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Laughter

By Foy Valentine

Whatsoever things are...lovely...think on these things."

Philippians 4:8

What could be more lovely than a good belly laugh?

Even a nice little chuckle is not to be sneezed at.

And a good joke is better than a hundred jeremiads. You know, those organ recitals in which operations are enumerated, wrongs are recalled, and troubles are mournfully rehashed.

Not to labor the point unduly, consider the considerable benefits of mirth.

Humor, it seems to me, is God's great gift to a species prone to failure, misery, depression, wrath, remorse, sickness, disease, gout, cataracts, the common cold, war, cruelty, cancer, poverty, pain, exploitation, prejudice, hunger, pride, failure, misery, abuse, torture, violence, and death. If you ask me, who could laugh in the face of such adversities, then I would like to ask you, who could keep his head above water at all without the life raft of laughter to cling to in all those wild waters?

Here, then, is a salute to laughter.

Laughter may well derive from our having been made in the likeness of God. He worked six days in creation, you know, and then washed his hands good and took the next day off. Sitting down he propped up his feet, surveyed his handiwork, and with a broad smile, allowed that it was good. Who knows but that he may have laughed out loud at the ludicrous hippopotamus, at the antics of the monkey, and at *ha adam*, the adam, hairless, teetering around on two legs, and naked as a jaybird?

And we can well imagine that God smiled at the light, at the

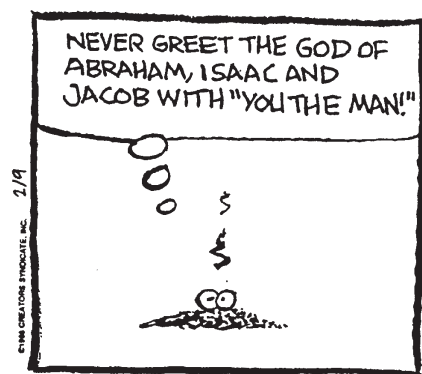
dry land, at violets, at ripe peaches, at fleecy clouds, at the blue sky, at the fantastic fire he had kindled in the sun, at the splendor of the full moon rising, at the sunset, and at "the stars also" (Genesis 1:16).

Common folk wisdom would have us believe that a spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down. Actually, I can't quite see it. Still the wise seer of Proverbs 17:22 allowed that "a merry heart doeth good like a medicine." The Psalmist has said that a body who loves righteousness and hates wickedness, that is, a person who has his moral head screwed on reasonably straight is anointed by the Lord "with the oil of gladness" (Psalms 45:7). The author of Hebrews had hid this word about "the oil of gladness" in his, or her, heart (Hebrews 1:9), right up front. Well-being, the peace that passes understanding, the smile that turns easily into laughter are "the oil of gladness" that is the natural corollary of righteousness.

It is always a good day for me when Warren Hultgren, my friend of fifty years, calls me long distance for a leisurely visit. He is fun. His disposition is sunny. He is consistently pleasant. He is upbeat. And I could never ever tell you how many of his stories, yarns, jokes, frivolities, artful exaggerations, and ludicrous little lies, we have, together, laughed at uproariously. Nowadays, I can be driving down the highway all by myself and still burst out laughing at one of his tales which he told me twenty years ago. That tale, I estimate has been worth a minimum of \$50,000 to me.

My warm friendship of a lifetime shared with Charles

(continued on page 6)



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One Small Kind Word for JFK

By Charles Wellborn

[Dr. Charles Wellborn is Professor of Religion Emeritus, Florida State University, Tallahassee and for 20 years was Dean of the FSU Overseas Campus in London.]

In the past few months America—and the world—have been deluged with articles, books, and television documentaries revealing the alleged sordid details of the private, and especially, sexual life of former president John F. Kennedy. Indulging in its currently most popular blood-sport, the media has pulled no punches in its pursuit of scandal—some of it, quite possibly, true but some of it undoubtedly based on malicious hearsay and self-serving assumption.

I have read and watched this material with mixed emotions. I have no defense to offer for Kennedy's moral failures, but I must admit to being depressed by the whole sorry spectacle. I find it sad to watch the image of a former American hero being gleefully destroyed. After his tragic assassination in Dallas, Kennedy was elevated by the American public—and by the world at large—almost to the position of a martyred saint. It was perhaps inevitable that his feet of clay should be painfully laid bare.

As a perhaps irrelevant interjection here, I would predict that much the same fate awaits someone like Princess Diana, whose unexpected death so recently produced quite unnatural paroxysms of grief in Britain and indeed almost everywhere. Once the sensation-seeking journalists and revisionist historians do their work, the Princess will not fare well. She too had feet of clay.

In this connection several observers of the modern scene have pointed out the disturbing fact that today we have few, if any, heroes. I am convinced that all of us, young and old, need heroes—role-models, objects of genuine veneration and admiration. I confess that once John Kennedy was one of my heroes, based on what I understood of his political stances and compassion for the little man. I have now lost my hero and find that substantially more painful than losing something like a mere appendix. The world is a bleaker place without heroes.

As I write here in England, a continuing television series called "Heroes" is in progress on the BBC. A distinguished journalist, writer, and former Member of Parliament, Brian Walden, is, each week, giving a thirty-minute lecture on heroic figures of the past. Thus far, he has dealt with Winston Churchill and Abraham Lincoln. His intention is, he says, to consider such figures in total, "warts and all." Unfortunately, he spends almost all of his time dealing with the "warts." Neither Churchill nor Lincoln emerges from his scathing scrutiny with much honor. I find his muckraking a thoroughly depressing spectacle.

As a Christian, I have been constrained by all of this to go back to my New Testament and to the teachings of my Master. Years

ago a dear friend of mine, now dead, took up his first pastorate in a Baptist church in an East Texas town. As he began his sermon on his first Sunday morning he placed a rough piece of rock on the front of the pulpit, reminding his congregation of the words of Jesus as he knelt beside the prostrate form of a wretched woman taken in adultery. "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." I list that statement among a number of the teachings of Jesus that most of us find difficult and do exegetical cartwheels trying to explain away.

Perhaps my friend's gesture is a bit too dramatic for many of us, but there is hard truth behind the gesture. Jesus certainly condemned moral sin wherever he found it, but *he never rejoiced in it*. In the Kennedy affair I have been repelled by the eager interest of much of the public in every prurient detail of the story and, especially, by the unholy joy of some, openly exulting in the downfall of an American idol. The moral weakness and sexual turpitude of another human being, however exalted his position, is not a valid source of amusement or delight.

Every moral condemnation that issued from the lips of Jesus was interlaced with profound compassion. He knew and taught that all people are sinners, each in his/her own way. No one human being's transgressions and weaknesses are carbon copies of someone else's moral failings. We each sin in our own way, and all sins are abhorrent in the sight of God. Few, if any, of us would relish the prospect of the public revelation of every detail of our private lives, especially those incidents and episodes we have diligently sought to forget. It ill behooves us to gloat over the public moral nudity of someone else.

Just as important, I think, is that we remember that no human being is *totally* bad. We are all intricate mixtures of faith and doubt, selfishness and altruism, love and lust. Which is precisely why all of us—the John Kennedys and the John Does—must finally rely on the immeasurable grace of a loving God.

All of this reflection has led me to remember one small incident in my personal life, an incident which involved President Kennedy. Totally unimportant in the larger scheme of things, it is for me, nevertheless, a poignant memory.

The 1960 presidential campaign between Kennedy and Richard Nixon was bitterly fought, nowhere more so than in Texas, where I was a pastor at the time. In our area the campaign steadily degenerated in tone and spirit. Ignoring the many real and important differences of policy and qualification between the two candidates, the major debate came to center on whether Kennedy, by upbringing and practice a Roman Catholic Christian, should be elected president. Platforms and pulpits reverberated to the claims of the prophets of doom. A dread picture was painted: if Kennedy were elected, the White House

would be the servant of the papacy and national policy would be directed from some secret room in the Roman Vatican.

Political feeling was intense in the city where I served as a pastor. I did not believe then, and do not believe now, that it is part of the job of a minister to tell his congregation how to vote in a partisan political contest. And as a practical matter, when I stepped into my pulpit on Sunday morning I faced in the pews one faithful deacon who was chairman of the county Democratic organization and another equally faithful deacon who was chairman of the county Republican party. I certainly had no desire to be involved in any sort of political controversy.

Then something significant happened. The pastor of the most influential Baptist church in the city decided to use his pulpit on a Sunday morning in early October to mount an openly partisan attack on Senator Kennedy. His tirade was based entirely on the fact that Kennedy was a Roman Catholic, and he used as his primary piece of evidence the so-called “Knights of Columbus Oath,” which supposedly bound the members of that Catholic men’s organization to a bloody persecution of all Protestants.

I knew—and I could not believe that my seminary-educated colleague did not know—that the “Oath,” over and over again, had been discredited and proved fraudulent by reputable scholars of all faiths and none. I also knew that there was no evidence whatever to show that Kennedy subscribed to any of the beliefs set forth in that forgery. I was appalled and dismayed. There seemed to me no ethical or Christian justification for my fellow pastor’s action.

The attack on Kennedy was picked up by the local press and then by statewide and national newspapers. It received headline attention. Though I felt strongly about the whole matter, my response as a careful man (which I believed myself to be) was strictly limited. I regularly wrote a column called “From the Pastor’s Study” for our church newspaper, distributed only to the members of our congregation. I used that column the following week to set out what I entitled “A Call for Fair Play.” I detailed the indisputable evidence for the fraudulent nature of the so-called “Oath,” and I urged my people to make their own decisions as to how to vote, based on the important and certainly debatable genuine political issues.

I did not foresee the results. In the same way that the press had seized upon the original attack, they now exploited my strictly church-related remarks. Headlines appeared in the local paper, and national press organizations gave the story wide coverage.

It was, as I remember, a Tuesday afternoon in late October of that year. I was beaver away in the church office when my secretary burst in, obviously in a state of high excitement. “Pastor,” she almost shouted, “Hyannis Port, Massachusetts, is on the telephone. Senator Kennedy wants to speak to you.”

I thought my usually calm and efficient secretary had suddenly had an attack of unexplained intellectual vertigo. But I must admit that I, too, was excited. It is not every day that a minor Baptist preacher gets a telephone call from a man who might well

become President of the United States. When I picked up the phone, an anonymous voice insured that I was the proper person to take the call. And then there came the unmistakable clipped, New England accent of John Kennedy.

“Mr. Wellborn,” he said, “Forgive me for interrupting your busy schedule.” (*My busy schedule!*) “I wondered if I could take a moment of your time (“Yes, Senator, I think I could spare a moment!”) “I want to tell you that we have gotten the press releases on your recent statement calling for fair play in the campaign. After what we’ve been getting recently in Texas, your remarks were like an oasis in the desert. Let me assure you that we will make no use of your statement in our campaign. I have just called to express in all sincerity my respect and gratitude.”

That was it—two minutes at the most. He did not ask me for any further statement or action. He did not even ask me to vote for him. He simply said, in a gracious and, it seemed to me, sincere way, “Thank you.”

So what, you well might say. It was an insignificant incident. And you are probably right, but forgive me if I wonder just a bit. I do not claim in any way to understand John F. Kennedy, but when I view all the dark and sordid stories about him, I feel compelled to mix in one little moment almost forty years ago—one simple, undemanding, “Thank you.”

No one of us understands completely the totality of another human being, even those we love most or who love us. There is something unfathomable to human intelligence about the human soul. Every little human entity is one of the enigmas of the universe, which is one reason why the scientists will never completely analyze us under the microscope or in the laboratory. And that is why one of the “blessed assurances” of the Christian is the faith that the God who stands both behind and in the universe and who called us each one into being **does** know and understand.

The New Testament tells the story of Zaccheus, a miserable little man who one day climbed a sycamore tree in his curiosity to catch a glimpse of Jesus. Beneath the tree Jesus stopped, looked up at that nondescript human specimen, and called him by name. And not only did he name him, but he insisted that he must go home with him. Jesus knew Zaccheus and understood him in all his misery and littleness, just as God knows us all.

I remember one brief moment when John Kennedy and I made personal contact, but I share more than that moment with him. We share our human-ness. My path has been different from his and my weaknesses are peculiar to me, but we have both, I am certain, walked through the same valleys of moral ambiguity and ethical weakness. We professional ethicists, among whom I list myself, work diligently to set our standards, rules, regulations, and guidelines for individual and social behavior. But, in the final analysis, we are all human, and we fight a common battle.

That, I suppose, is why I feel constrained by my Christian conscience to say this one small kind word for John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

The View From a Padded Cell

By Hal Harolson

[Hal Harolson practices law in Austin. A regular contributor to *Christian Ethics Today*, he was recently given the John J. Keeter, Jr. Alumni Service Award for distinguished service to the University and to Christian education, the highest award Hardin-Simmons University gives to an alumnus.]

The view from a padded cell?

There isn't any.

I lay on my back on a mattress. The ceiling was padded. The walls were padded. There was no view.

My suicide attempt had failed. The gas had exploded and set fire to the house at 214 Brookview in San Antonio.

The San Antonio State Hospital would be my home for the next three months.

It was cold (December 16, 1962). I had only a mattress to cover with. I was naked. NO clothes because I was dangerous to myself.

The doctor told Judy (my wife of five years) to take Jill (age 4) and go home to be with her parents for Christmas. Judy was six months pregnant.

My depression had continued to worsen. I spent days in bed. Then I would have a manic period where I seemed invincible. Judy had put up with this for nearly a year.

My mind raced. What would happen to my wife and child? What would people think of my failure after 10 years in the ministry? I had been Pastor of two churches. What would those people think?

My education had all been for the ministry. I had graduated with a 3.6 grade point average and been President of the student body my senior year at Hardin-Simmons University.

I had never failed at anything in my life until now. I wanted out of the ministry. God called me to preach 10 years ago. How do I deal with that now?

After six weeks and 13 shock treatments, the psychiatrist said if I didn't leave the ministry he felt I would attempt suicide again or spend years in the state hospital.

I knew this was not what God wanted for me. I made the decision to leave the ministry and was released from the hospital 5 days before our second child (Brad) was born.

I had my ordination revoked. The next six years were spent in the business world as the Personnel Director for a corporation with 600 employees. Then, real estate. Finally, I was the business manager for two doctors including administrator of a 35-bed hospital and clinic, management of ranching operations and a nurs-

ing home, and handling all their personal business.

My mental illness was diagnosed as manic-depressive (later as bi polar) and would be a part of my life as long as I lived.

There were other hospitalizations over the years when depression would reoccur. They were shorter (one to two weeks) because I was on medication and had a relationship with a good doctor.

In 1968, at age 33, I sold out to the doctors. I looked for a profession to enter where my mental illness would not be a handicap. I decided to go to law school. With a wife and three small children, I had to move quickly.

I did not know at the time how unusual it was to be admitted to The University of Texas School of Law in the fall of 1968 without having taken the LSAT and based on an application that was less than one week old.

I determined that law school would not rule my life. I would not be an absentee husband and father for three years. My family was my first priority.

I made a rule that I would go to law school from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. There would be no studying at night or on weekends except during finals. It worked!

This time, I determined to practice law the way I attended law school.

No late hours. No weekends. My own priorities of family, church, and service in the community came first.

We camped out as a family. There were hunting and fishing excursions. Three years passed quickly and, at the age of 37, I received my law degree from The University of Texas School of Law.

