

their naval forces into a decisive battle when the Americans attempted to retake the Philippines. They set in motion an immense operation, including a clever plan to lure Admiral "Bull" Halsey's main task force away from the invasion site in Leyte Gulf. Sending a small fleet to the north near Luzon, they induced Halsey to follow and drew him away from the landings.

A divided sphere of command compounded Halsey's mistake in taking the Japanese "bait." Admiral Thomas Kinkaid was responsible for protecting the American landings by guarding Suriago Strait, the southern entrance to Leyte Gulf. Admiral Halsey, responsible for the northern entrance, a passage called the San Bernardino Strait, was days away in the north, pursuing the Japanese diversion near Luzon. The divided command led to a communications failure. Kinkaid and Halsey each assumed the other was guarding the vital northern entrance to Leyte Gulf and the vulnerable landing beaches. This confusion led to Kinkaid's famous message to Halsey, "Who is guarding the San Bernardino Strait?"

On the morning of October 25, 1944, the main Japanese fleet under Admiral Kurita suddenly emerged in Leyte Gulf from the San Bernardino Strait. Finding no significant American opposition covering the exposed landing beaches, Kurita turned due south and steamed directly toward Leyte, where thousands of American soldiers and marines, along with unarmed transport and supply vessels, now lay unguarded by any heavy U.S. surface units. The only impediment between the Japanese and the landing area was a surprised and considerably weaker screen of American destroyers, destroyer escorts, and small carriers, now suddenly facing the superior might of a Japanese fleet of battleships and cruisers.

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Who Is Guarding the San Bernardino Strait?

An urgent plea to pastors and Christian leaders...

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Sometime ago I had occasion to read a riveting account of the Battle of Leyte Gulf. Though largely forgotten except by military historians and aging World War II veterans, it was the greatest naval battle in U.S. history, perhaps in world history. It resulted from a high stakes gamble by the Japanese, one that almost succeeded, thanks to the temporary lapses of two of the Navy's best fighting admirals. A military disaster of great magnitude was prevented only by the heroism of a handful of U.S. skippers who saw the sudden danger and knew what they had to do, even though it meant confronting the might of the Japanese navy outnumbered and outgunned. They sailed into harm's way with little hope of surviving because they knew the price of inaction or retreat was far greater than losing their own lives and their ships. I was struck not just by the heroism that saved the day for the Americans, but also by the series of decisions and errors on both sides that culminated in this extraordinary climax. I saw inescapable parallels between the errors of those long-ago naval commanders and the priorities of major Christian leaders of today as they attempt to wage the 'culture war' that is dividing our nation and steadily eroding its moral and spiritual foundations.

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In October 1944, General Douglas MacArthur began to redeem his promise to the people of Philippines, "I shall return." The campaign to liberate the Philippines opened with the invasion of the island of Leyte by the U.S. Army and Marine Corps. But after a long string of defeats, the Japanese had decided to throw virtually all

It should have been no contest. No one had been guarding the San Bernardino Strait and the remaining American ships, smaller and fewer in number than the oncoming enemy, could hardly hope to take on a major Japanese fleet and prevent disaster. But they did exactly that. Realizing the gravity of the moment and heedless of their own peril, the smaller American force immediately went into a full scale attack against the vastly superior Japanese. Their unexpected heroism, akin to a cavalry charge at sea, along with the unlikely scenario that the San Bernardino Strait would have been left so unguarded, fooled the Japanese into thinking they faced a greater force and had blundered into a trap. After a brisk battle which inflicted severe losses on the weak American screen, the Japanese veered off to the east and away from the American troops at Leyte Gulf, thereby sparing the landing forces from destruction. Many military historians count this the greatest moment in American naval history, an unlikely victory against incredible odds. The most significant naval battle in history had been decided by the aggressive action of the smaller destroyers against Japanese battleships and cruisers. Naval historian Thomas Cutler says, "What the men in those ships did on that October morning deserves to be the focal point of the nation's naval heritage.... Commander Ernest Evans received the Medal of Honor, posthumously, for his incredible courage while taking his destroyer Johnston 'in harm's way.'" (THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF, p. 297).

