



Searching for a Winner: Jim Lawrence's "Conversation with a Tombstone"; Introduction: Brett Turner Deployed; Duties of a Client Nation

Searching for a Winner
Memorial Day Special - 2002

Lawrence, James T. "Conversation with a Tombstone." In *Reflections on Albany*.
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The older soldier stepped off the train,
Moved slowly upward by the escalator
And out into a brilliant, crisp November day.

Down the long, straight sidewalk,
Across the road
And through the magnificent marble gates
Marking the beginning of the cemetery.

Past the sign asking for quiet respect
To honor those buried there
On the hallowed grounds.

The older soldier stopped momentarily,
Overcome by the contrasting colors of this place.
Yellow, red, and brown trees,
Full in their autumn hues,
Reaching up to a bright blue sky.
The grass, still green,
Interrupted by rows and rows
Of small, rounded white tombstones,
Reaching out in all directions,
Neatly laid side by side,
And running parallel into eternity.

The older soldier began his climb,
Up the steep roads void of any traffic,
Dedicated to foot visitors only.
Past the tourists gathered around
The tomb of the young president,
Who was apparently going to get them
Out of that hellish place,
Until he was untimely struck down
By an assassin's bullet.

Past the Tomb of the Unknown,
Familiar only to God,
And always attended
By the members of the Old Guard.

The older soldier continued his climb,



Breathing more heavily now,
Knees and back beginning to hurt;
Problems he did not have over thirty years ago
When he was humping
The hills and jungles of Vietnam
As a young, eager, infallible twenty-four-year-old.

Past the Tomb of the Unknown,
Around the curved sidewalk to the left
Almost to the American flagpole,
Then off the sidewalk and down the grassy incline,
Through the rows of the small, white stones
To the bottom of the hill.

There, in a place the older soldier and stood
Many times before,
In the shadow of the large oak tree,
He found the marker
Of his colleague and friend.

After a moment to catch his breath
And gather his feelings,
The older soldier spoke:
"How are you, my friend.
Here I am again, just as I promised;
Every year, during the celebration,
I've come over here alone,
To see you.

Your buddies are just up the way,
Older now, like me;
In the hotel hospitality suite,
Smoking and drinking;
Telling lies,
Some avoiding the truth,
Some fighting the battle again,
Some purging their ghosts.

Your name comes up a lot;
You were brave, my friend,
You earned the respect of your men and your country,
You died doing ..."

But the older soldier
Could go no further.
The powerful emotion
Of this spot and this moment
Swept over him,
As it has done every year before.
The older soldier's knees began to buckle,
Not from the walk,
But from the stirring in his soul,
His eyes filling with the tears of the loss,
Blinding him to the realities of the world.



He spoke again,
But with much more emotion and conviction:
"We really miss you ...
No, I really miss you.
Do you remember those times on the ship going over,
After lights out and the men were asleep,
You and I would go up on the top deck
And discuss everything—
Life, love, war, dying.
We were the same age,
But you were so much wiser;
I really listened to you,
Tried to take you advice.
You talked to me
About being a good husband,
About being a good father;
You talked to me about dying;
But I never believed it would come to this.
Why?
Why did you have to be the good soldier
And seek your radio operator
As soon as the firing started;
They saw you, and it got you killed.
Why was I the bad soldier;
I could not find my raidoman
And became another foot soldier and defender;
Why did the good soldier die,
And the bad soldier live,
I don't understand.
I don't understand.

But I miss you,
I need to talk to you;
By man's standards,
I have done all right;
But to hell with man's standards!
I've fought that battle over and over again,
A thousand times in my mind;
Why did we not
Put our companies on line
And assault the enemy
To our right flank.
Why did we not overrun the bastards
And save all our men
And become heroes.
But we didn't, or couldn't.
You died, I lived.
Who has it better?
Who has it better?"

The older soldier paused,
Began to gather himself:
"Your wife and son are fine;
I saw them last year.
Like I told you before,
She married another good man



Who has taken care of her and your boy;
But they still miss you.
After all these years,
They still miss you.

