

CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 2

AGGREGATE ISSUE 15

APRIL 1998

Letters to the Editor

Wanted: A Public Philosophy

Charles Wellborn

Strange Bedfellows:

Strategies Shared by Darwinists and Gender Traditionalists

Rebecca Merrill Groothuis

Persecution of Christians in America: Say What?

Frosty Troy

A Blending of Cultures

Hal Haralson

Two Shorts and a Long

Bruce McIver

Reforming Campaign Financing

Paul Simon

Family Reunion

William L. Hendricks

What's Your Net Worth?

Glenn Dromgoole

Three Poems

Wyatt H. Heard

Gleanings from the Internet

Things You Can Learn From a Dog

Administratium

Watching the World Go By

Ralph Lynn

The Death Penalty

Millard Fuller

Kudzu

Doug Marlette

Editorial Report

Very seldom are the readers of *Christian Ethics Today* accosted with statistics, reports, policies, or sundry housekeeping details. This third anniversary issue, however, may be a not inappropriate time to mention a few things.

Subscription policy. The journal is sent without charge to those who request it.

Journal of opinion. Articles printed represent the views of the authors and are not necessarily those of the editor or the Center's Trustees or the Regents or Administration of Baylor University.

Finances. Financial support for the Center for Christian Ethics comes from interested individuals, from foundations, from churches, and through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Auditor's report. In 1997, the Center for Christian Ethics took in \$54,036 and spent \$50,484. Using a cost accounting method of reckoning, each issue of the journal costs about \$10,000 to \$12,000.

Consultants. The journal's contents are assembled, edited, and proofed by the editor and his incredibly wonderful wife, Mary Louise. (Oversights and mistakes are hers, not mine. NOT.) Handwritten or typed materials are processed into a floppy disk by computer whiz Marilyn Davis. After the design process, printing is done by the Etheridge Printing Company who, after providing blue lines for final proofing, delivers the printed copies to the professional mailers who then abandon the finished product to the U.S. Post Office for indeterminate treatment.

Submission of materials. Content material for possible publication is solicited. As long as the material is related to Christian social ethics, its submission for consideration is welcome. The Center's policy is to pay \$100 for articles and \$50 for shorter pieces, paid at the time of publication.

Advertising. The Center at this time does not have the staff in place to implement a policy of carrying advertisements in the journal. Paid subscriptions: Ditto. Maybe some day.

Staff. The Center currently has no full time paid staff but is vigorously, earnestly, read, frantically seeking qualified persons to direct and implement the Center's work out of offices at Baylor University.

Center-Baylor relationship. In 1997, the Center for Christian Ethics and Baylor University entered into a mutually beneficial relationship with Baylor's Regents electing the Center's Trustees and providing the Center with offices at the Baylor Administration Building at 416 Pat Neff Hall in Waco, Texas and with the Center's Trustees, through the Center's staff, having "primary responsibility for the financial support, supervision, program activities, and ongoing work of the Center in support of Christian ethics." Being the Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor provides Baylor as an institution with important distance and provides the Center as a Christian ethics entity with important relationships.

Be a Little Kinder

Martin Marty's *Context*, a constant source of blessing, is published 22 times a year by Claretian Publications, 205 West Monroe St., Chicago, Illinois 60606. The subscription price is \$29.95 per year. Call 1/800-328-6515. His Volume 29, Number 19 issue noted, from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 6/20/97, that Huston Smith, famed and senior professor of religion at Syracuse said:

"While I was teaching at M.I.T., Aldous Huxley joined us for a semester as distinguished visiting professor in the humanities. Needless to say, he was in demand all over New England, and my regard for him was so great that I volunteered to be his social secretary, driving him to and from his engagements because I wanted nothing so much that semester as to spend as much time in his presence as I could manage. On the way to one of his engagements, he said, 'You know, Huston, it's rather embarrassing to have spent one's entire lifetime pondering the human condition and to come toward its close and find that I really don't have anything more profound to pass on by way of advice than, 'Try to be a little kinder.'"

Editor: Foy Valentine

Publisher: The Center for Christian Ethics

CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY is published spasmodically, as funding and energy permit, by the Center for Christian Ethics, Post Office Box 670784, Dallas, Texas 75367-0784. Phone (972) 404-0070 or (972) 404-0050. Produced in the United States of America. Third class postage paid at Dallas, Texas.

Letters to the Editor

“Once again, I enjoyed Christian Ethics Today. It is the best reading material I receive....Enclosed please find [a check]....”

Lawyer, Texas

“I sat down and read the current issue ‘from cover to cover.’ This is a superb piece of work....I especially appreciated the report on your fiftieth wedding anniversary year and immediately passed it on to [my wife] with a suggestion that we try something like that....”

University Professor, Alabama

“The December 1997 issue is one of the best. However, they are all superb.”

Pastor, Arizona

“Dr. John Swomley’s treatment of ‘Abortion and Public Policy’ is the best statement on the subject I have ever read.”

Christian Statesman, Texas

“When I read my magazines and journals, I always dog-ear the first page of an article if I want to keep it. Then when I finish that issue, I pull out the articles I want to keep and put them in their appropriate files so I can access them later. In going through the most recent issue of *Christian Ethics Today*, I discovered that I have dog-eared just about every article. Congratulations on hitting a home run!”

Young Pastor, Alabama

“I want you to know the immense inspiration and intellectual stimulus derived from reading every article....I’ve been languishing for something that would lift me out of my....doldrums into new streams of vigor and reflection. Reading your volume tonight has done just that!...This issue...is as laden in substantive content and reading pleasure as any journal my eyes, heart, and mind have fixed on...and I do keep a pastoral discipline of reading and study....Genius writing in style and thought....”

Executive Minister, Rhode Island

“The article by Dr. John Swomley on the public policy aspects of abortion is the most balanced, the most logical, and the most convincing thing I have ever read on the subject. Thank you for a magazine of consistently superior content.”

Retired Career Foreign Missionary, Texas

“The current issue of *Christian Ethics Today* is simply outstanding....Thanks...for continuing to challenge us mentally and spiritually.”

Denominational Executive, Texas

“I do not get excited about many things these days; yet, the last issue really received my enthusiasm for something very positive in Baptist print. You have dealt, almost by chapter and verse, with the issues which I am striving to steer a couples class...to face. Do you have 20 copies which I might have?”

Prominent Church Woman, Virginia

“Don’t know who gave you our address, but we will be eternally grateful. *Christian Ethics Today* is a classic! It is wonderful to read something meaty and constructive.”

Retirees, Arizona

“*Christian Ethics Today* is about the only publication of which we are aware which discusses in some depth the critical issues that are adversely affecting us.”

Businessman, Texas

“The...article...by Charles Wellborn...was one of the truly great pieces of writing I have come across and I would certainly think this is something that ought to be inserted in the *Congressional Record*....”

Insurance CEO, Texas

“I just can’t help being mad at you. Every time a new issue arrives, I’m driven to drop everything else I’m doing in order to read it from cover to cover.”

Minister, Florida

“We so much enjoyed...your excellent...*Christian Ethics Today* picked up today. Always drop everything to read it.”

Minister, Mississippi

“Your last issue of *Christian Ethics Today* was outstanding....Swomley’s article on abortion was definitive.”

Counselor, Missouri

“I recommend every article in the magazine and usually read it from cover to cover.”

Lawyer, Former Judge, New Mexico

“Thanks for the Wellborn article. It has one of the greatest paragraphs I’ve ever read in all my life....Thanks for sharing this magazine with me.”

Hospital Chaplain, Texas

“I love this journal. It helps me a lot. May I put some of the articles on the Internet?”

Pastor, Texas

Wanted: A Public Philosophy

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.]

During 1963 and 1964 I spent much of my time in an in-depth study of the career of Walter Lippmann, the political columnist and philosopher. The result was a book called *Twentieth Century Pilgrimage: Walter Lippmann and the Public Philosophy*, published in 1969. The book, I must confess, made hardly a ripple in the wide sea of political thought.

Lippmann is remembered today primarily as an influential syndicated newspaper columnist. Indeed, at one point his status inspired a famous *New Yorker* cartoon, depicting two dowagers at the breakfast table on a New York commuter train. One lady says to the other, "Just a cup of coffee and Walter Lippmann. That's all I need for breakfast." But Lippmann was respected by more than commuters. When he visited London, he was received by Winston Churchill. Two lengthy interviews with Nikita Khrushchev, the Russian leader, were internationally televised and resulted in a best-selling book. And shortly after John F. Kennedy was elected president, he visited Lippmann for a long session of political advice and counsel.

Lippmann, however, was much more than a widely-read political pundit. Across his half-century career he produced a series of thoughtful books. His 1922 work called *Public Opinion* is still ranked as a classic in its field. The most important of his books, setting out his mature and considered views, was a slim volume called *The Public Philosophy* which appeared in 1955.

In recent days I have gone back to that seminal publication and have found it even more relevant and insightful than when it was first written. Lippmann's prophecies have been largely fulfilled, and his analysis remains pertinent, more than forty years later.

What were the problems which disturbed Lippmann? He saw the recent history of Western society as drastic evidence of dangerous political decay. Possessing the greatest accumulation of technological power and potential the world has ever known, victorious in battle (and now, in Cold War) over all enemies, verbally committed to high ideals and noble purposes, the democratic nations have still failed by and large to achieve the kind of society expected by their people and demanded by the times.

The trends which Lippmann described in 1955 have become more pronounced in the years since. Today we are an economically prosperous society; yet there are potentially convulsive problems lurking below the political surface. We are a nation of conflicting pressure groups in constant struggle with one another. Of course, in one sense we have always been so. The difference today is that many of these pressure groups—ethnic, economic, social—seem

gradually to be giving up on the prescribed democratic methods of change. Violence, force, disorder, combined with the skillful media manipulation of public opinion, are more and more becoming the pragmatic means of change. We condemn the terrorist methods of Palestinian guerrillas or Algerian rebels; yet we are nourishing within our own boundaries a situation in which our rapidly expanding underclass—people who no longer feel they have a stake in the maintenance of a stable democratic society—increasingly are led to resort to anti-democratic tactics. Force begets force, and a democratic society threatened by internal convulsion is steadily tempted to abandon its own principles and meet brute power with even greater power.

How has this happened? Why does an America committed to peace and freedom now have to deal with anarchic militia groups who blow up buildings in Oklahoma City? Why must we face lawless and destructive uprisings of the economically and socially depressed classes in our cities? Why are so many inner city areas now "no-go" areas for even the appointed forces of the law? Why does the gap between the rich and the poor grow steadily larger?

The situation is certainly not helped by a significant warping of the original theory of rule by democratically elected representatives. The founders and most of the early leaders of the American democracy subscribed to the concept set out most clearly by the English parliamentarian, Edmund Burke. Government should be administered by representatives elected by the people in a system which was optimistically expected to place in office the most capable and thoughtful leaders of the nation. These representatives were expected to use their own wisdom and conscientious judgment in putting legislation into place. In our revolutionary information and media age that theory has devolved in practice into a system which favors the election of those candidates with the most money and the most effective "spin doctors." Once in office, these elected officials are prisoners of volatile and rapidly-changing public opinion, expected not to exercise any independent judgment but to conform to the wishes of 51% of their constituents. The spectacle of an American president with three television sets in the Oval office, so that he could be up to date instantly on the opinion polls of all three major television networks, is a sad commentary on the present system. Rubber stamp representative government, responding to a public opinion manipulated by skillful use of half-truths and inadequate, sensationalized media exposure, can rapidly degenerate into the rule of the mob.

Walter Lippmann, however, was concerned with more basic problems than these largely technical ones. He believed that a central clue to our difficulty lies in the progressive loss of what he called the "public philosophy" or the "tradition of civility"—a

body of knowledge and understanding slowly and painfully arrived at over more than twenty centuries of Western thought and experience. Within this overall loss, the most serious problem is the loss of any generally accepted moral standard.

The inescapable fact is that nowadays many people, perhaps most, do not actually believe in universal moral rules. Every situation in which people find themselves seems to be different, and every moral decision they make is surrounded by a complex, compromising halo of cause and effect. "Thou shalt not steal"—fine, but perhaps if you had a violent father, or a drunken mother, a lousy education, and the gene for criminality, then stealing would be, if not excusable, then at least not really your fault. Certainly the kind of theft that involves intricate corporate legal maneuvers or political chicanery isn't really covered by that injunction. And the average gland-crazed teenager would probably think "Thou shalt not commit adultery" a pretty stupid rule when he has been brainwashed by the culture to believe that every woman, married or not, is panting for sex and eagerly awaiting his virile advances.

Bryan Appleyard, an astute British critic of the contemporary scene, has recently written, "Modern morals, if any, tend to be entirely subjective and limited only at the outermost margins by the objective reality of the existence of other people." (*The Times*, London, January 4, 1998)

Lippmann foresaw this moral anarchy almost a half century ago. Increasingly, over the last few decades we have seen the rise of the cult of the individual. In our laudable exaltation of the ideal of individual freedom we have lost sight of the equally important idea of individual and social responsibility. An overarching and generally agreed sense of community morality has been replaced by an anarchic ethic which makes morality for many purely a matter of individual preference. Each individual is the final judge of right and wrong. What's "good for me", a standard largely determined by the degree of personal pleasure or material gain, is somehow transmuted into what is good for all. The individual reigns as moral king.

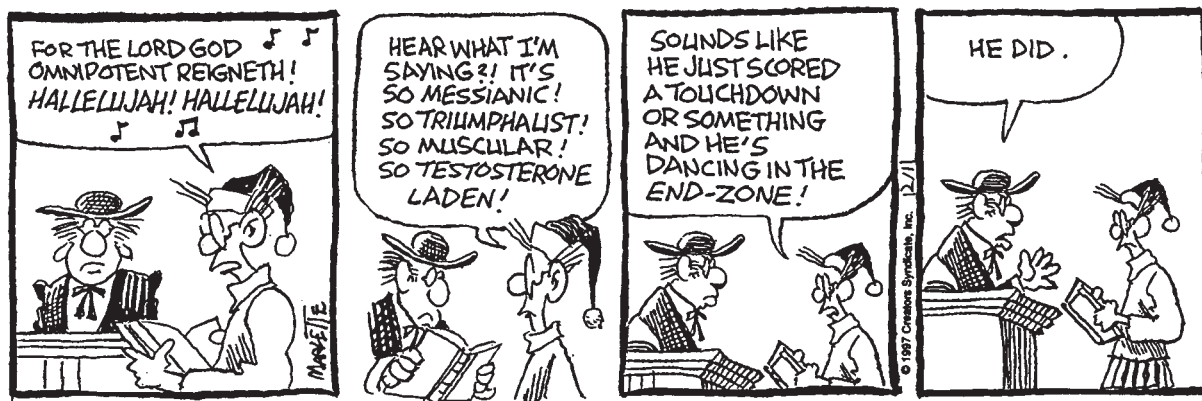
The problem with this kind of individualistic ethic is that (with my sincere apologies to the human race, of which I am most definitely a part) most individuals are narrow-minded and shortsighted. The tradition of general moral rules, affecting every one's behavior, incorporates spiritual insight and wisdom, hard earned and long tested. These rules, of which the prime example is the Ten Commandments, are based on the impact of individuals in the

wider realm. In the Old Testament Jehovah saw the entire history of the people of Israel as dependent on their general obedience to his moral law. And in the end he was right. The Jewish and later the Christian moral view triumphed and eventually formed a civilization—not perfect, by any means—but one of unparalleled freedom, wealth, and creativity. It is therefore simply moral madness to dump the accumulated religious and ethical wisdom of the centuries.