No one wanted to hire an "old man" right out of law school, so I hung out a shingle in Austin, Texas as a solo practitioner in general practice.

My practice grew so fast that in six months I became depressed again. I was overwhelmed with the number of clients and the work load. I closed the office.

I referred out all my clients and did not practice for six months. There was no income. We had thought depression was a thing of the past since it had been five years since the last one.

I began again. This time, I determined to practice law the way I attended law school.

No late hours. No weekends. My own priorities of family, church, and service in the community came first.

The law practice has continued for twenty six years in Austin. Judy went to graduate School at The University of Texas at age 40 and has been a psychotherapist in private practice for 20 years.

We have been married for 41 years.

Jill is a social worker in Kerrville. Brad practices law in San Angelo. David spent 5 years as a nuclear officer in the Navy and now works for Applied Materials in Austin, Texas.

We have been actively involved in our church, in the mental health movement and with Hardin-Simmons University (our alma mater).

How did this happen? After the devastation of the suicide attempt and diagnosis as a manic depressive, how have I functioned successfully as an attorney for 26 years?

Here are some of the things that have contributed to my life being what it is at the age of 63.

1. Keep family in first place. Spend time with the children. Plan special time alone with your spouse. This time is sacred. Do not let the practice of law invade it.
2. Keep a place for faith in God and involvement in church. You cannot do it alone.
3. Don't let the practice of law run your life. You can always put in more billable hours or make more money. What's the point if it is at the cost of family, health, and happiness?
4. Give something back to the world in which you live through service to others.
5. Hunt, fish, fly airplanes, golf. Do something that you really enjoy and do it often.
6. Have one or two close friends who aren't lawyers.
7. Exercise. I walk four miles daily after work. I do this four days per week and it is a very positive outlet mentally and physically. Your exercise may be jogging, swimming, golf. Just do it.
8. Have a good doctor and see him/her at least annually. If you are on medication, do not alter the amount without consulting your physician. I have been on lithium for 23 years.
9. Life brings difficulties. These experiences can be used to help people who are going through the same or similar difficulty. Be thankful you have the "gift" of experience to share with others.
10. Be considerate and sensitive to the feelings of those around you. Clerks, taxi drivers, secretaries, law clerks. Even judges and other lawyers.

Live your life so that when you awaken each morning, you can be thankful for a new day...and that your bedroom is not a padded cell.

Laughter

(continued from page 2)

Trentham had such a dimension. Just before he died recently in a terrible car accident, we had occasion to revel together in this tale: it seems that this young preacher was called to two churches on the same day. Not knowing which one to take, but being quite sure that he wanted out of where he was, he went to his old mentor, saying, "What shall I do? I just want, in my ministry, to be where God is." "The old pastor said. "That's easy, son. Go where the money is. God is everywhere." I can still hear his deep, resonant, contagious laugh. (If you won't tell anybody, I'll tell you that I told that at his funeral; and I'm pretty sure he relished it again.)

My Texas Aggie brother, older by five years, and I often call each other long distance to share a small joke, a funny story, a nice turn of phrase, or, rarely, a new blockbuster of humor which simply will not wait until we with mutually advancing auditory challenges (that is French for deafness), can shout it at one another, face to face.

Another friend, Ross Coggins, lights up my whole life with his unique gift of seeing the funny side of things so that any conversation we can manage to have, in person, by phone, or in writing, is a benediction to me, a truly good word.

Laughter's universal appeal is clearly seen in my friend Bruce McIver's phenomenally popular *Stories I Could Not Tell While I Was Pastor*, a funny book now in its twelfth printing and just now released, together with its sequel, *Just As Long As I'm Riding Up Front*, by Guideposts as their featured Spring promotion on a national and international scale.

You can understand why I feel compelled to rise up and call these people blessed. They have employed laughter to our mutual edification, made life's rough places a little smoother, for a little while enabled us to soar above the rough terrain through which we have been stumbling, and obliterate for the moment the nagging pain, the miserable failures, and the everlasting thorns in the flesh which, if allowed to do so, would drain the juices of our souls, gnaw at our spirits, and consume us all.

So.

Smile. It beats frowning.

Chuckle. It beats grouching.

Laugh. It beats crying.

Laughter. Let's celebrate it and thank God for it. It is a lovely thing.



The Station

By Bob Hastings

[Editor's Note: Dr. Robert J. Hastings who died last year left an impressive legacy. As a minister, pastor, editor, teacher, author, radio personality, columnist, and denominational leader, he cut a very wide swath, indeed. His best known writing is presented here as my last salute to a friend whose acquaintance I first made when we were students together in seminary more than 50 years ago. "The Station" has been printed in uncounted magazines, newspapers, and other publications and twice has been used in Ann Landers' column. Bob Hastings himself spoke of this brief essay as "my all-time favorite." It could well be one of yours as it certainly is of mine.]

Tucked away in our subconscious minds is an idyllic vision in which we see ourselves on a long journey that spans an entire continent. We're traveling by train and from the windows, we drink in the passing scenes of cars on nearby highways, of children waving at crossings, of cattle grazing in distant pastures, of smoke pouring from power plants, of row upon row of cotton and corn and wheat, of flatlands and valleys, of city skylines and village halls.

But uppermost in our minds is our final destination—for at a certain hour and on a given day our train will finally pull into the station with bells ringing, flags waving, and bands playing. And once that day comes, so many wonderful dreams will come true.

So restlessly we pace the aisles and count the miles, peering ahead, waiting, waiting, waiting for the station.

"Yes, when we reach the station, that will be it!" we promise ourselves. "When we're eighteen...win that promotion...put the last kid through college...buy that 450 SL Mercedes Benz...pay off the mortgage...have a nest egg for retirement."

From that day on we will all live happily ever after.

Sooner or later, however, we must realize there is no station in this life, no one earthly place to arrive at once and for all. The journey is the joy. The station is an illusion—it constantly out-distances us. Yesterday's a memory, tomorrow's a dream. Yesterday belongs to history, tomorrow belongs to God. Yesterday's a fading sunset. Only today is there light enough to love and live.

So, gently close the door on yesterday and then throw the key away. It isn't the burdens of today that drive men mad, but rather the regret over yesterday and the fear of tomorrow.

"Relish the moment" is a good motto, especially when coupled with Psalm 118:24, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

So stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles. Instead swim more rivers, climb more mountains, kiss more babies, count more stars. Laugh more and cry less. Go barefoot oftener. Eat more ice cream. Ride more merry-go-rounds. Watch more sunsets. Life must be lived as we go along.



Vouchers: The Wrong Medicine For the Ills of Public Education

By Richard V. Pierard

[Dr. Richard V. Pierard is professor of history at Indiana State University.]

One of the most distinctive elements of the Religious Right's attack on public education is the demand that parents be provided with "vouchers" to cover the tuition costs of private schools so their children may obtain an "alternative" education to that provided by the "government" schools. This nostrum operates under such slogans as "choice," "fairness," and "competition," but in fact voucher plans are, as religious liberty expert Edd Doerr stated on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*, "pure snake oil."¹ Granted, public education suffers from numerous maladies and a host of reform-minded "physicians" are prescribing cures for them through their books and consulting services, but those who promote voucher plans are nothing more than educational quacks. In fact, the Religious Right can be expected to be content only if the public schools were rendered extinct, and private or "Christian" schools replaced them as the primary educational structure in our country.

What complicates the discussion is that "school choice" advocates populate other segments of American society as well. Conservatives and libertarians who adhere to other faiths besides evangelical Protestantism or whose religious commitment is minimal are also enthusiasts for this. For them the ideas of "deregulation" and "privatization" are not only applicable to the economic sphere but also to the realm of education. By far the best known of the works espousing this viewpoint is *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*, by John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe.² These two scholars, whose book appears under the imprint of a respected Washington think tank, marshal an impressive body of quantitative data to demonstrate that competition in a market system of control will motivate schools to be more responsive to the needs of their

current and potential clients. The American educational system, they believe, would be greatly improved (in the sense that student achievement would rise) if overbureaucratized, government-run schools were replaced by autonomous, market-driven ones. Public schools should be forced to compete with private schools for tax dollars by offering all parents publicly funded "scholarships," or tuition vouchers, which they could "spend" at any school they choose.

Such ideas had not gained much acceptance until the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. Then, the new right conservatives launched their war against the liberal reforms of the last half-century and promoted market solutions to public problems. They were joined in this struggle by a large number of Protestant evangelicals, who condemned the public schools as repositories of secular humanism. They found allies in the Department of Education, which shifted its emphasis away from public education and tilted toward private education and school choice. All the Republican secretaries of education more or less supported school choice, and Lamar Alexander, in particular, publicly and unreservedly championed the idea. Even a special agency within the department was created, the Center for Choice in Education, which freely distributed materials calling for public support of private schools. Roman Catholics quickly joined in the coalition to promote choice. In the states, grassroots organizers promoted the idea assiduously, and choice measures were placed on ballots or even enacted into law; for example, the notorious Milwaukee experiment promoted by Wisconsin legislator Annette "Polly" Williams. In 1992 President George Bush proposed the "G.I. Bill Opportunity Scholarships for Children," a voucher program that he said would encourage competition and produce a revolution in education. He also declared: "And look at it this way, we're doing the Lord's work for our nation's future."³



Regardless of the strong pressures for voucher programs coming from conservative Republicans and their evangelical Protestant and Roman Catholic allies, the idea is a bad one.

First, *it is the wrong solution to the ills of public education.* As education professor Peter Cookson so well put it, vouchers are “an educational solution in search of a problem.” The fundamental questions facing education are matters of purpose and resources. Markets may provide options, but they cannot define purpose. The market approach does not provide a definitive idea of what education should be—that is, what kind of schools will produce the sort of adults who will be productive citizens. Schools are attacked for many reasons—violence, teachers’ unions, inadequate student achievement, lack of morality. However, the origins of these problems are seldom subjected to examination, such as, a faltering economy, ethnic competition and struggle, and postmodern social values. Would deregulating the school system really address these problems?

The reason why the “deregulation coalition” of political conservatives, libertarians, fundamentalist Christians, and opponents of the welfare state has been so successful is because of their sophisticated disinformation campaign against public institutions, social democracy, and ethnic and cultural diversity.⁴ Their aim is to replace the democratically based school system with one that is much more authoritarian and subject to the whims of the power interests in American society.

In fact, education scholars have demonstrated conclusively that the highly-touted Chubb and Moe study, which, in effect, called for a transformation from democratic control of education to a market system and whose recommendations were favored by the Bush administration, is seriously flawed. What the two researchers did was come with a set of preconceived policy notions and then look for empirical evidence to validate these. They intended to show that the political environment of democratic control (schools are responsible to elected boards and have bureaucracies to carry out policies developed by these boards) was the reason for the problems that public schools experienced. But by manipulating the data to justify market control as the solution, they ended up with “a polemic obfuscated by numbers” whose policy recommendations were not supported by the evidence presented.⁵ In short, there is no empirical foundation for the contention that competition with nonpublic schools will somehow improve public schools.

Second, *a voucher system will harm public education.* In spite of the rhetoric with which we are bombarded from the right, public education is seriously underfunded. It is always the isolated cases of overpaid administrators and inflexible teachers’ unions that we

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against public institutions, social democracy,
and ethnic and cultural diversity.*

hear about. In fact, in spite of their dedication, teachers are among the lowest paid of all college educated professionals. In the 10-year period 1982-92, teacher salaries increased a mere 21% while the inflation rate was at least double that amount, and yet only 5% of teachers annually left the profession, mostly to retire or raise children.⁶ Moreover, the primary use of property taxes to fund education means that the school facilities in poorer and middle-income areas are of much lower quality than those in wealthy suburbs. The tax resistance movements spawned by the right make it almost impossible to increase the levels of funding. Thus, to divert money from already financially strapped public schools to private ones will only accentuate these difficulties.

The cost of private school vouchers would obviously be skimmed off the top of public education budgets. This means that public schools, which already are experiencing shortages in funding, would be subjected to further reductions, unless taxpayers agreed to increase revenues to make up the difference, which in today’s political climate is out of the question. Thus, it is inconceivable that such a program of competition for scarce moneys would enable the public schools to improve. Vouchers would have the effect of redistributing existing education dollars to nonpublic schools without any assurance that the quality of education for all children would be enhanced.

Further, the very concept of a healthy rivalry between public and private schools which voucher advocates envision is illusory. The two kinds of schools actually play by different rules. Public schools must adhere to the various federal and state civil rights laws, which forbid discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, and physical disabilities. Many states and localities also have policies regarding curriculum, teacher certification, quality of facilities, and environmental protections to which public schools must adhere. Private schools, especially those which do not receive federal moneys, can choose not to abide by regulations and laws which are designed to meet the common needs of children, parents, the community, and the nation.

If a private school feels that it is too expensive to accommodate handicapped children, it can choose not to admit them. If the school wishes to exclude female students from the sports program, it can do so. If it is a religious school, it can legally discriminate in the employment of teachers and the admission of students who share the faith of the school’s sponsors. Teachers are often paid less than those in public schools (that is particularly the case in religious ones), and this further helps to reduce the costs incurred by nonpublic schools. This unfair framework of competition inevitably will culminate in the creation of a dual school system: a public one which has to meet the common needs of the community regardless

of the cost, and a private one which may choose to exempt itself from regulations in order to save money or to accommodate the special interests of its children and parents.

Operating from marketplace theory, one could expect with the implementation of a large-scale voucher plan, not the appearance of thousands of independently-operated schools and marvelous experiments in educational diversity, but, rather, large school franchises where control would be concentrated in the hands of financiers and managers. Vouchers could, in fact, destroy the very educational diversity for which their proponents so fondly hoped. The nature of all marketplaces, and the educational one is no exception, is that profits can only be realized through economies of scale and monopolistic practices.⁷

Third, *a voucher system will further divide our society*. One of the more spurious arguments for the idea comes from well-intentioned social activists who claim that private school assistance will help poor and minority children. By enabling them to attend better quality private schools, they are given the opportunity to get on the ladder of success and break out of the cycle of inner-city poverty and misery. However, with some statistically insignificant exceptions, that has proven to be illusory. The Milwaukee voucher experiment is a sterling example of the failure of this policy. Some 40 percent of the students who made the switch to a private school did not return after one year, and the standard test scores of participating students showed little or no improvement in reading and mathematics and remained well below the average in both areas. Also it was found that children were being screened out on the basis of previous school performance. A variety of registration, tuition, and uniform fees had increased the costs to parents above the amount that the vouchers covered, and the private schools taking part in the plan had the option to reject handicapped children.⁸

In fact, private schools tend to be selective in the students they admit, resulting in a process known as “cream-skimming.” This means that they can choose the best and most easily educable children, thus intellectually impoverishing schools in working class neighborhoods by leaving to the public schools the average and below average students and enriching schools in middle and upper class neighborhoods. Private schools may also reject or expel students with discipline and behavioral problems, if they see fit. It is fairly easy to educate white middle-class students from stable families, but it is much more difficult to work with students who are poor, racially diverse, or from broken homes. In other words, “parental choice” is a myth; it is the school, not the parents, that chooses whether to accept a student. Nothing requires admitting a student with low academic potential or a disciplinary record.

