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On Being Seventy Five

By Foy Valentine

“Whatsoever things are...lovely...think on these things”

Philippians 4:8

Today I am seventy five. Exactly half way between the Bible’s vaunted “three score years and ten” and the “four score” years which “by reason of strength” get meted out to a few.

It is a milestone calculated to invoke mellowness, if a body could only keep from nodding off.

Old Omar Khayyam hit the nail on the head: “The Bird of Time has but a little way to flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.” I have to tell you, I can feel it in my bones. Somewhat. Yes.

The wise old man of Ecclesiastes had himself been there and done that. Else he could hardly have understood the situation well enough to chronicle so insightfully the vivid realities of these yellow leaf years.

Years when, as he says, “the sun grows dark, and the light goes from moon and stars.” (Cataracts? Glaucoma? One garrulous eye specialist who headed his department at the University Medical School where I had gone to get the very best analysis available, chattering to a half dozen eager young medical interns standing by as he peered into the inner recesses of my poor eyeballs through grossly dilated pupils gave this casual diagnosis: “Senile macular degeneration. Yuck.” Hardly a bedside manner likely to guarantee those young whelps an early retirement from the practice of medicine as caring eye specialists.)

Years when “ladies at the lattice lose their lustre.” (Must we wallow in specificity? Could the media drag out the details for months or years?)

Years when “the sound of the mill runs low, when the twitter of birds is faint.” (For me the loss of hearing has crept up on padded cat’s feet so that everybody mumbles, nobody enunciates, and I couldn’t understand one single word of what our granddaughter just said.)

Years “when old age fears a height.” (Old bones heal slowly, so be careful out there and don’t fall.)

Years when “even a walk has its terrors.” (Dragons and demons may be lurking and who knows what bankruptcies or black holes might engulf you?)

Years when the “hair is almond white, and he drags his limbs along as the spirit flags and fades.” (Arthritis? Ministrokes? Alzheimer’s?)

Until in due time we go to our “long, long home and mourners pass along the street, on the day when the silver cord is snapped and the golden lamp drops broken” (Ecclesiastes 12:1-8 Moffatt.) [Do read this whole fantastic passage in James Moffatt’s hauntingly beautiful translation.]

I mention these matters not to wallow in morbidity or because I relish this cataloguing of the infirmities of old age. On the contrary, I came here to celebrate.

Here goes.

I’m here. Lots of folks I’ve known aren’t.

I’m alive. Lots of old friends aren’t.

I’m still happily married to Mary Louise to whom after 51 years I still sign all correspondence, notes, cards, complaints, and kudos, no matter how trivial or inconsequential, with Greek words which freely translated mean, “My life, I love you,” and with whom we have together been blessed with three wonderful daughters, fine sons-in-law, and splendid grandchildren not a few.

I remember good parents and a good home. Many are not so fortunate to have such good remembers.

I remember good teachers. How blessed I was, and how blessed I am to this good day because of them.

I remember church. Some good and some not so good. But for me, far more good than bad.

And I remember friends. Without them life would have been thin and poor. And without them life today would be immeasurably thinner, infinitely poorer.

A fine passage in Anton Chekov’s *The Cherry Orchard* catches Yermolay Alexeyevitch, a new-rich business man who has just come from the auction in the city where he has bought for 90 thousand rubles the ancestral home of the bankrupt aristocrat, Madame Lyubov Andreyevna:

The cherry orchard’s mine!...If my father and grandfather could rise from their graves and see all that has happened! How their Yermolay, ignorant, beaten Yermolay, who used to run about barefoot in winter how that Yermolay has bought the finest estate in the world. I have bought the estate where my father and grandfather were slaves, where they were not even admitted into the kitchen....Music! Play up!

So, today, as the happy owner of memories more precious by far than “the finest estate in the world,” I have invited you in, where the music is, to join me in remembering, in celebrating, and in giving thanks to God for his immeasurable grace.

Many happy returns of the day. ■

Editor: Foy Valentine

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The Secret Life of the Perfect Suburb

By William E. Hull

[Dr. William E. Hull preached this message as a Father's Day sermon at the Mountain Brook Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama on June 21, 1998. His quotations and the basic thrust of his main illustration came from the book *Our Guys: The Glen Ridge Rape and the Secret Life of the Perfect Suburb* by Bernard Lefkowitz in the Men and Masculinity Series. Berkley, University California Press, 1992, 1997, 516 pages. A paperback edition was published in 1998 from which citations in this sermon were taken. Dr. Hull is University Professor at Samford University in Birmingham.]

Glen Ridge is a tranquil town in Essex County, New Jersey, a squeaky-clean, manicured community of 7,800 citizens, the antithesis of gritty Newark only five miles away. Its central values of propriety, orderliness, discretion, and continuity are enshrined in its faithfully attended churches, tree-shaded streets, spacious parks, and commodious homes. Its 666 gas lamps cast a warm glow over what one editorial writer called a "second edition of the Garden of Eden". Above all, Glen Ridge reflects a culture of achievement, a place where winners are "assertive but not belligerent, self-confident but not boastful, and determined but not driven". In short, it is a little slice of the American dream just like Mountain Brook, Alabama.

But on March 1, 1989, something happened that would shatter forever the carefully guarded tranquillity of this bucolic borough. It was the kind of thing that could happen at any time in Glen Ridge. Indeed, it was typical of the way in which the quintessential lifestyle of this privileged community exploited the tension between power and vulnerability. But this time, to everyone's surprise, the secret was exposed for all to see. Eventually, the deepest values of this very private and protective neighborhood were caught in the relentless glare of national

media attention throughout a prolonged criminal trial at which "Glen Ridge's test of character became America's test of character". The award-winning author, Bernard Lefkowitz, spent seven years plumbing the depths of this undiagnosed disease. Let us use his brilliant work, *Our Guys*, as a case study of the moral malignancy of our time.

I.

(1) *The Guys*. The pride of the local citizenry were the stalwart young athletes who did battle for the glory of Glen Ridge on the football gridiron, baseball diamond, and wrestling mat. At the apex of the social pyramid that defined the youth culture, these princes of the playing field acted without challenge as if they owned the high school. They "were the sons of lawyers, investment bankers, accountants, teachers — people who formed the backbone of the town", people who "didn't just show up on Sunday; they sang in the church choir, were vestrymen. They defined Glen Ridge, they made it what it was". The faith of these families was infused with a strong sense of optimism; it was but one more way to be a winner. School reinforced the primacy of athletics as a route to success. At Glen Ridge High, on the wall across from the principal's office were glass cases displaying shelf after shelf of sports trophies, but nowhere visible was the student honor roll. The yearbook devoted twenty-three pages to athletics while the valedictorian, voted most likely to succeed, got only one small photograph on the same page as his headshot.

But even from innocent childhood, and accelerating into adolescence, this tight little clique began to cast a troubling shadow. At first it was just an arrogant swagger called the "Jock Strut", then a pattern of loud and defiant misbehavior tolerated by teachers who would have instantly punished such raucous conduct had it come from girls. But later it began to take a



more sinister form: taunting and bullying anyone who challenged their supremacy, hitting a kid again and again when he was down. It featured open contempt of female students and teachers, snapping a girl's bra strap or pinning her against a locker door, even exposing themselves in class and making obscene gestures behind a teacher's back. To "the hunks," everyone outside their circle was viewed with disdain as "nerds" or "geeks," party "giggers" or ethnic "guidos." Because of its athletic aristocracy, life at Glen Ridge High was defined as an unremitting power struggle in which there were only winners and losers.

(2) *The Girl*. In this combustible mix of arrogance and dominance lived a very vulnerable young woman to whom we shall give the pseudonym of Leslie Faber. Adopted in infancy by devoted parents despite a known disability, Leslie grew into awkward adolescence with an IQ of 49 that placed her in the bottom one percent of the U. S. population, able to function only at the second-grade level of an eight year old. The school bureaucracy shuffled her from one special education program to another based on classifying her first as "neurologically impaired" and then as "mentally retarded". The jocks had their own cruel classifications when endlessly ridiculing her clumsy efforts to play games: "Leslie is a retard! Leslie is a dummy!". They began to call her by such nicknames as "Hey, Brain-Les! Hey, Head-Les!"

Pathetically lonely, craving even a crumb of attention from the gatekeepers of a social clique that excluded her, Leslie would do anything to earn acceptance from those whom she yearned to call her friends. As she grew past puberty, gradually the realization began to dawn that her emerging sexuality might be a "means of pleasing others". The jocks, who by now had made pornography and voyeurism a daily obsession, quickly learned that Les would let you get away with anything "if you said you really liked her and would be her friend". Soon her oversized body became a casual object of curiosity to those interested only in degrading her with obscene proposals. Her frantic parents, faced with a choice between keeping her locked in the house or letting her wander about this "Garden of Eden" full of juvenile serpents, knew nothing better to do than begin giving her birth control pills.

(3) *The Basement*. Finally all of the lurid propositions, the panting phone calls, the experiments with frozen hot dogs reached an inevitable climax on the first day of March in 1989. While Leslie was playing alone in a public park, the gang invited her to the basement of a nearby home where some of the best parties in town were often held. When at first she hesitated, they promised her a date with her favorite football hero and so she naively complied. Once there with thirteen of Glen Ridge's "finest," they disrobed her, insisted that she engage in auto-eroticism and oral sex, and then penetrated the most intimate recesses of her body, first with a bright red broom handle, then with a regulation size baseball bat, and finally with a musical drumstick that she had picked up on the playground. As the proceedings became more degrading, six of the boys left without any effort to stop the seven who remained to the end. On the next day, two of the Jocks propositioned Leslie to return for an encore that could be captured on film, but this time, in pain and confusion, she reluctantly declined.

Obviously, many shocking details emerged in the twenty-one week trial that would offend our deepest sensibilities if recounted here. But let not this recital of the "bare facts" obscure what happened in the basement on that fateful afternoon. At the moral level, this was a totally exploitive act which left a vulnerable young woman both physically abused and emotionally battered. As the policewoman trained in rape intervention who was assigned to the case concluded, long before any criminal guilt was assessed, "what these celebrated young men of Glen Ridge had done was ugly. It was barbaric. It was inhuman. It made [her] sick. How could they do that to another human being?". The central mystery of all was why.

"Why did such a thing happen? Why in this peaceful little town of all places? Why *these* young men, the most pampered and favored boys in a town filled with pampered kids?". "What went wrong in the perfect suburb?"

II.

After five hundred pages of probing analysis, Lefkowitz brings the reader to one inescapable conclusion: The cause was in the culture. We tend to think of evil in terms of personal decision, but none of the Glen Ridge Seven, either individually or collectively, plotted to molest Leslie Faber. Rather, it was just "something to do" that was consistent with the way they thought and acted every day of their lives. It never occurred to any of them as they walked down those basement stairs that they were about to commit a felony, or violate a moral code, or cross the line that defines human decency. To be arrested, tried, and convicted took them totally by surprise because their outrageous conduct was part and parcel of a lifestyle that had been tolerated, if not tacitly approved, by their parents, school officials, town leaders, and youthful peers for as long as they could remember. What they did was but the natural expression of what it meant to be a jock in Glen Ridge.

To put it as simply as possible, they acted out of a culture of consent shaped by the core values of the community. It was this culture, as pervasive as the air they breathed, which defined for them at an instinctive level what was permissible. They inflicted their cruel fantasies on Leslie Faber for an hour, without so much as a second thought, precisely because of what they had gotten away with for a decade.

They were the children of a culture that did not have embedded in its foundations those norms that would have made such reprehensible acts unthinkable. To understand the anatomy of that culture, a culture that Glen Ridge fought to protect to the bitter end, is to understand the pathology of the evil which it spawned. Since culture is nothing less than a collective way of life, it has many component assumptions and attitudes. Here we identify only three for closer examination.

(1) *The Worship of Success*. As already hinted, Glen Ridge aggressively fostered a culture of achievement. Its men were business and professional leaders, their wives were civic and social leaders. Which meant that their children must become leaders too. The only way to do this before assuming adult responsibilities was in the youthful games that they played, beginning with Bandbox softball at age six. As they grew older

the games became more ferocious, climaxing with high school football, the supreme training ground for learning to become a winner. The virtues most highly prized were those of competitiveness, assertiveness, and brute strength. The name of the game was winning, which meant conquest and control. And the way to win was through a team effort that increasingly sealed the gladiators in a hermetic all-male world. There was little or no time for serious study, for adult conversation, or for kids with other priorities. They belonged only to the brotherhood that wore a uniform, that had its own secret codes and inside jokes.

Parents contented themselves that these activities were organized and supervised. "Their kids were playing by the rules, the game rules and the social rules. No waywardness, no improvisation, no accidental friendships with out-of-town kids. And no frivolity. This was serious recreation" and, as such, was the only thing that they took seriously. But with the passion to win came an undisguised contempt for losers or those who chose to play other games. Because girls lacked the strength for contact sport, they were relegated to the sidelines where they fulfilled the decorative role of cheering their heroes on. Eggheads who wanted to match their minds with ideas were scorned as book-worms. Ethnic minorities had no place in this WASP culture unless they could offer their heft as uncomplaining linemen. But most vulnerable of all were the handicapped, like Leslie Faber, whose disabilities excluded them from ever achieving any measure of success as Glen Ridge defined it. They were useful only to be taunted, embarrassed, and humiliated as if, in some perverse way, this ignominy would confirm the reigning view of what it meant to be a winner.