What is the root cause of this contemporary moral madness? Lippmann believed that it arises out of the fact that modern man has been systematically conditioned to believe that reliable knowledge can only arise out of that which can be sensibly experienced and mathematically verified. Blithely casting aside the long history of the struggle for a humanizing civilization, today's individual is effectively cut off from the past, thereby losing touch with the truth which teaches the necessity for the subjugation of a person's first nature—existence in self-centered barbarism—to the moral demands of his second nature—the realm of essence and ultimate reality.

As a result, for many today there is no room for a supremely important structure of "oughtness," a final moral standard by which all human actions must be judged. No such standard can arise out of or be derived from the ambiguous earth-bound flow of human existence, flawed as it is by its concentration on the pleasure, power, and material gain of the individual. What Confucius called the "mandate of heaven" can only be glimpsed in our contact with the realm of essence. For centuries mankind's spiritual and philosophic geniuses have sought to discover and establish a moral standard which requires that each individual's actions must be ethically measured, not only by the consequences for the individual, but by the effects upon others in the total community of which we are inescapably a part. Without such a standard we are condemned to live in a largely amoral world in which it is every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. Thomas Hobbes' ghastly vision of a society in which every man is at war with every other man is the depressing result.

The centuries-long search for this ultimate standard is what Lippmann meant by the "traditions of civility." He believed, as I do, that such values as truth, beauty, and love are not pathetic phantasms of the human imagination but final constituents of moral reality. Through our human search (and for the Christian, as we shall see in a moment, through the graceful revelation of God in Christ) we have discovered intimations of that realm of essence. It



is imperative that we do not discard or disregard that most significant achievement of the human pilgrimage.

True, these ultimate moral values do not supply us with a legalistic set of rules, automatically applicable to every human decision. Created as free moral agents, we have the responsibility of moral struggle as we attempt, always in the light and judgment of those values, to work out decisions in the ambiguities of existence. In many cases, given the nature of an imperfect and sinful world, we can only hope to achieve that which is “more right” under the circumstances. But what is “more right” must always be measured by essential and final moral standards.

Where does the faithful Christian believer stand in this situation? As Christians, we believe that we have been transformed by the grace of God into “new beings,” “born-again” men and women. We do not kid ourselves that this means we are ethically perfect and without sin. In fact, we are more conscious of our sin and moral failure than ever before. But in our encounter with the Christ-event we have been brought face to face with an ultimate ethic of perfect love. Jesus did not discard or ignore the Old Testament Law—the Ten Commandments—but he absorbed those commandments into a deeper and far more demanding ethic, most succinctly set out in the Sermon on the Mount.

An essential part of our Christian calling is to proclaim that perfect-love ethic to the world around us. But we must also realize that without the consequences of conversion and Christian commitment, that ethic never makes sense to the world at large. Today we live in a multi-cultural, multi-religious society. Without in any way neglecting our evangelistic imperative, we must also lend our efforts to the maintenance and establishment of a society in which such minimal standards as justice, honesty, fairness, integrity, and respect for human beings as valuable entities, each in his own right, are recognized and adhered to.

It is testimony to the validity of the realm of moral essence that the world's great religions and most of the world's greatest philosophers have centered upon the struggle to find some moral absolute. Even the sincere secular humanist seeks some ultimate moral meaning in the universe. Lippmann, though not himself a professing Christian, repeatedly picked out the Christian Church through the ages as the single most powerful testimony to the “traditions of civility.” Speaking in 1938 to a Salvation Army dinner in New York, Lippmann said, “The final faith by which all human philosophies must be tested, the touchstone of all party creeds, all politics of state, all relations among men, the inner nucleus of the universal conscience, is in possession of the Salvation Army.”

Lippmann's recognition, which I share, places a heavy responsibility upon the modern Christian community. It is an essential part of our mission to support and uphold those “traditions of civility,” that public philosophy. To do so is not to be disloyal to our faith. Far from it. Jesus certainly demands from us in the

*In our laudable
exaltation of the
ideal of individual
freedom we have lost
sight of the equally
important idea of
individual and
social responsibility.*

realm of ethics more than justice, honesty, fairness, and integrity. He demands perfect love. But it is important to remember that he never demands *less* than justice, fairness, honesty, and integrity in our every action. We betray Him whenever we settle for anything less.

I believe with all my heart that God is deeply concerned about every Christian believer. But I am constrained to believe by the nature of the God I worship that he is also deeply concerned about every little human entity everywhere. I believe his love and compassion reach out to a starving Arab child, to a suffering Chinese dissident, to a morally and educationally deprived teenager in an American urban ghetto, and to an ordinary citizen cheated and oppressed by a greedy, profit-driven business executive. If God cares, then so

must I. And my care must be translated into a struggle to change the situation and to at least bring others closer to those moral standards which should be acknowledged by the whole society.

Lippmann believed, as I do, that no free and democratic—no “good”—human society can long endure without a “mandate from heaven.” When our Founding Fathers in America incorporated into the Declaration of Independence the phrase, “All men are *created* equal,” they acknowledged that the right of every tiny human entity to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is a God-given, natural right. I do not mean to say that any earthly government is a reflection of the will of God. I do not believe in the “divine right of kings,” no more than I believe in the “divine right of America.” What I do believe is that a good government and a good society is one which takes seriously an overarching structure of right and wrong and is not reluctant to have its actions measured by that standard.

Human equality under law and the consequent right to justice can never be demonstrated in the laboratory or by mathematical calculations. Values such as honesty, faithfulness, and integrity can never be established by public opinion polls. These values are derived from the realm of essence. In Christian terms they are “God-given.” The truth of that proposition is our legacy of centuries of human struggle, our “traditions of civility.”

I believe that the greatest moral and ethical challenge of our day is not that of any particular moral issue or evil, important as it may be. Our challenge is to re-establish, reinforce, and undergird the public philosophy. That task cannot be accomplished by force or by direction from “the powers that be” in earthly terms. No amendment to the U.S. Constitution declaring us to be a “Christian” nation will make one whit of difference. The task can only be accomplished by persons of faith and good will—politicians, educators, business men and women, working people, all of us—sounding out loud and clear our testimony and our witness.

Christians, now as always, have a major role to play. We are called to that task as surely as any minister or missionary is called to his or her vocation. To fail to respond to the challenge, to shrug off its imperative importance, is, in the deepest and most meaningful sense of the Christian term, blasphemy. ■

Strange Bedfellows:

Strategies Shared by Darwinists and Gender Traditionalists

Rebecca Merrill Groothuis

[Rebecca Merrill Groothuis is the author of *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Baker, 1997) and of *Women Caught in the Conflict: The Culture War Between Traditionalism and Feminism* (Wipf and Stock Pub., 1997). She and her husband, Douglas Groothuis who teaches Ethics and Philosophy of Religion at Denver Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary, live in Littleton, Colorado.]

It all began with a dinner table conversation that my husband and I enjoyed with Phillip Johnson and his wife.¹ In listening to Johnson's quiet complaints of how the prejudices and presuppositions of Darwinists twisted the public discourse on the question of life's origin, I recognized a familiar pattern. Much of what Johnson had observed concerning the contours of the debate between Darwinists and creationists, I also had observed in the debate between those evangelicals who advocate traditional gender hierarchy and those who advocate gender equality.²

Intrigued by the analogy, I determined to investigate further Johnson's cultural analysis of the evolution/creation controversy. The more I learned about the debate raging in the scientific and political arenas over the origin of life, the better I understood the debate in the evangelical Christian community over the roles of men and women. Conversely, my own observations of the gender wars in the church enhanced my understanding of the "rules of the game" that are operative in the public debate over biological evolution. It seemed to me to be the same game, with different players waging war over a different set of key concepts.

In each case, the public discourse is controlled by the representatives of the dominant ideology (whether Darwinism or traditionalism) through the repeated and predictable use of a number of rhetorical strategies. Lines are drawn and categories are created to the effect that the views of dissenters are dismissed before they are seriously heard.

Of course, the mere fact that certain semantic strategies are employed to maintain an ideology's cultural hegemony does not mean that the ideology itself is false. But it does mean that if the ideology is false, its falsity is being effectively concealed, and arguments in favor of rival positions are being unfairly silenced.

We need to be alert to the various rhetorical devices employed in public discourse, for the way people communicate can frequently do more to obscure than to inform. The following observations concerning some of these communication strategies have been culled both from Phillip Johnson's insights on the Darwinism debate and my own extensive look into the gender issue within evangelicalism over the past several years.³

Appealing to Authority

Proponents of the orthodoxy (i.e., the dominant ideology) typically defend their position by appealing to an authority that their challengers have no reason not to accept. Darwinists preface their assertions with, "Science has shown..." as readily and frequently as traditionalists intone, "The Bible says...." Frequent appeal to an unimpeachable authority dissuades the public from looking at the entire body of evidence that is available from these sources of authority—evidence that would, if examined carefully, cast doubt on the confident assertions of the orthodoxy.

The cultural hegemony of the orthodoxy is enforced by its "priesthood"—its "wise men" who interpret the meaning and significance of the evidence, whether scientific data or biblical texts. They are the authorities on the source of authority, and to question their dicta is tantamount to questioning the authority (science or the Bible) that they mediate to the common folk.

Consequently, anyone who accepts the source of authority to which the orthodoxy appeals is expected to accept the orthodoxy itself. A real scientist is, ipso facto, a Darwinist. A real Bible-believing Christian is, necessarily and by definition, a gender role traditionalist. Conversely, opponents of Darwinism are benighted souls who reject science in favor of mindless religious faith. Opponents of gender hierarchy are secularists or heretics who have no regard for God's authoritative Word, but desire simply to twist and revise Scripture for their own perverse and pagan ends.

As a result of this maneuver, civil and informed dialogue is shut down. Debate is no longer an option. Alternative viewpoints are not countenanced. Darwinian evolution is the scientific position. Gender hierarchy is the biblical position. To deviate from these views is simply to be unscientific, or unbiblical.

The question at stake in the origins debate, however, is not whether science is a source of truth, but whether an honest application of scientific methodology really points to a naturalistic evolutionary theory of life's origin and development. The question at stake in the gender debate is not whether the Bible is our absolute authority, but whether the doctrine of a spiritualized, universalized gender hierarchy is actually taught in Scripture, or is even compatible with what the Bible clearly states concerning the essential spiritual equality of all persons, the equal imaging of God by both male and female, the priesthood of all believers, and Christ as the one mediator and high priest between God and humanity.⁴

Inventing a Public Face

Those who defend and maintain the dominant ideology typically create a PR definition of their position by reducing it to its indisputably evident elements. The orthodoxy is thereby made to

appear irrefutable by any rational standard. In public rhetoric, evolution is commonly defined as changes in the history of life through breeding patterns, while traditionalism is described as the acknowledgment of male/female differences and the different roles that follow therefrom. The points at issue in these controversies, however, do not concern these simplistically true statements, but their implications—which are not made explicit but are merely assumed in their official, PR definitions.

For example, many Darwinists will cite evidence for microevolution (small-scale adaptive variation within a species) and then act as though they have proven macroevolution (the development of all life forms from a simple life form by this same natural, adaptive process, thus ruling out the need for a supernatural Creator).⁵ Traditionalists will cite scientific studies showing psychological differences between men and women and then assume they have proven the “naturalness” of their own gender role restrictions. As Johnson observes, people are always “eager to underwrite value-laden philosophies by borrowing against the deserved prestige of experimental science.”⁶

Interestingly, Johnson’s response to the Darwinist claim in this regard is identical in logical structure to my response to the traditionalist claim.⁷ That is to say, it is not sufficient to note that genetic mutations occur, or that differences exist between men and women. A number of features must be shown to be true about genetic mutations and gender differences before any case can be made for Darwinism or gender hierarchy. As it happens, these features cannot all be shown to be true.

A simplistic, propagandistic description of an ideology distracts people from the contradictions and difficulties inherent to the ideology by focusing on its easily affirmed aspects: an observable process of natural variation can occur within a species as living things adapt to their environment; gender differences exist, there are roles unique to men and to women, role differences do not necessarily entail inequality, and so forth. The keepers of the orthodoxy then present these concepts as definitive of their position, and accuse their challengers of taking issue with these obviously true propositions. This approach portrays dissenters as unconscionably irrational, and completely sidesteps the heart of the disagreement.

Again, the issue in the gender debate is not whether men and women are different, but whether these differences logically and justifiably entail the inequitable roles, rights, and opportunities prescribed by traditionalists. The issue in the debate over evolution is not whether some natural variation occurs among living creatures, but whether the processes by which natural variations occur can reasonably be construed as the sole means by which all forms of life came into being.

Creating Categories for Ridicule

All too often, proponents of the orthodoxy respond to questions and criticisms with a distinctly superior air, as though the truth of their position were so patently clear that only a fool or a fanatic would dispute it. Opponents of Darwinian evolution are routinely represented as ignorant, literalistic, six-day creationists who deny the indisputable scientific fact that genetic changes occur across generations.⁸ Egalitarians are frequently caricatured as angry, maladjusted liberals who deny all differences between men and women,

as well as the plain teaching of Scripture.

Prejudice against dissenters is, in fact, so intense that criticizing the orthodoxy can end a person’s career—whether it is in the field of scientific research or conservative Christendom.⁹ People in academia or the church who do not hold the orthodox view must be careful to distance themselves from the “religious” or the “feminist,” lest they be grouped in one of these categories—and, thereby, dismissed from the realm of the credible.

Just as Darwinists frequently use “religion” as a surrogate word for “nonsense,”¹⁰ so traditionalists tend to use “feminism” as a surrogate word for “heresy” or “secularism.” In each case, a term with a legitimate (if controversial) meaning becomes a code word for the contemptuous. In this way, positions that challenge the orthodoxy are sneered at, not overtly, but in code, as it were. Johnson observes that “what cannot be done explicitly can often be done implicitly, by the imposition of categories and definitions that are anything but neutral in their impact.”¹¹ In other words, “a viewpoint or theory is marginalized when, without being refuted, it is categorized in such a way that it can be excluded from serious consideration.”¹²

Darwinists typically assert that creationism is a religious belief, and thus has to do with subjective feelings or values, while Darwinian evolution is scientific, which is a matter of objective knowledge or facts. Defining and compartmentalizing the issue in this way conveniently exempts Darwinists from having to give the case for creation a fair hearing.¹³ Similarly, saying that “feminism” comes from modern culture and traditional gender roles from the Bible excuses traditionalists from seriously considering the case for biblical equality on its own merits. Traditionalism maintains its ideological dominance, not primarily through hermeneutical arguments, but through constant recourse to the cultural argument. The relentless ridicule and rejection of anything categorized as “feminist” imposes ideological blinders on people’s minds, ensuring that their thinking stays in lockstep with that of the traditionalist priesthood.¹⁴

A false dilemma lies behind much of the orthodoxy’s caricatures and dismissive ridicule. Many traditionalists and Darwinists hold doggedly to their position because they perceive the only alternative to be, respectively, radical feminism and the breakdown of the family, or an irrational, legalistic, biblical literalism.

Defenders of the orthodoxy frequently assume their opponents have a radicalized, insidious agenda that will stop at nothing short of total, fanatical takeover. Those egalitarians and creationists who present careful, moderate, nuanced views simply have not revealed the full extent of their ideology. There really isn’t, nor can there be, a biblical feminist or a rational creationist.¹⁵

Although traditionalists and Darwinists claim to be completely certain that their view is the only reasonable option, many persist in systematically freezing out dissent, frequently refusing even to understand the rival view before high-handedly dismissing it. Because the guardians of the orthodoxy are also the gatekeepers of public discourse, they find it easy to deal with a challenge to their ideological dominance by denying dissenters a public voice, often ignoring the existence of alternative theories entirely.¹⁶ Yet if the orthodox view really is the plain, obvious fact of the matter, it seems the orthodoxy’s priesthood would seek to establish this through rational argumentation rather than through repeated recourse to the

rhetoric of desperation (insult, ridicule, caricature, the silent treatment, and so forth).