Since most nonpublic schools are middle class in their orientation, providing public support for their work will only produce deeper cleavages in our society. As Peter Cookson accurately states: “Private schools attract families that are wealthier than average, are usually quite knowledgeable about their educational options, and have faith in the power of education in the intellectual and status marketplace.”⁹ There is a close relationship between private schools and social stratification, and to provide public funding for their operation would contribute to the further fragmentation of

our communities and society along religious, ideological, ethnic, and social lines. One need only look at the southern towns where the black and some poor white children attend the public schools while the white middle class children are all enrolled in Christian academies and other nonpublic schools. However, high quality, free, and universal education is a basic right which all Americans have. It is not a property right belonging to only those who possess wealth. Public schools should be improved, not replaced with private ones.

Fourth, *a voucher program which includes religious schools violates the constitutional provisions for the separation of church and state*. The foundation of American freedom is the principle articulated by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and incorporated into the First Amendment that no law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. No person would, in the words of the Virginia Statute for Establishing Religious Freedom authored by Jefferson, “be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever.” After becoming president he declared that the First Amendment religious clauses erected a “wall of separation” between church and state, thus meaning government was to remain neutral in religious matters and not involve itself in the affairs of religious groups. All matters of religious practice and propagation were left up to the individual citizens and the institutional structures which they voluntarily created and supported from their own resources and not from tax moneys received from the government. Included among this was the right to educate their children in their respective faiths, if they so wished, and to create schools to carry out that task.

The expenditure of tax money to support these nonpublic, sectarian schools would seriously undermine the heritage of religious freedom. In a voucher plan, the state would of necessity become entangled in religious affairs. Government officials would have to supervise the expenditure of the money given and see to it that the schools conform to regulations governing such outlay of public funds. This includes gathering information on parents, children, and churches to make sure that the money is spent correctly. In effect, the state would be giving its approval to religion because it organizes, promotes, and funds religious education. Church-related schools, in turn, would surrender their autonomy, lose their true sense of uniqueness, and become like public schools. Also, dependence on government support might well cause the atrophy of ability on the part of nonpublic schools to raise money privately, should they ever in the future decide to give up public funding.¹⁰

Another problem is that the church-related schools discriminate in the admission of students and hiring of teachers. School policies which are set by the sponsoring church or non-profit religious foundation and involve some sort of invidious discrimination by race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or handicap place the government in a difficult constitutional situation. If money is given in the form of vouchers, the state violates its own civil rights laws. On the other hand, if it attempts to police or regulate admissions and hiring policies, it becomes entangled in religious affairs.

It is clear that religiously-based schools, whether Protestant,

Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, or other, are pervasively sectarian institutions. Moreover, around 85% of nonpublic schools are religious in nature even if they are supported or sponsored by non-sectarian foundations related to no specific church or denomination. In the great majority of these schools, religion permeates both the philosophy and content of instruction. The First Amendment allows everyone to practice their religious faith as they see fit, even if it is hierarchical, authoritarian, intolerant, close-minded, hostile to diversity, or not in accord with public policy at any given time. No matter how bizarre or idiosyncratic they may be, religious beliefs flourish and are protected by the Constitution. What is wrong, however, is to expect taxpayers through a voucher system to support the teaching of these beliefs. Those who adhere to them are responsible for financing their own religious enterprises.

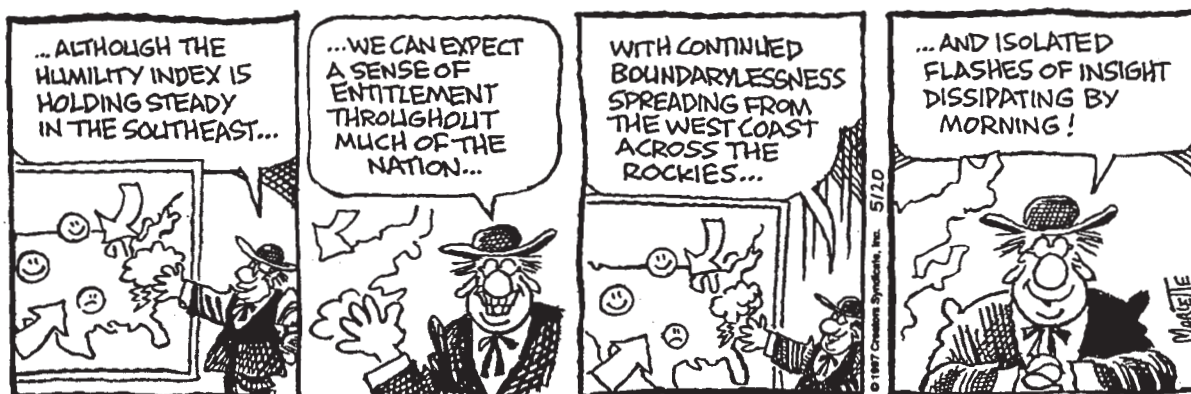
It is clear that religious bodies have the right to operate private schools, and parents have the right to send their children to them. What is wrong is asking the government to support institutions that are an integral part of a religious body's mission or using its taxing power to compel involuntary support for religious institutions. To do so would do nothing to advance the cause of better education in America, but, rather, would foster the sort of religious conflict that is tearing at the social fabric of so many countries elsewhere in the world. On every count, school vouchers are a flawed idea and an even worse prescription for the ills of American education.

We should see that public funds are directed toward the free, democratically-managed public schools. Not one dollar appropriated for their support should be channeled to any sectarian school. We must resolve that the state and nation shall support those institutions of learning which give every child growing up in our land the opportunity of a good common school education. Let us leave matters of religion to the family, the church, and the private school, and let them be supported entirely by private contributions. Keep church and state forever separate.

1. July 17, 1996; text of remarks from Americans for Religious Liberty, Silver Spring, Maryland.
2. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1990. Other noteworthy works endorsing this idea are Stephen Arons, *Compelling*

Belief: The Culture of American Schooling (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983); Myron Lieberman, *Privatization and Educational Choice* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989); and John E. Coons and Stephen D. Sugarman, *Scholarships for Children* (Berkeley: Institute of Governmental Studies Press, 1992. Major critiques of school choice include Jeffrey R. Henig, *Rethinking School Choice: Limits of the Market Metaphor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Peter W. Cookson, Jr., *School Choice: The Struggle for the Soul of American Education* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Kevin B. Smith and Kenneth J. Meier, *The Case Against School Choice* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995); and Edd Doerr, Albert J. Menendez, and John M. Swomley, *The Case Against School Vouchers* (Silver Spring, Md.: Americans for Religious Liberty, 1995. Both sides of the issue are dealt with in Peter W. Cookson, Jr. (Ed.), *The Choice Controversy* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Corwin Press, 1992); Edith Rasell and Richard Rothstein (Eds.), *School Choice: Examining the Evidence* (Washington: Economic Policy Institute, 1993); and Jerome J. Hanus and Peter W. Cookson, Jr., *Choosing Schools: Vouchers and American Education* (Washington: American University Press, 1996).

3. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States. George Bush, 1992-93* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1993), 1014. He made this statement on June 12, 1992.
4. Hanus and Cookson, *Choosing Schools*, 118-20.
5. Marla E. Sukstorf, Amy Stewart Wells, and Robert L. Crain, A Re-examination of Church and Moe's *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*, in Rasell and Rothstein, *School Choice*, 217-18.
6. National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 1995* (Washington: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1995), 158, 164.
7. *Ibid.*, 138.
8. Doerr, et. al., *Case Against School Vouchers*, 47-48, citing reports from the Milwaukee *Journal-Sentinel* and the 1992 Carnegie Foundation study, *School Choice*.
9. Hanus and Cookson, *Choosing Schools*, 152.
10. Doerr, et. al., *Case Against School Vouchers*, 6.



In Love

By Bruce McIver

[Dr. Bruce McIver is retired from the pastorate of the Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas.]

Valentine's Day is not a part of the Christian Calendar. But it's a part of the McIver calendar—at least, it had *better* be! Thirty-eight years ago (February 13) Lawanna and I said our “I do's.” Lawanna became an instant wife, pastor's wife, mother and, within three years, mother *twice* again. That brought us back to reality—in a hurry.

About the time of our marriage I read and clipped the enclosed article. I think I found it, appropriately, in *Life* magazine. If my source is not correct it's still about as close to *life* as you can get!

The wedding dress is folded away. The love nest in the suburbs turns out to have a leaky roof, crabgrass, a mortgage that burns up every second paycheck. The babies are not the dimpled darlings of the ads, but imperious tyrants who have to be bottled, burped, and changed—and later agonized over. The groom, alas, never earned that million dollars. His wife lost her figure. There are moments when he would like to run off to Australia; moments when she wishes she had entered a nunnery. And still...and still...

You see them in Florida or on porches up north: an old man reading the newspaper through a magnifying glass; an old woman wearing sandals to ease her aching arches. In a little while they will eat supper, and then watch television, each knowing exactly what the other is thinking; and through the night each will rest content because the other is there.

They are in love. They have always been in love, although sometimes they would have denied it. And because they have always been in love they have survived everything that life could throw at them, even their own failures. This is what it means to have a happy marriage.

Now, I'm sitting here this morning remembering the first time I read this article. I chuckled over “magnifying glasses”...“sandals”...“aching arches”...and “each knowing what the other is thinking” (I'm still not sure about that one!).

But I'm typing this in my study today while wearing reading glasses and house slippers, and while nursing some pain in my back. Lawanna is in the other room drinking a second cup of coffee, browsing through the morning paper, wearing reading glasses and house slippers, and also nursing pain in *her* back.

The television is off and the phone is not ringing. There is a satisfying silence as we begin a new day.

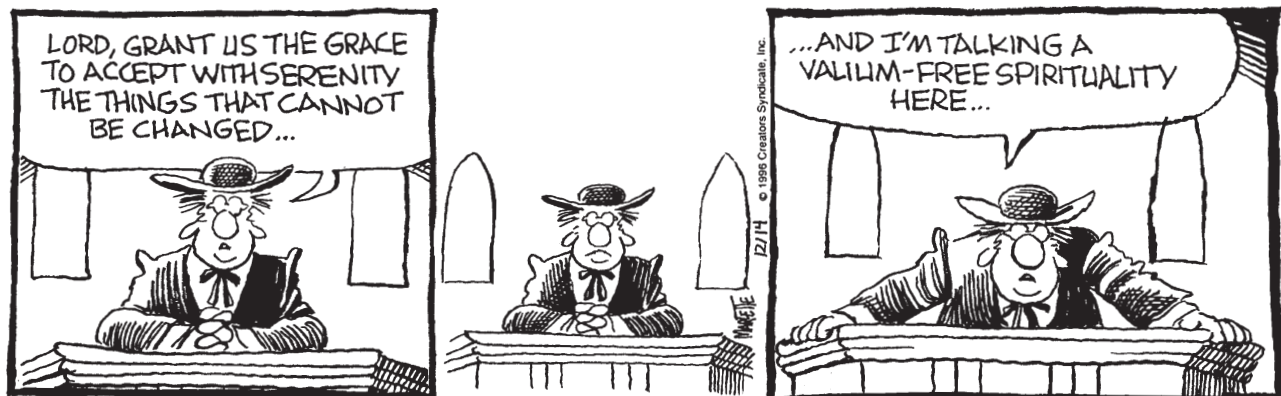
Together.

We are content.

We are in love.

It's a gift.

From God.



Where's the Booze in the Drug War?

By Frosty Troy

[Frosty Troy is Editor of the *Oklahoma Observer* and is a frequent contributor to this journal.]

No sane person doubts that the war on drugs launched in the Reagan Administration has been lost, that \$16 billion a year is wasted, that thousands of young lives have been tossed on the ash heap of the criminal justice system.

It doesn't take a Carrie Nation mentality to see that what is socially acceptable is easily ignored. While parents and politicians rage against the evils of marijuana and the devastation of crack, pills, and heroin, the lives they claim are minimal compared to booze.

It is estimated that the annual cost to America of alcohol abuse tops \$40 billion. The Surgeon General says the nation averages 100,000 deaths a year due to alcohol abuse.

More than half of the people entering America's prisons are there because of problems related to alcohol and drugs.

If marijuana is the gateway to serious drug addiction, alcohol is the prime doorway to domestic violence and rampant crime.

National crime statistics show that alcohol is involved in:

- 35% of all rapes
- 61 % of all felony arrests
- 90% of all assaults
- 33% of all suicides
- 75% of all divorces
- 45% of all drownings
- 85% of all homicides
- 70% of all fatal falls
- 50% of all battered wives
- 65% of all child abuse cases
- 67% of all attempted suicides
- 90% of all college campus rapes
- 86% of all deaths related to fire
- 50% of all delinquency cases
- 40% of all industrial fatalities
- 55% of domestic arguments and assaults

There are an estimated 28.6 million children of alcoholics in the U.S., nearly seven million of them under age 18. Of the under 18 group, almost three million will develop alcoholism, other drug problems, and/or other serious coping problems.

About half of children of alcoholics marry alcoholics and are likely to recreate the same kinds of highly stressful and unhealthy families in which they grew up.

Children of alcoholics are at high risk for alcohol and other drug problems, often live with pervasive tension and stress, have higher levels of anxiety and depression, do poorly in school, and experience problems with coping.

During the time of the Vietnam War, alcohol in all its forms took four times more lives than the Vietnam War itself—250,000 vs. 56,000.

Every four minutes some driver in America will die as a result of drinking and driving. It's the third leading cause of death in the United States. Four out of every five drivers will be in an alcohol related accident.

Seven out of every 10 Americans can drink socially without becoming addicted, but one out of 10 drinkers will become alcoholics.

Alcohol is the number one cause of infant death (5,000 a year) and mental retardation with fetal alcohol syndrome (36,000 a year).

It's the number one killer of drivers and passengers under the age of 30.

More college students will die due to alcohol than will earn advanced degrees. Binge drinking is epidemic on many—some claim most college campuses.

In spite of laws about underage drinking, 1.1 billion cans of beer are consumed by junior and senior high school students each year, according to a report by the Inspector General of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Alcohol related highway deaths are the number one killer of 15 to 24 year olds. Twenty five percent of all hospital admissions are reported to be because of alcohol; more Medicare hospitalizations are credited to alcohol related problems than to heart attacks.

From the moment of conception a fetus is susceptible to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) if the mother is drinking, and that includes beer. A study published by the American Federation of Teachers stated that some 40,000 babies a year are born with FAS. Drug abuse of all kinds affected about 425,000 babies each year.

Courts, district attorney offices, juvenile affairs offices, litigation, all are impacted by alcohol and drug related offenses.

More than a third of young mothers on welfare are addicted to alcohol, according to a report released by the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University.

Alcohol in all its forms causes one-third of all preventable deaths in the United States.

Alcohol related crashes claimed more than 16,600 lives last year and injured a million people. Drunk driving injuries and fatalities cost American society \$46 billion annually in lost production, medical costs, property damages, and other direct expenditures.

A majority of occupants killed in drunk driving crashes did not wear seat belts.

Research shows that safety belts reduce the risk of fatal or serious injury to front seat passengers by 45 to 50 percent.

Congress passed and President Clinton signed a bill that penalizes states without a zero tolerance law for teens who drink and drive.

States could lose up to five percent of federal highway funds if the state does not pass a zero tolerance law by this year, 1998.

How exorbitant must the price in dollars and human suffering be before grassroots Americans determine to reverse the trend in alcohol abuse? For years many groups have sought to pass laws, initiate programs, and educate the public to the dangers of alcohol, and drug use, but America is losing the war.