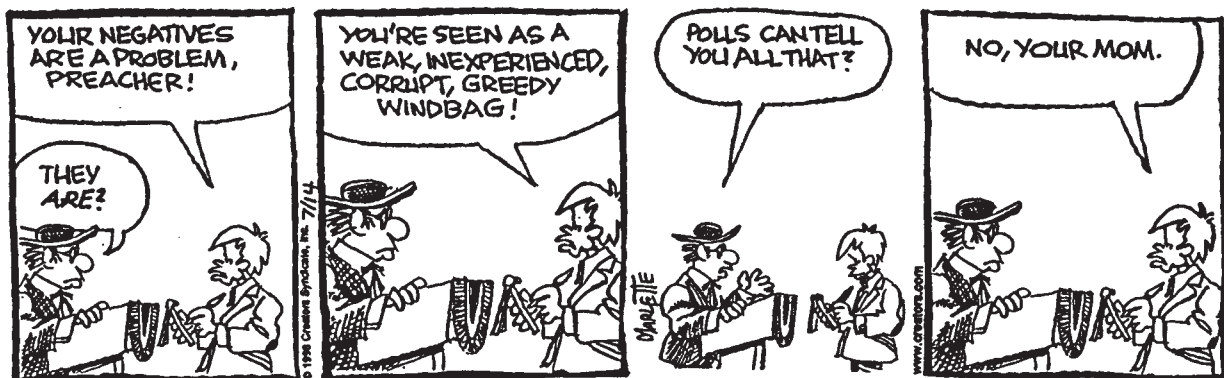
(2) *The Strategy of Silence.* The adults knew, of course, that unrestrained macho had its downside, as they put it that "boys will be boys." But they treated this recognition as a dark secret to be shrouded in silence because to do otherwise would be to admit failure—and failure had no place in their culture of achievement. Once embarked upon this course, they clung to the strategy of silence even as evil began to escalate. Because the town folk could not bring themselves to talk about their problems, they were unable to face them, much less to do anything about them. In silence they could not inform each other, or learn from each other, or encourage each other, or—heaven forbid—admonish each other. Their collective conspiracy of silence created the perfect moral vacuum in which the ugly

malignancy was free to metastasize.

By the time the Jocks were seniors, they had compiled an impressive record of outrageous behavior. Every social event included compulsive binge drinking, but the drug prevention counselor at the high school lamented, "Parental resistance is my main problem; parents just don't want to hear about alcohol and drugs". Girls were being treated in a callous and domineering way that featured spectator sex for the enjoyment of the gang. Violence erupted especially at parties in the homes of students whose parents were away. Once an entire three-floor residence was trashed for no reason at all, but neither the perpetrators nor their parents ever said they were sorry, or offered to clean up the mess, or helped to pay for the damage. The student who was victimized never came back to Glen Ridge High, her family moved away, and the Jocks listed in the yearbook under "personal highlights" their participation in "Ryan's Wreck" as a memorable event of the high school years. Those on the cutting edge of raising hell simply gained a greater degree of legitimacy and authority for their vicious exploits because no one spoke up to say loud and clear, "This is wrong!"

(3) *The Curse of Consequences.* Most alarming of all was the unwillingness of the culture to reach a verdict, to pass judgment on anything, to admit that attitudes and acts have consequences. This refusal to practice moral discernment began by clothing evil in euphemisms. When Glen Ridge was forced by the media to face what their guys had done, the best they could manage was to call it a "tragedy," a carefully neutral word that made brutal rape in the basement sound almost like an act of God. In discussing the "incident" they absolved the boys of moral responsibility by substituting temperament for character, i.e. they were just being "hyper" and "upbeat". They wanted the demonic to wear a psychological mask which made sheer depravity merely a matter of developmental "growing pains".

The upshot of this evasiveness was the abdication of moral decision-making. When the school wanted to hire a crisis intervention counselor, parents changed the title to School Assistance Counselor, gutted the job description, and soon eliminated the position. When the principal tried to impose tougher discipline, all hell broke loose among parents who said that keeping someone after school for misbehaving was a "Gestapo method". The tougher discipline policy was dropped the next year and shortly thereafter the principal resigned. When the school offered special



programs for the most malicious of the malcontents, parents responded in rage, "You're after my kid". On the all-important matter of athletic eligibility, only grades were allowed to count, not conduct. No one was ever disqualified because of behavior, however flagrant. Even when team captains were selected, no one questioned "whether they had the ethics, the values, the *character*" to hold a leadership position.

III.

We have now seen how early warning signals were going off loud and clear in a culture that was tone deaf. For all of its business prowess and social sophistication, Glen Ridge had not a clue as to how evil actually works to wreak havoc. The "leading citizens" actually believed that if you try hard enough to succeed, and simply ignore all evidence to the contrary, things are bound to turn out all right in the end. Suffice it to say that such a pathetic theology belongs in the hell that it visited on those who adopted it as their creed! Which raises in acute form the question of what we as parents can do to combat the degradation that is corrupting the morals of our youth. Based on the diagnosis of the sickness, I have three prescriptions to offer.

(1) *Create a New Hierarchy of Values.* It is now abundantly clear that assigning the highest value to winning leads to relationships of dominance and submission, of coercion and exploitation, of victor and victim. If unchallenged, which challenge winners seldom permit, this mindset leads to the absurd notion that the more one achieves in terms of affluence, power, and reputation, the more one is exempt from the seductions of sin. Over and over again the parents of Glen Ridge sought to solve the problems of their delinquent kids by making "restitution," i.e. paying for the damage, as if money could somehow cure a moral cancer. No progress is possible unless we can somehow get it through our thick spiritual skulls that money does not inoculate against evil! Granted our propensity to pride and exaggerated self-confidence, we are never in greater danger of corruption than when basking in the spotlight of success.

The only defense is to construct a new hierarchy of values, one with love rather than power at its pinnacle, one that emphasizes respect for human dignity, fairness in human relations, and decency in human conduct. Central to this constellation of virtues is compassion, a costly caring for the less fortunate who may lack our generous endowments. There is no moral principle more central to Biblical teaching than the protection of the vulnerable, whether they be widows or orphans, the lame or the blind, the elderly or the handicapped, the stranger or the despised minority. The measure of our morality is not in how we treat the strong but in how we treat the weak. We must face squarely the fact that Jesus radically reversed the "winner-take-all" approach to life in his teaching on becoming "servant-of-all" (Mark 10:42-44).

(2) *Model Values by Behavior.* Children and youth are not instructed or persuaded very effectively by ethical abstractions. They need to see morality in concrete behavior in order to grasp its claim on their lives. That is why they like games so much. The contest is acted out on the playing field with the results vis-

ible on the scoreboard for all to see. The rules are not buried in a book but are as tangible as the whistle in the referee's mouth. Just so, the high calling of parents is to act out in unmistakable terms the values which they would inculcate in their children. Words are also important, especially in stories that describe desirable character traits, but words are best used to interpret and commend conduct which the child has already seen in action. In one sense, family life should be viewed as an arena where morality games are played in contest with the alternatives so seductively marketed by a secular culture.

This modeling of a servant morality for our children is not a matter of contrived behavior which we must create. Rather, the opportunity is there every time the yard man comes to the back door for a drink of water, every time an elderly person holds up the cafeteria line with her shuffling gait, every time a child forgets his piece at the piano recital, every time an epileptic drools at the corner of the mouth, every time a high school dropout murders the King's English. Believe me, kids know the difference, when they see it, between condescension and contempt on the one hand and sensitivity and compassion on the other. The terrifying truth is that, to a large extent, they will grow up to do what they have seen us do. Are you going to teach them by your example that winners can do no wrong and losers can do no good, or are you going to teach them how to help every person reach their God-given potential by showing a generous measure of patience, encouragement, and respect for winners and losers alike?

(3) *Build a Culture of Integrity.* Despite the enormous importance of parental example, our children are also profoundly influenced by their peers, therefore we must also work to shape a youth culture congenial to these values. Admittedly it is hard to break the silence and talk face-to-face with other parents about what is really going on in the community, about what behavior is permissible and what behavior is prohibited, about what movies and television programs may be watched, about what punishment is appropriate for various infractions and how it should be consistently administered. It is hard to hammer out an acceptable code of conduct based on a broad consensus of home, school, and church. It is hard to roll back the excesses of an entire generation that have landed us in our present chaos. It is perhaps hardest of all to restrict alcohol when parents drink, to restrict sex when parents are having an affair, and to exalt home life when parents are never at home.

But my deepest conviction is that, hard as it is for parents to function as responsible moral agents, it is even harder to ignore the problem in the vain hope that it will go away. So I call you beyond the conspiracy of silence to become evangelists for a culture of integrity, to shape a total setting in which the soul of your child can grow a moral backbone. Listen, parents, it is never rude, never awkward, never inappropriate to face reality and act responsibly when your kids are being relentlessly pressured to go straight to hell. Most, if not all, of you may reply that things are not that bad in your home, which I hope to God is the case. But I plead with you: Don't wait until something happens in the basement before you begin to practice responsible parenting! ■

A Measure of Faith: George Gallup, Jr.

By Diane Winston

[Diane Winston is a free lance writer and serves as a fellow at the Center for the Study of American Religion at Princeton University. My own acquaintance with and appreciation for George Gallup, Jr. tracks closely with that of the author of this piece which she originally wrote for the *Dallas Morning News*.]

When George Gallup, Jr. joined the family polling firm, the church lost a prospective priest but the world gained a Spirit-filled layman. Mr. Gallup, who is chairman of the George H. Gallup International Institute and executive director of the Princeton Religion Research Center, chose a secular path for a religious call. But he can twirl a rubber band as deftly as a Catholic prays the rosary.

"I was drawn to the church and thought about being an Episcopal priest," said Mr. Gallup, whose deep bass voice would have rung appealingly from any pulpit. "But I decided Dad's field offered an opportunity to find truth, to see how people respond to God and to explore their religious lives. When I started surveying in the early 1950s, this was virgin territory."

That the once-virgin territory is now well-explored is due, in no small part, to Mr. Gallup's zeal. Over the years, Gallup polls have measured belief in God, angels, miracles, born-again experiences, biblical inerrancy, and heaven and hell. Among his recent projects is a survey on gratitude commissioned by Thanks-Giving Square in Dallas.

Recently, Mr. Gallup discussed his findings during the institution's annual celebration of the National Day of Prayer.

"George Gallup was the logical person to talk to when we first conceived our interest in the healing power of prayer," said Peter Stewart, chairman of Thanksgiving Foundation. "He has an amazing way of looking at subjective and intangible things

through the polling method, and he himself is certainly a man who understands the power of gratitude and thanksgiving."

Mr. Gallup would not divulge the survey's findings before his speech, but he did say respondents were asked what motivated their gratitude and how they expressed it. He also revealed that the survey focused on teenagers, an age group that Mr. Gallup has tracked for more than 20 years.

Mr. Gallup's interest in young people may spring from his own youthful conversion. At the tender age of 9, he felt the power of God's presence and began contemplating a religious vocation. Later, as a student at Princeton University, he majored in religion and wrote his senior thesis about a survey, aided by family connections, of the reasons people believe in God.

"That was in 1953," recalled Mr. Gallup, whose office walls, decorated with election memorabilia dating back to George Washington, reflect his interest in the past. "The study was one of the first attempts to poke around that area."

At the same time, Mr. Gallup was poking around a religious vocation. He traveled to Galveston to work with a summer Bible school and an interracial youth program. Based at an African-American Episcopal church, the Christian collegian did his part to end segregation. But, despite his sympathy for the cause and dedication to the church, Mr. Gallup decided to serve God in a different way.

"The most important purpose of polls is to explore people's response to God and indicate ways to strengthen that response," he told *The Business Journal* of New Jersey. "That is a form of ministry."

Working for his father, George Jr. explored this form of ministry at the Gallup Organization, a for-profit firm that conducts wide-ranging surveys and market research. Ten years ago, the Gallup family sold the business to Selection Research Institute



of Lincoln, Neb. Mr. Gallup now divides his time between the George H. Gallup International Institute, named for Gallup senior, a public charity that seeks new approaches to social problems in education, environment, health, religion and human values, and the Princeton Religion Research Center, which publishes books and newsletters on religious trends.

At 67, Mr. Gallup remains hale and handsome. Tanned skin, clear blue eyes and punctilious manners attest to years spent as a member of one of Princeton's first families. Likewise, a long-standing love for soccer and Gilbert and Sullivan bespeak Mr. Gallup's engagement with the more secular side of life.

Then there is The Car.

Tweaked about his spiritual enthusiasms, Mr. Gallup admits a profane passion for a 1923 red-and-black Packard. He bought the car for \$450 in the mid-1950's and has spent the intervening years restoring it to pristine condition. When the weather turns balmy, Mr. Gallup can be glimpsed driving his prized possession along the backroads of his family farm.

"He's one of a kind," said the Rev. Nicholas Van Dyck, another Princeton resident and president of Religion and American Life, an interfaith organization that serves and strengthens religious communities. "He is probably the kindest man I know. He and his family have always used survey data to improve human life and serve the common good."

In turn, organizations such as Mr. Van Dyck's have made good use of the poll numbers.

"He is probably the kindest man I know.

He and his family have always used survey data to improve human life and serve the common good."

"Since Gallup has tracked indices in the United States since 1939, it provides a uniquely valuable research tool because of the longevity of the data," he said. "It's a good thing."