Obscuring the Issues

The semantic strategies employed in public debate effectively divert people's attention from the dominant ideology's core affirmations, undefined definitions, and hidden assumptions. The emphasis on the genetic changes that normally occur in the history of life obscures a foundational premise of Darwinian orthodoxy, namely, that no supernatural God need be postulated in order to account for the existence of natural life in all its complexity.¹⁷ The emphasis on the simple fact of gender differences obscures the unstated traditionalist assumption that gender differences include status differences. (From this assumption traditionalists go on to assert that anyone who disputes women's subordinate status is simply refusing to recognize the differences between men and women.) Masked by the orthodoxy's public persona, the offense of its fundamental premises goes unnoticed in the heat of a debate that is essentially controlled by the orthodoxy's priesthood.

One has but to nose around a bit behind the PR picture of Darwinism to realize that the evidence for macroevolution is not at all compelling unless one begins with the presupposition of philosophical naturalism—the belief that nature (matter plus energy) is all there is, and that all phenomena can and must be explained in these terms. As Johnson points out, that which “is presented to the public as scientific knowledge about evolutionary mechanisms is mostly philosophical speculation and is not even consistent with the evidence once the naturalistic spectacles are removed.”¹⁸ The “truth” of Darwinian evolution depends on naturalism being true, and this is what the argument is really about. Darwinists are not always willing to admit this, however.

Similarly, the biblical evidence for a God-ordained hierarchy of female subordination to male spiritual authority is not compelling unless the Bible is viewed through the spectacles of traditional gender stereotypes. The idea of universal male authority is implausible apart from the premise that there are some things that women are just not spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually fit to do. This is what the argument is really about, but no one wants to admit it.¹⁹

Despite the certainty with which the orthodoxy is set before the public, its claims are not supported adequately, or entirely, by the evidence. “As a general theory of biological creation,” Johnson observes, “Darwinism is not empirical at all. Rather, it is a necessary implication of a philosophical doctrine called scientific naturalism.”²⁰ In other words, scientists are compelled to be Darwinists, not by the empirical evidence for the theory, but by the philosophical necessity of the theory. “There can be argument about the details, but if God was not in the picture something very much like Darwinism simply has to be true, regardless of the evidence.”²¹

Likewise with traditionalism. There can be argument about the details (e.g., exactly where the line should be drawn between “general” and “male only” ministries), but if women are not designed for the most important roles of spiritual leadership, and if it is fundamentally unfitting for women to enjoy the same rights, opportunities, and spiritual privileges as men, then the Bible must set forth a universal principle of some sort that mandates and legitimates such a state of affairs between the sexes, regardless of how spotty, ambigu-

ous, and fraught with contradiction the biblical evidence for this may be.²²

In the end, the evidence exists to serve the assumptions of the orthodoxy's priesthood, and these assumptions are fundamentally metaphysical, that is, they pertain to the nature of things, whether of male and female, or of ultimate reality. The refusal to “come clean” concerning foundational issues sidetracks and obfuscates public discussion of these controversial topics. As Johnson powerfully puts it, “Addressing the metaphysical questions honestly will not heat up the culture wars, but rather tend to make them a part of the normal political and intellectual debate that characterizes a free and pluralistic society. What infuriates people is not disagreement but the subtext of contempt that necessarily accompanies the pronouncements of a ruling intellectual establishment whose power is based on a secret it is unwilling to disclose.”²³

Camouflaging the Contradictions

The rhetoric of the orthodoxy also misleads when it implies that there is no real conflict between the orthodoxy and its opposition. Some proponents of Darwinism have been attempting to palliate troubled theists by saying that evolution is not incompatible with religious faith, but only with a Genesis literalism. Evolutionary biology does not rule out, but rather (when properly understood) points to the existence of a wise Creator. The orthodox Darwinian position, however, is that the theory of evolution renders the idea of God unnecessary.²⁴

Similarly, traditionalists have recently taken to insisting that when their position is properly understood, it provides for and honors women's essential equality with men. The feminists, therefore, are fussing over a fallacy. However, the truly traditional rationale for gender hierarchy has always been the logically coherent one, namely, that woman's inferior status points to and follows from her inferior nature.

The differences between creationism and Darwinism, and between gender equality and gender hierarchy, are irreconcilable.²⁵ To affirm the one is to deny the other. Nonetheless, Darwinists and traditionalists who want to defer dissent—or who feel threatened by dissenters' arguments—will often deny the fundamental issues that are in conflict, and attempt to play both ends against the middle. The result of such evasive action is internal incoherence, which is cheerfully disregarded for the sake of maintaining ideological dominance.

The keepers of the orthodoxy routinely disguise conflicts and deflect criticisms by positing a disjunct between contradictory concepts. Naturalistic scientists separate Darwinism (which is “science”) from creationism (which is “religion”), and claim that science has to do with objective knowledge and religion with subjective beliefs. Traditionalists declare a woman's ostensibly equal “being” unrelated to her clearly inferior “function.”

These conceptual disjuncts serve to deliver their respective ideologies from cultural “hot water.” In fact, they are invoked so frequently for this purpose, they almost sound like mantras. The traditionalist mantra is that the prescribed female subordination to male authority has nothing to do with a woman's “being” but only her “function.” Women are not inferior to men in essence, but only in role or function. The Darwinist mantra is that the question of

life's origin has nothing to do with religion, but only science; the issue pertains to facts and knowledge, not values or beliefs.

The repeated intoning of these mantras keeps objections at bay, and forestalls open discussion about foundational assumptions. The question of women's inferiority cannot be discussed, because it is denied. The issue of philosophical naturalism cannot be discussed, because the presence of any metaphysical or religious beliefs within the context of science has been ruled out by definition.²⁶ There is no contradiction between women's equality and women's subordination, because the two are deemed unrelated. There is no contradiction between creationism and Darwinism, because the two are deemed unrelated.

Thus, traditionalists are delivered from the criticism that gender hierarchy denies the equality of women, and Darwinists are delivered from the criticism that the theory of evolution offends and contradicts the religious faith of many people. Asserting a disjunct between two fundamentally related concepts proves to be a useful device for putting over an ideology that has at its core a profound contradiction between those two concepts.

Conceptual Cover-Ups

In addition to the semantic camouflaging of objections and contradictions, various theoretical constructs are devised by the orthodoxy's priesthood in order to finesse conceptual difficulties within the ideology. Both traditionalism and Darwinism require that certain assumptions and expectations be imported from outside the available evidence (whether biblical or scientific), in order to fill in the gaps and shore up the weak links in the system. To derive the doctrine of a universal hierarchy of male spiritual authority, the actual biblical data must be augmented with suppositions, inferences, and anachronisms.²⁷ Similarly, one must augment the actual fossil record with assorted theories and speculations in order to derive from it a completely naturalistic account of life's origin and development.²⁸

In each view, the system of thought is held together at its sundry weak links by cobbled-together constructs. The whole house would fall down without these strategic but precarious postulations. Darwinists rely on such notions as emergent properties, catastrophism, the blind watchmaker thesis, and a disjunct between science and religion.²⁹ Traditionalists rely on a questionable interpretation of "head" in the NT as necessarily a metaphor for spiritual leader, an assumption that submission (when required of women to men) means unilateral obedience to spiritual authority, a carefully (and circuitously) constructed hierarchy of spiritual authority, various euphemisms and rhetorical smoke screens, and, of course, a disjunct between woman's function and being.³⁰

Two of the constructs mentioned here merit a closer look, namely, the Darwinian notion of emergence and the traditionalist disjunct between being and function. Johnson explains how some Darwinists manage to incorporate into their thought the theoretical benefits of the concept of the mind as an immaterial entity (rather than as merely a product of natural forces in a material universe), yet without actually asserting the existence of immaterial, supernatural reality (which would be prescientific, religious nonsense).

These contortions are necessary because, if the mind itself is nothing but a material product of the natural processes of biological

evolution, then all "knowledge" produced by the mind is ultimately reducible to genes and brain chemicals. This, then, depreciates those academic disciplines that study things other than DNA or neuroscience; yet the scholars in these disciplines nonetheless feel the need to remain committed to naturalism.³¹ Moreover, such materialist reductionism renders all scientific theorizing inadequate and unreliable. If the mind, and the objects and ideas it studies, are all elements that have evolved within a closed system operated by natural laws, then the mind—like the rest of the natural world—is merely a product of a mindless system, a pawn of random forces. How can it assess and judge the system reliably? As Johnson observes, "The story of the great scientific mind that discovers absolute truth is satisfying only so long as we accept the mind itself as a given. Once we try to explain the mind as a product of its own discoveries, we are in a hall of mirrors with no exit."³²

Darwinists who do not wish to succumb to the consequences of materialist reductionism must, Johnson explains, "fight it by setting up a barrier to reductionism that is sufficiently impermeable to provide the advantages of dualism while being sufficiently flexible to avoid serious metaphysical trouble. The code word for this 'now you see it, now you don't' barrier is emergence, a term that refers to the tendency of surprising new properties to emerge when substances are combined."³³ Thus, consciousness is neatly defined as an emergent property of brain chemistry. It is a "something" distinct from brain chemistry, yet it is nothing but brain chemistry. The mind—like everything else in a naturalistic universe—is a product of blind evolutionary forces. Yet, the mind is still something more, somehow, than the sum of its material parts, and we can proceed on the basis of the assumption that it is a more or less reliable organ of knowledge.

Similarly, advocates of gender hierarchy must find a way to argue that the female nature is suited for inferior status, yet is not inferior. Unless women can be said to possess essential qualities that equip them for roles of subordinate domesticity and put them in need of the spiritual governance of men, the entire edifice of traditionalist dogma becomes an untenable and arbitrary enterprise. Nonetheless, traditionalists today—unlike their truly traditional predecessors—are committed to repudiating the notion that women are inferior to men. So women must be portrayed as innately and uniquely fitted for a place of permanent subordination to men, yet without being inferior to men.

As with naturalistic scientists, the dilemma is resolved through the manipulation of language. The vocabulary of the traditionalist argument is carefully designed to protect its proponents from charges of misogyny, while also providing some sort of metaphysical justification for a universalized hierarchy of male authority. To adapt Johnson, the linguistic barrier that is devised for this purpose is sufficiently impermeable to justify the gender roles that follow from the traditional, prescientific belief in women's inferiority, while being sufficiently flexible to avoid serious metaphysical trouble. The "code words" for this barrier include "femininity" (defined as woman's natural aptitude for supporting and submitting to male leadership), "masculinity" (defined as man's inherent sense of leadership, especially of women), "difference" (to refer to the feminine role of inferior status), "responsibility" (to refer to the masculine role of superior status), "servanthood" (to redescribe male authori-

ty), and, finally, “equal in being, unequal in function” (to reconcile woman’s unequal status and opportunities with her alleged equality).³⁴ Thus, an ideology that makes no sense without the premise of women’s inferiority manages to incorporate the theoretical benefits of this premise, all the while officially denying it.

In each case, a concept that the orthodoxy’s priesthood is determined to deny (whether belief in the supernatural or in women’s inferiority) is smuggled back into the ideology when it becomes necessary in order to provide meaning and coherence.

Concluding Thoughts

Of Darwinists and traditionalists, there are two kinds: the simplistic and the sophisticated.³⁵ The simplistic (whether the lemmings or the leaders) accept uncritically the official stereotype, the PR version of the orthodoxy (i.e., natural variations occur, gender differences exist), and believe that this settles the case and leaves no room for debate. The sophisticated are aware of the loopholes and lacunae in their position and attempt to finesse them with complex arguments, arcane data, authoritative assertions, and euphemistic re-descriptions. Like the simplistic, however, the sophisticated often evince no willingness to give serious consideration to rival views, but claim absolute certainty that their own position is correct, and profess astonishment that their opponents should be so deluded.

This state of affairs is not likely to change very much, given the cultural (and ecclesiastical) influence and opportunities enjoyed by representatives of the orthodoxy, their ready access to the arenas of public debate, and the string of semantic strategies that are routinely employed “to bamboozle, intimidate, and coax the public into accepting the view that furthers the interests of the priesthood.”³⁶

Contemplating the contours of public discourse in these two controversies has persuaded me that postmodernists are correct when they say that the politics of power is largely the politics of language games in the service of ideological dominance. As postmodernist philosopher Richard Rorty observes, “anything can be made to look good or bad by being re-described.”³⁷ This, of course, doesn’t make a thing good or bad; but it does make it appear so in the eyes of an easily bamboozled public. ■

Endnotes

1 Johnson, a law professor at the University of California at Berkeley, has authored several books critiquing Darwinism, including Darwin on Trial (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991; revised 1993).

2 Traditionalists believe that the Bible teaches a universal principle of female subordination to male authority. Biblical egalitarians disagree, maintaining that mutual submission and equal opportunity for ministry should characterize the relationship of all believers, regardless of race, class, or gender.

3 Two disclaimers before I proceed: 1) There are traditionalists (as, I expect, there are Darwinists) who are more interested in truth and reason than in politics, and therefore do not resort to these semantic strategies in promoting their beliefs. These are not the people of whom I speak in this article, because they are not the ones actively politicking and crusading for their ideology, thereby setting the tone and the terms of the public debate. 2) The comparison between Phillip Johnson’s and my insights on the evolution and gender debates (respectively) are not intended to reflect in any way on Johnson’s own view of the gender issue.

4 See Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), chapters 1, 3 and 4.

5 Phillip E. Johnson, Reason in the Balance: The Case Against Naturalism in Science, Law, & Education (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 73-74.

6 *Ibid.*, 200.

7 See *ibid.*, 80-82; and Groothuis, 234-35.

8 Johnson, 73.

9 See *ibid.*, 96, with respect to the field of science.

10 See *ibid.*, 182.

11 *Ibid.*, 33.

12 *Ibid.*, 21.

13 *Ibid.*, 48.

14 For instance, the ferocity of the public outcry in the spring of 1997 that shut down years of work by translators to update the New International Version of the Bible was not a result of compelling arguments related to actual translational issues, but of sensational journalistic rhetoric that cleverly categorized the proposed revised version as a “unisex,” “feminist” product of modern cultural ideology. The irony is that these rhetorical and political strategies that many traditionalists find so useful do not represent the “traditional” way of marketing ideas, but the postmodern way of politicizing ideas and rejecting rational discourse—strategies grounded in contemporary cultural values that contradict biblical and ethical principles of truth, justice, charity, and rationality.

15 On the orthodoxy’s fear of the slippery slope, see Johnson, 47, 183; and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, Women Caught in the Conflict: The Culture War Between Traditionalism and Feminism (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1994; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub., 1997), chapters 8 and 11.

16 I have been surprised to discover how many, many evangelicals—including students at theological seminaries—have never even heard the biblical case for gender equality.

17 Johnson, 14-16, 196.

18 *Ibid.*, 12; see also 16, 205-206..

19 See Groothuis, Good News for Women, chapters 2-4.

20 Phillip E. Johnson, “What Is Darwinism?” Christian Research Journal, Spring 1997, 26.

21 *Ibid.*, 22.

22 The ambiguities and contradictions inherent to the biblical case for gender hierarchy are explored in Good News for Women.