A Balanced Budget

By Bernard Rapoport

[Bernard Rapoport is Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the American Income Life Insurance Company. He is a past Chairman of the Regents of the University of Texas.]

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens described the end of the eighteenth century as “the best of times” and “the worst of times.” Were Dickens living and writing today, he could use the same words to describe the end of this century. Years of “growth and prosperity” suggest that there are reasons for optimism, yet increasing poverty, a loss of commitment to education, and a growing crisis in our healthcare system are but a few reasons for pessimism. Another reason for pessimism is that we have allowed simple words to paralyze our society and government.

Some historian in years to come might very well hold President Ronald Reagan responsible for emphasizing the one word that most contributes to paralysis, the one word that today stands in the way of improving social conditions in our country. That word is “budget.”

It is not my intention to defame President Reagan, but if I fault him for one thing more than any other, it is the paralysis he imposed upon the nation that twice elected him. That paralysis is a result of his fixation on the word “budget.”

That the word doesn't work effectively in business is pointed out by Oren Harari in his book, *Leapfrogging the Competition*.

I recently had a conversation with a CEO of a struggling \$100-million company. He complained that every year he would wind up spending literally two months immersed in an abhorrent, wasteful budgeting process.

There are many reasons why I think it folly when politicians refer to this word as an excuse for not meeting social responsibilities—especially in the areas of health or education—when they know full well that government accounting is totally different from business accounting.

Consider just one public policy initiative that wouldn't have passed the budget fixation that today has our country in a state of paralysis. I suspect that many in my age bracket feel as I do—that the single most important piece of legislation passed in the 20th Century was the G.I. Bill of Rights. I do not mean to diminish the importance of Social Security, unemployment compensation, or civil rights legislation—each of which has proved vital to a sustainable democratic society. But what was so admirable about the passage of the G.I. Bill of Rights legislation is that to pass it, the politicians said: “Budget be damned! Educating our youngsters comes first.”

Any mathematician or statistician who attempts to track the return on investments will have to concede that no business ever made an investment for which the financial return in any way approached the return on the G.I. Bill of Rights. And I am talking about dollars and cents. That investment in the education of those who served in this country's armed forces has been repaid many times over—in dollars and cents—by the productivity of the GIs the government invested in.

And it is only through continued investment in education that our democracy will survive. I believe in standards for those who seek higher education, as well as those who pursue education in a technical school. Anyone who has been involved in education knows that the President's advocacy of a national standard is essential, if for only one reason: in individual school districts, there is so much parochial, ethnic, racial, and financial disagreement that somehow there is more political concern than interest in the education of a child. You can't impose education; you can't order it; it has to be something an individual wants. But public schools and good teachers are the first priority.

Education rarely turns a profit—in the short run. And a budget is an instrument that works in the short run. But what could be a greater investment in the long-term future of this country than money spent on education? Investment in a system of education that would include every American who wants an education—from Head Start through at least a bachelor's degree or technical school diploma. That would be investment in the future of this country. Nothing says that our nation is destined to exist forever, or that its survival is a given. But education can improve the odds for survival, because investment in education is investment in the social capital that creates financial capital.

And in a truly democratic society, the abstract noun “education” should be preceded by the adjective “public.” I have no complaints about private schools, but our first responsibility to all of our children is to provide them access to a first-rate *public* education. Without it there can be no democracy. Civil rights legislation was late in coming, and we all recognize the benefits it brought us. Yet had we put in place forty years ago a system of accessible public education, like the one I described, the debate over affirmative action might today be moot. We didn't, so affirmative action is not only advisable, but necessary—at the very least as an attempt to level the playing field.

The word “budget” should not be allowed to stand in the way of creating a level playing field. While a government does not keep books like a corporation, which has a balance statement and profit-and-loss statement, it does keep books. When a company purchases a computer, for example, it does not diminish the company's balance sheet in any way. It reduces the amount of cash,

but not the amount of assets. The computer has one purpose, and that is to increase the bottom line—the profit, if you please. My point is that we need to think in those terms when we consider investment in public education and Head Start. The true bottom line for society is the benefit derived from a better-educated populace; less crime and greater contributions from each individual citizen—not only financial contributions, but the social contributions that occur when people are profitably employed.

So social investments can have the same or even greater returns than so-called financial investments. There is no poverty in the lives of those who have an education or a trade. Of course, the naysayer can point to instances where that is not true, yet, if we are just 75 percent right, our society is going in the right direction. Look how far we have progressed because of good social legislation. We must never forget that poverty in virtually every instance is a result of ignorance. Albert Camus wrote that “Poverty is imprisonment without a drawbridge.” In a just society, the drawbridge that provides an escape from poverty is training and education. Our children, as John White admonished us, are “the message we send to a time we will not see.” If we fail them, as Jacqueline Kennedy observed, “then no other success in life really counts.”

I am reminded of a story told by George Mitchell, the former federal judge and majority leader of the Senate. As a judge presiding over the naturalization of new citizens, it was George Mitchell’s pleasure to shake the hand of each new citizen. On one occasion, he asked someone from Vietnam, “Why did you want to become an American citizen?” With tears in his eyes, the man responded, “Because in America, everyone has a chance.”

You and I know that this is not as true as it ought to be; it is not as true as it can be. But it becomes less true when we tolerate social paralysis—the sort of paralysis caused by a word such as “budget.”

I close with an anecdote that suggests how we ought to view life, and suggests how great America can be if we view life the right way. It is revealed in a story told by a famous rabbi:

A beloved rabbi, when he was yet a young child, was playing with a group of children who were climbing a ladder. All his friends were afraid to climb to the top, but he had no fear. Later, his grandfather asked him, “Why were you not afraid to climb and the others were?” “Because as they climbed, they kept looking down,” the boy replied. “They saw how high they were, and they were frightened. As I climbed, I kept looking upward. I saw how low I was, and it motivated me to climb higher.”

If you have read this far, I hope you are saying to yourselves that in this nation, everyone is going to have a chance. We must not cease the struggle—we must not stop climbing and providing others what they need to climb, until the top of the ladder becomes a reality for all.

Woman’s World

By Judy Haralson

[Judy Haralson is a psychotherapist living in Austin, Texas]

My world is made up of Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays,
Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, Mondays
Washing, ironing, cooking, cleaning, churching
Mending clothes, turning down radios, wiping noses and
bottoms

Answering telephones and door bells
Letting dogs in and letting dogs out
Taking children to and bringing children from
Fixing food, making beds, mopping floors
Rejoicing, crying, listening

Rejoicing with Jill when her cat has kittens
Crying with Brad when his kite string breaks
Listening to David’s tales of Sesame Street

I must communicate with my husband
Share with my neighbors
Empathize with my friends
Organize myself, my home, my children, my husband, the
women at the church
On and on, endlessly, my world goes

Then Jesus steps into the uttermost parts of my world and
speaks
He speaks through little mouths, teary eyes, hurt looks
He speaks through closed doors, trusting hands, unuttered
wishes
He speaks through David as we make a cake
“Me help, Mommy, me help”

“David, if you wouldn’t help so much I could get it done a lot
better, in half the time”
Then I listen as the great God says to me
“Judy, if you just wouldn’t help so much I could get it done
better, in half the time”

The “Democracy” of the Mob

By Franklin H. Littell

[Dr. Littell, a Methodist minister, college professor, Holocaust expert, scholar, historian, and world citizen, is a frequent contributor to this journal.]

A current full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* heralds the dictator of North Korea, Kim Jong Il, as “the Lodestar for Sailing the 21st Century.” Son of the previous dictator, Kim Il Sung, he is praised (in the PR) for many virtues:

- He is a “a man of great leadership, remarkable wisdom and noble virtues.”
- He is “always with the popular masses, sharing the ups and downs of life with them.”
- He is “equipped with all the qualities a great leader needs.”
- His Credo: “I admire the people as a great mentor.”

In sum, Kim Jong Il joins the god-men of the 20th century (today called “dictators”) who are said to embody in their persons the will of the masses.

At the level of political science, the phenomenon is part of the general picture of “Illiberal Democracy”—brilliantly discussed by Foreed Zakaria in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs*. Since the French Revolution, since the emergence of “modernity,” the teaching and practice of popular sovereignty and respect for the rights of the citizen—once tightly bonded to each other—have in many places gone separate ways. We can no longer take it for granted that popular government will with devotion and self-restraint protect the liberty, dignity, and integrity of the dissenter and loyal opposition.

To be sure, every 20th century despot or dictator has found it necessary to claim to represent “the will of the people,” even as he trampled on their lives, dignities, and liberties. And all too frequently the majority victimized by the tyrant has taken the easy way out, blaming some targeted and defenseless minority for their woes—rather than confronting the tyrant’s corruption and abuse of

power. This was the road taken in the Turkish genocide of the Armenians and the Nazi genocide of the Jews.

In the last decade gypsy (*Rom*) communities in Central Europe, especially in Transylvania and Moldavia, have been subjected to a series of assaults: murders, burnings, evictions, and expulsions. The authorities not only fail to protect the victims: they justify the mob violence by appeal to majority rule, “The will of the people,” and the national “Right to self-determination.”

Apart from the apotheosis of the god-man, the *Fuhrer*, the Noble Leader—which no person of Biblical training and commitment can affirm, a basic misunderstanding of democracy and republican principles is the root error. The true understanding of popular sovereignty (“the will of the people”) is based on the awareness that sound public opinion requires the full, free, and uninhibited discussion of public events and political policy. Without that forum for hammering out civic decision, no decision is truly “democratic.” That is why the apparent unanimity of opinion in support of tyrants is meaningless: the mob is fickle and its opinions brittle, especially when forced to honor the facade of popular support that the despot or dictator yearns for.

From the apparent power of the brutal Stalinist regime of East Germany to its collapse and the political incorporation of its states into the Federal Republic of Germany was but a matter of months. From the world-shaking and awesome threat of Soviet hegemony to the collapse of “the wall” and the devolution of the USSR into the confederated states of the CIS was but a matter of months.

The only viable government in the long run is that which gives equal attention to “the will of the people” and their basic human rights—including freedom of religion, freedom of speech and press, freedom of assembly and petition. A “democratic” regime that breaks from that tandem may bring misery to two or even three generations—all in the name of some god-man, some idol. But those who recall Stalin of the USSR and Hitler of the German Third Reich know already what the end of Kim Jon Il of North Korea will be: the Lord will grow tired of him.



Women Keep Promises, Too!

By Rebecca Merrill Groothuis and Douglas Groothuis

[Rebecca Merrill Groothuis is the author of *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Baker, 1997) and of *Women Caught Conflict: The Culture War Between Traditionalism and Feminism* (Wipf & Stock, 1997.) Douglas Groothuis is Assistant Professor of Philosophy of Religion and Ethics at Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary, and the author of seven books. Earlier versions of this article have been carried in *Perspectives* and in *Priscilla Papers*.]

People both within and without the church have been expressing amazement over the rapid growth of Promise Keepers, the Christian men's movement that was founded by former college football coach Bill McCartney in 1990, and which drew a little over one million participants in 22 cities in 1996. Men involved in this movement are finding the inspiration to live righteously as honest and loving husbands, fathers, and friends. They are learning to take responsibility for their families, to be faithful to their wives, to care for their children, to avoid pornography, to be involved and responsible members of their churches and communities, and to regard people of other races as their equals. In all of this, Promise Keepers offers a bracing antidote to the poison of male irresponsibility that evidently has become pandemic in American society. What can one say in response but what everyone seems to have said already, namely, that PK is doing a vitally good work in the lives of many people in the church today?

Perhaps, however, we ought to express amazement not only at the size and success of Promise Keepers, but also that the idea of someone keeping his promises should be considered so revolutionary as to start a movement! Perhaps we should pause to ponder what kind of church we have become, now that many Christian men seem to require their own books, videos, magazines, Bible study guides, conferences, seminars, support groups, even their own praise and worship music in order to find the motivation to lead lives of godliness and moral virtue. Is not the problem as startling as the size and success of its purported solution?

Nevertheless, if Promise Keepers is, in fact, providing a necessary corrective to a deplorable moral lassitude among men today, then the cheers and hallelujahs we have been hearing from PK enthusiasts everywhere are quite justified. The concern that many PK leaders exhibit with respect to the need for racial reconciliation in churches and communities is especially admirable. Promise Keepers is backing up its words with some of its financial where-withal in its cooperative effort with other charitable organizations to help rebuild African American churches in the South that have been destroyed by arson.¹ The miserable effects of racism—no less than of other sins traditionally condemned by the church—need desperately to be corrected through the wisdom of Scripture and

the love and power of the Holy Spirit.

Not only is Promise Keepers distinguished by these many beneficial features, the organization does not appear to be guilty of the things for which it has been most vehemently criticized in the secular press. Promise Keepers is a religious, not a political movement, and as such does not specifically promote any political agenda. Nor is it a gay-bashing enterprise, although PK leaders do rightly indicate that homosexual behavior is contrary to biblical morality.

However, we do not believe that it is justifiable to assume, as so many Christians appear to do that because this is a “move of God,” it is beyond reproach. The size, rapid growth, and beneficial results of the movement do not necessarily give it the divine imprimatur in *all* of its aspects. Promise Keepers seems to have made a start in reversing certain cultural trends and in modeling Christian manhood to society at large. PK men are repenting of many of the ways in which they have failed their families and their churches, and in doing so they appear to be avoiding the common tactic of blaming women (especially “career women”) for all the woes of family life today. However, it seems to us that many PK men lack a clear understanding of what, exactly, they should aspire to be and do. The zeal for reformation and renewal is certainly present and commendable; but care must be taken in order that this zeal be directed toward truth and protected from error or confusion.

In our article we wish to express our concerns as well as our commendations. Our concerns with Promise Keepers pertain not so much to what is explicitly taught as to what seems often to be implicitly assumed. Naturally, the implicit elements of PK are more difficult to perceive, explain and understand than the explicit elements. Because of this, and because so many Christians are aware only of PK's explicit message, we must devote most of our space to articulating what seems to be a largely unspoken message of PK, namely, that men have a place of primary importance in the spiritual scheme of things—a place not shared equally by women.

It might help forestall some of the inevitable protestations that our “egalitarian agenda” is driving our critique of PK if we note at the outset that this article has turned out quite differently from our expectations. Many of the negative things we expected to find (such as an overt and consistent advocacy of hierarchical gender roles), we did not find; and many of the positive things we did find were unexpected. (For example, we came across one article in *New Man* magazine that was particularly insightful for our own situation as a couple.) Moreover, what ended up as our primary criticism of the movement (the conflation of manliness and godliness) was discovered quite by surprise (and with no small dismay) through a meticulous survey of PK literature.

Since this article is co-authored by a man, many will wonder if

he has attended a PK conference. The question is given urgency by the oft-heard PK epistemology that attending a conference is both necessary and sufficient for understanding the movement. However, a conference provides the emotional context of Promise Keepers, but not necessarily its conceptual context. Conferences can differ greatly from one another in terms of the different speakers' messages about the roles and relations of women and men. In view of this, the written word—PK books, magazines, newsletters, advertising brochures, and so forth—is probably more likely than the shouted word of the mass rally to reveal the conceptual premises of the movement.