In the midst of all this goodness and service, Mr. Gallup is keenly aware of his flaws. To stay honest and in touch with his "brokenness," he participates in small groups for prayer and fellowship. He also "practices the presence of God."

"If you believe God is here at any point, then God is here all the time," said Mr. Gallup, who notes God's presence by praying throughout the day. "The pieces fit together when you try to submit your life to God."

While many Americans would voice similar sentiments, Mr. Gallup's polls suggest that few really know what they believe, much less how to put it into practice.

"People's faith is broad but not deep," he said. "There's a lack of charity, and spiritual disciplines—such as fasting, prayer, and meditation—have been ignored. The one good sign is the growth of the small-group movement. That's where people can find a place to be vulnerable and honest."

Mr. Gallup hopes to build the Gallup Institute and the Princeton Center into institutions that address social problems with spiritual, practical solutions.

And for that he is grateful.

"I'm grateful for a life with the sense of God's presence," he said. "I'm grateful as a Christian that Christ is my savior. I'm grateful for my wife and children. I'm grateful for a chance to serve through my life and work." ■

The Banker Who Heard Voices

By Hal Haralson

Shirley Humphries is a banker. She has been a friend and client for nearly 20 years.

Like most bankers, Shirley has a “no nonsense” attitude when it comes to money.

Shirley is a very deeply committed Christian.

On this particular day, she wasn't in a very “holy” position. Her hands were in the soapy dishwater of the kitchen sink.

She looked out the window and saw Carroll, her husband, gripping the handles of the tiller as he prepared the soil for the spring garden.

“I heard a voice,” Shirley told me later.

“I'm not given to this kind of thing, but it was very clear to me.”

God spoke, she told me, “Take care of my disciple, Davis.”

Davis is her preacher brother who had just lost his church and was in desperate straits with four kids. They were living with her parents.

She went outside and told Carroll what had happened.

She could tell he was somewhat skeptical. He assured her, however, that whatever God and she could agree on, he sure wasn't going to get in the way. That was all she needed. She went to the drawer where their last three tithe envelopes were.

They were about to join another church so she wrote the checks for the right amount but didn't complete the “Pay to” parts, waiting for the decision about which church they would join.

Then she opened another envelope and put the total amount of the money in it and laid it on the table, \$871.23.

Then she called her brother, Davis. He was grateful. “You know this is not tax deductible,” he said. “It's not like you are giving it to the church.”

“I know what I'm doing, Davis. The money will be in tomorrow's mail.”

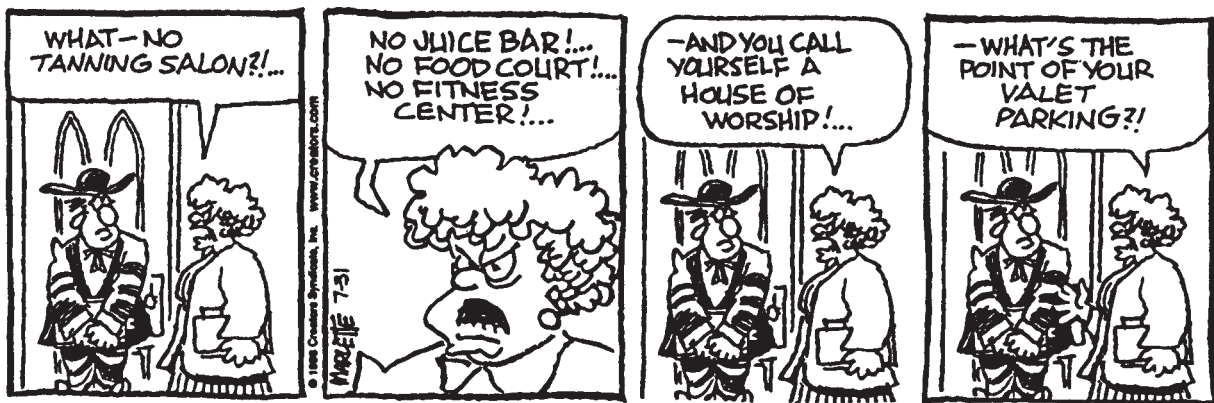
She felt good about what she had done. “I knew God had spoken to me,” she told me later. “I had obeyed.”

Carroll and she discussed it at the dinner table. He didn't say much but she felt okay. He was with her in this.

Three days later, she reported to me, there was a letter in the mail from the Title Company. They had sold their house two months before.

“Dear Mr. and Mrs. Humphries. When we did the closing on your house, we made a mistake. Please accept our apologies. A check for the amount we owe you is enclosed.” The check was for \$871.23.

A direct wire transfer? ■



525,600 Minutes

By Roger Lovette

[Dr. Roger Lovett is pastor of the Baptist Church of the Covenant in Birmingham, Alabama.]

One of the great surprises of the Broadway theater is the current musical, "Rent." The play started on a dirty side street in New York City. They call it Off-Off Broadway, which means the musical had little chance of making it to the big time. But then something happened that nobody predicted. The musical just exploded. People started packing the house every night. When the awards were given, "Rent" came away a winner. Even after two years it is still hard to get a ticket to this play.

Something about "Rent" touched a nerve and spoke to the heart. It could be that the intensity of the young author spilled over into his work. He was very sick as he wrote the play and died just before opening night. The centerpiece of the musical is a song that comes in the second act called "Season of Love." Critics say this song may be one of the reasons that "Rent" continues to fill the theater night after night.

Five hundred twenty-five thousand
Six hundred minutes.
Five hundred twenty-five thousand
Moments so dear.
Five hundred twenty-five thousand
Six hundred minutes,
How do we measure a year?

In daylights—in sunsets,
In midnights—in cups of coffee,
In inches—in miles,
In laughter—in strife.

In five hundred twenty-five thousand
Six hundred minutes.
How do we measure

A year in the life?
How about love?
How about love?
How about love?
Measure in love.

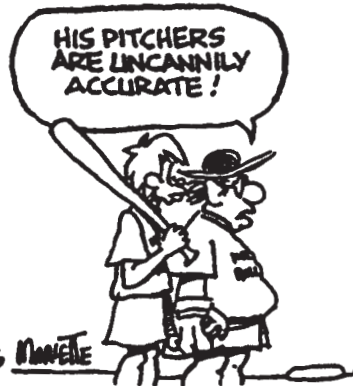
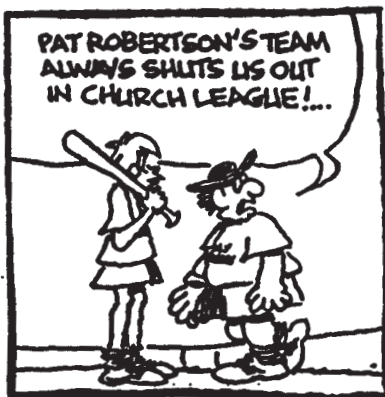
Seasons of love.
Seasons of love.
Five hundred twenty-five thousand
Six hundred minutes
Five hundred twenty-five thousand
Journeys to plan.

Five hundred twenty-five thousand
Six hundred minutes.
How do we measure the life
Of a Woman or a Man?

In truths that she learned
Or in times that he cried,
In bridges he burned
Or the way that she died.

It's time now—to sing out
Tho' the story never ends.
Let's celebrate
Remember a year in the life of friends.

Remember the love.
Remember the love.
Remember the love.
Measure the love.



Measure, measure your life in love.
Seasons of love.
Seasons of love.

Paul understood these feelings when he wrote to the church at Ephesus. From a jail cell, anticipating his own death, he too wrote with a great intensity.

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father (Ephesians 5:15-20 RSV).

His audience met in a little house church surrounded by a pagan culture. And Paul's impassioned yearning for his friends speaks to a universal question. Is it possible to live a meaningful life in a world like this? He knew that many things chipped away at their souls and assaulted their values day after day. His response was to say that they could take the minutes of their lives and make them count.

If we turn from the Bible to today's newspaper it is amazing how current Paul's concerns still are. Like Ephesus long ago we are part of a culture that incessantly assaults our values. The old seven deadly sins of the Middle Ages still rear their ugly heads. After all these years we still do battle with pride, envy, anger, lust, gluttony, greed, and sloth. Stephen Carter, Professor of Law at Yale University, calls one of our basic problems a lack of integrity. He says we live in an age where winning is more important than playing by the rules of the game. He footnotes his case with a multitude of stories. A beauty queen is stripped of her title when it is learned that the educational credentials on her resume were fabricated. A respected national TV network is forced to apologize for doctoring a TV clip to make a truck seem less safe than it is. Respectable authors of a book on management are accused of bulk purchases at key bookstores to get their book on the Best Seller list. He talks about Republican and Democrat politicians who are guilty of taking under-the-table money for elections. Mr. Carter wonders what has happened to integrity in our time. (Stephen L. Carter, *Integrity* [New York: Basic Books, 1996] p. 4.)

Paul also struggled with the integrity issue. His advice on how to live honestly in a difficult time is found at the end of his letter to the Ephesians. How can we use the minutes and hours that stretch out before us? How can we walk without stum-

bling? The Apostle gives his friends, and us, five solid words of advice.

Paul begins with *wisdom*. He reached back into his Jewish heritage and reclaimed an old word. He told his friends to live not as unwise persons but as wise. The Ephesians knew a lot about wisdom. Athens and Alexandria were the centers of wisdom in their time. They knew that wisdom meant knowledge and facts and intelligence. But not all the things that march under the banner of wisdom deserve to be there.

If he were writing to us I think he would say that wisdom is not scanning the Internet. He could not have had in mind the multitude of how-to books that we keep buying. He certainly did not mean that wisdom is synonymous with yet another diploma or degree.

Paul's understanding of wisdom was not intellectual achievement. He was talking about one's attitude toward life. How one looked at the world. Real wisdom is looking through the lenses as a child of God and seeing our brothers and sisters everywhere and knowing that we are here to make a contribution and give something back. Real wisdom is standing firm and not letting the world shape our values. Maybe this is one of the reasons that the play, "Rent," has touched a nerve in our time. Maybe the dying young author had come to understand the meaning of real wisdom. It is making sense of our lives and the times in which we live.

Paul follows his words about wisdom with a second word about *time*. He talks about using well whatever minutes we have. The King James Version cautions us to redeem the time, which means to use carefully the time we have been given. Our lives are everlastingly besieged by a vast array of choices. The great test for all of us is that we pick and choose among all the options, taking care with us things that matter and not things

shabby and inconsequential.

Frederick Beuchner has said that every day we live is like a birthday present waiting to be opened. We are to use wisely what we have been given. Open the package ever so slowly. Take from the box each brand new day with its challenges and opportunities. This present of a day will never come again. No wonder the Apostle writes to his friends, be careful how you use your time.

Paul then uses the word *understanding*. He encourages us to understand the will of God. He pleads for discernment. This age of ours knows little of discernment. We are much like the window-shopper who stares incredulously into the shop window where, on the other side of the glass, someone has mislabeled all the valuable items in the window cheaply and placed ridiculously high price tags on cheap baubles. It is not always easy to distinguish between what matters and what is inconsequential. Yet Paul says we can go beyond the confusion of our

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time. We can know the will of God.

Patrick Overton speaks to this in his poem from *The Learning Tree*:

When we walk to the edge of all
the light we have

And take that step into the darkness
Of the unknown,

We believe that one of two things will
happen—

There will be something solid for us
To stand on

Or, we will be taught how to fly.

This is discernment. We all stand on the edge of a precipice from time to time. There is great confusion about what we are to do next. But, like Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress*, if we keep our eyes on the light that shines in the distance and follow it all the way, we shall find the path. We call this discovery the will of God.

Paul's next word is a verb, *fill*. He warns his friends not to be drunk with wine but rather to be filled with the Spirit. The cult of Dionysius held that wine-induced frenzies led to religious insight. Remnants of that cult are still with us. Many still believe that whatever gets us through the hard times is all right. But Paul reminds us that there are no substitutes for the Spirit of God who fills and enlightens believers.

Our age knows all too well that addiction goes far beyond drugs and alcohol. We can be hooked on material goods, on money, on status, on success and work and sex and exercise and just about everything. Paul says we are to be filled with the Spirit of God. In that Spirit we find energy, breath, and life itself. We are to accept no substitute for this filling, which God brings.

Has Paul saved the best word for last? He gives us the word *thanks*. One man found this to be a saving word during a sudden, scary stay in the hospital. Lying there, waiting for the test results he was afraid might reveal a malignancy, he began to sort out the things that mattered. His hospital room was flooded by

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the memories of a lifetime. He remembered the pleasure of listening to the Saint Louis Cardinals on the radio when he was a boy. He recalled watching a son grow from boy to man. He thought of the sheer delight on his daughter's face as she watered skied for the first time. The wonder of his minutes and hours and days just poured in upon him. He remembered pumpkins...a 1969 Chevy...bicycle rides...holding hands with his beloved...early morning fog...blue jays, and raisin-bread Dalmatians. Once he began thinking, he couldn't stop. He thought of old folk songs and hot dogs and tomatoes from his garden and stained glass windows and News from Lake Woebegon. He remembered dahlias and daisies and dandelions and Doonesbury and Snoopy and Oscar Peterson at the keyboard and somebody singing "Porgy and Bess." But he said the best remembering was when the doctor came into his hospital room and used the marvelous word: "Benign." In that remembering his life was changed forever. (Gordon Greer, "Editor at Large," *Better Homes and Gardens*, November 1982, p. 4.)