23 Johnson, Reason, 191-192.

24 See *ibid.*, 73-75.

25 See *ibid.*, 109, 205-218, with respect to naturalism vs. theism.

26 See *ibid.*, 35, where religion is broadly defined as “a way of thinking about ultimate questions.” Johnson makes the case that naturalism is “the established religious philosophy of America.”

27 See Groothuis, Good News, chapters 5-9. A typical anachronism is the reading of NT texts as though they were written directly to 20th-century readers.

28 Johnson, Reason, 82-83.

29 See *ibid.*, 126-128, 76-86, 21, 45.

30 See Groothuis, Good News, chapters 2, 3, 6 and 8.

31 See Johnson, Reason, 126.

32 *Ibid.*, 62.

33 *Ibid.*, 127.

34 See Groothuis, Good News, chapters 2-3.

35 See Johnson, Reason, 83.

36 From a lecture on Darwinism by Phillip Johnson. Recent developments related to the work of molecular biologist Michael Behe seem to have penetrated the Darwinist line of defense to some extent. Yet Darwinists remain unpersuaded and are busily devising rhetorical strategies (they have no compelling scientific arguments) for responding to Behe’s challenge. (See Tom Woodward, “Meeting Darwin’s Wager,” Christianity Today, 28 April 1997, 15-21.)

37 Richard Rorty, “Ironists and Metaphysicians,” in The Truth About the Truth: De-Confusing and Re-Constructing the Postmodern World, ed. Walter Truett Anderson (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1995), 101.

Persecution of Christians in America: Say What?

By Frosty Troy

[Frosty Troy is editor of *The Oklahoma Observer* published 22 times a year for \$25, Box 53371, Oklahoma City, OK 73152. Mr. Troy, winner of numerous prestigious journalism awards, is a Roman Catholic married to a Baptist and is a frequent contributor to *Christian Ethics Today*. Mincing words is not his long suit.]

Persecute: To afflict or harass constantly so as to injure or distress; oppress cruelly, esp., for reasons of religion, politics or race; to trouble or annoy constantly. Webster's New World dictionary.

To hear the minions of the religious right tell it, they are being persecuted across the land, martyrs in a secular environment, victims of a government hostile to the word of God.

Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Okla., has used that agitprop in pushing a constitutional amendment to Christianize the public schools.

Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Coalition, uses the refrain often on his 700 Club TV program, contending that the U.S. Supreme Court is attempting to wipe out any vestige of religious life in America.

Flip on religious radio or any televangelist and hear the same whining from James Hagee, James Dobson, D. James Kennedy and Jerry Falwell, et al.

The accusation of persecution follows this scenario: Christian colonists fomented a revolution to create a country devoted to Jesus Christ. Gradually, secular humanists took the reins of power in the courts and elective offices. Their goal: A secular society.

Buttressed by the support of Satan, secular humanists have brought the family to its knees, destroyed the discipline and integrity of public education by removing school prayer, legalized homosexuality and pornography which debauch the country.

They offer as proof the divorce rate, failing public schools, abortion, porn at the newsstands, on cable and in the movies, a soaring crime rate, AIDS and VD epidemics, and kids going to gangs, not to Sunday school.

It's an ugly picture, attributed to those who would deny this nation its Christian heritage.

The only problem? It's a lie, a clever propaganda ploy that has paid off handsomely—both politically and financially—for those who engineered it. It has ensnared millions of good, decent American Christians in a web of fabrications that rivals anything Paul Joseph Goebbels constructed.

The religious right is strongest in the South, the area dominated by Protestant fundamentalists. The divorce rate in those states is higher than in the godless North.

As Martin Marty noted in *Christian Century*, Alabama—whose zealous judge wants the 10 commandments hung in a courtroom—has a divorce rate more than double the New England rate. (Fundamentalist Oklahoma's rate is the nation's highest.)

Abortion among Catholic women is 26% higher than the national average—despite a hierarchy that has made abortion a national political litmus test.

The distortion of the nation's history is breathtaking in its sweep. The motley crew of deists, Unitarians and Free Thinkers who crafted the government wanted more than anything to prevent any entanglement with religion—Christian or otherwise. That's the kind of "Christian" nations many were fleeing.

John Adams, Daniel Webster and Thomas Jefferson were Unitarians, Benjamin Franklin was a self-proclaimed Deist, Thomas Payne was an atheist—and the list goes on.

If anyone is guilty of religious persecution in America today, it is the religious right. They routinely defame and trample on non-Christians and Christians who disagree with their asinine interpretation of the Bible and the Constitution.

They launched their jihad with the Roundtable in Texas, spearheaded by those who took over the leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention. They were subsequently joined by a bevy of right-wing Catholics headed by New York's Cardinal John O'Connor and many fundamentalists.

They number at most a noisy 20 million and their goal has always been quasi-political, not religious. The largest of the movements is Robertson's Christian Coalition, legally tax exempt on the claim that it eschews partisan politics.

Check out these excerpts of tape remarks by Pat Robertson at a Sept. 13, 1997 Christian Coalition meeting, released by Americans United for Separation of Church and State:

"I told (Christian Coalition President) Don Hodel when he joined us, 'My dear friend, I want to hold out to you the possibility of selecting the next President of the United States, because I think that's what we have in this organization.'

"...So I don't think at this time and juncture the Democrats are going to be able to take the White House unless we throw it away.

"...We've had a major presence in one of the major parties; we still haven't gotten the influence I think we ought to have inside the Republican Party.

"...I have seen a steamroller of liberalism trying to crush faith out of our life. It's all under the rubric of 'separation of church and state,' and you know that's a distortion of what the framers of the Constitution intended.

"...Christians are not second-class citizens; we're going to fight for our rights. And if we have to get a constitutional amendment to do it, we'll do it. It's not that hard once you get the Congress to vote. We just tell these guys, 'Look, we put you in power in 1994, and we want you to deliver. We're tired of temporizing. Don't give us all this stuff about you've got a different agenda.'"

That's not partisan politics?

Or check the minions of James Dobson's Focus on the Family, censors-in-chief who want to dictate to a free people what they can read in their libraries. They press for the junk science of Creationism in public schools—earth a mere 10,000 years old. More recently, Dobson attacked a Bible whose translation he didn't like and his power is such that it was withdrawn from proposed publication.

The Religious Right dominates the air waves and controls thousands of book stores where only politically correct texts are sold. Radio and TV evangelism is a billion dollar a year business, making millionaires out of Robertson, Dobson, Falwell, Kennedy, Hagee and others. (They cleverly say they take a salary. Check and see who controls the enterprise, who owns the private jets.)

There are now 1,648 "Christian" radio stations, an increase of 500 in the past five years—one in seven stations on the dial. Most are owned by fat cat evangelists, airing some of the most venomous commentary since Father Coughlin.

Secular talk shows are invariably allies of the Religious Right. Together they are a drumbeat of bigotry that would make Cotton Mather blush.

Right-wing evangelism permeates television—faith healers, gospel music, partisan politics, talking in tongues, and old fashioned fire and brimstone.

Private prayer was never taken out of the classroom—only rampant proselytizing by Fundamentalists. (Ask the child whose mother objected to teacher-led classroom prayer. The teacher put a football helmet on his head as she continued prayer. Ask the Del City child whose ugly nightmares resulted from a teacher who told her students they would burn in hell unless they accepted Jesus.)

The religious right operates under a double standard. If critics assail Falwell's litany of hate on the Old Time Gospel Hour, they're persecuting him. If the Baptists boycott Disney, they're expressing their First Amendment Rights.

If Ted Kennedy is slammed by Cardinal O'Connor for his vote on abortion, the cardinal is only expressing a constitutional right. If O'Connor is blistered for his chronic Republican partisanship from the pulpit, his critics are anti-Catholic.

If voter guides are slanted to gain votes for Religious Right supporters, its good government in action. If an editorial mocks the pseudo religious politics of televangelist D. James Kennedy—a braying jackass if there ever was one—he is being persecuted.

James Hagee, the porcine preaching clown of San Antonio, pummels President Clinton's morality but doesn't tell the TV congregation he dumped his wife for a younger chick.

James Dobson is the radio evangelist whose purring programs mask the most vicious political wing of the Religious Right. A former aide writes that Dobson prowls through the offices and desks of employees after hours for any evidence contrary to his sick religious views. He raked in more than \$100 million last year.

The Republican Party's foremost religious icon, African American Rep. J.C. Watts of Oklahoma, mesmerizes radio and TV audiences with his Southern Baptist rhetoric. He doesn't mention the child he sired out of wedlock which he refused to support, the bills he didn't pay, the money he took from a lobbyist but failed to report as required by law.

"Character is what you do when no one is looking," Watts said in responding to the President's State of the Union address. He should get a first degree burn when he touches a Bible.

The Rev. James Watkins, writing in the Freedom Watch, said that in 28 years in the pulpit he has never been muzzled. "Radio, TV and the Internet are full of religious expression," he wrote. "American houses of worship are the single largest nonprofit enterprise in our society."

He said when a religious body wants to get into partisan politics, all it has to do is give up its tax exemption—the same exemption that applies to all nonprofit organizations, not just churches.

There is genuine persecution of Christians in several countries but America is not one of them. Nor is America a "secular humanist" society. No other western nation equals American church membership, attendance, or volunteerism. A whopping 96 percent of Americans believe in God, 42 percent believe the Bible is the literal word of God—up five percent since 1987.

If there is divorce and disarray in the American family, it has more to do with the failure of the church than the government. Sunday remains America's most segregated hour. While some Religious Right congregations seek to erect giant crosses and entertainment complexes, there is hunger and homelessness in the nearby inner city. What would Jesus say about that?

Crime was also a pestilence in the colonies, usually a product of poverty and injustice, just as it is today.

A Church of Christ preacher believes welfare is a sin because the Bible says, "Anyone unwilling to work should not eat." But what about this one: "Give to everyone who begs from you." Who is infallible? Jesus or Paul?

Selective reading of the Bible is a Religious Right specialty.

If you seek prime examples of overt religious persecution, consider the chronic bashing of Mormons by the Southern Baptist press.

Watch those "devout" Catholics of Operation Rescue terrifying women seeking a legal abortion.

Look what religious fanatics—mainly Focus on the Family followers—seek to do to America's libraries.

Witness the chronic defamation of public school teachers.

A counterfeit revival approaches and Americans are going to have to choose a side. The Religious Right is shackled to ignorance, disciplined by fear, and sheathed in superstition. Followers trudge toward control of every facet of American life. They are gullible and pitiful, swept along by false prophets. They mean this nation real harm.

Those familiar with George Orwell's classic novel 1984 will recognize Newspeak as practiced by the Religious Right. They are hard at work in the corridors of secular power while the corporal works of mercy go begging. They seek to be Big Brother, to manipulate and deceive. The soft snow of euphemisms cover their real agenda—a theocracy.

The day they win is the day America dies. ■

A Blending of Cultures

By Hal Haralson

[Hal Haralson practices law in Austin and religion wherever he is. He is a frequent contributor to *Christian Ethics Today*.]

"Pops, can we talk to you for a minute?"

Our son, Brad, and his fiancée, Rachel Jasso, were flush with the excitement of planning their wedding set for July 12, 1997, in San Angelo.

I had overheard some of their plans. Particularly the blending of the Hispanic and Anglo cultures by the use of traditions of both in the wedding.

"Pops, we want you to speak at our wedding."

Silence....

"What do you mean, speak?"

"You'll have ten minutes....Any subject you want. The only restriction; *no* Wal-Mart jokes."

Brad and Rachel had met in the check-out line at Wal-Mart in San Antonio. Everyone who knew them had heard that story.

"Of course I'll do it. Are you sure that's what you want?"

Brad's reply was emphatic. "We've talked it over at length. It's what we want."

I've had many speaking assignments in my lifetime, but nothing like this. I never heard of someone "speaking" at a wedding.

I wrestled with the assignment for nearly a month and got nowhere. What could I say to my son and his bride that would enhance the blending of cultures theme they had chosen?

I woke one night with a song on my mind. I hadn't thought of it in years. The song...*Some Enchanted Evening*. I knew what I was going to do.

The minister spoke to nearly 500 people who filled the First Christian Church of San Angelo. "Brad and Rachel have asked Brad's father to speak."

That was it. I was on.

I was choked with emotion as I looked out over the crowd. It took a moment to control my sobs so I could speak. I began.

"I was having lunch in the Marimont Cafeteria on 38th Street in Austin. I looked across the room and saw James Michener. He was eating alone.

"When I finished my meal, I went by Michener's table and

introduced myself. 'Mr. Michener, I have enjoyed your writing for years and have read all your books.'

"He was nearly 90 years old but replied enthusiastically, 'Sit down, tell me about yourself. Which of my books is your favorite?'

"That's easy,' I replied. '*The Source* has always been my favorite. I love the way you use the layers of the archaeological 'dig' to tell the story of the *blending of cultures* in the Middle East.'

"It's my favorite, too,' said Michener. We talked for a few more minutes and I moved on.

"Michener wrote over 40 books. His most famous was his first, *Tales of the South Pacific*. It won him the Pulitzer Prize.

"This book became a famous Broadway musical, *South Pacific*. The musical has several memorable songs. One stands out in my mind. It's called *Some Enchanted Evening*.

"Those of you with gray hair remember the words. For those too young to remember, they go like this:

Some enchanted evening,
You may see a stranger.
You may see a stranger across a crowded room.
And, somehow you'll know
You'll know even then
That somewhere you'll see her
Again and again.

Once you have found her
Never let her go.
Once you have found her
Never let her go.

(I started to choke again), "A beautiful, romantic ballad."

"No less beautiful, no less romantic, if we substitute for across a crowded room' with 'in the check-out line at Wal-Mart.'"

Spontaneous applause.

Brad and Rachel's love for each other succeeded in bringing the two cultures, Hispanic and Anglo together.

The theme had been captured. The cultures are blending. ■

Two Shorts and a Long

By Bruce McIver

[Bruce McIver is Pastor Emeritus of the Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas and, in retirement is a fabulously successful author of best-selling books.]

As a boy back in North Carolina I grew up listening to the “Amos and Andy” radio program. It was fifteen minutes of laughter, static, and family “togetherness” as we all huddled around the old Philco radio, straining to catch every line of the show.

Andy had a secretary named “Miss Blue.” When someone came by his office to visit he would often interrupt the conversation by hollering through the door, “MISS BLUE, WOULD YOU PLEASE BUZZ ME!” A second later a buzzer would sound and Andy would talk through his new intercom with Miss Blue about some trivial matter. Obviously, no intercom was needed; and, just as obviously; the whole charade was acted out to impress visitors to Andy’s office. (Or was it Kingfish? It has been a long time.)

During those days when we listened to the daily program we weren’t worried about any telephone calls from 6:45 until 7:00 in the evenings. Amos and Andy had absolute priority up and down the party line. A crisis would just have to wait. By the way our telephone number in Siler City was 8-F, or two shorts and a long. That’s all; just 8-F. Downright humiliating by today’s standards. And our post office box number was 42. Just 42. Our street had no name or address. We lived “across the creek...one house past the Darks...and just before you get to the Fitts.”

Today, I sit in my office at home, surrounded by a FAX machine (hoping somebody will FAX me!), a telephone to my left and another telephone with a “dedicated line” for the FAX machine, a pocket recorder, a cellular telephone for use in the car, an adding machine (never could balance my check book without one!), and a PC (personal computer) with a “hard drive.” And, just recently I went “on line” so I could send and receive E-mail messages.

A long, long way from Amos and Andy. And 8-F.