The fact is, I (Doug) have not yet found myself motivated to spend an entire day sitting amongst a huge crowd in a sports stadium, exposed to unpredictable elements while listening to various speakers who are not, typically, among those whom I am most interested in listening to. This lack of motivation arises out of personal preference, not moral principle. I do not consider myself more spiritual than those who attend or speak at PK rallies, nor do I believe they are wasting their time. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, many men are called to greater obedience to Christ and many entrust their lives to the Savior for the first time. For this I praise God. Yet I do not believe that my own sanctification will stagnate or be impoverished if I fail to attend Christian stadium events for men, nor do I think that this is the case for Christian men in general. While such activities are evidently helpful for some, they are not necessarily helpful for all. My own Bible study, prayer, marriage, church life, and circle of family and friends provide the best incentive to godliness that I know.

Had a PK conference been scheduled in our area when I knew I would be working on this article, I probably would have attempted to attend the event for the sake of research. However, we believe that our analysis of PK's large supply of printed material is sufficient to make an informed judgment on the movement, a judgment that need not stop short of recognizing the clearly positive results that are testified to by many of the men who have attended the conferences.

It is, however, interesting to consider why PK men so readily equate knowledge of Promise Keepers with the experience of a conference. Frequently, the conference experience is all that it takes to "sell" PK men on the entire movement. We suspect that the conferences have this effect because they utilize the imagery of the sports arena to key into a powerful emotional response among men, many of whom have learned to remain emotionally impassive in the face of virtually every life situation—except when it comes to cheering on their favorite sports team. When a similar emotional response is transferred to the very personal and

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spiritual issues that are dealt with at the conferences, the experience may engage these men's emotions in a way that nothing else pertaining to their spiritual and personal lives ever has. As a result, Promise Keepers becomes their "team," which they defend, root for, and believe in no matter what. This is only a hypothesis, of course, but it does help account for why PK adherents tend to be so fiercely loyal to the movement and (as we have learned through unpleasant personal experience) tend not to suffer criticism kindly.

Conflating Manliness and Godliness

Along with its efforts to make men virtuous, Promise Keepers also aims to make men masculine. There is certainly nothing wrong with encouraging men to be both godly and masculine—although the former certainly exceeds the latter in importance and eternal significance. The problem is that, in PK talk, these two goals tend to be conflated. For example, the PK motto is that "a man's man is a godly man"—which seems to be saying that what makes a man manly is godliness. Jesus Christ is looked upon as the ideal model of masculinity. And the seven promises of a Promise Keeper are held up as descriptive of true masculinity.

Yet PK's seven promises address basic biblical principles of righteousness that should characterize the lives of *all* believers, whether male or female. These principles are, in brief:

1. the primacy of Christian worship and obedience,
2. the importance of friendship with and accountability to other believers,
3. moral and sexual purity,
4. faithful commitment to one's marriage and family,
5. support of the church,
6. racial reconciliation, and
7. evangelism.

These are excellent moral guidelines, but they do not define masculinity; they simply define essential aspects of godly character.

The PK definition of godly manhood does not imply merely that genuine masculinity is—or at least ought to be—godly. The larger implication of the PK treatment of the meaning of masculinity is that manliness and godliness are identical. In other words, the problem is not with the PK teaching that men should behave in a godly manner (which is true enough), but with the PK tendency to describe masculinity in terms that are indistinguishable from a description of generic godliness, thus rendering the two concepts essentially equivalent. The consequence (even if unintended) of such a manner of speaking is for godliness to be

seen as fundamentally masculine matter, and women to be relegated to the spiritual sidelines.

Interestingly, the casting of Christianity as an essentially masculine, “muscular” religion, and men as its proper representatives, was the tack taken by male fundamentalist leaders of the early twentieth century in their efforts to attain control of the church, lest women be allowed to “take over.” This fundamentalist strategy was essentially a male reaction against the female initiative in ministry, and the perceived “feminization” of the church, that had arisen out of the revivals and social reform movements of the 19th century.² In what sense, we wonder, might history be repeating itself?

An article by Stu Weber in PK’s *New Man* magazine declares that Jesus Christ is the “perfect model” of “maximum manhood,” and describes the “heart of Jesus’ manhood” as his “sense of purpose” and his “clarity of vision.” Waxing rhapsodic over his vaunted view of manhood, Weber declares, “That’s the heart of what makes a man. That ringing sense of destiny.... A man, you see, was made for a cause. A man was made for something outside of himself.”³ After reading these ecstatic pronouncements, we cannot help but ask whether men like Weber really believe that it is a singularly male condition to have a life mission, a sense of purpose larger than oneself. Was Jesus’ single-minded determination to accomplish the mission with which his Father had commissioned him a uniquely masculine endeavor? Do women have no sense of purpose or destiny outside of their small selves? Are they content to live merely from one meal preparation to the next, with no mind for anything but the practical details of the here and now? Is every woman satisfied merely with helping her man fulfill *his* mission in life? If a sense of destiny is the distinguishing mark of manhood, then womanhood is left with only a sense of vicarious destiny.

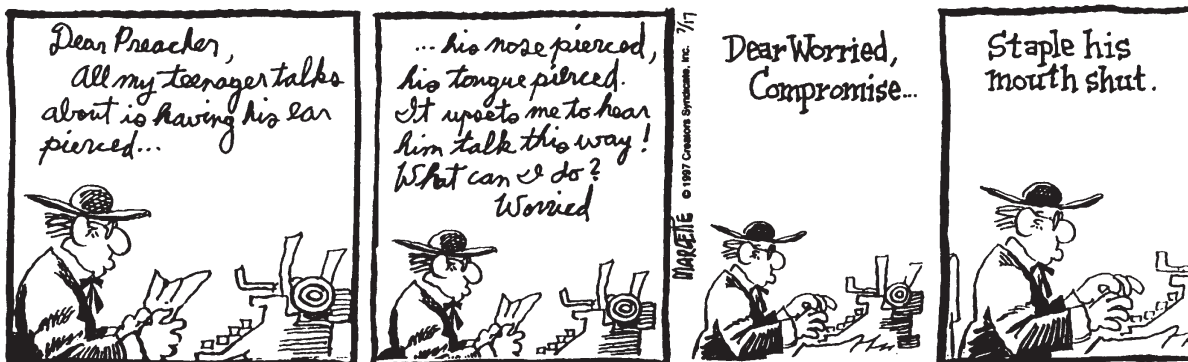
The fact of the matter is that living for a mission outside of oneself is not a sexual need but a human need, and is shared by male and female humans alike. Women and men are *both* created with the need to love and to be loved, to have a sense of life purpose and personal accomplishment, and, ultimately, to glorify God and seek his kingdom (Mt. 6:33, Col. 3:17). Both men and women have these needs, because these are *human* needs, and men and women are both human. When masculinity is understood as a definitive of *every* thing a man is and does, common elements of human behavior that are in reality no more male than female tend

to be annexed as part and parcel of masculinity. As a result, maleness can come to be seen as equivalent to or representative of humanness in general, while femaleness is defined solely in terms of those sexual attributes and behaviors that are not a part of the masculine package.

Moreover, if masculinity is the manly behavior that sets men apart from women (and which, therefore, is inappropriate for women), and if Christ serves as a model for this sort of behavior, then women are constitutionally incapable of emulating Christ to the degree that men are able to do. In other words, if Christian men are like Christ not simply because they are Christians but also because they are men, then men are simply more Christlike than women. Unfortunately, the PK emphasis on the maleness of Jesus Christ (“truly a phallic male” in the words of Robert Hicks) can only encourage such an assumption.⁴ The biblical truth of the matter, of course, is that there is nothing that Christ did or said, and nothing in PK’s seven promises (save some gender-specific terms), that is any less applicable to the life of a godly woman than to the life of a godly man.

A view of manhood as more representative than womanhood of both God and humanity may align with the perspective of traditional andocentric culture, but it clearly does not square with biblical teaching. According to Scripture, man and woman are equally created in God’s image (Gen. 1:27; 5:1-2), equally recreated as “sons,” or heirs, of God in Christ (Gal. 3:26-28; 1 Pet. 3:7), and equally commissioned as priests unto God and representatives of God (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; 2 Cor. 5:20, Rev. 1:6). There is a fundamental, essential equality here that precludes imputing to one gender a greater humanness or spiritual significance than the other. And, doubtless, PK folk would not quarrel with this. A familiar sentiment in PK literature is that one of the “primary goals” of the ministry is to “deepen the commitment of men to respect and honor women.”⁵

Nonetheless, Promise Keepers’ all-inclusive definitions of Christian manhood seem to point toward a view of manhood as representative of and normative for both godliness and humanness. This view appears to be reflected in and reinforced by the PK habit of equivocating between the generic and the gender-specific meanings of terms such as “man,” “men,” and “sons.” Certain Bible verses, quotations, and common phrases, in which these terms are properly understood in the traditionally generic sense of “human” or “person,” are persistently used to refer specif-



ically to men. This practice pops up repeatedly in PK talk—in their worship songs for men, their various publications, even in the name of the official PK magazine *New Man* (taken from Eph. 4:24, translated “new man” in the KJV, and “new self” in the NIV).⁶ PK’s use of “man” and “men” implies that even when intended generically, these terms are still more applicable to men than to women—strongly suggesting that men are more central to both the human agenda and the agenda of God’s kingdom.

A pointed example of the conflation of manliness and godliness in PK rhetoric is found in Tony Evans’ fondness for employing terms such as “sissified” and “feminized” to refer to behavior by men that is immature or irresponsible.⁷ The logical implication of such talk is that virtue and moral maturity are masculine, and irresponsible and self-indulgent behavior is feminine. It should not be assumed that Evans intends to communicate this; it seems his words are meant to motivate men to change their behavior by means of the time-honored method of challenging their sense of masculinity. However, when godly behavior is depicted as essentially masculine, womanhood is implicitly consigned to a category of spiritual “difference,” if not deficiency.

The notion of a gender requirement for spirituality is by no means alien to popular evangelical perceptions. Christian products—PK or otherwise—that package spirituality along lines of gender (Bible verses for men, devotions for women, worship music for men, and so forth) are saying, in effect, that the spiritual life is substantially different for men than it is for women. Accordingly, the various PK-counterpart women’s groups offer programs quite different from the grandiose goals of PK, which include setting the stage for spiritual revival by means of the prayers and repentance of godly men who will “stand in the gap” for God on behalf of both America and the church (the impetus behind the “Sacred Assembly of Men” in Washington, D.C., October 1997).

By contrast, it seems the main goal of the Women of Faith Joyful Journey conferences—perhaps the highest-profile female counterpart to PK—is simply to provide women opportunity to get away from their daily woes and cares in order to regain their sense of humor about life, and to commiserate and exchange comfort and consolation with other women. (The conference was described by one attendee as “a giant Christian slumber party.”)⁸ Other groups, such as Suitable Helpers, aim to encourage women to help their husbands be spiritual leaders. In general, the women appear dutifully to be fitting into the room that remains for them after PK men assume for themselves the crucial tasks of saving the nation and reviving the church.

The activities of both the men’s movement and the assorted women’s movements presuppose that the spiritual needs and responsibilities of women and men are vastly different. Biblically, however, spiritual gifts and qualities do not come in shades of pink and blue! When, for example, the fruit of the Spirit is listed in Galatians 5:22-23, there is not even a hint that some fruit is masculine and some feminine. But just as it is wrong for radical spiritual feminists to insist that there is something spiritually advantageous to being female, so it would also be wrong for Christian men to slip into the assumption that maleness is somehow more spiritually important to the cause of Christ—that man-

liness is next to godliness, as it were.

To be fair, however, it does not seem that Promise Keepers intends to teach pejorative views of women. Prejudices about the primacy of men usually exist as unexamined, unarticulated, culturally-conditioned assumptions, and are passed on to and received by others in the same way. The confusion and equivocation concerning the place and purpose of women in the PK scheme of things appear to be a result more of thoughtlessness, than of ill intent. It seems that Promise Keepers has grown so quickly that comparatively little time has been spent by its leaders and strategists on carefully thinking through the ideology and theology of the movement, although some effort is now being expended in this area. To date, however, much has been assumed and very little discussed or debated when it comes to such questions as the validity and meaning of the concept of masculinity, how (or even if) a godly man’s behavior is distinguishable from a godly woman’s behavior, and how women fit into the “masculine” Christianity being promoted by PK.

To be sure, nowhere does a PK person proclaim outright that godliness and manliness are essentially equivalent. But these two subjects are repeatedly dealt with in a way that points toward this as a necessary outcome. Our concern is that such a view would seem to be the logical end of the overly-expansive concept of masculinity that PK appears to promote. And, when left to run their course, ideologies do tend to proceed from their premises toward their logical conclusions.

An essential element of the solution to this problem would be for masculinity to be conceptualized with considerably more care and precision, so that it is limited to that which pertains simply to male sexuality—which, by definition, has to do with the ways in which men differ from women. Basic principles of godly character (which do *not* differentiate men from women) ought not to be included in a definition of masculinity (which *does* differentiate men from women). Certainly, godly character should inform and shape the expression of a man’s masculinity; but the development of godly character should not be addressed in such a way that it can easily be construed as a particularly masculine enterprise.

When godliness is presented as a mark of manliness, it serves to bait the hook, as it were, by persuading men that in behaving virtuously (something men do not always want to do), they thereby will prove themselves to be masculine (something men are normally quite eager to do!). One wonders what would happen if PK men were asked to keep their promises simply because this is the mark of a godly *person*, without this virtuous behavior being linked to an attribution of masculinity? Where would all the men be then?

The Leadership of Men in the Home

There is little if any argument in PK teaching (aside from the occasional citing of a biblical-proof text) for why leadership should be considered a male responsibility, or why a man should be deemed the spiritual leader of his home. Nor is there any acknowledgment that male leadership is a legitimately debatable view; it evidently is just assumed to be the biblical position.

But not only is male leadership assumed rather than defended

and delineated (it isn't even mentioned in the seven promises), it also tends to be described in different ways by different PK men. At one extreme, popular PK speaker Tony Evans declares the "a father is to be the priest of his home," and that a man who wants to reclaim spiritual purity in his life must sit down with his wife and inform her in no uncertain terms that **he is henceforth taking the leadership of the family away from her.** He is not to ask her about this; he is to tell her.⁹ In a recent television news interview Bill McCartney explained the PK phenomenon in terms of his conviction that, "There is a hunger and a thirst among men to assume their rightful role as the spiritual leaders in their homes."¹⁰ At the 1993 conference, McCartney stated that a husband is responsible for his wife's spiritual life and explained how a man is to pray as the priest of the home.¹¹ At the other end of the spectrum, a man's leadership is often described simply as servanthood, with no mention of taking charge or assuming a role of authority. "We lead by serving" seems to be a familiar theme. Interestingly, the understanding of male leadership as commander-in-chief is more likely to be brought out in secular presentations of PK, while the servanthood approach is usually the only view presented in Christian discussions of the movement.

Is a man to lead his family by acting as the authoritative representative of God to his wife and children, determining God's will for them and expecting them to follow his directives? Or does a man lead his family by being willing, able, and available to serve in whatever ways are needed, and by taking the initiative necessary to see to it that the lives of the family members proceed in a generally godly direction? The former understanding describes a position of authority which, by definition, excludes the wife and mother (whom the man "leads" along with the children). The latter is more descriptive of responsibility than of authority, and is just as applicable to the wife and mother as to the husband and father. Moreover, this position describes true servanthood; the former does not. A well-adjusted, adult woman is not "served" when a man exercises over her the authority of traditional male "headship." Indeed, such unearned, unilateral, final, and irrevocable authority is always incompatible with servanthood. Servant leadership, by definition, is limited, revocable, accountable to those who are governed, and must be earned.¹²

The gender agenda that traditionalists have inherited from nineteenth-century Victorian society is clearly being modified by Promise Keepers. A helpful corrective is the PK emphasis on the need for men to reverse the social pattern that was established in the last century, whereby men became separated both physically and emotionally from their families. Instead, fathers are exhorted to spend time developing loving relationships with their family members. This is, indeed, a sorely-needed exhortation.