How do we use our 525,600 minutes? Living a meaningful life has never been simple. But even though our roads are plagued with potholes and barricades, with barriers and detours, we can discover some wisdom along the way. We do not have to fritter away our time. We can make the most of what we have been given. We can come to some understanding of this wonderful will of God. We can find our help in spiritual realities and not in the addictions of our time. Most of all we can learn to say thanks not only for the ups but also for the downs of our lives. 525,600 minutes. We can learn to treasure the things we have been given. And when our time comes, as it did to the old preacher who penned the letter and to the young man that wrote the play, we too can say: We remember the love. We really do remember the love. ■

Boys and Boats

By Bruce McIver

[Dr. Bruce McIver is the author of *Stories I Couldn't Tell While I Was a Pastor* and *Just As Long As I'm Riding Up Front*. For 30 years he was pastor of the Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas.]

Some time ago four of our grandchildren—ages six to less than one year—spent several days with us. They left Lawanna and me bushed, battered, and bruised; but we'll survive—on heaps of love and lots of memories. Somehow spilled milk, fingerprints on windows and doors, and early morning awakenings (very early) now blend into something beautiful. I guess that's the way love is. You remember the best.

Just as they left for the airport, John-John, then age 4, climbed up into my lap, put his arms around my neck, snuggled up close and said, "Goose, I want to stay with you 'til I die."

Gulp. Silence. A tear. I was too choked up to speak, but words weren't necessary.

We clung to each other for a moment, and then I remembered yesterday. Lawanna had fixed a picnic lunch (peanut butter sandwiches, no less) and we'd gone down to White Rock Lake, a short distance from our house. It was a good outing. We were surrounded by wobbly ducks looking for bits of bread, egrets who stood like statues knee-deep in water, and squirrels who scampered all over (including our picnic table) for hand-outs.

Finally, I was able to speak. "That would be nice, John-John," I said. "Then we could go to the lake...and feed the ducks....and chase the squirrels...."

"And buy a boat!" John-John exclaimed with eyes as big as saucers.

For half a second I was tempted to shout, "Yeah! Buy a boat!"

Then, I chuckled. Grandchildren are always half a step ahead of you. I hadn't even mentioned or thought about a boat.

Besides, they don't let motorboats on White Rock Lake. And, besides again, boats cost money...and...and....

The "adult" in me was now winning. This was a time for logic, reason, and practicality.

As the "adult" in me won the battle, the "child" in me began slowly to die. Maturity had won...again. I explained to John-John with facts and figures and common sense why this wouldn't work. For a moment he also seemed to understand but the saucer-like eyes relaxed as he released his tight hold around my neck. With a quick kiss he jumped down and rushed off to play with the other children.

I wanted to rush with him, but the "adult" in me told me I was tired and this was a game for little boys and girls.

Sitting there, I thought of the promises Jesus made to his disciples. Promises of joy and peace and thrills and challenges. Promises that would take his message into all the world. Promises of forgiveness and hope and celebration.

But the "adult" in me wouldn't give up, and all that thinking soon passed. Reason and logic and the practical had once again put the "child" in me back in his proper place.

I left my chair and moved slowly—like an old man—into my study...laboriously to prepare a sermon that would, I hoped, excite a congregation. Oh, maybe so...maybe not.

But in the ensuing days I've been thinking a lot about what Jesus said, "Unless you become like children you can't enter the kingdom."

And I've been thinking of what John-John said with wide-eyed expectations about that boat.

You know, John-John and I might just buy that boat some day, even if we don't have a lake to put it in! It would be fun to take a risk...like two little kids. And, if I do, don't call me an "old fool." Call me a "grown-up child." ■



How to Win at Work

By Paul Basden

[Dr. Paul Basden is pastor of the Brookwood Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama.]

Between the ages of 25 and 65, most of us spend more time working than sleeping, eating, playing, or doing anything else.

Consider this recent humorous look at work in the form of a Top Ten list of signs indicating that your company is planning a layoff. (Work is hard, but is there anything wrong in laughing about it?)

10. Company softball team downsized to chess team.
9. Dr. Kevorkian hired as a "transition consultant."
8. Pretty young women in marketing suddenly start to flirt with dorky personnel manager.
7. The beer of choice at company picnics is Old Milwaukee.
6. Giant yard sale in front of corporate headquarters.
5. Company president now driving a Hyundai.
4. Annual company holiday bash moved from Sheraton banquet room to abandoned Fotomat booth.
3. Employee discount days at Ammo Attic are discontinued.
2. Company dental plan now consists of pliers and string.
1. CEO frequently heard mumbling "Eeny, meeny, miney, mo" behind closed doors.

Work is too important *not* to laugh at, right? Yet it is clearly more than a laughing matter. In reality, it is nothing less than a gift from God. What God gives, God values. And God values hard work.

The Old Testament book of Proverbs contains over twenty-five proverbs on work and laziness. A handful of these passages deserve special consideration. They suggest vital ingredients on *How to Win at Work*.

First, motivate yourself.

"Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler" (Prov. 6:6-7).

Sluggard is a word that occurs fourteen times in Proverbs and nowhere else in the Bible. Today we would say *lazybones*, that is, someone who resists, resents, even hates work. It refers to someone who doesn't understand that living in God's world calls for diligence, attention, and hard work, not laziness and sloth, indolence or apathy.

The message to the sluggard is short, sweet, and sarcastic: go find an ant, watch its ways, and see what you can learn.

Such observation should yield two lessons. The first is: motivate yourself. The ant "has no commander, no overseer or ruler." It needs no prodding or pushing from outside to do its work. It simply acts out of self-motivation.

Almost nothing you bring to work is more important than being self-motivated. And there is almost nothing harder than trying to motivate another person to do good work. In fact, it's an impossible task! Only you can motivate yourself to work, and you can never fully motivate another person to good work. That is a law of life.

What, then, are the best motivations for you to do your best work?

The Bible teaches that we humans were made to work. Before sin ever entered the world, God designed human beings to work. "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it" (Gn. 2:15). Work was a good gift from God. It still is.

In addition, we have creativity to offer the world, and this often is best expressed in our vocation. This is some of what it means to be created in the image of God. Even as God continually cares for the world through Providence, so we care for the world through our work.

Also, we can glorify God through our work. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men..." (Col. 3:23).

If you want to fail in your job, wait for others to motivate you. But if you want to win at work, motivate yourself!

Second, know what time it is.

"Yet [the ant] stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest" (Prov. 6:8).

The second lesson from the ant is equally profound: recognize the times. The ant knows instinctively when it's time to store up food for cold winter months. It has built-in foresight. It does not wait until winter arrives, then wonder why there is not enough food. It plans ahead.

Do you know what time it is where you work? Do you know what time it is in your profession?

Folk-rock legend Bob Dylan recently had his face on the front cover of *Newsweek*. Dylan was famous in the early 1960s for noticing the changing times in our country. His best-selling songs, "The Times, They Are A-Changing" and "The Answer is Blowing in the Wind," pointed out just how much the world was changing, yet few noticed what was happening. He charged the leaders of his day with not knowing what time it was.

The same is true for the world of work. Many people in the workforce don't know what time it is. Price Pritchett is an expert in organizational change. The author of seventeen books on the dynamics of change, Pritchett has earned a Ph.D. in Psychology and for over twenty years has served as a consultant to major American corporations such as 3M, GE, IBM, American Airlines, BellSouth, Chemical Bank, and Ernst and Young. In *New Work Habits for a Radically Changing World* (Pritchett & Associates, Inc., Dallas, TX), he states the following:

- “During the early 1900's, 85% of our workers were in agriculture. Now agriculture involves less than 3% of the workforce.”
- “In 1950, 73% of U.S. employees worked in production or manufacturing. Now less than 15% do.”
- “As recently as the 1960's, almost one-half of all workers in the industrialized countries were involved in making (or helping to make) *things*. By the year 2000, however, no developed country will have more than one-sixth or one-eighth of its workforce in the traditional roles of making and moving goods.”
- “The Department of Labor estimates that by the year 2000 at least 44% of all workers will be in data services—for example, gathering, processing, retrieving, or analyzing information.”
- “The information supply available to us doubles every 5 years.”
- “In 1991, nearly 1 out of 3 American workers had been with their employer for less than a year, and almost 2 out of 3 less than 5 years.”
- “Constant training, retraining, job-hopping, and even career-hopping will become the norm.”

The times, they really are a-changing! Do you know what time it is where you work? If you want to fail in your job, ignore the changing times; but if you want to win, know what time it is!

Third, get started.

“How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man” (Prov. 6:9-11).

The ant offers yet another lesson for us to learn about work: get up and get going. You never see ants lying around

If you want to fail in your job, then don't do anything more than what's expected of you. Don't be helpful. Ignore your job description. Don't answer that other phone. But if you want to win at work, be useful!

doing nothing. Nor do you ever see successful business-people doing nothing. Success at work can happen only if you finally get started.

Since this passage seems to criticize sleep, let me clarify: there is nothing wrong with sleep! It's a gift from God to restore our energy for the next day. But to fail to get up and get going day after day is to invite economic disaster. Success tends to follow hard work. Do you live to sleep, or sleep to live?

If you want to fail in your job, then put off beginning your work. Keep singing *Manana, Manana, Manana is good enough for me*. Keep letting opportunities slip through your fingers. But if you want to win at work, then get started! Begin with the task you hate the worst, the project you're behind on the most, the job you've been putting off the longest. Do get started!

Fourth, be useful.

“As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is a sluggard to those who send him.” (Prov. 10:26)

Here is yet another picture of the *sluggard*, and it's not pretty. This is the worker who is slothful in his or her job and who is not habitually helpful to anyone. This is the employee who is more of a nuisance than a blessing to employers, who violates their trust, and who embarrasses them in front of others. This is the person who ends up being as much of a pain and an irritant to co-workers as vinegar is to the teeth and smoke is to the eyes—all you can do is walk away and cringe.

Physicians must take a vow when they assume the role of medical provider. The promise: “First do no harm!” This should be the motto of all of us in every job: do no harm, do some good, be useful. Make your employer or supervisor proud of you for the way you work.

I recently read a story of a chance encounter between one of the founders of American Airlines and a lazy employee.

C.R. Smith, one of the founders of American Airlines, stopped once in Nashville, Tennessee. He found two desks in the American Airlines sector of the airport. On one a phone was madly ringing. Sitting at the other, with his feet propped up, a man was reading a newspaper. Smith said, “Your phone is ringing.” The man said, “That's reservations. I'm maintenance.” Smith answered the phone, and it was a father urgently needing to get to California. Smith rattled off the schedule from memory to the man and hung up. The other man, attracted

by Smith's knowledge of the schedule, said, "Say, that was pretty good. Do you work for American Airlines?" Smith said, "Yes, I do. And you used to." (Peel, *Discover Your Destiny*, 170)

If you want to fail in your job, then don't do anything more than what's expected of you. Don't be helpful. Ignore your job description. Don't answer that other phone. But if you want to win at work, be useful!

Fifth, face the facts.

"He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgment." (Prov. 12:11)

Earlier in this century Eugene O'Neill wrote *The Iceman Cometh*, a play about one man's "pipedreams" and his unwillingness to face reality. So he never faced the facts; he just lived in a fantasy land. Now while fantasy lands don't require real food or homes or clothes, the real world does. No worker has the luxury of living in a dreamworld, wishing things were different, pretending that things are not as they appear. In the real world, we are compelled to face the facts.

Switzerland used to own the watch business. But Swiss watchmakers in the 1960s didn't face the facts about quartz watches, and today Japan owns the watch business. A half-century ago, American railroads didn't face the facts about the rise in popularity of cars and airplanes, and today railroads do precious little business compared to their glorious past. According to a recent *Newsweek* article, taped conversations of LBJ from the Oval Office in 1964 reveal that the U.S. government didn't face the facts about the Vietnam War until way too late; by the time they did look squarely at the issues, hundreds of thousands of lives had been lost in an unwinnable war.

If you want to lose in your job, then ignore reality. Live in a dream world. Build your home in fantasy land. But if you want to win at work, face the facts!

Sixth, complete what you start.

"The lazy man does not roast his game, but the diligent man prizes his possessions." (Prov. 12:27)

This verse draws a sad picture of a man who goes to the trouble of hunting and catching game for food, but then is too lazy to roast it for eating. It's a perfect illustration of the well-known truth that fools begin well, but never finish well. When I was a college student at Baylor, near the end of every semester our B.S.U. Director would give us a speech. It was the same every year. We called it his "Finish well!" speech. In it, he would challenge us to finish the semester as well as we began it. He would urge us to be as upbeat as we faced final

exams as we were on the first day of class. We needed to hear it then, and we need to hear it now.

Few things are more frustrating than working with someone who starts a job, then leaves it incomplete. When that happens, someone else has to finish it. Hasn't it happened to you before?

If you want to fail in your job, begin well...then quit! But if you want to win at work, then finish what you begin. Do what you say. Complete what you start!

Seventh, embrace hard work.

"All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty" (Prov. 14:23).

You've probably noticed a fact in the marketplace: some people prefer talk to work. They would rather discuss the job than get out and do the job. This is a recipe for vocational failure! The general rule is that hard work gets you ahead in life and makes you a decent living. Talk gets you nowhere...except to the poorhouse!

Thomas Edison, America's foremost scientist and inventor, was famous for the hard work he invested in his inventions. The man who supposedly said, "Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration," also said, "Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."

Charles Kingsley once said,

"Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do that day which must be done whether you like it or not. Being forced to work and forced to do your best will breed in you a hundred virtues which the idle will never know" (*Leadership*, Fall 1996).