I need to go now ...

The older soldier took a few steps forward,
Past the foot of the grave;
Leaned over and reached out,
Touched the rounded top of the tombstone,
Whispered softly,
"Good-bye buddy;
Until next year."
And slowly started back down the grassy hill
Into the starkness of reality.

Introduction:

In the course of our nation's history, from the War for Independence through the Islamic War, its freedom has been achieved, defended, and maintained by the sacrifice of millions of young men who have served in the various branches of its armed forces. Those who have died in battle now total well over 650-thousand. The total list of casualties, dead and wounded, exceeds 2-million, 600-thousand. Today we salute first of all our fallen dead, secondly all those who have answered the tocsin's call to defend the colors of our client nation, past and present.

The following article appeared in yesterday's paper:

"57 Army Reservists Get Call to Duty for War on Terror," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 25 May 2002, p. 21:

The Army has tapped 57 soldiers from an Army Reserve unit in St. Louis for a stint of active duty as part of the war on terrorism.

The unit is the 329th Quartermaster Battalion. The tentative date for the call-up is Friday.

The Army refused as a matter of security to say where the reservists would head once they reported to active duty. Some Reserve and National Guard units have gone to Central Asia; some have filled in for regular Army units that have gone to Central Asia; still others have augmented the regular Army.

The 329th Quartermaster Battalion's duties consist of logistical supply for troops in the field. It manages distribution of assets through subordinate units under its supervision, such as transportation, clothing, medical care, food distribution, fuel, and other provisions.

Members of the Company could be deployed for as much as a year. In the meantime their families must manage daily exigencies without them. We thus take on the obligation of providing prayer support and whatever assistance we can offer in the interim. As a result, next month we will add a new category to our Establishment Prayer List called "Active Duty." The first two names to be added to this category are the 329th's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Jim Donahue and the Headquarters Detachment Commander, Capt. Brett M. Turner.



Brett, a member of Grace Doctrine church from his youth, was graduated from Virginia Military Institute in May 1990 and was designated as Distinguished Military Graduate. While at VMI he attained officer rank in the crops and was elected to the Kappa Alpha Honorary Society, an organization whose inductees are burdened with the objective of preserving the gentlemanly ideals of character and religion of which Robert E. Lee is considered its stereotype.

At graduation, Brett was commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Army and shortly thereafter assigned to the Tanker Training School at Fort Knox, Kentucky, where he learned the ins and outs of commanding an M-1A1 tank crew. He learned well as indicated by the fact his crew won the top award for his class. Upon completion he was assigned to the First Armor Division as a platoon leader and transferred to Germany in November 1990. On arrival he learned his unit had been deployed to Saudi Arabia as part of the VIIth Corps's assignment in Operation Desert Shield.

On Sunday, 24 February 1991, he led his platoon of 4 M-1A1s into the ground-war phase of Operation Desert Storm and distinguished himself in the 100-hour battle of February 24-28 that liberated Kuwait from Iraqi control. In doing so, Brett continued a tradition begun in his family four generations ago. His great-grandfather, Gordon Johnson, fought in World War I; his grandfather, Charles Lanterman, in World War II; his father, Melvin L. Turner, in Vietnam; and he in Operation Desert Storm. He also extended another tradition begun by his grandfather Lanterman and father, Mel, by being awarded the Bronze Star.

Following his tour of duty, Brett left active duty and joined the Army Reserve unit here in St. Louis where he lives with his wife, Cyndi, and his two daughters, Libby and Ginny. Since returning to St. Louis he has been employed in the private sector, presently with Southwestern Bell from which he is now on leave of absence. He is scheduled this August to be promoted to the rank of major. Now, called again to active duty, Brett is about to be deployed, along with the other 56 men of the 326th Quartermaster Battalion, for duty in the Islamic War. It is now the obligation of this congregation to pray for Brett, the members of his battalion, and their families. I commit to Brett the assurance that the members of this congregation stand ready to assist Cyndi and their daughters in any way that we can in his absence.