However, another PK modification of the Victorian gender agenda is not so helpful. In Victorian culture, a woman's responsi-

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bility to provide moral instruction and leadership for her family was regarded as an essential element of the "high calling of motherhood."¹³ But instead of correcting this misapprehension by granting that the mother and father should share responsibility for moral leadership, much PK teaching seems intent on transferring moral and spiritual leadership in the family to the father exclusively. In this we again hear echoes of early twentieth-century fundamentalist efforts to solidify the moral and spiritual leadership of men in the home.¹⁴ Ironically, much of the writing in a PK newsletter on the "high calling" of fatherhood is reminiscent of the high-flown rhetoric that mystified and glorified Victorian motherhood.¹⁵

Of course, in the Victorian era, woman's place as a vocational mother served as a counterbalance of sorts to the man's culturally-assigned role of public leadership and influence. Being a "full-time" mother was all that remained for many women (particularly

middle and upper-class women) after industrialization took most of the productive work (and the men with it) out of the home and into the factories. In the PK agenda, however, it seems that men not only retain their roles of public leadership, but now are also urged to assume the role of moral and spiritual leadership in their private home life. Gary Rosberg's description of his job as a father doesn't seem to leave much for the mother to do:

It's my job to lead my family spiritually, to prepare my children for living for eternity, for eternal life with God. It's my job to equip them, edify them, and—when necessary—to admonish them with deep respect and honor. As the leader of my home, my job is to live for eternity and lead my family the same way.¹⁶

Rosberg states repeatedly that the moral and spiritual leadership of the family is "my job," not "our job" (that is, his and his wife's together). Since this definition of fatherhood does not indicate that it is a full-time job (unlike the Victorian mother, Rosberg has his own full-time career), evidently there does remain a great deal of housework, at least, for the mother to do!

Happily, some briefer descriptions of fatherhood in the same newsletter are not marked by such a sense of self-importance. A short essay by John Maxwell does not even present his role as father as distinct from his wife's role as mother, but as part of a joint effort between husband and wife to share parenting decisions and responsibilities. For this PK man, father and mother appear to be on the same level, working together and pooling their wisdom and resources, with neither one deemed more crucial to the family's spiritual health than the other.¹⁷

Men's Leadership in Church and Society

The PK view of male leadership in the church, while still not explicitly delineated, seems to be somewhat less ambiguous than PK references to male leadership in the home. The apparent decrease in ambiguity follows the development of the PK Clergy Conference for Men (first held February 1996). The purpose of these conferences is tied in with the PK vision of a mighty movement of godly men ushering in a time of revival for the church. Accordingly, the advertising brochure for the 1996 conference stated that “revivals led by pastors have the greatest impact and endure the longest”; therefore, “the Lord is raising up this special clergy conference for men to refresh pastors...that they might lead His Church into full-scale revival.”¹⁸

The theme of male pastors leading the charge was reinforced at the conference itself by remarks such as Tony Evans' that “God's starting team has taken the field”—which nicely combines the familiar sports motif of PK conferences with the familiar premise that the important movers and shapers, the folks who really get things done for God (“God's starting team”), are men.¹⁹ The upcoming clergy conferences for men are similarly explained in terms of Promise Keepers' desire (“to be a catalyst for revival in the personal life of clergy and their congregations.”²⁰ In these and many other statements promoting the clergy conferences, references to “clergy” and “pastors” are repeatedly made with the implicit understanding that these people are all men.

Given that the clearly stated purpose of these male-only clergy conferences is the spiritual renewal of pastors in preparation for their role of spiritual leadership in the coming revival, it follows that Promise Keepers must believe that the spiritual renewal of female pastors is irrelevant to the accomplishment of this objective. Either women clergy are in no need of spiritual renewal or the church is in no need of their spiritual leadership. There is no way to make sense of the PK rhetoric concerning the clergy conferences other than to presuppose a primary role of spiritual importance and leadership for men in the church.

Promise Keepers does not explicitly set limits on women's activities, or define with clarity what they mean by the male role of “spiritual leadership.” There does not as yet appear to be one “official” PK position on the place of women in the church. But even if there were an official position, and even if it were different from the conclusions that are logically drawn from PK's public rhetoric, it would be less important than the message PK actually communicates publicly in terms of words and deeds; for this is what influences people's thinking, not the beliefs that may be held in theory behind the scenes.

Although many of the men involved in Promise Keepers are evidently greatly troubled over the pain that minorities (especially African Americans) experience from racism, they typically do not demonstrate comparable concern over the pain women experience from sexism.

It is inadequate for PK to respond to objections concerning the exclusion of female pastors simply by saying that of course only men are allowed because “Promise Keepers is a men's movement.”²¹ The entire purpose of a men's movement is to address issues that are of particular relevance to men.²² And PK does this with respect to men's concerns about sexuality and their roles as husbands and fathers. To include among these issues the role of being a pastor is either to be very confused about the meaning of a men's movement, or to be quite convinced that pastoral ministry *is* a uniquely male concern because it is a role in which women simply do not belong.²³ There are, of course, some issues pertaining to the pastorate that are likely to be of more concern to male pastors than female pastors. But such issues are clearly not the main point of the clergy conferences, which are set up with the expressed generic intent of equipping pastors to lead the whole church into revival.

A related area of ambiguity has to do with the prominent belief within Promise Keepers that the troubles of our country today are due primarily to the fact that men have not been doing what God has called them to do. Most PK statements along these lines are sufficiently vague as to allow two very different interpretations, each with very different implications for the value placed upon womanhood. Is the

moral and social order in the nation falling apart for lack of spiritual leadership that only men can adequately provide? Or are things degenerating simply because men have not been carrying their share of the burden, but have left family, church, and social responsibilities largely to women (many of whom have been wearing themselves out doing double duty)?

The former view entails a hierarchy of power that is drawn along gender lines; the latter advocates a mutual, cooperative effort in which each person utilizes his or her gifts in service to God and others. The former imputes to men a unique and essential spiritual purpose in which women do not participate. The latter accords men and women equal importance and influence in the kingdom of God, thereby making the moral integrity of our nation and the spiritual vitality of our church dependent not primarily on men, but on everyone pulling his or her weight, regardless of gender.

The oft-quoted statement of James Dobson to the effect that the future of America and even western civilization depends entirely on male leadership—a statement neither unfamiliar or unapproved in PK circles—certainly comes down on the side of leadership as an exclusively male right and responsibility.²⁴

So, it seems did the “sacred assembly of men” in Washington, D.C. committed to “stand in the gap” before God in prayerful repentance on behalf of the nation. The event was crucial, explained its director Dale Schlafer, because “the corporate act of

contrition is perhaps the only thing left to stay God's hand of judgment of His people."²⁵ Schlafer states:

The Bible gives us specific steps by which to appeal to God for spiritual revival. In Joel 2:15, God tells us to "declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly." *Stand in the Gap* is our intentional response to a specific invitation by God, offering to revive His church.²⁶

Blithely ignored in this rationale is the fact that the "specific steps" indicated in the Joel passage clearly refer to a sacred assembly of *all* the people, young and old, male and female (see verse 16). Why is it, then, that for the first time in thousands of years, ever since God first called a people to himself, the "sacred assembly," the "corporate act of contrition," is now an exclusively *male* event? Repeatedly, Promise Keepers refers to this "sacred assembly of men" as though it were representative of the church as a whole. It is deemed necessary that men of all races and denominations be present; women, however, seem to be superfluous.

The PK brochure explains that the event is limited to men "because Promise Keepers is a men's ministry, and because it is men who have failed to take the spiritual leadership role in the family and Church." This explanation is one of the more pointed statements of the presumed spiritual priority of manhood. Men are to take "*the* spiritual leadership role." While this role, as usual, is not defined, it evidently is not a role shared with women.

Moreover, the failure of men to assume spiritual leadership cannot be understood to pertain merely to pastoral leadership. At this point in history, female pastors are something of a novelty in evangelical churches; men certainly have not failed to assume this role for themselves. The special role of spiritual leadership that is men's alone evidently also pertains to lay leadership in the church, as well as spiritual leadership in the home. Yet it is somewhat unclear whether the job of preparing the church and the nation for revival is essentially a masculine enterprise, or whether men have been given this task at this time simply because they have more sin for which to repent than women (specifically, their "failure" to exercise spiritual leadership). The implication, however, seems to be that men's special leadership role lends a special potency to men's prayers for revival.

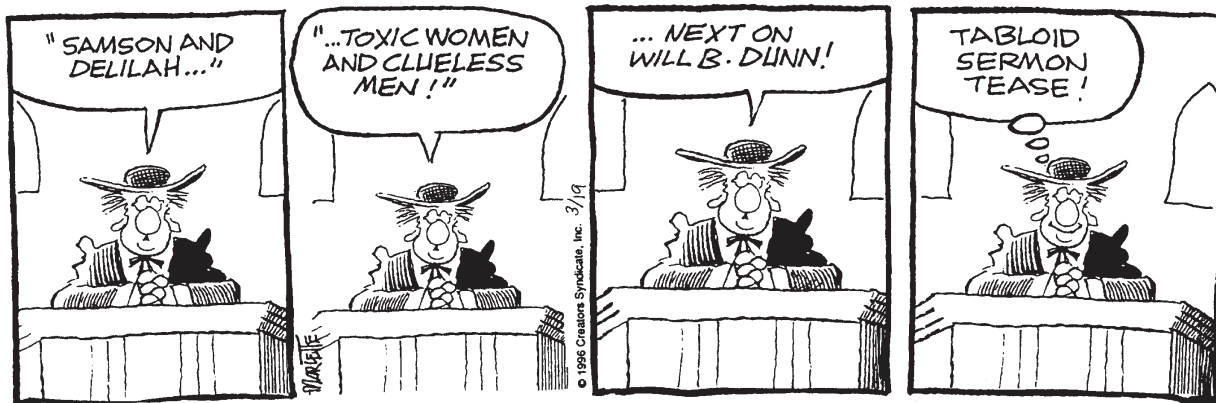
Promise Keepers insists that it is following historical precedent in believing that men's prayers of repentance will set the spiritual

stage for revival. They cite the pattern of revival formation in the Old Testament and in American history. However, they overlook the fact that never has revival come only in response to the prayers of men. Nor have the sacred assemblies in the revivals of either Old Testament or American history been only of men. Historically and biblically, revival is a matter of equal concern to believers of both genders; typically, periods of revival lead to more involvement of women in public ministry.

The apparent assumption that the "Sacred Assembly of Men" would be representative of the church as a whole is somewhat evocative of ancient Judaism, which permitted women but required men to attend the annual feasts or festivals; for the men served as representatives of families.²⁷ (Of course, PK did not intend to permit women to attend their Sacred Assembly.) It probably should not be assumed that PK men understand that this Jewish custom has been superseded in the new covenant, by which all believers have become one in Christ and priests unto God without respect to race, class, or gender.²⁸

The ambiguity concerning the meaning and extent of men's leadership responsibilities seems almost to be intentional; it does, after all, benefit the movement in terms of numerical growth. Talk of men's spiritual leadership seems to be carefully worded so as to appeal to hierarchically-minded men without overtly offending egalitarian men. Although PK teachers stop short of illustrating male leadership with specific instructions and diagrams of chains of command (for this would surely draw fire from those who hold to gender equality,) they exert no effort to unseat the chain of command that most likely resides as an archetype of sorts in the minds of many Christian men. Talk of male "leadership"—however ill-defined—is bound to attract men who have inextricably associated masculinity with authority. Indeed, PK's implicit message that men are the ones upon whose leadership the family, the church, and even the society depend for their spiritual and moral vitality seems to constitute a significant part of the PK response to the "crisis of masculinity" that is apparently afflicting American men at this time.

Although PK leaders evidently do not consider it necessary to make their agenda explicit on the issue of male leadership, that agenda does need to be clarified. To allow PK teaching on the subject to appear to point at once in opposite directions is to leave the matter up to the assumptions and prejudices that come naturally to each man's mind. These antithetical understandings of



men's leadership responsibilities should at least be presented as options to be discussed and explored in light of biblical principles. Unfortunately, however (and this has been typical of mass evangelical movements), the overall tenor of PK has not, thus far, been conducive to thoughtful reflection. Promise Keepers typically offers men answers, not questions; catchy slogans, not difficult alternatives to study and evaluate.

The ambiguities in this movement lead us to ask: As PK men learn to live lives of virtue, integrity, and responsibility in their homes, churches, and communities, will they be doing these good things with the primary motive of building up the kingdom of God in a united effort with other believers (both male and female)? Or will their primary motive be their desire to shore up their own beleaguered sense of manhood—perhaps even at the expense of women's sense of personhood?

Racism Is Evil, But Sexism Doesn't Exist

Although many of the men involved in Promise Keepers are evidently greatly troubled over the pain that minorities (especially African Americans) experience from racism, they typically do not demonstrate comparable concern over the pain women experience from sexism. While even traditionalist women acknowledge the existence of an unbiblical and hurtful prejudice against women in many evangelical churches, awareness of this problem seems to be mission from the PK agenda. The movement does show concern for the suffering that many women have experienced as a result of absent, irresponsible, and even abusive husbands; this concern is commendable. However, men cannot truly honor and respect women—as PK urges them to do—until they first recognize and repent of the ways in which they may habitually dishonor and disrespect women through thoughtless and even unintentional acts and attitudes of sexist prejudice.

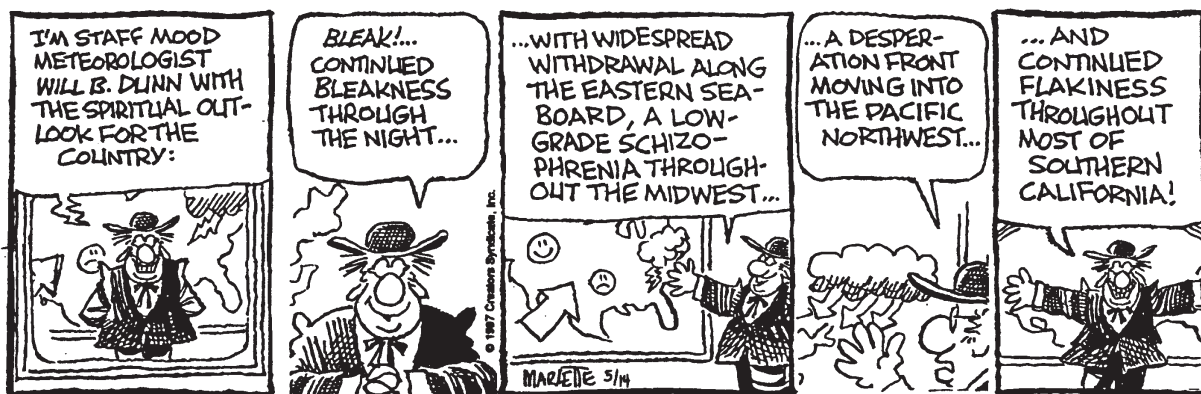
It is good that PK men are learning to hear, without criticism or judgment, the hurt that their minority brothers have felt in a white-dominant society. It is a shame that PK men are not also learning to hear, uncritically and nonjudgmentally, the pain that women of all races have experienced in a male-dominant church and society.