If you want to fail in your job, just sit around and talk about what needs to be done. But if you want to win at work, then embrace the job before you. Perform the doing of it.

Eighth, face your problems.

"The sluggard says, 'There is a lion outside!' Or, 'I will be murdered in the streets!'" (Prov. 22:13).

Here is a third look at the *sluggard*. It ranks as one of the most curious proverbs in the book. The saying points to the ridiculous excuses that some people make in order to avoid work. Perhaps you have heard about the man who didn't want to get up one Sunday morning and go to church. His wife shook him and shook him until he was awake enough to talk. She demanded that he get up, eat, shower, dress, and go to church. He refused. She demanded again. He refused again. After a long moment of silence, he looked at her and said, "Give me three good reasons why I should go to church

today.” She responded: “Okay, First, you’re a Christian. Second, the people there love you. Third, you’re the pastor!” All of us make excuses to avoid work when there’s a problem we don’t want to face.

Fear of facing problems is normal. But John Claypool was right when he said, “The truth may hurt, but only the truth can heal.”

Max DePree, retired business executive and active Christian layman, tells the following story.

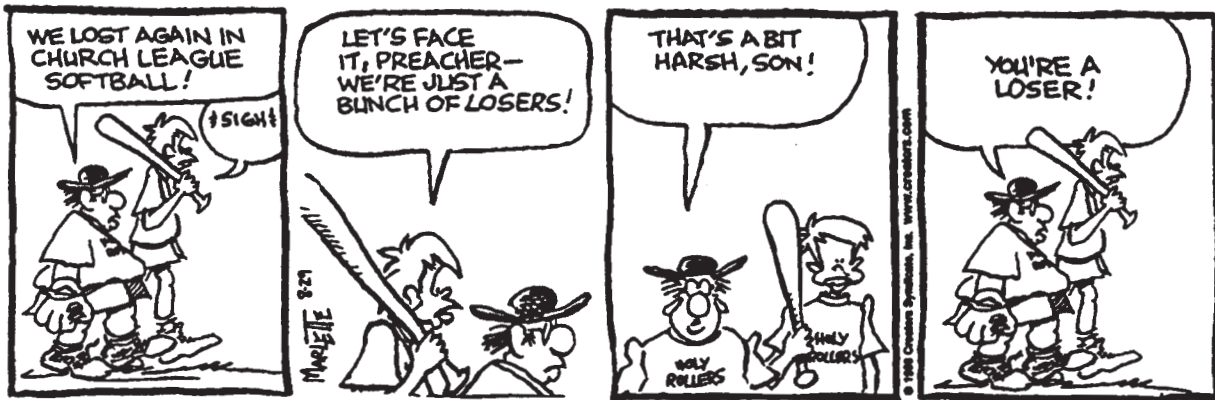
A year ago I was at the School of Education at Harvard talking about some of these ideas related to change. During the question-and-answer period, a man said he had had lunch with an executive from AT&T shortly after the company announced it was laying off 40,000 people. When the subject came up, the man from AT&T said, “What you have to understand is that there are no more jobs. There are only projects.” (*Fuller Focus*, Spring 1997)

If you want to fail in your job, then make excuses when you don’t want to work. But if you want to win at work, then face your problems head-on!

Now while this sermon is about how to win at work, it ultimately points to a more profound question: how can you win at life? After all, life is more than work. Vocational success does not automatically translate into relational and emotional and spiritual success. So how can you win at life?

Here is a word for you on this serious subject—not original, but profound. As you work hard, don’t worship your work. Don’t become a workaholic. Balance your work with play and worship, heeding Randall Lolley’s pithy warning lest “We worship our work, we work at our play, and we play at our worship.” Surely this is not God’s will for Christ-followers.

Therefore work hard. Do your job well. Offer your labor to Christ. Seek God’s Kingdom first. In so doing, you will win not only at work, but also at life. ■



Carlyle Marney as Ethicist

By Michael C. Blackwell

[Dr. Michael Blackwell has been president of the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina for 15 years. The material in this article reminds us of what a powerful ethical giant Marney was. 1998 marks the 20th anniversary of his death, who, though "being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4).]

Early in his life Carlyle Marney knew the kind of man he wanted to be.

He is called One of a Thousand; he is a begetter of spiritual children; He is a birther, he is a nurse; he knows and unfolds dark things to sinners. He pleads, he slights and despises the things that are present, and he is sure of a world to come.¹

The words were from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, but they characterized the thrust of Marney's ethical ministry. Marney died five days before his sixty-second birthday. He was born July 8, 1916, as Leonard Carlyle Marney. To all except immediate family, he was always "Marney." He died in his office in Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, on July 3, 1978. He suffered a heart attack as he was preparing to leave for a week of lectures at the Pastor's School at Furman University.

Marney's birthplace was Harriman, Tennessee. His parents, John Leonard and Sara Victoria Mays, were tenth generation Americans whose family had moved but once since 1720. His father, a turnplow designer, never went to school. His heritage, Marney said, put him on the underside. His East Tennessee upbringing provided a laboratory for all the contradictions of southern religion. His earliest memories were of Sunday afternoons at his grandfather's home when the family debated the hottest issue of the day—evolution. The Scopes monkey trial of 1925 was making headlines around the country. "The *Knoxville Sentinel*, which we read, was on Jesus' side," Marney once recalled, "but the *Cincinnati Post*, which Grandpa read, was on Darrow's side. A little boy of eight years old, I was torn apart by this."²

Marney was reared in ecumenical surroundings. His parents were Baptist, but aunts, uncles, and grandparents were Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian. He lived next to the Presbyterian manse. His mother went to the Methodist church on Sunday mornings to learn "how to live," but attended Trenton Street Baptist Church on Sunday nights to be sure she was still "all right."

Marney said Harriman was "a marvelous place to grow up." Liberal, Protestant, northern people moved there. "There was

lots of Yankee manufacturing money," he noted. "A Yankee general camped there during the Civil War and later returned to found a town, where he thought there were enough coal and timber and iron for a boom." Harriman never became an industrial center—another Birmingham—, "but it was sort of a mixed-up place."³

Harriman was also headquarters for the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and Marney attended plays in the WCTU temple. "We could hear Holy Roller meetings going on at the bottom of the hill on summer nights. But down the hill the other way was the Andrew Carnegie Library—which I devoured as a little boy." Marney got his first library card at age eight and started reading three or four books weekly. He read *Quo Vadis* when he was thirteen. "I didn't resolve the furor *that* cooked up until I had a doctorate in church history."⁴ Marney's love of books never waned. He would later confess to friends a "theological lust," his way of describing his life-long love affair with books.

Marney's ethical awareness began early. "I wasn't yet five years old when I heard my grandpa talking about how blacks ought not to be treated," he said. He remembered his own father, dying at age eight-four and "hallucinating in the hospital on his deathbed" saying, "They're not treating those folks right." From those vivid memories, Marney said, "I had no choice but to be true to a heritage of which I'm proud, though it's not the typical southern pattern."⁵

When he was nineteen, Marney "made a decision to move toward people" and away from trees. He had seriously considered forestry as a career. Within a year, Marney decided to enter the ministry. "The Baptist part was more or less automatic because that was where I had been reared." He attended a Baptist school, Carson-Newman, where he distinguished himself not only as a scholar but as a football player. He also served as Educational Director of the First Baptist Church of Kingsport, Tennessee. While there, he met a Presbyterian Minister of Music named Elizabeth Christopher. They were married in 1940. Their children were Rita Christopher, born in 1944 and Susan Elizabeth, born in 1947. The Marneys would later have three grandchildren.

Marney preached his first sermon in Kingsport. The pastor, M.J.G. Hughes, became ill and informed Marney that he would have to preach. And Marney preached the one prepared sermon he possessed! "He did well at it," his wife recalled. He began to supply regularly when the pastor was away. When he entered Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1940, Marney confirmed his desire to be a preaching minister.

At Southern, Marney compiled an outstanding academic record. His major professor, Dr. Sydnor Stealey, called Marney his most brilliant student. Stealey guided Marney through his Doctor of Theology program in church history, and the two men remained life-long friends. In later years, Marney said that if he had his time to do over, he would have attended schools outside his region. "But it's in the South that my education and my exposure to classic social influences happened," he said. Marney took his teachers seriously. "And those teachers were in touch with the classics. A man can get a fairly classic education south of God."⁶

Marney's seminary education included more than books. He served as student chaplain at Fort Knox, Kentucky, from 1940-41. He witnessed race riots in prison stockades. He continued his chaplain's work when he was called to pastor the Stithon Baptist Church in Fort Knox (1941-43). When he received his Th.M. degree from Southern in 1943, Marney moved to the Beaver Dam Baptist Church where he served until 1946. During the Beaver Dam years, he was invited to preach in Memphis where his old pastor was then serving. He preached "All the Sons of the Earth," a positive ethical statement on race relations. It was Marney's first experience with "rejection over preaching." "Perhaps it wasn't a very good time to lay these social issues out...I got through the sermon, and was never asked back. But then I didn't expect to be."⁷

Was Marney destined to be on the cutting edge of ethical issues? His own insight at age twenty-three provides a clue.

There are strange meeting places in a man's life where all he has done and thought and prepared comes together in frightening, compelling synchronization. And a step he took in the dark opens a vista of which he could at best but have dreamed. It is as if a hand had stacked his deck.⁸

However his deck was stacked, Marney took a step in the dark in 1948 when he left his pastorate of the Immanuel Baptist Church in Paducah, Kentucky, to become pastor of First Baptist in Austin, Texas. He was thirty-two at the time. The church had five thousand members, a staff of twenty-five, and was located across the street from the capitol and down the street from the university. He preached to people who understood his ethical/social/political criticisms and affirmations. Marney discovered himself to have "an almost perfect willingness" to be "barker, front man, even a bell-wether outside the main tent."⁹ He was also "determined not to be a professional..., to be more man than functionaire..., to be more Christian than ever I could be Baptist." He swore three oaths:

1. I would never become economically enslaved to a place or a status.
2. I would never walk across the street to get any post or positions nor would I ever want one to the point I would pay too much for it.
3. I would follow faithfully whatever new light I might be given, wherever it led.¹⁰

The bright light which led him to Austin kept him there ten years. He quickly became involved in the broader social issues of a larger community. Some of his sermons were printed in book form. "I offered my wares to the Baptists south of God in terms of manuscripts and other things, which they rejected."¹¹ Marney became involved in a church power struggle during his first year. A long-time member forced the issue, and the matter of whether Marney would stay was decided on the church floor. The vote was six hundred ninety-six to sixteen, and Marney remained another nine years. Within a few years, some three hundred members who could not reconcile themselves to Marney's ministry left and formed a new church. And they had Marney's blessing to their venture.

In Austin, Marney was caught up in a "pit of beautiful influences, minds, and opportunities." He developed friendships with other liberals and intellectuals with whom he would have "exciting, stimulating, agonizing, debating, acrimonious, insulting, uplifting hours of discussion." At James McCord's invitation, Marney began teaching Christian Ethics at Austin Presbyterian Seminary. He preached ethical integrity from the pulpit. He practiced it on the floor of the Texas legislature. One week he spent forty hours before various committees trying to defeat thirteen racist bills. He and some friends convinced Governor Price Daniel, a member of Marney's church, to oppose the bills and they were killed.¹² Marney infuriated many people. Noel Smith, editor of the fundamentalist *Baptist Bible Tribune* said that "Marney's head needs examining." The issue? Marney had agreed with the Nels F.S. Ferre lecture at Baylor University.¹³

Marney's reputation grew. As he began to publish books, write articles, and speak across the country, a group of people in Charlotte, North Carolina, heard about him. They were from the Myers Park Baptist Church, and they wanted him to be their pastor. Neither Marney nor his wife Elizabeth was interested, but with the encouragement of the committee and friends like Dr. Sydnor Stealey, they visited Charlotte. On the way, they stopped in Maggie Valley, North Carolina, and determined that whether or not they came to Charlotte, they would buy some mountain property. They did come to Charlotte, and they did buy the mountain property, some forty-five acres on the north end of Wolf Pen Mountain near Waynesville.

"The real crisis for me was Charlotte," Marney said. "With the heavy emphasis on property and profit, banking and commercialism and family, I ran into psychic incest, perversion and political manipulations."¹⁴ He became, more than ever, an ethical prophet. "A man makes his own list according to where he hurts," he said. "Everybody's moral condition is a reflection of his own. Everyone's poverty is an extension of his own. Where," he asked, "have we borne a witness based on courage rather than affluence?"¹⁵

Time magazine called Marney a "fiery minister" who told businessmen that "the profit motive is ethically bankrupt" *Time* said Marney was a staunch believer in church-state separation who wants religious teaching banned from all schools.¹⁶ The *Time* article, which spotlighted several preachers of the Southern Baptist Convention, came on the heels of Marney's *Structures of*

Prejudice, which, among other things, was a scathing critique of capitalism. Although roundly criticized by many members of the business community, other businessmen asked Marney to teach them ethical responsibility in business matters. His seminars on business ethics were well attended and received extensive local newspaper coverage.

Marney's workaholicism was in full bloom during the Charlotte years (1958-1967). "When I'm excited about a project, I can get by for months at a time on three or four hours of sleep a night," he said in 1962.¹⁷ His study was always at home, and he would often rise at three in the morning, warm up the coffee, and write until dawn. Then, he said, he would go to the office, put himself in neutral, and go where they pushed him. Marney seldom relaxed during the Myers Park years, although he did ride his horses occasionally. Seven of his books were published while he lived in Charlotte.