My dear friend, Jimmy Allen, former President of the Southern Baptist Convention and now pastor in the mountains of Georgia, and I have communicated with one another a couple of times a week for at least twenty-five years—swapping stories, sermon ideas and illustrations, and just sharing mutual concerns. Telephone calls and faxes worked okay, but E-mail has nearly ruined a good relationship!

When I went “on line” recently I sent Jimmy a message. It didn’t go through. He tried to respond. But his message didn’t get through. We struggled with this process for about three days, running up enormous telephone bills trying to figure out how to save money on E-mail. Frankly, I was about ready to go back to “8-F”—two shorts and a long—or to smoke signals sent over the mountains.

On the fourth day he finally got the thing to work. My computer screen said, “Message waiting.”

With nervous fingers I punched the right keys to retrieve my first E-mail message. This was the moment of birth of a whole new way of communication. Something “Edison” McIver could tell his grandchildren.

Jimmy’s message read, “*I think we’ve figured this thing out. Now, say something!*”

From Andy’s intercom...to two shorts and a long...to fax machines with “dedicated lines”...to PC’s...to cellular phones...to E-mail...to television programs...to public address systems...to microphones used in the worship service this Sunday.

...Not much matters if we don’t have something to say.

In one of his last “words” to the disciples Jesus said, “You shall be my witnesses.”

Easter is a good time to say, “*I think we’ve figured this thing out. Now say something.*”

How about starting with...

“*The Lord is risen;*

The Lord is risen, indeed!” ■



Reforming Campaign Financing

By Senator Paul Simon

[Paul Simon is a former United States Senator from Illinois. He now serves as director of the Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. After serving in the Illinois House of Representatives and then in the Senate from 1955 to 1969, he became a U.S. Congressman and then a U.S. Senator from 1975 until his retirement in 1996. He holds 39 honorary doctorates and has written numerous books, almost all of which deal substantively with ethical issues. The article carried here is excerpted from *We Can Do Better*, a book of letters addressed to President Bill Clinton proposing practical steps which are needed for the good of America and all Americans. "Reforming Campaign Financing" is an issue of major and primary importance, as timely now as it was when it was first written. Senator Simon here proposes common-sense solutions for one of our nation's most pressing problems. It is a vital part of a blueprint for turning the country around and giving our children and grandchildren a brighter and better future. It is printed here with Senator Simon's permission.]

Dear Mr. President:

The mixture we have of money and politics undercuts our democracy. This issue, Mr. President, is fundamental. Those with power and wealth use our democratic process to add to their power and wealth. And the public sees a distorted system that should address fundamental problems but doesn't. What aggravates the public and intensifies its cynicism is not the unpopular vote a Senator or House member casts—the public does not expect us to agree with them at all times—but there is the belief that many legislative decisions are made because of heavy campaign contributions. Prior to his conviction on several charges of fraud and embezzlement, when reporters asked Charles Keating, a generous donor to political campaigns, whether the hundreds of thousands of dollars he contributed to campaigns influenced the conduct of the recipients, he replied, "I certainly hope so." That's the way the system works.

In addition, people in politics spend too much time raising money. If it were only the fact that we waste the most precious resource we have, time, that would be bad enough, but the methods of financing campaigns pervert the democratic process and do not serve the nation's needs. You have had your share of experiences with this demeaning system.

The campaign finance reform bills passed by the Senate and house in 1993 offered slight improvements but gave us thin soup, when what we need is meat and potatoes—genuine reform. You need to press harder to make the public see the flaws in our present

system and understand that it needs wholesale change, and soon.

Bought and Paid For

Over and over on the Senate floor, I see the process that should be serving the public being twisted to serve those who contribute to our campaigns. The public senses this. Their perception is of people donating money that buys votes in Congress or contracts and appointments from the executive branch. The practice usually is not that crude or direct, but too often the net effect is about the same. This is not a new phenomenon. In his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Edward Gibbon wrote more than two centuries ago: "The wisdom and authority of the legislator are seldom victorious in a contest with the vigilant dexterity of private interest."¹ He wrote of ancient Rome, but he might well be speaking of modern America.

Here's an illustration from my recent experience: I voted with you on the North American Free Trade Agreement, widely known as NAFTA. I started the process uncertain as to how I would vote, reading all I could, finally coming to the conclusion that it would create jobs and serve the nation's interest. After going through the studies by various groups, I decided that it was not even a close call. For the cause of this nation's working men and women, for our economic future, and for the cause of better relations with our neighbors, I supported NAFTA. But my long-time friends in the labor movement were not happy, and one respected official told a small gathering that I had been the recipient of more than \$600,000 in contributions from them in the last election. He implied clearly that I had been bought and paid for and that there was something unethical about my voting against those who had been so generous to my campaign. Another time, when I served in the state legislature, someone asked me how I could vote against this measure, involving some point of the law about monuments in cemeteries, when he had donated \$200 to my campaign. I volunteered to write a check giving him his money back. He declined. Years later, someone who had raised money for me said that he felt I owed him a federal judgeship. He does not have the temperament to be a good federal judge, but if the call had been marginal, his comment to me, no matter what his qualifications, would have precluded me from recommending him for a judgeship.

This system affects all of us. I have never made a promise involving my official duties in return for a campaign contribution. But if I arrive home late at night or at a hotel in Chicago at midnight and there are twenty phone calls waiting, nineteen of them from people whose names I do not recognize, the twentieth from someone who gave me a \$1,000 campaign contribution, at midnight I will not make twenty phone calls, but I might make one. Which one will I make?

You know the answer. And that means that the financially articulate have an inordinate access to policymakers, including to those who are the most careful on how these matters are handled. But what about the unemployed person who needs access, who probably does not follow the intricacies of legislative maneuverings and certainly will not make a significant campaign contribution? That person is lost in the process. That is the reason I have so many town meetings in Illinois, so that access is there for everyone, but that is a weak substitute for fundamental reform. The present system causes what former Representative Henry Reuss of Wisconsin calls “a psychological mortgage on members.”

Are there no pluses to the present system? There are some, but the liabilities far outweigh the assets. When people contribute, they feel more involved in a campaign and are more likely to take an active role. One of the ironies is that a free political rally for a candidate for the U.S. Senate, for example, usually draws a modest crowd. But if there is a charge of \$100 a plate for a dinner, a reasonably effective committee selling tickets, there will be a larger crowd, and those gathered tend to be opinion molders. That may be more a commentary on the nature of our political meetings than a tribute to fund-raising dinners.

The traditional political rally is designed to enthuse the party faithful and often fails to do even that. The usually “We’re all good and they’re all bad” speeches turn off independents, and the free (and usually noisy) beer-and-burgers events appeal to the physically hungry more than the politically hungry. And you and I both know that no one is more certain of his or her position on any number of issues than an uninformed citizen who has had six beers.

One of the positive things you did, Mr. President, during your campaign was to shift the significant dialogue away from the political rally and over to the television and radio talk shows. Not only did you reach much larger audiences, you partially bypassed the political reporters who tend to ask process questions rather than issue questions. The woman on the call-in program whose husband is dying of cancer asks questions about health care, and that reflects the concerns of the American public. The reporter who asks why you slipped four points in the latest poll is straining to find some new angle to a story because he or she has heard you give essentially the same speech for the twentieth time. My instinct is that if political rallies were more reflective of the talk show format, with genuine dialogue, there would be more interest and greater understanding of the issues. The danger with the nature of today’s political rallies is that they encourage massive oversimplification of complex issues and are too easily abused by small-time demagogues.

Reforming Presidential Campaign Funding

The funding of presidential races offers an example of genuine reform—and also demonstrates the reality that reform is never a fully completed process, that reforms eventually must be

The public pays for elections now but in the worst possible way: through distorted priorities that reflect law-making for donors rather than law-making to meet the nation’s needs.

reformed. In a presidential primary, matching funds are available to candidates who raise at least \$100,000 in twenty states in individual contributions of \$250 or less. That helps candidates of limited means and is good. But the rules under which the funds can be spent are unworkable, as the Federal Election Commission acknowledges.

The great problem—where additional reform is needed at the presidential level—is in the fall run-off after the conventions. In your race against former President George Bush in 1992, you both received a grant of \$55.2 million from the check-off that citizens may use when filing their federal income tax forms. That is the amount a candidate should spend in the general election, and for several elections after its passage it worked that way. But soon “soft money” entered the picture, money given by corporations, labor unions (neither of which can give directly to federal candidates), and individuals, all of whom donate to the national and state political parties and to their offshoots. In 1992, the national parties received \$67.8 million (\$36.2 million for Republicans, \$31.6 million for Democrats) in soft money, and 43 percent of this soft money came in contributions of \$50,000 or more.

The rules for disclosure of “hard money,” direct contributions to federal candidates, are good and strict, as they should be. The rules on disclosure for soft money are considerably weaker. The amounts given to state parties and their creations in 1992 still have not been totaled and may never be. The soft money hemorrhage has significantly weakened presidential finance reform and should be halted.

The congressional campaign reform legislation that passed the House and the Senate in 1993, in differing versions, does offer slight improvement, but the emphasized word must be slight. To achieve significant improvement we should shift the focus.

There has been a preoccupation with the political action committees (PACs) as the great source of evil. I would vote tomorrow to get rid of PACs, but if the aim is reform, you can place that one far down the list of changes that would really make a difference. In other words, if the aim of campaign finance reform is to score 100, give two points to eliminating PACs, with ninety-eight to go.

There are even some good things about PACs. For one thing, they can be a means for small donors to contribute. Also, at least now, if the Jones Furniture Manufacturing Company, of which Robert Smith is the president (all names are fictional), gives a House or Senate member \$1,000 from its PAC, that donation is listed and clear for all to see. But if the present funding system is not dramatically altered, and the Jones Furniture Manufacturing Company has a serious legislative interest, eliminating the PAC will not stop this company’s efforts to buy access to lawmakers. If the PAC is eliminated, Robert Smith’s wife, Nancy Smith can donate \$1,000, listing her occupation as “housewife,” and the public will know almost nothing about the source of funds. And with the current growing trend of women not changing their names at marriage, Nancy Smith may well be listed as Nancy

Bartholomew, and the trail to the real source of funding for the campaign becomes even fainter.

The other side of the story, however, is that PACs contribute overwhelmingly to incumbents. Even those who manage to offend some of the major sources of funds are helped more by PACs. Let me immodestly use myself, again, as an example. Because I have voted for many cuts in defense spending, sponsored legislation to bring insurance companies under the antitrust laws, have not voted with the big oil companies, and have favored politics generally not supported by the American Medical Association and other big contributors, my percentage of contributions from PACs has been well below average for an incumbent: 17 percent of my campaign contributions came from PACs in my last race, compared to an average of 36 percent for my Senate colleagues, exempting Senator David Boren of Oklahoma and Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, neither of whom accept PAC contributions. In my 1990 race against Representative Lynn Martin, who later became Secretary of Labor, she received \$1,193,642, from political action committees compared to my \$1,480,221, a far above-average amount for a challenger. This undoubtedly helped my funding: The polls showed me winning. PACs don't like to offend incumbents—and they love winners. Some of those who contributed heavily to my opponent early in the election assured me that after the election, they would contribute to me. And they did.

What we need is public funding of campaigns. Anything short of this may improve the system a little, but only a little. If this idea is properly planned and clearly presented, it will have overwhelming popular support. Political leaders are correct when they piously say, "Opinion polls show that when the public is asked if they favor using taxpayers' money to fund campaigns, they overwhelmingly reject the idea." And then these same political leaders say that they will stand with public opinion "even though I would benefit from a change in the system." What they do not say is that incumbents recognize that the current system is strongly tilted toward reelecting them. Plus there is the never expressed but clear thought on the part of many: "Whatever system got me elected must be pretty good." My experience at town meetings in Illinois is that when the idea of public campaign funding is explained, people are overwhelmingly for it. What is needed is leadership to educate the public about the significance of such a change for them. The public pays for elections now but in the worst possible way: through distorted priorities that reflect law-making for donors rather than law-making to meet the nation's needs.

Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts introduced an amendment that six of us co-sponsored, calling for a system of public financing of Senate and House races. He proposed a voluntary \$5 donation that anyone filling out a federal income tax form could check off and contribute toward campaigns, with no private contributions permitted, except for limited donations in the event of a primary contest.

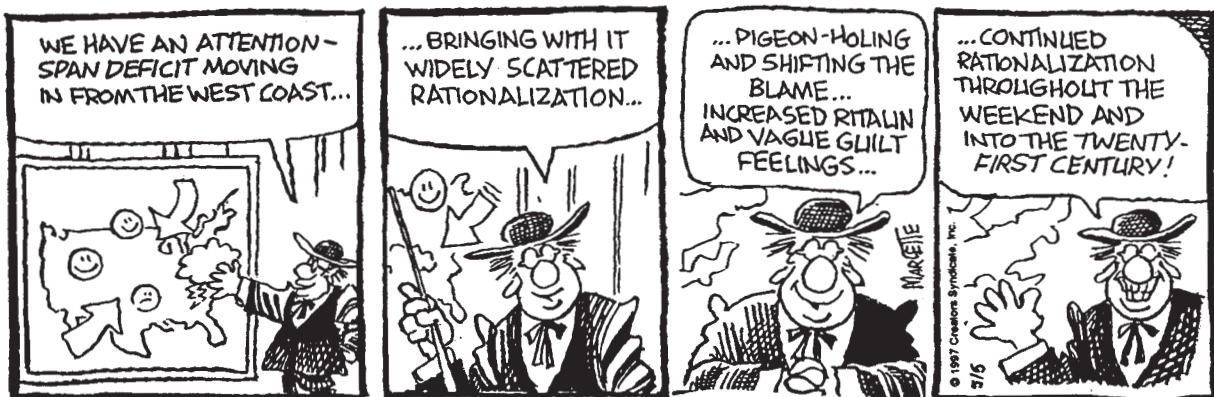
First, Senator Kerry explained the problem with two illustrations:

The LTV Corporation and the Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel Corporation both lobbied aggressively for legislation that facilitated their claim to \$144 million in tax refunds, despite the fact that prohibitions against those refunds existed where a corporation had done what those very corporations had done, which is cut off the pension plan payments to retirees. So they spent \$201,304 in very targeted campaign contributions, some of them directed to two key Senators on the very legislative committees pertaining to that legislation. And all of those companies that have revoked the pensions for over 100,000 retirees, were allowed to claim relief under the new law in a special provision put in for them by the committee on which those two legislators sat.²

Now, whether or not those two legislators did it, the appearances of impropriety screamed out at everybody so much that newspapers and others made direct allegations of impropriety.

Another example:

Northrop Corporation sent well over \$250,000 in PAC money to Congress in 1988. And it did so literally at the very moment that the Tacit Rainbow project came up in the Senate. Several thousands [of] dollars were contributed directly to the campaign of a chairman of one of the committees of jurisdiction. And although the anti-radar project had failed four flight tests [and] it had accrued enormous cost overruns, \$180 million was budgeted for its continued development and the conflict of interest at the level of appearance once again surfaced in the press.



Then Senator Kerry explained the logic of his amendment:

Think of what it would mean in this country to have the general election campaigns of the U.S. Senators funded by \$5 contributions from anonymous people. You do not know who gave you the money. People who care about liberating their Congress from the special interests are the ones who gave it. But whether they be Democrat, Republican or Independent, they have given it because they want us to end the charade of pretending we are trying to set up a system that will help challengers, when in fact the current system is so anti-challenger it is incredible.³

To no one's surprise, the amendment lost 60-35. All thirty-five Senators voting for the amendment were Democrats, unfortunately. This issue should transcend partisan politics. That thirty-five Democrats bucked the pressures and supported its signals that this is an important battle for the public interest that can be won. One article calling for public financing observed: "Neither Congress nor the President should be looked to as the engine of reform."⁴ The authors suggest there really has to be a grassroots movement to bring about the change. While I strongly favor any public support that can be generated, the reality is that this issue is complicated enough that there will not be any sizable grassroots call for change. However, more than one-third of the Senate is willing to support this needed reform. If you as President of the United States came aboard strongly on this—with one-tenth the effort that you and your staff put forward so effectively on NAFTA—the measure would pass the Senate and the House.