Brett, so that all here may know for whom they are praying I would like for you to stand and be recognized. Ladies and gentlemen, Capt. Brett M. Turner.

And Cyndi, so that all here may know for whom they have pledged assistance, will you please stand and be recognized: Mrs. Cyndi Turner.

Brett, it is because of men such as yourself that we continue to be the beneficiaries of a free society and the reason we pause to pay respects to your fallen comrades who have gone before.

For a client nation to maintain its status as God's enclave in *cosmos diabolicus*, it is also essential that it have within its population a corps of spiritual winners who perform the duties that define a client nation. There must first of all be pastors who consistently teach doctrine to their assigned flocks. Those who grow in grace under their teachings must advance within the system of the four spiritual mechanics to a level of spiritual sophistication. From this high ground they must come to influence their own family, friends, and associates by executing and demonstrating the effectiveness and power of the plan of God. As others orient to this influence the corps of winners grows and has invisible historical impact on each succeeding generation.

Principles of establishment viewpoint and the doctrines of Protestant theology have been central to the freedom and prosperity enjoyed by all Americans since our nation was founded in 1776. The result of this establishment and doctrinal thought has produced a population who has accepted, supported, and sustained a culture that fulfills the five duties of client nation function:

- 1-Evangelism of the lost.
- 2-Communication of doctrine to the saved.



- 3-Preservation and distribution of the completed canon of Scripture.
- 4-Deployment and support of missionaries, both foreign and domestic.
- 5-Provision of a haven of refuge for the Jewish Diaspora along with a pro-Semitic foreign policy.

From this system emerges a Pivot that sustains the client nation in every generation under the principle that Jesus Christ controls history. However, it must always be remembered that the client nation is an enclave in the devil's world. It is hated by Lucifer and his demonic hoards. It is assaulted by their emissaries who are motivated and driven to action by demon influence at best and demon possession at worst. It is under constantly misunderstood by those who are ignorant of establishment and doctrinal thought and consequently the invisible impact of the believer is an ongoing requirement for the maintenance of divine protection.

Once the client nation is established, divine viewpoint becomes the *sine qua non* for the preservation and maintenance of freedom. There will inevitably be times when circumstances dictate that this freedom be defended, whether from uprisings by the malcontents and hoi polloi within the nation or from assaults by predator nations or the guerrilla tactics of terrorists. On every occasion, such disturbances are the result of behavior motivated by those who are without divine viewpoint and are therefore led by doctrines of demons.

That they occasionally interrupt the domestic tranquility of the client nation can be explained by comparing it to the sophisticated believer's providential preventive suffering or momentum testing. On these occasions the spiritual inventory of the nation is so strong divine sovereignty puts its spiritual fabric under the pressure of testing in order to prevent arrogance from asserting its destructive influence.

However, on other occasions, upheavals are permitted as collective discipline to the people of the client nation because its pastors have failed, its Pivot has shrunk, the power of divine viewpoint is absent in the land, and decadence has become the dominant historical trend.

In either case, the client nation is forced to call upon its armed forces to defend its shores and to protect its citizens.

It should be stated that the people of a client nation must have the resolve to defend the freedom, the property, the lives, and the tranquility of its citizens. It should never become engaged in conflict for any other reason. However, once threatened or attacked, it must be willing to call forth its men of arms and its civilian leadership must have the resolve to employ whatever weapons of war are necessary to assure victory over the aggressors.

In order for men to win wars they must possess above all else the attitude of victory. This attitude is founded on the conscious conviction that the ideals for which one fights are absolute principles that are endorsed by a higher power Who will grant victory to those who endeavor to defend them. Such confidence produces the courage that is necessary to engage the enemy and the stomach to inflict the punishment necessary to subdue him.