Marney learned the ethical use of power during the Myers Park years. When his church faced the integration question, he enlisted the help of nineteen former board chairmen, part of the community power structure, to write the document that would integrate the church. He knew there was opposition among those nineteen men, but he was reasonable: he started with the opposition—where the power really was. "If you are going to play power, you had better use power."¹⁸ Said Dr. Sam Byuarm, professor of sociology at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte:

Marney was a radical, the iron fist in the velvet glove. Radical as far as Myers Park Baptist was concerned. But there was a sanity in what he was saying and what he was doing and they couldn't deny it. The sanity and the ethics—he had them on this.¹⁹

As Charlotte's Chamber of Commerce sought to integrate the city, Marney worked behind the scenes. "I was amazed at the ethical awareness of some of the business leaders," he said. "But I read through their ethical language to see that what they were seeing was that, economically, this is a thing we had better do." Marney said the real issue in Charlotte during the mid 'sixties was not race. "It was economics, money, banking, interest rates, loan policies, employment."²⁰

If Marney's ministry was known only in the South in the early 'sixties, that was quickly dispelled in the mid 'sixties. As he spoke at Yale, Chicago, Duke, Harvard, Cornell, and other major centers of learning, he also spoke to the nation. That came in a controversial 1965 Christmas Eve service which was telecast nationwide by CBS. Marney's sermon drew five hundred letters of praise and protest. CBS said it was the finest service of that type they had ever broadcast. One critic called the sermon "a blasphemous substitute for what Baptists have traditionally believed and preached."²¹ Marney found the controversy tremendously stimulating and uplifting. The *Charlotte News* reprinted the entire sermon on January 13, 1966.²²

Marney's "blasphemous substitute" critic was probably right.

Marney's criticisms of Southern Baptists probably reached a zenith in 1964. They were dutifully reported by the Charlotte newspapers:

A social revolution is going on, but we Baptists who are on God's right hand had precious little to do with it except when run over from the rear....There are hundreds of colleges and dozens of seminaries and scores of Baptist organizations which provide little kingdoms which little men just love to run. They won't give up their thrones for unity's sake....The Southern Baptist Convention is a Jesus cult dressed like Buster Brown and Little Lord Fauntleroy with a bowie knife handy to cut the throats of any who disagree with a regional point of view.²³

Marney's hectic pace of writing, preaching, lecturing, and teaching continued unabated until Sunday, September 5, 1966. He had just returned to Charlotte from a six-week lecture tour ranging from Florida to upstate New York. After preaching at eight-thirty in the morning, teaching a Sunday School lesson, and preparing to preach at eleven o'clock, Marney became ill and was rushed to Charlotte Memorial Hospital. He was fifty at the time. He would return to Myers Park several times following that fateful September heart attack, but never again as pastor. He remained in the hospital over five weeks, and then went to his cabin at Wolf Pen Mountain to recuperate.

On November 25, 1966, Marney told a reporter that he had been a lifelong workaholic. "I worked eighteen and twenty hours a day. A man doesn't do that because he loves God. There are other drives. It's a crime. I don't intend to do that anymore." Marney said he had always wanted to be known as a man who could do well in anything he undertook. As to his future, he said, "I'm not searching for the answer. I don't have to—it'll come." He reiterated the vow that he would not return to the old "crime" of preacher, lecturer, writer.²⁴

Marney agonized seven months before deciding not to return to Myers Park. His agony, depression, and anger forced him "to follow any new light....that would put me nearer the center of the sea of troubles that now beset the Great Church." Marney's "new light" was an Interpreters' House, to be housed at Lambuth Inn, Lake Junaluska, near what would become his and Elizabeth's permanent home on Wolf Pen Mountain. "I rejoice now," he said, "in this strange new turn of which all my life has prepared me."²⁵

Indeed, life *had* prepared Marney for an Interpreters' House. It was a logical culmination to a life-long pilgrimage. "We can't rest in a bland changelessness, or go on looking for a world that never was, or deny history, or act as if our creatureliness were a life," he said. "We have to make a prophetic fellowship of pilgrimage to go with our priestly concerns in the world," Marney named Interpreter's House after the house of the same name in *Pilgrim's Progress*. Christian, the principal character, journeys from the City of Destruction to Mount Zion. On the journey he stops at Interpreters' House, and with his burden, and his

half-released guilt, says, "You would show me excellent things such as will help me on my journey." Marney's final journey would be as Keeper of Interpreters' House:

Where a man as an interpreter, exposed to the things of God; reached for the most he could get, true to the tradition in which he had started; worked with what he got, receiving "all who came," in the context of the Kingdom of God, and the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁶

The purpose of Interpreters' House was to give those who came "the assurance that the journey inward is worth taking; to give your distinctive inwardness a grand and high meaning." Interpreters' House would "permit a man to endure, understand, and accept his own inwardness." Here, "the self-soul recovers its courage for the outward journey where he must live in an environment that furnishes him a role, a vocation, a priesthood." The real business "is the inwardness of you and outwardness of you, and both need interpretation... You learn to receive your own inwardness in such a way that your outwardness becomes a redemptive journey."²⁷ Close to ten thousand people joined Marney in the Interpreters' House journey. "The goal is not to come out unscathed," he told participants. "I have no hope that you won't bleed unnecessarily, unworthily and fatally."²⁸

From Interpreters' House, Marney continued "saying a Mass for all mankind."²⁹ He vowed to continue to tell the truth "as much as I can bear and then a little more."³⁰ That "little more" caused Marney soon to return to the old "crime" he had earlier disavowed, namely, a crowded schedule of lecturing, preaching, and writing. One project he was intently interested in was the Yale lectures on preaching which he was scheduled to deliver in 1980. According to Mrs. Marney, he had tentatively decided to lecture on Interpreters' House.

When Marney died, Interpreters' House was closed, and a thundering voice of ethical prophecy was silenced. The wounded healer had himself been mortally wounded. The pilgrim who "would show me excellent things" had taken his final journey. His redemptive suffering which had shed "new light" to those willing to follow, was now complete. His wounds were worth the journey and the journey worth the wounds because "everywhere a good man suffers he releases redemption for the need that surrounds him—the watchers taste his redemption in the way he suffers."³¹ But Marney would insist that "the redeemer is *always* numbered with the transgressors."³² Such was Marney's journey. Such is his legacy. ■

¹Carlyle Marney, "The Interpreter's House," n.d., n.p., (Mimeographed Sermon), p. 8.

²Bill Finger, "Preaching the Gospel South of God," *The Christian Century*, October 4, 1978, p. 914.

³*Ibid.*, p. 915.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 916.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸Carlyle Marney, "Lecture III," McCormick Theological Seminary, Summer, 1963, p. 3.

⁹Carlyle Marney, "The More Excellent Way," n.d., n.p., (Mimeographed Sermon), p. 95.

¹⁰Carlyle Marney, "The Priest at Every Elbow," n.d., (Mimeographed Sermon), p. 5.

¹¹Finger, "Preaching the Gospel South of God," p. 916.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 916-917.

¹³*Baptist Bible Tribune*, January 9, 1953, p. 1.

¹⁴Finger, "Preaching the Gospel South of God," p. 918.

¹⁵Carlyle Marney, "Truth and Revelation," n.d., (Mimeographed Sermon), p. 116.

¹⁶*Time*, October 17, 1950, p. 88.

¹⁷*Charlotte Observer*, June 9, 1962.

¹⁸Finger, "Preaching the Gospel South of God," p. 918.

¹⁹Mary Kratt, *Marney*, Myers Park Baptist Church, 1979, p. 37.

²⁰Finger, "Preaching the Gospel South of God," p. 918.

²¹Kratt, *Marney*, p. 21.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*, p. 46.

²⁴*Charlotte News*, November 25, 1966.

²⁵Kratt, *Marney*, pp. 68-69.

²⁶Carlyle Marney, "The Interpreters' House," n.d., pp. 7, 9, 10.

²⁷Carlyle Marney, "The Interpreters' House, II," n.d., pp. 6-7.

²⁸William H. Willimon, "A Prophet Leavzes Us," *The Christian Century*, July 19, 1978, p. 695.

²⁹Carlyle Marney, *The Coming Faith*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), p. 129.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹Carlyle Marney, *The Suffering Servant*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965), p. 35.

³²*Ibid.*

Whatever Happened to “Overcome Evil With Good”?

By Brian L. Harbour

[Dr. Brian L. Harbour is pastor of the First Baptist Church of Richardson, Texas.]

You don't have to look far to find evil. It is “couching (lying in ambush) at the door” (Gen. 4:7). It is all around us. Living in a fallen world, we are confronted on every side with the reality of evil—in our world, in our nation, in our city, in our neighborhood, in our family. How are we to respond to this evil around us? Paul addressed that question in the twelfth chapter of his letter to the Romans. He presented both a defensive and an offensive strategy.

A Defensive Strategy

The defensive strategy is found in verse 2 and it is pretty much what we would expect Paul to say. “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” All around us there is evil, seeking to influence us to be like everyone else. Inside us is the Holy Spirit, seeking to influence us to be like Christ. So Paul's advice: neutralize the negative influence of your external culture with the positive influence of your internal culture.

That is the defensive strategy for living in a fallen world, a world in which evil is everywhere present. As we live by the Spirit, as we walk in the Spirit, as we are controlled by the Spirit, and as we are empowered through the Spirit within us, we will be able to resist the influence of evil around us.

Many Christians today have adopted this as their code for living in today's world. It is the defensive strategy which has motivated Christians to withdraw into their Christian communities and to isolate themselves from the world. It is the defensive strategy that has spawned Christian schools and, in more recent days, home schooling. It is an effective defensive strategy for liv-

ing in today's world.

The down side of this defensive strategy, however, is that it is limited. It relates to only one side of the issue. Because we have been told by our Master to “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19), because Jesus told us we are to be salt which gives the world flavor and light which illuminates the world's darkness (Matt. 5:13-16), because the resurrected Lord declared to his disciples, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21), we cannot be content with simply isolating ourselves from the world and protecting ourselves from the world's influence.

At the same time we are keeping the world from shaping us, we are to influence the world. Living in a fallen world in which evil is ever present, we cannot just have a defensive strategy. We must also have an offensive strategy.

An Offensive Strategy

Paul presented an offensive strategy in the remainder of Romans 12. The culmination of this offensive strategy is found in verses 17-21.

In verse 17 Paul advised: “Do not repay anyone evil for evil.” Retaliation, which is the desire to get even with someone, is the world's way. Instead of retaliation, Christians are to: “Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody” (v. 17) and “Live at peace with everyone” (v. 18).

In verse 19, Paul admonished: “Do not take revenge.” Revenge, which is the desire to get back at someone, is the world's way. Instead of revenge, Christians are to serve our enemies. “If your enemy is hungry, feed him,” Paul says in verse 20, “if he is thirsty, give him something to drink” (v. 20).

The conclusion of Paul's advice, the summary of the offensive strategy presented by the apostle, is found in verse 21:



“Overcome evil with good.”

“Do not be overcome by evil” (Rom. 12:2). That’s the defensive strategy.

“Overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21). That’s the offensive strategy.

The Problem

Whereas we are comfortable with Paul’s defensive strategy, we are often dissatisfied with his offensive strategy. OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD! That biblical admonition sounds strange to the ear of the American Christian living at the end of the twentieth century, because we have been presented a different strategy today. The primary offensive strategy in American evangelical Christianity today is to OVERCOME EVIL WITH FORCE, to attack evil.

We hear it from popular Christian spokesmen of our day as they use the language of warfare. In March, 1995, a debate erupted in the pages of *Christianity Today* between James Dobson on the one hand and John Woodbridge on the other. John Woodbridge wrote an article entitled, “Culture War Casualties: How Warfare Rhetoric is Hurting the Work of the Church,” including James Dobson, among others, in his accusation. Dobson responded with an article entitled, “Why I use ‘Fighting Words.’” In the article Dobson spoke of a great Civil War of values raging in America today, of two great armies on opposing sides, and someday soon, he said a winner will emerge. And he wants Christians to be the winners. Dobson’s conclusion: we must attack evil and destroy it before it destroys us.

Whatever happened to “OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD”?

The popular strategy in American evangelical Christianity today is to try to overcome evil with force, to attack evil. We hear it from popular Christian authors whose fiction books develop themes of warfare. In 1986, a novel written by Frank Peretti entitled *The Present Darkness* vaulted to the top of the religious best seller lists, eventually selling more than 2 million copies. Set in a small college town, the story is about a horrific war going on, not a battle between two human armies, but a battle going on between the demonic powers of darkness on the one side and the angelic hosts of light on the other.

Part of the reason for the popularity of the book is that readers sensed the author was giving a symbolic picture of what is happening in our country, and the challenge of the book is to join the battle against evil. Be constantly on guard. Demonic forces all around want to possess you. Stamp them out. Destroy them. That is Peretti’s advice.

Whatever happened to “OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD”?

We are to be peace makers, instead of peace breakers. We are to be distinctive instead of vindictive.

We are to be dispensers of grace instead of moral judges. We are to “OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD”!