The Honor Roll of Senators who voted for the Kerry amendment:

Daniel Akaka	Hawaii
Joe Biden	Delaware
Jeff Bingaman	New Mexico
David Boren	Oklahoma
Barbara Boxer	California
Bill Bradley	New Jersey
Dale Bumpers	Arkansas
Robert Byrd	West Virginia
Kent Conrad	North Dakota
Tom Daschle	South Dakota
Dennis DeConcini	Arizona
Chris Dodd	Connecticut
Russ Feingold	Wisconsin
John Glenn	Ohio
Tom Harkin	Iowa
Daniel Inouye	Hawaii
Ted Kennedy	Massachusetts
John Kerry	Massachusetts
Frank Lautenberg	New Jersey
Pat Leahy	Vermont
Harlan Mathews	Tennessee
Howard Metzenbaum	Ohio
Barbara Mikulski	Maryland

George Mitchell	Maine
Carol Moseley-Braun	Illinois
Daniel Patrick Moynihan	New York
Claiborne Pell	Rhode Island
David Pryor	Arkansas
Harry Reid	Nevada
Don Riegle	Michigan
Paul Sarbanes	Maryland
Jim Sasser	Tennessee
Paul Wellstone	Minnesota
Harris Wofford	Pennsylvania

It is not only the pandering to big contributors that is wrong, it is the huge amount of time wasted by candidates, including incumbents, on raising money, time that should be spent becoming more knowledgeable about the many complex issues. In my last race for the Senate, I raised \$8.4 million. But on a per capita basis for the number of voters in the state, mine was one of the least expensive races. Here is the breakdown for the 1990 Senate races, with the amount winners and losers spent, divided by the total Senate vote for that state (with the opponent's expenditure in parentheses):

Winner Spending Per Vote (Opponent's Spending)

Joseph Biden, D., DE	\$14.16	(\$1.34)
Ted Stevens, R., AK	8.52	(zero)
John D. Rockefeller IV, D., WV	6.56	(0.06)
Max Baucus, D., MT	6.54	(2.34)
Claiborne Pell, D., RI	6.49	(5.65)
Jesse Helms, R., NC	6.45	(3.77)
Larry Pressler, R., SD	6.43	(1.76)
Alan Simpson, R., WY	6.35	(0.04)
Mitch McConnell, R., KY	5.54	(3.20)
Tom Harkin, D., IA	5.36	(5.15)
Larry Craig, R., ID	5.23	(1.72)
Daniel Akaka, D., HI	5.04	(6.86)
Bill Bradley, D., NJ	4.93	(0.41)
Robert Smith, R., NH	4.87	(1.10)
Pete Domenici, R., NM	4.73	(0.09)
James Exon, D., NE	3.96	(2.45)
Hank Brown, R., CO	3.60	(1.90)
Bennett Johnston, D., LA	3.57	(1.87)
William Cohen, R., ME	3.02	(3.14)
Howell Heflin, D., AL	2.90	(1.56)
Carl Levin, D., MI	2.71	(0.94)
John Kerry, D., MA	2.69	(2.24)
Phil Gramm, R., TX	2.56	(0.44)
Strom Thurmond, R., SC	2.55	(0.01)
Daniel Coats, R., IN	2.47	(0.72)
Paul Simon, D., IL	2.36	(1.51)
Mark Hatfield, R., OR	2.15	(1.35)
Albert Gore Jr., D., TN	2.08	(0.01)
David Boren, D., OK	1.55	(0.16)
Paul Wellstone, D., MN	0.74	(3.44)
Nancy Kassebaum, R., KS	0.52	(0.02)

Here's another flaw: Four incumbents in 1990 had no opposition: David Pryor of Arkansas, Sam Nunn of Georgia, Thad Cochran of Mississippi, and John Warner of Virginia. All are good legislators, but it is reasonable to assume that if we had a system in which an opponent would have the same amount of money to spend as a sitting Senator, the incumbents would have been challenged and the process of democracy would have been aided. No-choice elections are not elections.

As you look at the figures for the 31 contested Senate races, the person with the greater campaign treasury won in all but three. In all but three cases also the sitting senator outspent (usually by a substantial margin) the nonincumbent. And in all but one case, the sitting senator won.

Time and Money

People ask, how do I raise \$8.4 million for a Senate race in Illinois? Not easily. I spend time in my home state but I also travel to New York, Los Angeles, and other cities where I can pull together a handful of people to raise funds. Particularly in an election year (which is every other year in the House), I'll spend an hour or two on the telephone almost every day, raising funds. Because it is illegal to do this from the Senate and House offices, that also means spending ten or fifteen minutes getting to and from a nearby nongovernmental office to make the calls. Each year, thousands of people who visit the Senate and House chambers when we are in session are appalled at the few members who are on the floor participating in debate. Part of that is because committee meetings are often going on at the same time. (In this one respect, state legislative bodies have better rules. When state legislative bodies meet, most members are present to hear the debate.) But the visitors in the gallery who are appalled at the small numbers on the floor of either the House or Senate would be even more appalled if they knew this reality: If they are visiting the chambers in an election year, in all probability there are more House and Senate members making phone calls to raise money at that point (except for the time we are casting votes) than are on the floor of either chamber. Would we be serving the public better by listening to and participating in debate rather than making phone calls to raise money? To ask the question is to answer it.

Authors Ellen Miller and the late Phil Stern exaggerate when they wrote: "Money has become the medium of political participation in America today."⁵ But that is closer to the truth than it should be. And they make this valid point: "We would never allow competing litigants to pay jurors or judges. Similarly, self-interested private money has no place in our public legislature and elections."

It is not only the campaign contributions that a candidate receives that can influence votes in the Senate and House, it is also the awareness of the money that can be shifted to the opposition candidate and used against an incumbent. "What a great thirty-second commercial they can use against me on this vote" is a sentiment heard over and over when members cast votes they believe to be in the national interest, but politically imprudent.

One senator's chief of staff told me: "Most senators would much rather ignore the special interests, but under the present rules of financing campaigns, they cannot." All of us belong to

some "special interests." Teachers, for example, should not be ignored because they are a special interest. But too often, the larger the campaign purse, the greater the influence in the political process.

One of the finest persons ever to serve in the United States Senate, Paul Douglas, used to quote an unknown English poet:

The law locks up both man and woman,
Who steals the goose from off the Common.
But lets the greater felon loose,
Who steals the Common from the goose.

One of the influential men of the nineteenth century, British author John Stuart Mill, wrote:

One of the greatest dangers of democracy...lies in the sinister interest of the holders of power: it is the danger of class legislation; of government intended for...the immediate benefit of the dominant class, to the lasting detriment of the whole. And one of the most important questions demanding consideration...is how to provide efficacious security against this evil.⁶

It is the evil we have not yet addressed effectively.

The old line of finding truth in humor is true in the observation of Ronald Reagan (though no friend of campaign financing reform): "I thought politics to be the second-oldest profession. I come to realize that it bears a very close relationship to the first."⁷

Rush Limbaugh is not my favorite authority on most matters, but listen to his response to a question from a writer for the *National Review* on whether he would ever seek public office:

I have no desire [to do it]. Primarily because...to be elected to anything, you have to walk around like this—with your hand out. And you have to beg people to put something in it. Somebody always does, and they want repayment. And not with dollars. It's going to be with your soul, it's going to be with a portion of your soul. I don't look at it as fun.⁸

But some who read these words may ask, "If the system is that bad, why do you use it?" Former Senator William Proxmire of Wisconsin is the only member in recent history who ran and got reelected without raising campaign funds. Had he not chosen to retire, he would have been reelected again. After my election to the Senate, I approached him about the idea of running without fundraising in Illinois. In strong terms he advised me against it. In a state with a smaller population like Wisconsin, he told me, it is difficult but possible, but it would be impossible in a state with the population of Illinois. That means that unless a person considering a Senate race is independently wealthy—and I am not—a candidate depends on contributions to raise the money necessary for a campaign and has to use the present system, bad as it is.

There are those who argue that a change to public financing

will help Democrats more than Republicans, because generally Republicans have an easier time raising money. Opponents of public financing for presidential campaigns used that same argument, because Republicans generally collected and spent more in presidential races than Democrats. Since the income tax check-off reform passed, we have seen three Republican presidential victories and two Democratic wins, including yours. Because the House has been in Democratic hands since 1955, and because incumbents raise money more easily than challengers, it is probable that over time public financing would create a shift away from the Democratic lock on the House. But the electorate is not predictable under any system, and that is good. When Alaska and Hawaii were admitted to statehood, for example, Alaska had two Democratic Senators and Hawaii had two Republican Senators, and the political calculators predicted that the two states would remain in that position long into the future. They erred: Today Alaska has two Republican Senators, and Hawaii has two Democratic Senators.

A system of public financing will give incumbents less of an advantage. In 1974 the spending difference between House incumbents and challengers averaged \$17,000. By 1990 it had reached \$308,000. In 250 of the 435 House races that year, the winner outspent the loser by at least ten to one.⁹ Opponents of public financing argue that incumbents have much greater name recognition and other advantages. But incumbents also have the disadvantage of a record that can be dissected, distorted, and criticized. Balancing spending in general elections will remove the financial advantage for incumbents.

One restriction that you are subject to, Mr. President, that House and Senate members are not, is term limitation. People who advocate a constitutional amendment for term limits in the Senate and House make a mistake, in my judgment, on the grounds of both merit and practicality. The merit argument is that to change officeholders simply for the sake of change is not wise in an increasingly complex world. (I confess some conflict of interest on this argument.) I could give many examples of members in both political parties who have mastered highly technical areas and whose loss to the Senate would be a loss to the nation. Senator Bennett Johnston of Louisiana is one. He can enter into an extremely sophisticated discussion with scientists on the merits of various technical projects that fall under his jurisdiction. His substantial knowledge in this area, unmatched by anyone in either the House

or Senate, is a national asset.

The practical reality is that to enact term limitations requires a constitutional amendment and that takes a two-thirds vote of the House and Senate. You would probably get more votes in Congress to move the nation's capital to Las Vegas. It simply won't happen.

A system of public financing would make the reelection of incumbents less certain. That would bring meaningful and selective change. Incumbents would be forced to hold more town meetings in place of fund-raisers and pay more attention to weighty issues rather than hefty donors.

As candidate Bill Clinton pointed out during the 1992 campaign, we need to change the way we finance campaigns. You have shown your concern. Although it is a somewhat delicate matter involving congressional turf, you need to exert more leadership toward this end as President Bill Clinton.

Sincerely,

Paul Simon

1 Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, *Great Books of the Western World*, Mortimer Adler, ed., (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), p. 393.

2 *Congressional Record*, Senate, May 27, 1993, p. 6664.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 6665.

4 "Democratically Financed Elections," by Ellen Miller and Philip Stern in *Changing America*, edited by Mark Green, (New York: Newmarket Press, 1992), p. 760.

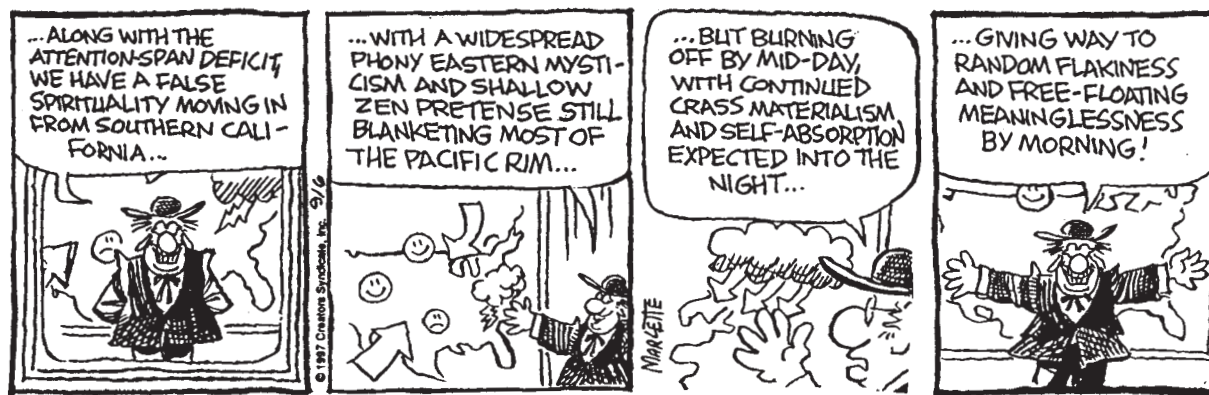
5 *Ibid.*, pp. 760-761.

6 John Stuart Mill, *Representative Government*, *Great Books of the Western World*, Mortimer Adler, ed., (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), p. 369.

7 Ronald Reagan, quoted in "Of Many Things," by George W. Hunt, *America*, November 7, 1992.

8 Quoted in "The Leader of the Opposition," by James Bowman, *National Review*, September 6, 1993.

9 "Democratically Financed Elections," by Ellen Miller and Philip Stern in *Changing America*, edited by Mark Green, (New York: Newmarket Press, 1992), p. 761.



Family Reunion

By William L. Hendricks

[William Hendricks is director of the Baptist studies program and lecturer in theology at Brite Divinity School of Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. He taught for four decades at Southwestern, Golden Gate, and Southern Baptist theological seminaries.]

How do you have a family reunion with a family you did not know you had, and whom you had never met? It is a long story; this is the short, happy version.

I learned in adolescence I was an adopted child. The circumstances were traumatic. Adopting parents, please tell your children from the beginning! The adjustments for all concerned will be easier.

At age 67 I began what I thought would be a futile quest for my birth family. My adoptive parents were long since deceased. My birth mother's name and date and place of birth were the only items of information available.

A Lutheran social worker from Montana, the place of birth, was contacted. The prospects were slim. The time interval was too great. The quest was a good idea.

Certain health problems which involve heredity gave additional reason for the search. A year elapsed with only formal letters of progress, namely that there was no progress in the search.

An Emotional Call

In September of 1996 the call came. The report was that both the parents were deceased. Since they were not married to one another, this removed any obstacle of embarrassment. Former students and critics who have thought I was a "you-know-what" were right!

Thanks to the grace of God, she chose adoption rather than abortion. Any personal embarrassment was erased by the awareness a child is not responsible for circumstances of birth. It is the

birthright of every child born to be loved.

The court had approved opening of the adoption records. After a little more sleuthing there they were: a half-brother on my birth mother's side, three half-brothers and a half-sister on my birth father's side and cousins too numerous to count.

There is also an aunt still living, a sister-in-law who was also a close friend and confidant of my birth mother. You can imagine their surprise when advised there was an unknown, older half-brother.

Permission for contact was granted. There were somewhat strained and formal phone conversations. Letters and birthday cards were exchanged. Pictures gave proof of family resemblance's on both sides of the family.

June 22-24, 1997, was set aside for a family (re)union!

I had flown to California on December 31, 1996, for a meeting with the maternal half-brother. There was instant empathy. He and his wife were included in the Montana reunion plans.

As the time grew close, anxiety increased. What would you say? How do you greet blood relatives you have never met, brothers and a sister with whom you did not grow up? No need to worry!