The PK practice of downplaying the presence and problems of women is perplexing in light of the movement's strong concern for unity among believers. It is also perplexing in view of PK's

ever-widening areas of spiritual emphasis—most of which are equally applicable to women as to men, yet are nonetheless limited to men. Bill McCartney states that “the building of bridges across the divisions that currently separate believers is an important part of why God called us into being as an organization,” and he expresses understandable distress over the presence of hostility between black and white believers.²⁹ But where is the concern about the divisions and hostilities that exist between men and women in the church? Or is the reality of such problems simply denied? If the 1996 PK Clergy Conference truly was “birthed on the biblical premise that walls of division in the church will only fall as its shepherds lead the way,” then it is indeed ironic that such a conference would exclude the church's female shepherds, thus reinforcing the divisive prejudice against women in pastoral ministry.³⁰

Perhaps these perplexities are simply a result of rampant but unreflective growth. Like any huge organization, Promise Keepers must justify and perpetuate its existence by continually adding to its “product line.” Because there is only so much that can be done with issues specific to men, PK projects have spilled over into the generic concerns of *all* Christians—yet without being opened up to all Christians because, as the refrain goes, “Promise Keepers is a men's movement.” This simplistic rationale, however, begs some important questions: Ought a men's movement offer events and activities that are not specifically relevant to men's issues? Does this approach, in the end, exclude and minimize women as much as it encourages and builds up men? If so, is this what Promise Keepers really wants to do?

The demeaning and minimizing of women is by no means a natural or necessary consequence of a men's movement. A truly Christian men's ministry would seem to be an ideal setting in which to instill in men a genuine empathy and respect for women as fellow believers and as equally valuable leaders and ministers in God's kingdom. Perhaps, by God's grace, the PK advocacy of emotional expressiveness, relational intimacy, selfless service to others, and hands-on fathering (even if referred to by some PK men as “babysitting”!) will eventually undermine notions of male centrality and authority—which traditionally have been legitimated and perpetuated in large part by the stereotypically masculine traits of emotional distance, invulnerability, insensitivity, and disinterest in child care.



Where Is Promise Keepers Going?

I was, perhaps, inevitable that after two decades of evangelical obsession over roles of women, there should emerge an evangelical movement designed to respond to men's uncertainty as to their special place in the spiritual order. Historian Margaret Lamberts Bendroth suggests that, following a period of belabored and unresolved debate concerning women's roles in the church, the question of the meaning of masculinity "is perhaps the place where fresh social dialogue among Christians might begin. Indeed, if healing is to occur, this is where it must happen."³¹

Whether or not this is the case, until men are able to feel securely masculine without having to exercise authority over women or carve out for themselves some special spiritual ministry that is closed to women, women will never enjoy equal status and respect. Despite the rhetoric about PK events being used by God to usher in revival, genuine spiritual renewal cannot occur apart from a Spirit-led appreciation and affirmation of every believer's spiritual gifts and callings—regardless of distinctions not only of race and denomination, but also of gender.

In view of the power and prominence of Promise Keepers, much will be determined for both women and men in the church by the way in which this movement responds (or fails to respond) to issues such as those raised in this article.

It is impossible to predict the direction in which Promise Keepers will head from here. Much PK talk to date seems to imply that men have a certain primacy in God's agenda, and that this place of special importance is tied in with an exclusively male role of spiritual leadership (however benevolently or imperiously that role may be conceived) in both the home and the church. The danger here is that women will not be honored but marginalized, that they will not be seen as equal partners with men in the Christian enterprise, and that the church will end up looking to "godly manhood" to save the day, make the difference, and bring about spiritual revival.

The positive possibility, on the other hand, is that Christians will engage in earnest prayer and biblically-informed dialogue concerning these unresolved issues within Promise Keepers, in order that this powerful and influential movement might be shaped by the will of God and not merely by the minds of men.

¹*Men of Action*, Summer 1996, 3.

²See Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender: 1875 to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), chapter 1.

³Stu Weber, "The Ultimate Tender Warrior," *New Man*, July/August 1994, 77-80.

⁴See Robert Hicks, "The Masculine Journey," *Men of Action*, Spring/Summer 1993, 4.

⁵See *The Making of a Godly Man: Promise Keepers 1977 Men's Conferences*, 25.

⁶The *Men in Action* newsletter, Spring 1994, quotes this verse (in the NKJV) and states that PK has "chosen that verse as a cornerstone for our new men's magazine, published with Strang Communications." As of April 1997, however, *New Man* ceased

being the official publication of PK; see *Christianity Today*, 28 April 1997, 85.

⁷See Tony Evans, "Spiritual Purity," in *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*, ed. Al Janssen and Larry K. Weeden (Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family, 1994) 73, 74, 80, 81.

⁸Joannie M. Schrof, "A giant Christian slumber party," *U.S. News & World Report*, 17 February 1997, 19.

⁹Evans, 76, 79-80.

¹⁰"9 News," 10 p.m., 6/20/96, Denver, CO.

¹¹Presentation by journalist Doug LeBlanc, Denver area CBE meeting, August 1995.

¹²For more on this, see Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 78-83.

¹³For an overview of Victorian gender roles, see Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Women Caught in the Conflict: The Culture War Between Traditionalism and Feminism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994) chapter 1.

¹⁴See Bendroth, 102-104.

¹⁵*Men of Action*, Summer 1996. See especially the "Letter from the Editor," 2.-

¹⁶Gary Rosberg, "A Father's Legacy," in *ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷"Four Thoughts on Fathering," in *ibid.*, 11.

¹⁸*Fan Into Flame: 1996 Clergy Conference for Men*, 1.

¹⁹"All Things Considered," PBS radio, 2/23/96.

²⁰*The Making of a Godly Man: Promise Keepers 1997 Men's Conferences*, 5.

²¹Stated by Wes Roberts, director of the 1996 clergy conference; reported by Gayle White, "Clergy Conference Stirs Historic Show of Unity," *Christianity Today*, 8 April 1996, 88.

²²It is sometimes noted in PK's explanations for why the conferences are limited to men that "the conferences are designed for specific men's issues." See *Seize the Moment: PK '94*.

²³For discussion of why there is no compelling reason, either biblically or theologically, to deny women pastoral ministry, see Groothuis, *Good News*, especially chapters 4, 8 & 9.

²⁴See Jim and Lynne Marian, "Greg Laurie Touches His Generation," *New Man*, January/February 1995, 50.

²⁵"Stand in the Gap: A Sacred Assembly of Men," *The Making of a Godly Man: Promise Keepers 1997 Men's Conferences*, 6.

²⁶"Stand in the Gap: A Sacred Assembly of Men," *Men of Action*, Spring 1997, 8.

²⁷See "Feasts, Festivals, and Fasts," in *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 333; also Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, third edition, (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co., n.d.; orig. pub. 1886), 1:235-36.

²⁸For a development of this theme, see Groothuis, *Good News*, chapter

²⁹Bill McCartney, "A Call to Unity," in *Seven Promises*, 160, 166.

³⁰"Highlights of 1996," *The Making of a Godly Man*, 9.

³¹Bendroth, 127.

Infallibility in Ethical Perspective

By John M. Swomley

[Dr. John M. Swomley lives in Kansas City, Missouri. He is a graduate of Dickinson College and holds M.A. and S.T.B. Degrees from Boston University and the Ph.D. degree from the University of Colorado. A Phi Beta Kappa keyholder, he was Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City from 1960 to 1984 and is now Professor Emeritus. He is a frequent contributor to *Christian Ethics Today*.]

The doctrine of papal infallibility has been under attack by some Roman Catholic theologians since its proclamation by Pius IX and the First Vatican Council in 1870. The most extensive recent critical examination of it is Hans Kung's 1972 book, *Infallible? An Inquiry*. Yet it is not the subject of the ecumenical dialogue which has been taking place as a result of the Second Vatican Council. Protestant theologians and church officials have tended to be silent. An ethical critique from a Protestant perspective seems all the more timely.

The original definition of infallibility which appears in Chapter 3 of the dogmatic Constitution, *Pastor Aeternus*, of July 18, 1870, declares excommunicate anyone who states that "the Roman Pontiff has the office only of inspection or of direction, but not full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal Church, not only in matters pertaining to faith and morals, but also in those pertaining to the discipline and government of the Church spread throughout the whole world; or that he has only a principal part and not the whole plenitude of this supreme power; or that this power of his is not ordinary and immediate, both over all and individual Churches and likewise over all and individual pastors and faithful."¹

Vatican I also amplified the definition with such general statements as "this the Holy See has always held" and "this the perpetual usage of the Church confirms."²

Chapter 4 of the Constitution seemed to limit infallibility to the pope's speaking *ex cathedra* when "he defines with his supreme apostolic authority a doctrine concerning faith or morals...and therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are irreformable of themselves." (and not from the consent of the Church.)³

However, "faith and morals" can be stretched to cover all kinds of actions, including wars and politics such as papal pronouncements against separation of church and state and those forbidding Catholic legislators to vote against positions held by the Church.

The first ethical casualty of "infallibility" is freedom within the church to disagree or dissent with respect to papal teaching or pronouncements. The only recourse of those who dissent is silence or disobedience. Disobedience has led to punishment of dissidents in various countries, including officially silencing them or forbidding them to teach in Catholic universities and even excommuni-

cation. These verdicts are handed out by what used to be called the Holy Office of the Roman and Universal Inquisition, now called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Hans Kung, who was forbidden to teach in a Catholic university, wrote, "No one is burned at the stake anymore but careers and psyches are destroyed as required."⁴

Since the doctrine of papal infallibility was intended to solidify papal power and prevent its erosion by dissent, the failure to stifle dissent required new and harsher methods. Therefore, according to a 1989 report in the *National Catholic Reporter*, a new fidelity or loyalty oath must be "taken with hands on a Bible, requiring teachers in any universities whatsoever who teach disciplines which deal with faith or morals" as well as pastors, deacons, seminary rectors, and rectors of universities to do so, and is binding also on diocesan officials.

The oath requires obedience to whatever may issue in the future from the Vatican or bishops as well as what has already been proclaimed. One of the sentences in the oath says, "I adhere with religious submission of will and intellect to the teachings which either the Roman pontiff or the College of Bishops enunciate when they exercise the authentic magisterium, even if they proclaim those teachings in an act that is not definitive."

Another sentence in the oath says, "With Christian obedience I shall associate myself with what is expressed by the holy shepherds as authentic doctors and teachers of the faith or established by them as the Church's rulers."⁵

The doctrine of infallibility has consequently become a totalitarian obedience to or thought control by the monarch. When the pope decides that a position he takes on morals, such as opposition to birth control or abortion, must not only be obeyed by the Catholic faithful, but legislated by the state, as he has done in the United States, he goes beyond control over a subordinated church, to seek theocratic control over citizens who do not accept his leadership or subscribe to his religious doctrines. Therefore the second ethical casualty of infallibility is that church doctrine becomes political ideology. That in turn tends to alienate non-Catholics as well as Catholics who believe the mission of the Church is persuasive, non-partisan, and service oriented.

A third ethical casualty of infallibility is recognition of the fact that no one, whatever his position of authority, is immune from error. Even a leader supported by an entire church hierarchy makes serious mistakes. Individual church members as well as theologians ought to exercise their own judgment instead of blindly accepting "infallible" teaching. A German theologian, W. Kasper, wrote, "For faith is essentially an act of free assent; as an act that is wholly and entirely human, it does not exclude but includes intellectual responsibility. No one can or may delegate

this responsibility in a blind obedience to the official church and her teaching office.”⁶

Among the many mistakes made by the papacy are those listed by Hans Kung as follows: the excommunication of Photius, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantiople and of the Greek Church, which made formal the schism with the Eastern Church, a schism which is now almost a thousand years old; the prohibition of [charging] interest at the beginning of modern times;...the condemnation of Galileo and the measures adopted as a consequence of this action, which are essentially responsible for the estrangement between the Church and the natural sciences (not yet overcome today); the condemnation of new forms of worship in the Rites controversy, which is one of the main reasons for the large-scale breakdown of the Catholic missions of modern times in India, China, and Japan; the maintenance up to the First Vatican Council of the medieval secular power of the Pope, with the aid of all secular and spiritual means of excommunication, which in large measure rendered the papacy incredible as a spiritual ministry.”⁷

Kung goes on to list other errors and concludes, “The errors of the ecclesiastical teaching office in every century have been numerous and indisputable.”⁸ Kung emphasizes the error of Pope Paul VI’s encyclical against birth control. His reference to birth control is in the context of papal commissions appointed by Paul VI during Vatican II to study the question of changing the Vatican position on contraception. Although a majority of both lay and clergy commissions voted, after two years of study, to accept contraception, the minority report prevailed. A portion of the minority report follows, as translated by A.B. Hasler:

If it should be declared that contraception is not evil in itself, then we should have to concede frankly that the Holy Spirit had been on the side of the Protestant churches in 1930 (when the encyclical *Casti connubi* was promulgated), in 1951 (Pius XII’s address to the midwives), and in 1958 (the address to the Society of Hematologists in the year the pope died). It should likewise have to be admitted that for half a century the Spirit failed to protect Pius XI, Pius XII and a large part of the Catholic hierarchy from a very serious error. This would mean that the leaders of the Church, acting with extreme imprudence, had condemned thousands of innocent human acts, forbidding, under pain of eternal damnation, a practice which would now be sanctioned. The fact can neither be

denied nor ignored that these same acts would now be declared licit on the grounds of principles cited by the Protestants, which popes and bishops have either condemned or at least not approved.⁹

Hasler concludes, “Thus, it became only too clear that the core of the problem was not the pill but the authority, continuity, and infallibility of the Church’s magisterium.”

The errors of the popes are not confined to these illustrations. If killing and torture are moral issues, as most would admit, the record of papal endorsement or sanction of such action has continued from the time of the Crusades through the Inquisition to the support of Croatian and Spanish wars for fascism, and the present pope’s collaboration with the United States in Central American wars as well as with the Argentine military in the numerous “disappearances” of suspected leftists. The present pope has acknowledged, still without apology, the involvement of the papacy in the events of the Holocaust.¹⁰

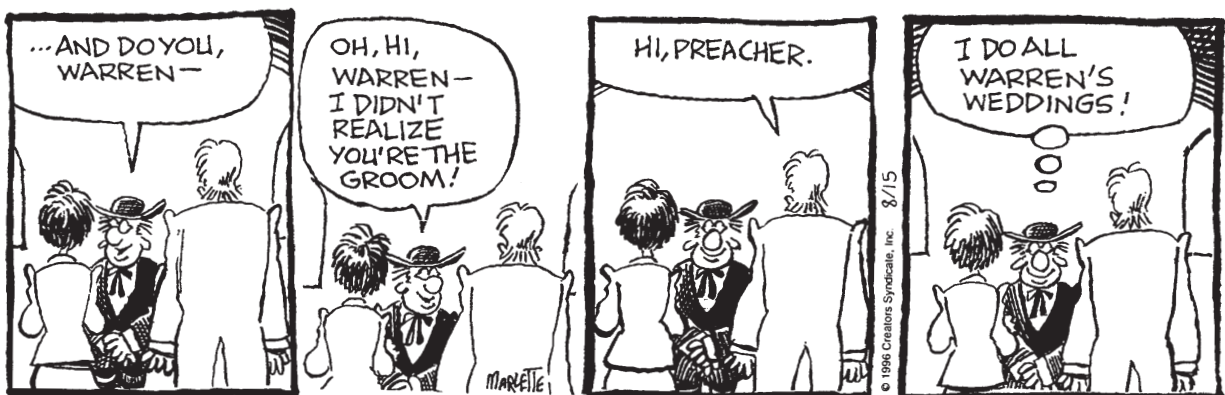
So the lessons of history with respect to papal error condemn the doctrine of infallibility to a mere attempt to maintain and expand clerical power, when moral leadership was wanting.