The popular strategy in American Christianity of trying to overcome evil with force is heard from the Christian right, partisans in the politics of polarization. In his 1991 book, *The New World Order*, Pat Robertson gave shape and form to the enemy against which we must fight and then laid out a strategy of attack that focused on developing a block of voters to support his agenda. He said, “We must rebuild ... America from the grassroots, precinct by precinct, city by city, and state by state.” And the strategy is clear: we need to organize politically so we can crush evil. The time-honored principle of separation of church and state so the state can do what it is supposed to do—provide freedom—and the church can do what it is supposed to do—promote faith freely chosen—has been replaced by the political strategy of using the government to promote the church—not just any church, but one particular understanding of the church—and its agenda.

We are confronted by the language of warfare by some Christian leaders, the themes of warfare in much religious fiction, and the politics of polarization in many Christian political action groups.

Whatever happened to “OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD”?

The Recovery of a Biblical Idea

Is this an anachronistic idea that needs to be discarded or is it a timeless Christian truth that needs to be rediscovered?

I want to declare that overcoming evil with good is not an idea of the past but an idea for the NOW, the very idea pronounced by Paul in our text, the idea declared by Jesus himself in Matthew 5:38-42 and then demonstrated by Jesus on the cross, the idea repeatedly referred to in the New Testament in places like 1 Thessalonians 5:15 and 1 Corinthians 4:12-13 and 1 Peter 3:9.

We are to be peace makers, instead of peace breakers. We are to be distinctive instead of vindictive. We are to be dispensers of grace instead of moral judges. We are to “OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD”!

The Protest

I can hear the whispers—I know, because I said the same thing to myself as I developed this message—“This mamby pambly approach is not going to work today. Doing good to those who do evil to us; refusing to get in there and fight against evil; it’s not going to work. We need to take the tough position. We need to get out there and fight. We need to take our stand.”

Two Responses

The first response is this: what is at stake is not what works but what is right, what is Christian. We are not told to stamp out evil. We are not commanded to win the battle. We are not told to come up with a strategy which will work. We are commissioned to tell the good news. We are called to be the light of the world. We are commanded to love as Christ loved us. We are enlisted to be distributors of grace, encouragers, burden bearers, peace makers. Whether or not this strategy will “work” is not the point. We need to overcome evil with good because that is the Christian thing to do.

Then there is a second response. As I thought about this biblical idea and the protest to it today, I came to the conclusion that overcoming evil with good is the only thing that *will* work. The only power which can transform evil into good is the transforming power of a redeeming love.

Do you see our Lord? He’s in the Garden. With his disciples—even of them that is. He is praying. They are sleeping. Suddenly the garden of prayer is turned into a coliseum of confrontation. Judas, one of the twelve, arrives. With him is a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and elders of the people. They are there to arrest him. To take him away. To very soon put him to death. It is the classic confrontation between good and evil.

Defend yourself, Jesus. Use your omnipotent power. Call on the twelve legions of angels at your disposal. That’s what we want to shout out to Jesus.

But instead, he does nothing. To Judas, the betrayer, Jesus

says, “Friend, do what you came for.” To the angry crowd, Jesus says, “I’ll go with you.” The ultimate good confronted by the epitome of evil, and Jesus ... does nothing.

Do you see him? He’s on the cross now. Hanging between two criminals. One of them rails at him. The people standing at the foot of the cross hurling insults at him. Ridiculing him. “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!” “This is the man who saved others. Hah! He can’t even save himself!”

Do something Jesus! Come down from the cross and show them who you are. Zap them with your divine power. That’s what we want him to do.

But instead, he does nothing. To one of the criminals he promises, “This day you will be with me in paradise.” About the crowd, Jesus prays, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” The ultimate good confronted by the epitome of evil, and Jesus ... does nothing.

Or does he?

There is another word from the cross. Do you remember? Jesus said, “It is finished.” The ultimate good confronted by the epitome of evil, and Jesus won the battle. Jesus completed his assignment. He destroyed death. He overcame evil. He defeated the kingdom of Satan and established the kingdom of God. That is the meaning of that phrase. That’s why he said, “It is finished.” But did you notice? He won the battle, not with a sword but with a cross.

Do not be overcome with evil—yes. We must not forget that defensive strategy. But this is the higher level to which we must ascend as Christians today—overcome evil with good. ■

Miracle on West Avenue

By Bernard Rapoport

[Bernard Rapoport is Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the American Income Life Insurance Company in Waco, Texas.]

Our Congressman, Chet Edwards, called me on the phone and said, "B, I would like to ask you to meet me at 3:00 on Monday." I said, "Where?" He said, "One of my aides will be there to direct you where to go." Well, you can't say "No" to a congressman or at least not to Chet Edwards. We got in the car and started driving. In 10 to 12 minutes, we were at 1525 West Avenue.

It was "just a building." I said to Jim Hogersson, the Executive Director of our Foundation who was accompanying me, "I have never been here before." He said, "This is the Larue Learning Center." I said, "Okay."

We walked in and there were a group of three-year-old boys and girls, dressed immaculately with their eyes bright and their cheery smiles ear-to-ear. I went up and hugged one, and then a bunch of the others came up and wanted to be hugged. All of this occurred before I even met the leader.

I thought I would test them and that they probably wouldn't know the letters of the alphabet. I asked, "Do you know your A-B-C-'s?" Then in unison, they sang the whole alphabet in song. I thought, "That is rote." So I went to the blackboard and put an "A" and asked what it was. Without hesitation, they told me. I went through several of the letters. All this transpired within a 4 to 5-minute period, and then Ms. Larue walked in.

She looked at those children and she looked at me. It was evident to me that she had held all of those youngsters on her lap at one time—maybe not physically, but certainly emotionally. No one had to tell me I was in the presence of a truly great individual. She didn't even have to open her mouth and talk. My first words to her here, "Ms. Larue, we have never met, but I

want to tell you that you are a miracle woman." What I had seen was just the beginning. I went from classroom to classroom, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9-year olds. Each of these children was alert and disciplined—let me repeat the word disciplined.

"Well, where does the funding come from?" I asked. She said, "We don't take any government money. Some of the parents pay—those who can—but our school has a place for every child. Private donors provide help." I said, "Ms. Larue, why this school?" She said, "Well, I wanted to prove that black children could learn as well as any other children." She said, "It is to that conviction that I have devoted my life."

One thing for certain, if it can be said that when one achieves their objective in life, they are a success, then Ms. Larue is an overwhelming success. The old adage comes to life when you visit her school, "If you save one soul, you have saved the world." By that wisdom she has saved uncounted worlds, and that is just a beginning because there are many lives that she will be saving in the years to come.

I just couldn't contain my excitement. Everyone who so much as finishes the third grade in her school will be equipped for life, self-sufficient, and a contributing member of our society, all because she had an objective to prove. It is incontrovertibly that if you give children the right start, you can forget about color, race, gender, political proclivity, or what-have-you, and they will make this a better world.

I read a lot of psychology and philosophy because I like to. What it all really gets down to is that what is missing in our society is not enough loving, not enough caring, and not enough commitment. I guess most of all, not enough understanding. Here was an example in action right before my eyes that the way things are in our society is not the way they have to be. You could see this for yourself if you could observe the miracle at 1525 West Avenue. ■



Capital Punishment: An Open Letter

By Curtis Freeman

[Dr. Curtis Freeman is Associate Professor of Christianity and Philosophy at Houston Baptist University.]

Dear David,

You have asked me to provide my views on capital punishment and in particular the place for clemency in public policy. Specifically, you urged my participation because in some measure you believe that my training and experience as a theologian might serve the Christian community in our witness to the state. Before you invited my participation, I had already revised the course outline in my Christian ethics course to include two class periods for reflection and discussion on capital punishment. My delay in responding is partly due to the need for time to reflect on my view. But I also held off because I wanted some lively discussion with students as we sought to formulate a normative judgment based on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

Seeking light on the subject we turned to the Christian scriptures for instruction and guidance. What we discovered was that the OT gives explicit warrants about capital punishment, but that the NT is silent. By that I do not imply that there is nothing at all in the NT which informs our judgment about capital punishment. I simply mean that there is no specific teaching about capital punishment. Some interpreters may regard the reference to “the sword” (*machaira*) in Romans 13:4 to be an allusion to the death penalty, but if so it is hardly clear what it means or how it applies. That it does not apply to the death penalty is more likely since the sword was not the instrument of capital punishment for the Romans. They crucified their criminals. That it does not even refer to war also seems likely because *machaira* was a dagger, not a soldier’s sword. What is described is the sword as the symbol of authority much like the gun worn by a police officer today. Our study of scripture led to the following conclusions.

1. The instructions about retaliation (*lex taliones*) were instituted to limit vengeance (Ex. 21:23-24). The rule of “an eye for an eye” prevents the escalation of violence (e.g. a life for an eye). In this sense the law of Moses was a moral improvement over vigilante justice. However, the *lex taliones* was remedial, not ideal. As Jesus told a group of Pharisees, Moses gave the Torah because of “the hardness of heart” (Mk. 10:5/Mt. 19:8); Deut. 24:1-4). Since capital pun-

ishment is a limitation, it is a wrong reading of these texts to suggest that the Bible requires capital punishment. Capital punishment, even in the OT, is a concession. It is not God’s best design for his people.

2. The OT includes a whole range of offenses for which the death penalty is deemed appropriate. These include intentional homicide (Ex. 21:12), but also listed as capital offenses are parental abuse—physical and verbal (Ex. 21:15, 17), kidnapping (Ex. 21:16), sorcery (Ex. 22:18), bestiality (Ex. 22:19), idolatry (Ex. 22:19), adultery (Deut. 22:22), rape (Deut. 22:25-27), and drunken-gluttonous-rebellious children (Deut. 21:18-21). Again, part of what is reflected in the law codes is an attempt to limit the abuses of justice, not to require that Israel put more people to death for as many offenses as they could justify.
3. The Torah and later rabbinical tradition places numerous restrictions on the practice of the death penalty. One was the eye for an eye limitation, but there are others. See for example, the requirement of truthfulness in witness and certainty of testimony against those accused (Deut. 17 and 19). The restrictions of Jewish law actually made conviction much more restrictive than U.S. law, so that by the second century B.C. the death penalty was rarely practiced among Jews.
4. Mercy is frequently granted to offenders for which the law specified death as a punishment. God granted mercy to Cain, the first murderer (Gen. 4). The cities of refuge created a sanctuary of mercy where the guilty could escape from the revenge of the victim’s family (Num. 35:1-34); Deut. 4:41-43; 19:1-21, esp. v. 10 and 18). Jesus proffered mercy to the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). Far from being absent from the biblical witness, mercy is a constant theme to be demonstrated and practiced by God’s people.
5. Christians are above all to live by the “higher righteousness” of agape as exemplified in Jesus (Mt. 5:17-20). Jesus said that he did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it, that is, to bring it to its completion. The law of retaliation (*lex taliones*) was remedial and temporary, but the law of non-retaliation is ideal and normative (Mt. 5:38-48; Rom. 13:8-10). The practice of reconciling love signifies the in-breaking of God’s peaceable reign on earth. Jesus embodied this higher righteousness by showing us how to love enemies, pray for persecutors, forgive offenders,

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and welcome strangers. In following our Lord's example (Rom. 12:14-21), the church lives as a colony of heaven (Phil. 1:27, 3:20). To the extent that Christians seek the peace of the other city (Jer. 29:3), we display in our exiled life together an alternative to the ways of violence, corruption, and despair. And in so doing the church in diaspora is a sign of God's gracious presence in the world.

The Christian witness to the state is based on the warrants of scripture, the witness of the gospel, and the way of God in Jesus Christ. Christians must then call for and, more importantly, exemplify to the state a form of life which accounts for the needs of victims and offenders, allows for reconciliation and forgiveness, and minimizes the exercise and escalation of lethal force. Since the state claims that capital punishment is society's way of 'righting' wrongs, the church must ask the state to demonstrate that capital punishment is, in fact, justly applied.

1. Does society mean that the death penalty is a just punishment because it serves a retributive purpose? If this is so, we must point out that the eye for eye approach, while limiting gross abuses of vengeance (viz. "cruel and unusual punishment"), lacks any transformative dimension. Moreover, that there is a class and racial bias in the way capital punishment is imposed suggests that retribution is not well served. The poor and minorities are far more likely to be executed than affluent, Anglo members of society. Furthermore, when the victim is white and the offender is from a minority group, there is a much greater likelihood that the death penalty will be imposed. Add to these difficulties the real possibility of executing the innocent (Michael L. Radelet, Hugo Adam Bedau, and Constance Putnam, "In Spite of Innocence: Erroneous Convictions in Capital Cases," Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992; Bedau and Radelet, "Miscarriages of Justice in Potentially Capital Cases," *Stanford Law Review* 40:21-179, 1987). As Martin Luther King, Jr. observed, practicing an eye for an eye will lead to a world of morally sightless people. Retribution is heartless and hopeless legalism.

Christians must then call for and, more importantly, exemplify to the state a form of life which accounts for the needs of victims and offenders, allows for reconciliation and forgiveness, and minimizes the exercise and escalation of lethal force.

2. Perhaps society means that the death penalty is just because it has a deterrent effect. Whatever one thinks about whether or not there is a general deterrent effect, the statistical evidence is not conclusive. The data simply does not demonstrate that capital punishment is a better deterrent to violent crime than imprisonment. Advocates of the death penalty as a deterrent, however, imagine that the execution of the guilty (i.e. the scapegoat) has a magical effect over our psycho-social reality, thus preventing further violence and moral chaos. Imagined and magical thinking, however, constitute no basis for just punishment, and it does not deserve Christian approval or support.