We find the attitude for victory as a popular subject of commentary by those who have either participated in or observed warfare:

Charlton, James (ed.). *The Military Quotation Book*. Rev. ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002):

Karl von Clausewitz: Two qualities are indispensable: first, an intellect that, even in the darkest hour, retains some glimmerings of the inner light which leads to truth; and second, the courage to follow this faint light wherever it may lead.

Marshal Arthur Lord Tedder: War is no longer a series of battles, but a test of strength of the entire nation, its moral strength as well as physical, brain as well as muscles, and stamina as well as courage.



Lord Moran: Discipline, control from without, can only be relaxed safely when it is replaced by something higher and better, control from within.

Barry Goldwater: Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. Moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue.

Gen. Philip H. Sheridan: The proper strategy consists in inflicting as telling blows as possible on the enemy's army, and then in causing the inhabitants so much suffering that they must long for peace, and force the government to demand it. The people must be left with nothing but their eyes to weep with after the war.

B. H. Liddell Hart: Paralysis, rather than destruction, is the true aim of war, and the most far-reaching in its effects.

B. H. Liddell Hart: The enemy nation's will to resist is subdued by the fact or threat of making life so unpleasant and difficult for the people that they will comply with your terms rather than endure this misery.

Gen. Dwight Eisenhower: Morale is the greatest single factor in successful wars.

Marshall Sir William Slim: Morale is a state of mind. It is that intangible force which will move a whole group of men to give their last ounce to achieve something, without counting the cost to themselves.

Robert Taber: The guerrilla fights the war of the flea, and his military enemy suffers the dog's disadvantages: too much to defend; too small, ubiquitous, and agile an enemy to come to grips with.

Fulgencio Batista: A government needs one hundred soldiers for every guerrilla it faces.

Sun-tzu: Subtle and insubstantial, the expert leaves no trace; divinely mysterious, he is inaudible. Thus he is master of his enemy's fate.

Ronal Reagan: Of the four wars in my lifetime none came about because the United States was too strong.

H. L. Menkin: There is no record in history of a nation that ever gained anything valuable by being unable to defend itself.

Gen. George Marshall: We have tried since the birth of our nation to promote our love of peace by a display of weakness. This course has failed us utterly.

Gen. Robert E. Lee: Do your duty in all things. You cannot do more, you should never wish to do less.

Gen. George Patton: The object of war is not to die for your country but to make the other bastard die for his.

Theodore Roosevelt: The man who loves other countries as much as his own stands on a level with the man who loves other women as much as he loves his own wife.

These are quotations on war by men who have fought them, sent others into the fray, or observed the results. However, the attitude required to do physical combat in defense of a client nation is advanced immeasurably by the possession of divine viewpoint by its warriors. Knowledge of Bible doctrine and an understanding of the laws of divine establishment give credence and meaning to the dirty business of war and give clear reason and purpose to the goal of total victory. This attitude is expressed in Scripture. And we will observe its applications in passages where it writers use the strategy and tactics of warfare to teach and illustrate the ethereal battles of the Invisible War.



II. Mental Attitude of the Winner:

Those who expect to be winners on the battlefields of human history or in the more sophisticated engagement of the angelic conflict must develop a mental attitude of victory.

This mental attitude can be summed up by the Greek word **ἀσκήσις, askēsis**, which means literally “to practice, to exercise, to train.” Herodotus and Pindar, fifth-century B.C. Greek writers used it in the spiritual sense of exercising a virtue.

The word came to describe the training of the body in the sense of gymnastic and athletic exercises.

These two concepts came together to define spiritual asceticism in the sense of exercise in the taming of the passions and the doing of righteous acts; conscious exercise in the control of thoughts and impulses.

As the athlete trains his body he is forced to abstain from certain activities and behaviors that otherwise would be viewed as legitimate, even normal. Likewise, in the development of the spiritual life, the believer must employ self-control and self-discipline if he is to remain undistracted in his spiritual advance.

When a person becomes devoted to an idea he inevitably finds that he must become committed to a system of excellence in the achievement of that objective. In the spiritual life, that system of excellence is compliance with the four spiritual mechanics.