They met us at the airport, the spouses too. There were tentative handshakes which evolved into warm hugs. There were welcome balloons.

The hospitality room at the hotel where we all stayed was decorated for a party. The meal was home-prepared with traditional, family foods.

At first I attempted, in true academic fashion, to take notes. Soon I gave that up for eyeball-to-eyeball sharing of stories, theirs and mine.

Bonding and Prayers

Over the next two days we bonded, took pictures and visited



their childhood homes. There were prayers at the grave sites of my birth father and birth mother, sites in two different cities.

We sized each other up and speculated as to what might have been. We swapped notes on children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews as yet unknown.

Specialists in the old argument about nature and nurture, heredity and environment, would have profited from a study of our circumstances.

I have served 40 years as a Baptist seminary professor. The maternal half-brother is concluding a career of college teaching in California. The oldest paternal half-brother is close to retirement from his position as dean of a state university in California...three academics, the first from immigrant families to attend colleges.

Two younger brothers were in the military early in life and retired early, one from a career with a utility company, the other from a telephone company. The sister, the youngest of the six siblings, works in a bank.

All are married. Three have been married twice. All have children. There are differences, too. One is Episcopal, four are Roman Catholic. Small wonder they were curious about a Baptist seminary professor brother.

Three of the brothers are athletes, avid golfers among other sports. All spouses were present and were comfortable with one another—remarkable!

A Wonderful Work

Did it work, this curious (re)union? Wonderfully so!

There was a visit with the maternal surviving aunt and her oldest son, in whom physical likenesses were discerned.

We began at the airport with hugs accompanied with tears. We agreed we have a lot of catching up to do. We agreed we will have other reunions now that the union, the coming together, was a good first step.

I grew up assuming I was an only child. I am still processing what it means to be one of six siblings.

Darrell Adams, the folk singer, has taught us to sing, *How great to be a family*. And so it is!

Oh, yes. Since I teach for a living, may I draw a few lessons from this experience?

A child is not responsible for the circumstances of his/her birth. It is the birthright of every child born to be loved. It is important to be rooted and to know your roots in the human community. ■

What's Your Net Worth?

By Glenn Dromgoole

[Glenn Dromgoole, a longtime Texas newspaper editor in Fort Worth, Bryan-College Station and Abilene, is writing a book of essays on the little ways people's lives can make a difference and can "brighten the Corner" in their communities.]

I stared at the question on the form. It asked simply: What is your net worth?

Well, I had never stopped to figure it. What's my net worth? Not much, I imagine. Maybe, if I'm lucky, it comes out a little above zero.

But as I gave the question more thought, I realized I couldn't possibly answer it. Could you?

Net worth is measured in dollars, but real worth can't be counted that way.

How much is a loving husband or wife or best friend worth?

How about your children? How much are they worth? (On a good day.)

Aren't your memories worth something? What would you give for the experiences you've had?

Who can put a price tag on friendships?

How much would you take for your freedom?

I had the kindest mother anyone could ever have. How much has that been worth over the years?

Laughter is free but invaluable. What's the net worth of a sense of humor?

Principles certainly count for something. But how can they be measured? Certainly not in dollars. What would you take for your self-respect, your conscience, your integrity? Are they for sale?

The value of an education is much greater than its cost. But how much?

Life itself is the ultimate treasure. Can you place a value on it?

Most of what is important in our lives cannot be bought or sold. It has *value*, to be sure, but not *monetary* value. It can't be measured; it can't be counted. But it is what makes life truly rich.

We're all a lot richer than we think, aren't we, when we stop and add up our true net worth. ■

Three Poems

By Wyatt H. Heard

[Wyatt H. Heard was a State District Judge in Houston for 21 years. Since 1997, as a lawyer, he has been doing mediations and arbitrations. He lives in Albuquerque.]

Daddy

There he sat on the lawn furniture; With his small portable radio tuned in on the baseball game.

The voices of my children and others filled the air. He was not the focus of their attention but they knew he was there. Waiting in patience ready to mentor if needed.

His massive frame and those huge hands which in former days used a rope and an ax, now simply turned the dial on his radio.

Three decades ago my judgment was flawed of him. That is now in the past never to be retrieved.

I hope it will give me pause when my judgment of someone else is not tempered with mercy.

These lessons extract a toll on us, but maybe, just maybe, compassion will not only be allowed to surface but flood all our cells as we are becoming something new.

The Back

With age comes wisdom—Right? Well, carrying old doors in— So “Don’t push it.” Right?

Two days later a yoga work shop Four hours, no trouble. Right?

The next day real pain radiating through the sciatic notch and down the back of the thigh. It will be okay in a couple of days. Right?

Two weeks pass. Then trips to the doctor for adjustments and... it’s going to be better. Right?

Days later pain is increasing and orders from the physician to take an M.R.I.

The —Father had prostate cancer which moved into the hip and death sentence declared.

It has been almost two years since my prostate operation but it did not spread. Right?

They don’t prepare a table before me in the presence.... No they lay me flat on the table and move me into a tunnel— Thirty minutes and no movement. Don’t worry. Right?

The next day results proclaim the good news no cancer but a ruptured disc at L5-S1. Well, physical therapy will take care of it. Right?

You are not the first pilgrim who has trailed this path. You are not as independent as you have acted for decades, so you swallow hard and proclaim, “I need help.” Right?

Seventy

After seven decades Once again ushered into campus life Where the trumpet of trade begins to be dimmed, The sound of art intrudes into the crossroads of civilization and stands against the ravages of time proclaiming the fearless truth.

Truth words do not perish but on waves of sound fly abroad. Why is it in youth we are so sure about life, only to awake in the late decades hearing the vibrations of ambiguity which threaten us in youth?

But in elder age uncertainty feels like comfortable old shoes. Maybe it is as one sage declared, “Certainty is the sin of bigots, terrorists, and Pharisees. Compassion makes me think I may be wrong.”

Gleanings from the Internet

Things You Can Learn from a Dog

Never pass up the opportunity to go for a joyride.
Allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy.
When loved ones come home, always run to greet them.
When it's in your best interest, practice obedience.
Let others know when they've invaded your territory.
Take naps and stretch before rising.
Run, romp and play daily.
Eat with gusto and enthusiasm.
Never pretend to be something you're not.
If what you want lies buried, dig until you find it.
When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by and nuzzle them gently.
Avoid biting when a simple growl will do.
On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree.
When you're happy, dance around and wag your entire body.
No matter how often you're scolded, don't buy into the guilt thing and pout; run right back and make friends.
Delight in the simple joy of a long walk.
Be loyal. ■

Administratium

The heaviest element known to science was recently discovered by university physicists. The element, tentatively named Administratium, has no protons or electrons and thus has an atomic weight of 0. However, it does have one neutron, 70 vice neutrons, and 161 assistant viceneutrons. This gives it an atomic mass of 232. These 232 particles are held together in a nucleus by a force that involves the continuous exchange of meson-like particles called morons.

Since it has no electrons, Administratium is inert. However, it can be detected chemically, as it impedes every reaction it comes in contact with. According to researchers, a minute amount of Administratium, added to one reaction, caused it to take four days to complete. Without the Administratium, the reaction ordinarily occurred in less than one second.

Administratium has a normal half-life of approximately three years, at which time it does not actually decay, but instead undergoes a reorganization in which assistant neutrons, vice neutrons, and assistant vice neutrons exchange places. Studies seem to show the atomic number actually increasing after each reorganization.

Research indicates that Administratium occurs naturally in the atmosphere. It tends to concentrate in certain locations such as government agencies, large corporations, denominational headquarters, and universities. It can usually be found in the newest, best-appointed, and best-maintained buildings.

Scientists warn that Administratium is known to be toxic, and recommend plenty of fluids and bed rest after even low levels of exposure. ■



Watching the World Go By

Don't Just Worry: Act

By Ralph Lynn

[Dr. Ralph Lynn, a frequent contributor to this journal, is a retired professor of history at Baylor University.]

Frank and Ernest of the newspaper comics describe us more accurately than did the 17th century Frenchman, Descartes, who said, "I think; therefore I am." Frank and Ernest say, "I think; therefore I worry."

Robert D. Kaplan, a contributing editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, 1996 made a sort of backpacking trip from the mid-Atlantic coast of Africa across the Middle East and on to the Indo-Chinese peninsula. His detailed, 476-page record (*The Ends of the Earth: A Journey At the Dawn of the 21st Century*, New York, 1996) gives the reader much to think and to worry about.

Kaplan offers helpful historical information to place each area he visited in context. He offers tentative explanations as to how and why each area has arrived at its present situation.

The following quotations are specifically about the mid-Atlantic equatorial coast states but they are fairly typical of the other hot and humid areas he visited.

"An odor of sour sweat, rotting fruit, hot roofing iron and dust, urine drying on sun-warmed stone, feces, and fly-infested meat. Pregnant women sitting on wooden crates, watching children play amid discarded automobile tires, mud, and broken glass."

In these depressed areas, "hospitals are in make-shift buildings with rusted iron bed-frames devoid of mattresses and with blankets of burlap." In these areas, the only half-way decent hospitals are maintained by Non-Governmental Organizations—"universally referred to as NGOs."

Turkey, Iran, Thailand and China are some examples of "ancient kingdoms, age-old nation-states," whose people are blessed with relatively effective "social cement" which seems still to make orderly society possible and to give the citizens pride.

Everywhere, in the depressed areas as in the more progressive areas, cities are being overrun by peasants seeking better lives—"crude people of no culture who relieve themselves just here and there."

In the more progressive areas, Kaplan observes that "though shacks may line sludgy canals, I saw the architecture

of the upwardly striving, with potted plants and ordered interiors glimpsed through the cracks in the cardboard and sheet-iron."

In this mass of generally disturbing information, perhaps the most astonishing and encouraging story is of the Rishi Valley in India. A few decades ago, it was deforested scrub land whose inhabitants could gain only a marginal existence.

Now, it is reforested and producing ample crops. "Every tree in sight, in what looked much like a jungle, had been planted by the hand of an adult or a child as part of a deliberate act of regeneration."

Now it is home to great varieties of butterflies and birds. This regeneration has been achieved without the advice of a single Western aid expert and with almost no outside funds."

This regeneration is largely due to one man who died in 1986. He was a skeptic with respect to established religions and governments. But he sold the people of the area on his view that "the earth is ours, yours and mine, and we have to live on it together; we have to cherish it and grow things on its soil." (This sounds like the voices of American Indians.)

Obviously, Kaplan has given us a rich book. As I read it, my mind kept turning to the conversion to public service of the English ruling class in the 1890s.

At that time, they lived in great houses staffed by servants who lived in the squalid basements of their masters' mansions. When these servants visited their own families, they found there the same lethally unsanitary living conditions that Kaplan found across Africa and all the way to Indonesia. The result was that the serving classes were poisoning both themselves and their masters.

The ruling class began to get interested in public health only when the germ origins of disease became known.

As I read Kaplan's book, I could not avoid wondering when we rich people of the Western nations will discover that our world is as small as England was a hundred years ago. How many AIDS types of epidemics will it take to awaken us? How can we help find the leadership for a great many Rishi Valleys?

Perhaps we need to improve a bit on the comics. Perhaps we need to be able to say, "We are informed and we think; we do not just worry; we act." ■

The Death Penalty

by Millard Fuller

[Millard Fuller is founder and president of Habitat for Humanity International, Americus, Georgia. After some years as a businessman and as a lawyer, he worked for a few years with Clarence Jordan in developing business options for the Koinonia Christian community near Americus. Since 1977, his work with Habitat for Humanity in providing housing for low income families has resulted in more than 20 honorary doctorates, numerous prestigious awards, and in 1996 the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He has written six books and is now working on a seventh to be entitled More Than Houses. A graduate of Auburn University and of the Law School at the University of Alabama, he and his wife, Linda, have four children. This article, written especially for *Christian Ethics Today*, represents a long-standing conviction he stands for regarding capital punishment.]

The death penalty is back in the news, big time. The case that pushed it forward to the front pages of our newspapers and as the lead story on the evening news was that of Karla Faye Tucker, who was executed in Texas in February. This attractive, young, white woman, a confessed pickax killer, professed a Christian conversion experience in prison and, by all accounts, truly was a transformed, born-again Christian.

As her execution date approached, she garnered very vocal support from many people, including such prominent individuals as Pope John Paul II, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Bianca Jagger, and even televangelist and death penalty supporter, Pat Robertson. In spite of all of this support, she was strapped to a white table in Huntsville, Texas on February 3 and given a lethal injection which ended her life on this earth.

The high profile case of Karla Faye Tucker has caused a lot of people to re-think the whole issue of the death penalty. A front page article in the Houston Chronicle on March 15 reported that a new Scripps-Howard Texas poll found 68 percent of Texans favor capital punishment, down 18 percentage points from a 1994 survey, the last time people in Texas were questioned on the subject. This precipitous drop in support of the death penalty, the article reported, was the lowest approval rating in a decade and, perhaps, the lowest since the 1960s when executions in Texas were carried out by electrocution.

Other state and national polls have also shown declining support for capital punishment in recent years. Even so, a strong majority of Americans still support the death penalty. And, with more than 3,300 people on death row, there is no shortage of "fodder" for the death machinery in the 38 states that have authorized the ultimate punishment. Furthermore, additional people are being added to death rows faster than earlier residents are being executed.

Texas and Florida are the leading "death states." Texas has already killed three people in 1998. Another 447 inmates in Texas await their turn on the table at some future date. Florida has elected to shoot 2,000 volts of electricity through the bodies of four people within two weeks, starting on March 23, including Judi Buenoano, the first woman put to death in Florida in 150 years. Florida still has 380 men and women on death row.

Larry Spalding, legislative counsel for the Florida American Civil Liberties Union was quoted in a Los Angeles Times article as saying, "Florida's lawmakers' obsession with the use of 'Old Sparky,' as they affectionately term the electric chair, is particularly gruesome. The next thing we'll see is a constitutional amendment to change our motto from the sunshine state to the Electric Chair State." Florida is one of ten states to use the electric chair. Their last electrocution, before the ones mentioned above, caused great controversy because flames erupted from the headgear of Pedro Medina. The state Supreme Court, in a 4-3 vote, subsequently ruled that using the electric chair did not violate the constitutional ban on cruel and unusual punishment.

But, whether death is delivered by electrocution, lethal injection, hanging, firing squad, poison gas, or whatever, the ultimate question is the rightness or wrongness of the death penalty. Specifically, what is right on this issue for a disciple of Jesus Christ? As a Christian, what should my position be on the death penalty? The matter is of great urgency and incredible relevance. Where do you stand? Can you support your position from God's word?

I oppose the death penalty. Unalterably. Absolutely. No exceptions. To me, it doesn't make any difference whether a person is attractive, white, black, female or male, articulate, born-again, belligerent, guilty or innocent. Obviously, even ardent supporters of the death penalty are not in favor of killing innocent people, even though many want to remove a lot of the safeguards to prevent the shedding of innocent blood. But, for me, I stand four-square on the side of opposition to state-sanctioned killing of human beings.

There are many reasons for my position, First, I don't believe in revenge. "Vengeance is mine," saith the Lord. "I will repay." The Bible, it seems to me, is clear on the subject of revenge. Probably the most powerful voice to speak on this matter is Coretta Scott King, the widow of murdered civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "As one whose husband and mother-in-law have both died the victims of murder assassinations, I stand firmly and unequivocally opposed to the Death Penalty for those convicted of capital offenses. An evil deed is not redeemed by another evil deed of retaliation. Justice is never advanced in the taking of human life. Morality is never upheld by legalized murder."