3. The witness of the Christian community to the state ought to be for a penal system based on restorative justice. Such a system would provide support for victims, apprehension and conviction of criminals, accountability for crimes, and opportunity for restoration and reconciliation to all parties. In such a system there would be opportunities and incentives for offenders to make amends with those whom they have wronged. Such a system would have alternatives to the death penalty, including life without parole. In such a system, there would be

place for the sweet grace of Karla Faye Tucker, but also the most violent and yet unconverted soul. That Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson asked for society to practice an eye for an eye for everyone except Karla Faye is hypocritical. That many Christians led the charge for her execution gives lie to the gospel. For the church of Jesus Christ not to challenge the death penalty as unjust punishment reflects our ultimate despair and disbelief in the redeeming and reconciling love of Christ. But most important of all, Christians must not only speak gospel truth. We must show it—in our worship, in our work, in our witness.

Hopefully,
Curtis W. Freeman
Associate Professor
Christianity and Philosophy
Houston Baptist University

One Nation Under God

By John M. Swomley

[John M. Swomley is professor emeritus of social ethics at St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri.]

A massive political campaign is underway in an effort to achieve religious and political control of crucial American policies and institutions, an effort which the popular press and television have virtually ignored. It was inspired by the Vatican and has been carried out over a period of years under the supervision of the National Council of Catholic Bishops. The bishops have created the impression that they speak for 59 million Catholics, which makes them a formidable political force, able to influence or intimidate presidents and other public officials.

For example, they had an important and close relationship with President George Bush. Within a month after Bush took office, he included all five of the U.S. cardinals in meetings at the White House and, thereafter, Cardinals Bernard Law of Boston and John O'Connor of New York spent overnights at the White House as guests of the president.

Doug Wead, a special assistant to the president, was quoted in the December 29, 1989, National Catholic Reporter as saying that Bush "has been more sensitive and accessible to the needs of the Catholic Church than any president I know of in American history.... We want the Church to feel loved and wanted, and we want them to have input." That relationship and input was maintained through the cardinals. Wead also boasted that "this administration has appointed more Catholic cabinet officers than any other in American history." There were, however, a number in the Reagan administration, as well.

The bishops organized their political campaign in 1975 and outlined it in an internal pastoral letter for Catholic officials and organizations. It is an ambitious campaign aimed at controlling judicial appointments, Congress, and other national and state political offices. In his book *Catholic Bishops in American*

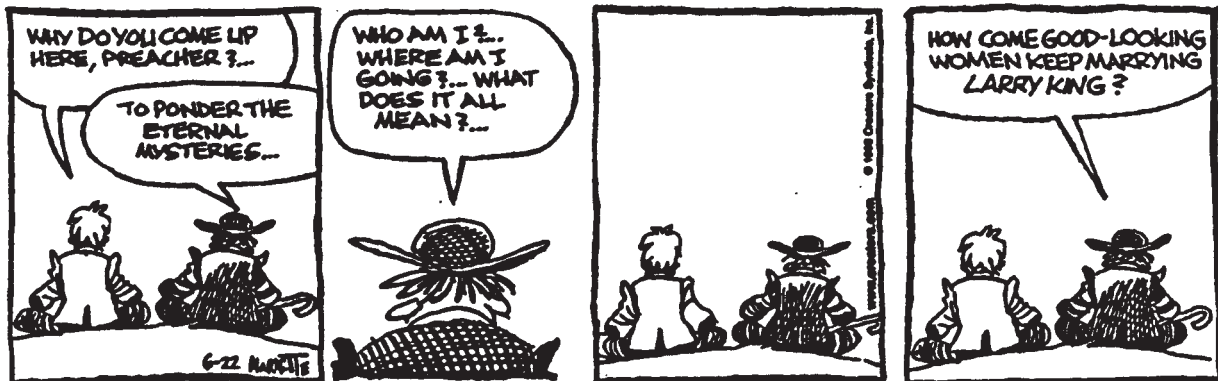
Politics, Catholic writer Timothy A. Byrnes calls the bishops' plan the "most focused and aggressive political leadership" ever exerted by the American Catholic hierarchy.

This political campaign, which has been organized around the issues of abortion and certain forms of birth control, has wider implications. The ability to control political and judicial offices on one doctrinal issue can and will be used on other matters, such as aid to parochial schools to the neglect of public schools and use of welfare legislation to provide funds for the charitable activities of churches, among others.

In their plans, the bishops list twenty major Catholic organizations—such as the Knights of Columbus, the Catholic Press Association, the Catholic Physicians' Guild, and the Catholic Lawyers Association—then begin to "explain political strategy and discuss how each group may participate." This involves getting "the National Organizations...to inventory their internal political capabilities systematically by means of their own government relations" and to "establish a communications structure from Washington to the national office of each organization to activate support for the political program."

A primary focus of the bishops' campaign is judicial appointment, so as to reverse Supreme Court decisions that legalize abortion. "Efforts should be made to reverse the decision, to restrain lower courts from interpreting and applying [Supreme Court decisions] more aggressively and more absolutely than the Supreme Court," the plans dictate. The bishops also "urge appointment of judges" who can be counted on to oppose abortion.

They have already been successful in that only anti-abortion judges were appointed during the Reagan and Bush years—one single pro-choice judge was named to the bench. Today, over 70 percent of our federal judges are basically anti-abortion,



as are at least four Supreme Court justices.

In order to influence the appointment of judges, it was necessary for the bishops to influence or control other branches of government. So a threefold strategy was “directed toward the legislative, judicial, and administrative areas.” This meant that “all Church sponsored or identified Catholic national, regional, diocesan and parochial organizations and agencies [must] pursue the three-fold effort.”

When Ronald Reagan was elected president, a major effort was made to influence him, especially at the point of foreign policy. The only popular press coverage of this was a feature by Carl Bernstein in *Time* magazine on February 24, 1992. Bernstein reported that “the key administrative players were all devout Roman Catholics”: CIA Chief William Casey; National Security Advisors Richard Allen and William Clark; Secretary of State Alexander Haig; Ambassador at Large Vernon Walters; and Reagan’s first ambassador to the Vatican, William Wilson.

Time also reported that, “in response to concerns of the Vatican, the Reagan Administration agreed to alter its foreign aid program to comply with the church’s teachings on birth control.... ‘American policy was changed, as a result of the Vatican’s not agreeing with our policy,’ Wilson explained. ‘American aid programs around the world did not meet the criteria the Vatican had for family planning.’” The Agency for International Development “sent various people from [the Department of] State to Rome,” said Wilson, “and I’d accompany them to meet the president of the Pontifical Council for the Family, and in long discussions they finally got the message.” The Vatican was directly involved through Pio Laghi, its apostolic delegate to Washington, D.C., with the Catholic members of Reagan’s team, according to the *Time* article.

According to Dr. R.T. Ravenholt, presidential candidate Jimmy Carter made a deal on August 31, 1976, with a group of Catholic bishops headed by Archbishop Joseph Bernadin in which the bishops, by agreeing not to endorse Carter’s opponent, Gerald Ford, received major concessions in terms of Catholic political appointees who dismembered and crippled the State Department’s family planning programs. Ravenholt, who was serving as director of AID’s global population program, was removed.

The legislative branch of government, according to the bishops’ plan, requires a more complex organization to cover every congressional district. Immediately after the campaign plan was formulated in 1975, the bishops began to “establish in each diocese a Pro-Life Committee to coordinate groups and activities within the diocese with respect to federal legislative structures.” This committee “will act through the diocesan Pro-Life Director,

Another aspect of the bishops’ plan is their ecumenical effort to organize Protestant evangelical churches as “front” groups, so as to avoid anti-Catholic criticism or recognition that there is a Catholic campaign to control politics.

who is appointed by the Bishop to direct pro-life efforts in the diocese.” The committee also included a congressional district representative to “develop core groups with close relationships to each Senator or Representative [and organize a] grass roots effort in every Congressional district.” Whenever there is a “House Recess Schedule,” the plan “makes the task of visiting the representative in his/her district both imperative and achievable.”

At the congressional level, the bishops already have a staunch supporter of the Vatican in Henry Hyde. As chair of the House Judiciary Committee, he has taken the initiative in promoting an anti-abortion amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It is Hyde who recently promoted the failed Istook amendment, which would have made government funds available for religious organizations. In 1996, Hyde also chaired the Republican Party’s Platform Committee, which has consistently given fetal life rights superior to those of pregnant women.

In each state, there is also a state coordinating committee to work on state politicians and legislators—the bishops have neglected nothing. They ask Catholics to “elect members of their own group, or active sympathizers, to specific posts in all local party organizations.” In other words, the bishops have established an organization in each parish, diocese, state, and on other levels in an effort to take control of American politics, knowing full well that most Americans do not vote and are often not informed of religious groups’ determination to achieve their political goals.

The funding for this political effort comes from the bishops’ own budget, which even five years ago in 1993, provided \$1.8 million—more than three times the next largest budgeted item. However, other major sources of funding include the Knights of Columbus and wealthy Catholic donors, such as the owner of Domino’s Pizza and the Coors beer family. A number of Foundations with Religious Right agendas have also now joined in this parade.

Another aspect of the bishops’ plan is their ecumenical effort to organize Protestant evangelical churches as “front” groups, so as to avoid anti-Catholic criticism or recognition that there is a Catholic campaign to control politics. At this level, they have been highly successful in bringing into their campaign the Southern Baptist Convention, the Mormons, and numerous other groups led by Protestant media religionists, including Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and James Kennedy, and lay leaders, including Missouri Senator John Ashcroft of the Assemblies of God.

Although the bishops have an extensive publicity network, they are quite content to let these Protestant groups get major attention in the public press, so long as they serve Vatican inter-

ests. The combination of these groups, together with the Catholic pro-life organizations, are loosely known as the religious right wing. These individuals and groups are represented formally or informally by such organizations as the Council on National Policy, the Christian Coalition, and organizations founded by Catholic right-wing leader Paul Weyrich: the Heritage Foundation and the Free Congress Foundation. They oppose separation of church and state, reproductive freedom for women, family planning, and equal rights for gays and lesbians and, in general, favor aid to parochial schools or home schooling over adequately financed public schools. On this latter issue, although a majority of Catholic children, especially lower-income Catholics, attend public schools, no cardinal or bishop is an outspoken advocate or defender of public education. It is not a Vatican priority or concern and, on all of the above issues, the Catholic and Protestant right wingers are united.

It is ironic and perhaps significant that the Christian Coalition is being investigated on the extent to which their contributions are illegal, since they claim to be a wholly religious organization not involved in politics. Meanwhile, the Catholic Church and Catholic organizations which are clearly involved in political activity have not been so investigated.

There is a very large group of progressive Catholics who are pro-choice and favor birth control, equal rights for women, religious liberty, and public education; in general, they support candidates with such views. However, they are not organized politically so as to espouse or give support to progressive politi-

What is required to counter this is a clear expose of the Catholic bishops' campaign and their collusion with the Protestant right wing, which they assisted in organizing, coupled with a strong counter-offensive in defense of church-state separation.

cians. Nevertheless, they provided the margin of votes for the Clinton-Gore reelection ticket in the twelve most heavily Catholic states, even though the bishops strongly attacked Clinton for his veto of a late-term abortion bill and in quiet ways supported the Republican ticket. This demonstrates that the bishops do not speak for all Catholics and that politicians who are not intimidated by the bishops' campaign can often win against those who do yield to the bishops' political efforts.

Still, the threat to America posed by the Catholic bishops and their Protestant allies is very great. At the very least, their efforts could lead to some form of shadow theocratic government, such as in southern Ireland where the bishops collectively are known as the "purple parliament."

What is required to counter this is a clear expose of the Catholic bishops' campaign and their collusion with the Protestant right wing, which they assisted in organizing, coupled with a strong counter-offensive in defense of church-state separation. It should also be obvious that organizations which depend upon an independent judiciary and judicial defense of the Bill of Rights cannot

be effective if the separation of church and state is eroded and congressional majorities are dominated by the religious right wing.

New strategies, new organizations of progressive voters, and more grass-roots education must become the order of the day. Until that happens, it is essential to alert everyone about the Catholic campaign for America and its Protestant allies. ■

I Got Old Much Sooner Than I Had Expected

By Kathryn Nutt Shamburger

[Mrs. Kathryn Shamburger is a native of Stephenville, Texas, a graduate of Baylor University, and a resident of Tyler where her late husband, Dr. William Shamburger, was the long-time pastor of the First Baptist Church.]

I got old much sooner than I expected.
Age had crossed my mind, but that thought I'd rejected!
I meant to grow roses, the talk of the town,
Be presented at Court in a white satin gown,
Sing in Carnegie Hall, take a bow at the Met,
Preach to the lost in Shanghai or Tibet.
Meant to rock the grandchildren more—sew for them too,
Make little girls' dresses embroidered in blue,
Do needlework, housework, and make it seem play,
Lose weight, get a face lift—model with clay.
Meant to work with ceramics, make chickens and frogs,
Roll all my newspapers into neat fireplace logs.
Meant to ride on a jet ski—go diving for pearls,
And fly across oceans to exotic new worlds.
Those far away places whose names I can't say
Are forever calling by night and by day.
I got old so much sooner than I had expected
Age had crossed my mind, but that thought I'd rejected.
I *will* not get old (or at least I'll pretend)
For deep down inside me my youth will not end!

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

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

CONTRIBUTIONS ARE

- Greatly needed
- Urgently solicited
- Genuinely appreciated

OBJECTIVES

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

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

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

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

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