Admirals Kinkaid and Halsey were by no means military incompetents. Halsey is rightly regarded as one of America's outstanding leaders in World War II. Yet their combined strategic errors and failure to coordinate their actions almost led to a serious defeat of American forces in Leyte Gulf. So it is with many larger Christian ministries in-

During the heat of battle Kinkaid and Halsey misjudged the intentions of their enemies and were tricked into making serious strategic errors that nearly cost them victory. The same happens in today's spiritual warfare. Many Christian leaders of major ministries pursue lesser enemies while a major enemy force, the liberal humanist left with their homosexual allies, capture the exposed children of America in the public schools. A minority of children are protected by a few Christian school and home-school associations, teachers, parents, and their conservative education allies. Like those few American destroyers, this small force stands alone to face the leviathan government school system, the liberal educational establishment, and their allies in both political parties. These brave few are charging into the teeth of the enemy while many of the best Christian ministries and denominations either remain unaware of the gravity of the humanist and homosexual agendas or are unwilling to face the problem head-on with a realistic plan that has some possibility of success. They are pursuing diversions and leaving the most vital battle area, our children, unprotected.

I believe no part of today's struggle for the heart and soul of our civilization equals the importance of the struggle for the K-12 Christian education of our children. The difficulty of convincing Christian leaders and pastors of the imminent danger that the current liberal agenda represents to their children, occurs because some will not take the time to study this issue and become informed, for to do so might compel them to action. Too many pastors seem content to allow the liberal humanists to indoctrinate their children during the week while on Sundays they urge their members to engage in peripheral political battles. But those who understand the absolute necessity of the

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involved in the cultural and spiritual war for the soul of the country. When Christians split commands, major ministry leaders seldom talk to one another or coordinate their efforts. Sometimes acting as competitors rather than allies or brethren, they choose battles they cannot win and even if won, would not seriously change the spiritual culture of the nation. Our ministries mistakenly concentrate only on remediation, and neglect prevention. Even the struggle against abortion and homosexuality, important as they may be, are struggles against the symptoms of a Christ-rejecting culture.

The best ministries often chase diversions instead of addressing root causes. Leaving the San Bernardino Strait unguarded, they concern themselves with boycotts, lobbying, legislation, political action, and thus expose the children of America to mortal danger by not developing a serious plan to rescue children from statist humanistic agendas as Goals 2000 and homosexual activists' capturing children in the public schools. Christian ministries in 2004 put all their efforts behind passing a FMA (Federal Marriage Amendment), an almost impossible feat in this current political culture, when the real target of the humanist left and homosexual movement may have always been the children. We ask, "Who is guarding the children of America?"

Christian community's recommitting itself to K-12 Christian education have no choice but to take on the battleships and heavy cruisers of the liberal humanist establishment. Someone must go into harm's way and wage a brisk and vigorous battle for the children as never before. This is the only battle that counts now, and we are now at the decisive moment in that battle. The final battle in the cultural will not be fought over the FMA, abortion, decency or gambling but over who will educate this and future generations of children.

Ministry leaders and pastors must understand the need to return to this crucial battlefield and guard the most vulnerable members of our families and communities by providing K-12 Christian education for the children. Reform of the public school system is not possible. Instead Christians must come out of that corrupt system, just as the children of Israel left Egypt for the Promised Land. The destructive effects of the humanistic education agenda will only grow worse, but we can at least rescue some of the children if our major ministry and denominational leaders will engage in this crucial battle while there is still time. But they must stop chasing diversions, fighting only symptoms, or engaging in lesser battles which may not impact the spiritual struggle for the soul of America. They must commit some of their energy, resources and personnel to the only plan that can change the tide of battle today, the K-12 Christian education of our children, in Christian day schools or home schooling.