We do have a problem of violence in America. Typically, twen-

ty thousand or so people are murdered every year in the United States. In an attempt to solve this national scandal and disgrace of violence and killing, the federal government and most states have opted for violence to combat violence. We have embraced the Old Testament concept of revenge and retaliation.

Our accepted solution has put us in bed with some unsavory bedfellows, nations like China, Iraq, and Iran. China alone executes 4,000 people a year! Would we aspire, as a nation, to be more like China? Or, Iraq or Iran? We stand alone today among industrial nations in our use of the death penalty.

I oppose the death penalty because it is being employed in a racially discriminatory manner.

A very significant study was done by a University of Iowa professor named David C. Baldus. He analyzed 2,500 murder cases in the state of Georgia between 1973 and 1978. He discovered that if a defendant is black and charged with killing a white, he is 4.3 times as likely to receive the death sentence as a defendant who kills another black. In other words, if you are black and you kill a white, the statistical study shows that you are 4.3 times more likely to get the death penalty than if you kill another black person. That means what? That an African-American life is less than one-fourth as valuable as a white life.

How should a Christian think about such blatant unfairness? Is not all life equal and precious to the Lord? Isn't that the message of scripture?

The Baldus study was cited extensively in a case called McCleskey vs. Kemp. McCleskey was a black man who was convicted of murder in Georgia. His case went up to the Supreme Court of the United States. The Baldus study found that the district attorneys of Georgia (all white males) would demand the death penalty in seventy percent of all cases involving a black defendant and a white victim, but in cases involving a white person who had killed another white person, they would seek the death penalty only thirty-two percent of the time. What do you call that? A double standard. Racism.

Well, in the McCleskey case, his lawyers said that his conviction should be overturned because of this racial discrimination which violated the eighth and fourteenth amendments to the United States Constitution. Now if you know your Constitution, you know that the eighth amendment prohibits cruel and unusual punishment. And a lot of people in our country say that a death penalty of any kind is cruel and unusual punishment. Human beings ought not deliberately to set out on a plan to kill somebody else in a calculated, premeditated way. But others say, no, if you do it in a certain way, it is not cruel and unusual. The fourteenth amendment says that all of us, black, white, rich and poor, north

I oppose the death penalty. Unalterably. Absolutely. No exceptions. To me, it doesn't make any difference whether a person is attractive, white, black, female or male, articulate, born-again, belligerent, guilty or innocent...I stand four-square on the side of opposition to state-sanctioned killing of human beings.

and south have a right to equal protection under the law. And this study shows that if you are of a certain race, your protection is different than if you are of another race. They were saying that this is not equal protection under the law. Well, these arguments were rejected by the Supreme Court of the United States in April, 1987. The decision was five to four. Five of them said they reject the study. Four of them said, no, the study is right. But five beats four so this man must die because that study does not apply to his particular case. It does not constitute cruel and unusual punishment, it does not violate the equal protection clause of the United States Constitution. So, by the Supreme Court approving of the execution of Mr. McCleskey, the flood gates were opened to many more executions in Georgia and across the nation.

Disproportionately, minorities continue to be given the death penalty across the nation. And, studies are clear that there is discrimination. What are the reasons for this? First of all there are historical reasons.

Justice Brennan who wrote the major dissent in the McCleskey case pointed out that in Colonial Days a black who killed a white got automatic death. There were no questions asked, a black killed a white, automatic death, usually death by hanging. At the time of the Civil War, there was an automatic death penalty for blacks killing whites but anyone else could get life if the jury recommended it.

Or, if the conviction was on circumstantial evidence, there was an automatic death penalty for rape of a white person by a black—automatic. Other rapes by whites got two to twenty years. Rape of a black got a fine and imprisonment at the discretion of the court. Assault by a black person on a white could get death at the discretion of the court. The same offense against a black was classified as a minor offense.

So you have a historical situation of a double standard of justice. The discrimination is obvious when you begin to get into this matter and read the cases and understand what is going on. It's just that the discrimination is more subtle now. It's a little more sophisticated, but it is still there.

But, there is another reason for this discrimination in these capital cases; and in all the reading I have done on this subject, I have not seen anybody write or talk about this second reason I am going to tell you as to why these death penalty cases are being handed down and why black folks, largely black folks, also poor whites, are just about the only people being executed.

What is this other reason as to why these death penalties are being given out largely to black folks and to poor whites but overwhelmingly to blacks?

I am a lawyer. I am currently inactive because of my all-consuming work with Habitat for Humanity, but in the past I have

tried several murder cases. I have tried three murder cases in which a death penalty was sought. I tried one in north Georgia. I tried one in Central Georgia, and I tried one in Steward County, in southwest Georgia. In all three of those murder cases, black men were the accused. In two cases, it was a black man charged with killing another black person or other black people. In the third case, a black man was charged with killing a white man. You want to know who got the death penalty? The black man who killed a white man. You know how many black folks were on his jury? Zero! It was an all-white jury deciding whether a black man was going to live or die for killing a white man. The evidence in the case was that the accused was there; he shot the victim with a pistol that had rat pellets in it. The victim had already been shot by some other folks. There were three of them there. The accused did a terrible deed. But, that's not the question. With so many of these folks, there's no question about the atrocious act; but the question is, what do you do with a person who is caught after committing such a crime? Do you give one set of folks one punishment and another set of folks who did the same thing, or worse, a lighter punishment? Is that equal justice?

The average person who is called to jury duty is not intimately familiar with how the court system works. In a murder case, you have initially what is called voir-dire examination. That is the stage at which prospective jurors are questioned about all kinds of things. Where do you live? Where do you work? What do you do? Are you married? Are you divorced? Who's your wife/former wife? Who's your husband/former husband? Where is he employed? Where is she employed? You can ask almost anything on voir-dire examination. And, if it is a murder case, where the death penalty is sought, you have as a defense lawyer a right to ask individually sequestered voir-dire examination. If it is a murder case where the death penalty is not being sought, it can be open voir-dire examination with the whole panel of prospective jurors sitting together in open court.

Now, it may come as a surprise to many but, overwhelmingly, in the deep south, where most death penalties are handed out,

*For me as a
Christian, the final
and most compelling
reason to oppose the
death penalty is
because Jesus was
against it.*

white people favor the death penalty and African-Americans oppose it.

I witnessed that division of opinion in a murder case I was trying in Macon County, Georgia. It was not a murder case where the death penalty was being sought. So, all the jurors were together. I said, "Everybody who opposes the death penalty, please rise." The black folks stood up. Maybe two or three out of a hundred didn't stand. I said, "Everybody who favors the death penalty stand up." All the white folks stood. That's exactly the way it was. Now, the U.S. Constitution says that a person is entitled to a trial by his peers. Have you ever heard that? Entitled to a trial by his or her peers.

In the McCleskey case, referred to earlier, the court wrote the following statement, "A sentencing jury must be composed of persons capable of expressing the conscience of the community on the ultimate questions of life or death." Now that's a very good statement. But, we are not getting people on the juries who are representative of the conscience of the community.

Consider this. If you are black, charged with murder and faced with the prospect of receiving a death sentence, who would you want on the jury? Somebody who looks like you, or a panel of white people? I think the answer is pretty obvious.

Let me tell you how the system works. The law of the land today is that if you absolutely oppose the death penalty, you cannot serve on a jury where the death penalty is being sought.

If you oppose the death penalty so that you will not impose it under any circumstances, you cannot sit on a jury. So here you are in a room with you, the judge, the defendant, the district attorney, two deputy sheriffs who are armed "to the teeth." You are a potential juror, scared to death. You're not sure you want to be there anyway. You're in there and everybody is grim-faced, and somebody's told you there is a murderer there, and you are sitting about six inches from him, and you're scared to death of him. You're scared to death of the judge. You're scared to death of the district attorney. And they start asking you about what you think about the death penalty. I tell you what black folks say. I have questioned scores of them in these murder cases. With rare exception, they say they oppose the death penalty. Why? "Cause I don't believe that



two wrongs make a right.” “You don’t believe in the death penalty at all? Why not?”

“Because God says, ‘Thou shall not kill.’” And then the district attorney who is there and trying to get the death penalty against this guy who is sitting there, the defendant, he begins to say to you. “You are a good Christian, aren’t you?”

“Yeah!”

“You go to church, don’t you?”

“Yeah!”

“You believe in the Bible, don’t you?”

“Yeah!”

“And you would never want to kill nobody, would you?”

“No sir, I don’t want to kill nobody.”

“You are a good Christian, you would never want to kill nobody.”

“No, sir, I would never want to kill nobody.”

And here I am the defense attorney. I know that unless I can convince that prospective juror that under some circumstances he would be willing to kill somebody in the electric chair, he can’t get on the jury! And you are thinking, “I thought this man was trying to save this man’s life and here he is trying to talk me into becoming a killer!” But unless I can get that prospective juror to eventually say that he would impose the death penalty under some extreme circumstance, he will be dismissed and cannot serve on the jury. So, I have to give him scenarios of horror.

“Now are you telling me if somebody catches a person and slowly chokes them to death and pulls their eyes out and takes a knife and carves their brain out, you still wouldn’t want to put them in the electric chair?” That’s the kind of stuff you have to do...AND finally the juror says “Yeah, I’d kill that old so and so! Put him in the electric chair!”

And then, if I can get him to say that, he can sit on the jury. But what happens is, that a lot of folks have so much integrity and they have so much love in their heart, they say “No, no matter what, I wouldn’t kill anybody. There is a better way. Two wrongs don’t make a right.” And if you can’t shake them and you can’t make them say that under some circumstances they would impose the death penalty, they cannot sit on this jury.

Now, what does that mean? Simply that a big chunk of the folks in the community who are peers, who are the neighbors of the man who is being tried, they are not on the jury! The only people on the jury are all those white folks who believe in the death penalty and a few black folks who you can convince to be for it. That is an evil system that removes from the jury all people who

I oppose the death penalty. Revenge belongs to God and not to individuals and not to the state. I am not comfortable being in the company of China, Iraq and Iran in the death penalty business. I am revulsed by the racial discrimination in administering the death penalty laws. I am appalled by the unfairness of who gets the death penalty, the poor and minorities, and the arbitrariness in determining who may live and who must die. And, I am convinced that the death penalty is not a deterrent to violence. Indeed, I believe that the death penalty causes more murders.

oppose the death penalty.

Studies show that those who support the death penalty are more likely to convict than people who oppose the death penalty. And, after conviction, the trial goes into the second phase. Murder cases, where the death penalty is sought, are bifurcated trials. The second phase of the trial determines whether a person lives or dies.

Even whites who have supported the death penalty, should be repulsed by the injustice of the system I have described above. The unfairness of the whole thing cries out to be remedied.

Here’s what Justice Brennan, who wrote the major dissent in the McCleskey case, had to say about the death penalty, “A mere three generations ago this court sanctioned racial segregation, stating that ‘if one race be inferior to the other socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane.’

“...We have sought to free ourselves from the burden of this history. Yet it has been scarcely a generation since this Court’s first decision striking down racial segregation, and barely two decades since the legislative prohibition of racial discrimination in major domains of national life. These have been honorable steps, but we cannot pretend that in three decades we have completely escaped the grip of an historical legacy spanning centuries. Warren McCleskey’s evidence confronts us with the subtle and persistent influence of the past. His message is a disturbing one to a society that has formally repudiated racism, and a frustrating one to a nation accustomed to regarding its destiny as the product of its own will. Nonetheless, we ignore him at our peril, for we remain imprisoned by the past as long as we deny its influence in the present.

“It is tempting to pretend that minorities on death row share a fate in no way connected to our own, that our treatment of them sounds no echoes beyond the chambers in which they die. Such an illusion is ultimately corrosive, for the reverberations of injustice are not so easily confined. ‘The destinies of the two races in this country are indissolubly linked together,’ and the way in which we choose those who will die reveals the depth of moral commitment among the living.”

The death penalty is a cancer on our society. It will continue to eat away at our souls until we send it to the junk heap of history.

But how will we do that? How do we send the death penalty to the junk heap of history? First of all, we need to read up on the subject. We need to educate ourselves. We need to understand really what is going on. We need to realize that in the death penal-

ty we are attacking the result and not the cause of the problem. Psychologist Dane Archer believes that human violence is a product of social forces rather than the result of biological drive. And he cites some compelling evidence. For example, he did a study comparing violence rates in this country and other countries and found that in New Zealand, which is an industrialized nation very much like our own, multi-racial although not the same composition that we have, violence and murder are minuscule.

Why is it that our society is so violent and a society like New Zealand so peaceful and people don't kill each other? He says that it is social forces. Archer is a world authority on homicide and he has earned that distinction by completing, with a colleague, a ten-year international study of criminal violence. The study has established Archer as a premier cross-national psychologist, one whose work is done entirely outside the traditional laboratory of experimental psychology.

Archer's study, *Violence and Crime in Cross-National Perspective*, was published as a book by Yale University Press. The study which has won four major awards in psychology and sociology, explores such illusive or critical social questions as, "Does the death penalty deter potential killers? Does violence increase in a nation that has just concluded a war? Do large cities have higher homicide rates than small cities in the same nation?" Drawing off statistics from 110 nations and 44 of their most cosmopolitan cities, Archer provides the following answers. No, the death penalty does not deter homicidal criminals. Yes, violence does increase in a nation that has just finished a war. And, yes, large cities do have higher homicide rates than small cities in the same nation. To explain most of his seemingly unrelated findings, Archer proposed a single hypothesis. When a nation does violence to human beings by conducting wars or executing criminals, it incites its citizens to more criminal violence than they would otherwise commit. Some people might reason, for example, that if the president was commanding the military to kill enemy soldiers and if judges were ordering prison authorities to execute convicted murderers, why shouldn't the private citizen follow suit and use deadly force on personal enemies? In other

words, in Archer's hypothesis, the state can make violence the "coin of its realm."

For all of the above reasons, I oppose the death penalty. Revenge belongs to God and not to individuals and not to the state. I am not comfortable being in the company of China, Iraq and Iran in the death penalty business. I am revulsed by the racial discrimination in administering the death penalty laws. I am appalled by the unfairness of who gets the death penalty, the poor and minorities, and the arbitrariness in determining who may live and who must die. And, I am convinced that the death penalty is not a deterrent to violence. Indeed, I believe that the death penalty causes more murders.

But, for me as a Christian, the final and most compelling reason to oppose the death penalty is because Jesus was against it. Once a woman was caught in adultery. A crowd was about to carry out the death sentence by stoning her. Jesus appeared. He stooped down and wrote in the sand. He then stood and said that the person without sin could throw the first stone. They all walked away. What about you? Are you without sin? Maybe you haven't committed adultery. You haven't killed anybody. But have you never sinned? By what authority are you casting stones to kill all these people on death row?

At the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, he was given a death sentence. The method of state execution in his day was death on a cross. As he hung there, he looked down on his executioners and said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing."

Do you know what you are doing in supporting the death penalty today? Are you witnessing faithfully for Christ in calling for revenge? Are you witnessing to God's love in remaining silent while others throw the stones, pull the switches, and stick in the needles to kill those who, in spite of their faults, are still made in the image of God?

I urge you to study prayerfully this explosive and powerfully relevant issue in our country. Ask what Jesus would do. Then, you do likewise. ■



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.

TRUSTEES

Patricia Ayres
John Leland Berg
Randy Fields
Leonard Holloway
W. David Sapp
Donald E. Schmeltekopf
Foy Valentine

SUPPORT

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.

The Center for Christian Ethics
CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY
Post Office Box 670784
Dallas, Texas, 75367-0784

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
DALLAS, TX
PERMIT NO. 3648