Still another ethical problem of the doctrine of infallibility is that it interferes with the church’s mission. The mission of the church on which faith depends is to proclaim the gospel afresh as situations change in a rapidly changing universe. When infallible teaching is proclaimed which prevents the church from dealing with new situations, the mission and faith of the church is damaged.

The two Vatican dogmas of Mary, the Immaculate Conception and her bodily Assumption into heaven, are illustrations of dogmas not required by necessity but, as Hans Kung put it, “for reasons of piety and propaganda.”¹¹

Still another illustration is found in Vatican instructions on sex, procreation, birth control, and abortion. The Vatican seriously opposes abortion on a right-to-life basis of the fetus, even if the woman carrying the fetus must die as a result. Father Patrick A. Finney in his book, *Moral Problems in Hospital Care*, states the dogma in question-answer form:

- If it is morally certain that a pregnant mother and her unborn child will both die if the pregnancy is allowed to take its course, but at the same time the attending physician is morally certain



that he can save the mother's life by removing the inviable fetus, is it lawful for him to do so?

- No, it is not. Such a removal of the fetus would be a direct abortion.

This placing women's lives or health in danger because of an infallible teaching will not satisfy either women or loving husbands or children already in the care of the mother doomed to die by church dogma. Is this what the gospel is about in this generation? Apparently the church's hierarchy is prepared to defend its dogma at the risk of all Christian beliefs. Cardinal O'Connor made this clear in April, 1992 when he said, "The fact is that attacks on the Catholic church's stance on abortion, unless they are rebutted effectively, erode church authority on all matters, indeed the authority of God himself."¹²

He also said in his publication, *Catholic New York*, "Abortion has become the number one challenge for the Church in the United States because...if the Church's authority is rejected on such a crucial question as human life...then questioning of the Trinity becomes child's play, as does questioning the divinity of Christ or any other Church teacher."¹³

This is precisely the problem. If church dogma against science is all-important, why should scientists accept other teachings? If the life of a fetus is more important than the lives of women, what does this say to many women or their husbands? In other words, papal infallibility is pitted against the more important teachings of the Bible, or ethical insights derived from the New Testament, such as opposition to legalism. Faith, of course, is not dependent on dogma, but it suffers if those who proclaim the faith subordinate it to the authority or dogma of the administrative and spiritual leaders of the church.

Numerous other questions can be raised about infallibility, such as whether the papacy can be guided by the Holy Spirit when it is responsible for so many errors. Or, why not dispense with the idea that the Vicar of Christ is immune from error when speaking *ex cathedra*, and let church councils or commissions seek a consensus on issues applicable to new developments that affect religion? Or, why does the papacy insist government action contrary to infallible teaching must be changed or the validity of the teaching is threatened? In other words, why should not the Vatican forego the theocratic impulse to enact into secular civil and criminal law what the pope insists is his religious certitude about women, sex, medicine, and other issues on which he has made infallible statements?

Neither the Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*¹⁴ nor the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*¹⁵ issued by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity even hints that such subjects might be open for discussion. Instead, John Paul II asserted in *Ut Unum Sint* that "He can under very specific conditions laid down by the First Vatican Council declare *ex cathedra* that a certain doctrine belongs to the deposit of faith. By thus bearing witness to the truth he serves unity."¹⁶ In other words, papal infallibility is not open for discussion but is a prerequisite for unity with Rome.

Is this also the assumption of Protestant participants in ecumenical dialogue? It is certainly not what many progressive European and American Catholics want.

Infallibility of course is not simply a Catholic or ecumenical problem. Protestant fundamentalists claim infallibility or inerrancy for the Bible, and various other religions have their infallible sources as well. The problem with all who claim infallibility is that this is their bottom line, making dialogue difficult and both ecumenical peace and authentic Christian brotherhood virtually impossible.

1 Hans Kung, *Infallibility? An Inquiry* (Garden City, NY, Image Books, Doubleday, 1972) 85

2 *Ibid.*, 107

3 *Ibid.*, 89

4 *National Catholic Reporter*, October 11, 1985

5 *National Catholic Reporter*, March 17, 1989

6 W. Kasper, *The Church's Road From Vatican I to Vatican II*, cited in Kung, 120

7 Kung, *Infallibility?*, 29-30

8 *Ibid.*, 30

9 A.B. Hasler, *How the Church Became Infallible*, (Garden City, NY, Doubleday, 1981) 270

10 James Carroll, "The Silence," *New Yorker*, April 7, 1997

11 Kung, 133

12 *The Wanderer*, April 23, 1992

13 *Catholic New York*, April 9, 1992

14 *Et Unum Sint* (Boston, St. Paul Books and Media) 1995

15 *The Directory*, U.S. Catholic Conference publication No. 658, 1992

16 *Et Unum Sint*, 101, 102



Dear Lord,

So far today, God, I've done all right. I haven't gossiped, haven't lost my temper, haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or over-indulged. I'm very thankful for that.

But in a few minutes, God, I'm going to get out of bed.

And from then on, I'm probably going to need a lot more help.

Amen

[Gleaned from the Internet by friends who obviously don't have enough to do.]

Watching the World Go By

Society's Drug Problem Is Spiritual

By Ralph Lynn

[Dr. Ralph Lynn is a retired Professor of History at Baylor University. He is a regular contributor to this journal.]

Up to now, our national wars against drugs, announced with much fanfare by successive presidents, have been uniformly unsuccessful.

On the assumption that millions of people resort to drugs to make empty, unsatisfying lives bearable, it is clear that we are fighting wars against symptoms rather than causes.

If we ever get serious about a war against drugs, we should understand that we cannot treat the problem successfully apart from the entire configuration of life among our tragically large underclass.

This configuration of life includes poverty, physical abuse, discrimination, neglect, disease, unemployment, ignorance, and the depressing experience of living among the wretched ruins of large sections of our cities or in impoverished pockets of rural areas.

Of course, a great many people in the upper social and economic brackets also try to fill empty, unsatisfying lives with drugs. These people, however, have access to many kinds of aid beyond the reach of the forty or so millions among us who are too sick, too old, too ill-educated, and too lacking in self-discipline to cope with life without society's help.

Without a successful campaign against the entire configuration of life among our underclass, a victory over commonly used hard drugs would only call up an unending supply of alcohol, designer drugs, and other kinds of chemical crutches. Even now, liquor and tobacco—both tragically legal—take a far greater human and economic toll than the drug trade.

If this argument is at all valid, then society needs a broad frontal assault on the entire configuration of life among our underclass. Probably we should at the outset come to terms with some unpalatable facts.

One is that the task of helping the helpless help themselves will take not just one or two presidential terms but one or two generations.

Another is that we have been throwing money not at problems but at people. We have done so partly in anger and impatience and partly in fear of and contempt for our underclass—much as the Roman rulers threw money at the masses watching their victory parades.

We must attack our social problems not in impatience and anger

but in the cool fashion of the scientist in search of a cure for a physical malady. And we must adjust to the fact that solutions for social maladies cost enormous sums of money just as the development of reliable treatments for physical ailments such as cancer and AIDS entail enormous sums for research and development.

Our business leaders, our sociologists, our educators, and our medical professionals are quite capable of devising effective programs within the framework of our traditional freedoms. Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries have demonstrated that it can be done.

It may have been noted that I did not list politicians among the people who can help solve our problem. The hard fact is that we cannot expect politicians to take the lead in any program for which they have no public support—which leads to a final unpalatable fact.

Our chief obstacle to the solution of the “drug” problem is neither material nor intellectual. It is spiritual; it lies in the areas which our spiritual leaders claim as their own.

So long as the inhabitants of ghettos do not break out to mug us or burglarize our homes, we millions of fortunate people seem willing to allow the shiftless, the sots, and the potheads—as we are likely and somewhat self-righteously inclined to think of them—to do without public assistance pending their decision to stay sober, avoid drugs, and take whatever employment they can find.

When the ghettos explode, we scream for law and order, for the right to carry concealed guns, and for vengeance—thus making the case that our problem is spiritual.

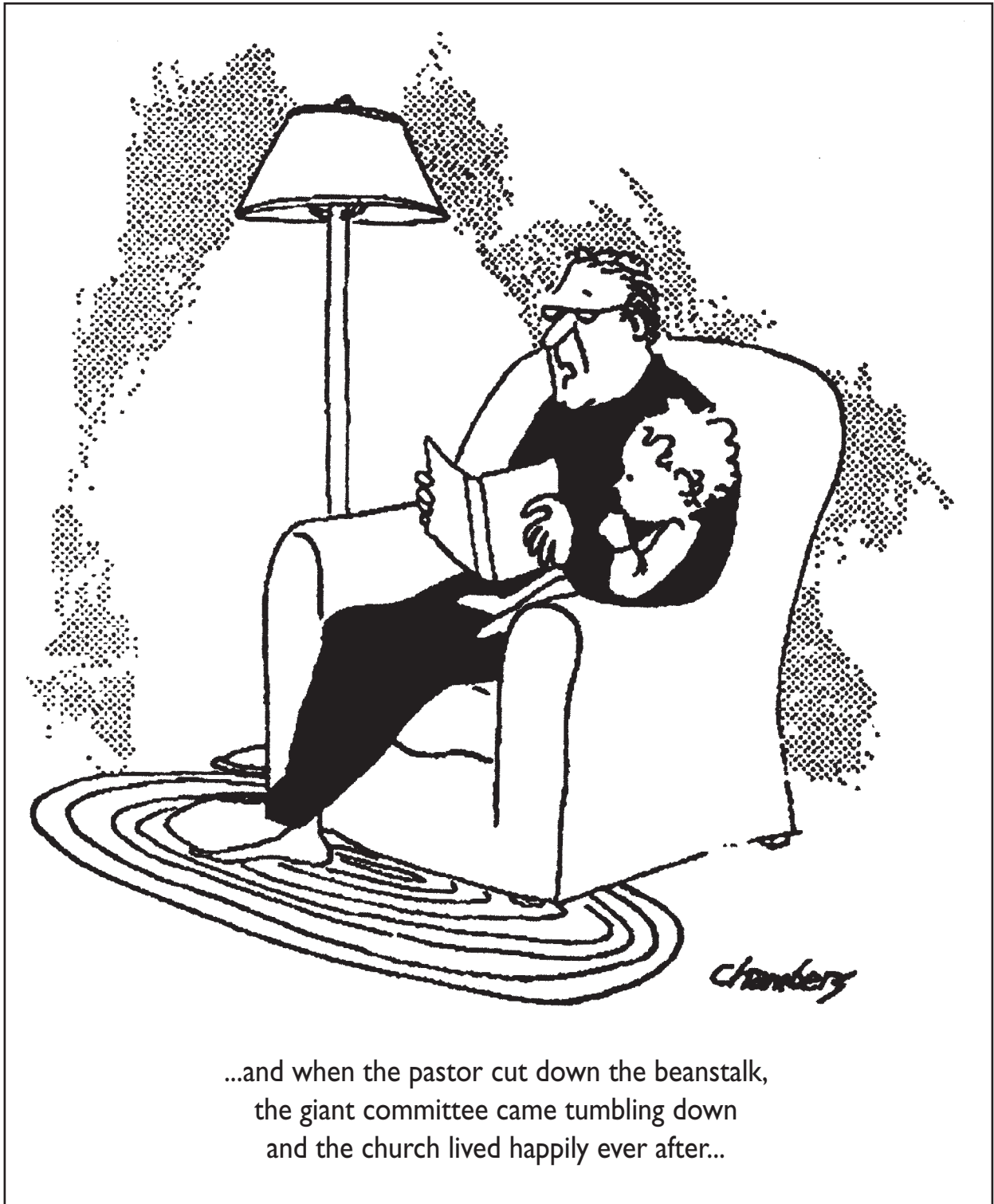
A recent letter in the local newspaper, in reaction to the murder of two women of the underclass, chillingly portrays our spiritual bankruptcy.

“Every family must be armed. Its only hope is to be able to defend itself. Every man and woman should be armed and trained in the use of weapons.

“None of us should feel the least guilt or hesitancy about using guns for the clearly determined purpose of killing anyone who threatens his family.”

The author? Not an obscure member of the National Rifle Association but the popular pastor of one of the two or three largest churches in a city of more than a hundred thousand.

There is a better way.



...and when the pastor cut down the beanstalk,
the giant committee came tumbling down
and the church lived happily ever after...

[Gleaned from the Internet]

THE CENTER FOR CHRISTIAN ETHICS AT BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

The Center for Christian Ethics exists to bear witness to the relevance of the Christian gospel in the world. It maintains an emphasis on applied Christianity with program activity based on Christian experience, Biblical truth, theological insight, historical perspective, current research, human needs, and the divine imperative to love God with our whole hearts and our neighbors as ourselves.

CHRONOLOGY

- In 1988 plans were made and the foundations laid for the Center for Christian Ethics.
- In 1989 the Center for Christian Ethics name was carefully chosen.
- In 1990, on June 14, the Center was chartered as a non-profit corporation.
- In 1991, on June 17, the Center was granted 501(c)(3) standing by the Internal Revenue Service.
- In 1997, a mutually beneficial relationship between the Center and Baylor University was established, with the Center's primary offices situated in the Baylor Administration Building, at 416 Pat Neff Hall, Waco, Texas.

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Financial support for the Center for Christian Ethics has come from churches, through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, from Foundations, and from interested individuals.

CONTRIBUTIONS ARE

- Greatly needed
- Urgently solicited
- Genuinely appreciated

OBJECTIVES

- Strengthen and support the cause of Christian ethics.
- Champion the moral values without which civilization itself could not survive.
- Publish a Christian ethics journal as a needed voice for the Christian ethics cause.
- Conduct forums to discuss critical ethical issues with a view to recommending practical responses.
- Address the ethical dimensions of public policy issues.
- Prepare and distribute Christian ethics support materials not being produced by others.
- Work with like-minded individuals and entities to advance the cause of Christian ethics.
- Perform needed Christian ethics projects and services for those welcoming such help.
- Recognize and honor those who have made unique contributions to the cause of Christian ethics.
- Utilize the contributions of responsible stewards who designate resources to be used in furthering the cause of Christian ethics.

The **VOICE** of the Center for Christian Ethics is *Christian Ethics Today*. Within the constraints of energy and finances, this journal is published about every other month. It is now sent without charge to those who request it.

COLLOQUIUMS are Center-sponsored conversations held several times a year with knowledgeable participants coming together to discuss relevant ethical issues with a view to recommending appropriate actions.

INITIATIVES in Christian Ethics (related to such things as race, class, gender, publishing, mass media, translation, teaching, and curricula) are Center agenda concerns.

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