apparently assumes that the solutions to the economic and political calamity will be found in natural reality not in spiritual reality.

It is a practice in the United States for the opposing party to offer a response to the State of the Union address. Governor Mitch Daniels of Indiana provided this response.

Governor Daniels does not share the president's optimism on the state of the union. He believes that the state of the union is grave. The United States is faced with debt issues similar to those of Greece; indeed, the country is only a short distance behind Greece and other nations with excessive debt. The federal government borrows one dollar out of every three dollars it spends. Young people today will be the first generation in US history to face a future less promising than their parents'.

Like the president, however, the governor believes the challenges we face are not ideological but mathematical and pragmatic. He stated that the only way out of the economic quandary is to grow the private economy. To do so will require a simplified tax code, fewer tax loop holes, lower tax rates, and reduced business regulation.

Also like President Obama, Governor Daniels noted that everyone should contribute to the national recovery. Americans must unite. Tough decisions need to be made concerning the use of government funds.

In conclusion, Governor Daniels said nothing is wrong with the state of our union that the American people can't fix.

Sadly, as with Europe and President Obama, Governor Daniels appears to be a naturalist and a pragmatist. He, too, failed to connect the dots. There was nothing in his response about the underlying spiritual reality; that is, about idolatry at work in America. Both the president and the governor expressed worldviews disconnected from Christ.

Neither the president nor the governor displayed Kay's wisdom. Kay is not a naturalist or pragmatist. She is a person with a biblical view of reality. When she saw her flowers dying and found an idol in her home, she connected the dots. She knew the idol must be removed because idolatry, which is unsound spiritual reality, was being manifested through death—unsound natural reality.

So it is for the United States and Europe. Until the idolatry is addressed, there will be no lasting solutions to the economic and political calamity. The economy may improve some, but man's financial engineering based on a naturalistic worldview will never fully solve the problems because naturalistic thinking rejects God and therefore embraces idolatry.

Lasting economic and political blessings are rooted in the worship of and obedience to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; therefore the only real lasting solution to these global economic and political problems is to return to Christ and build on him. This means that a biblical worldview will provide the only sound basis for building a prosperous society.

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